



(Time: 9.00 a.m. to 12.00 p.m.)

SATSANG PRAGNA - 1 : PAPER - 1

Note: A few of the questions in this Pre-Test Paper will be asked in the Final Examination to be held on Sunday, 4 March 2018. In the Final Examination answers written on extra pages will not be considered valid. Without the prior permission of the Pariksha Karyalay in Ahmedabad, answer papers written by substitute writers in place of the original candidate will not be accepted. Answer papers with more than one type of handwriting will not be accepted. Answers crossed out will not be considered valid. Answers will not be considered valid if they are not written in legible handwriting. Use the latest editions of the exam books. Candidates will not be allowed to keep any electronic items, such as, mobile phones, tablets, laptops, etc. in the examination room.

Total Marks: 100

SECTION 1: VACHANAMRUT – 1st Edition, December 2014

- Q.1 Answer ALL of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. [4]**
1. According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 37, what is extremely difficult to forget?
 2. What should one do to increasingly understand the profound glory of God?
 3. According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 68, what has God himself said?
 4. Like what should one not perceive the manifest form of Purushottam Narayan?
- Q.2 Write concisely on any TWO of the following questions. (In 4–5 lines each.) [4]**
1. What causes disturbances within the hearts of God's devotees?
 2. According to Vachanamrut Panchala 3, why is a devotee possessing jnan superior to all?
 3. According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 21, which conviction should all of our satsangis develop?
 4. What are the causes of the development of a nastik attitude?
- Q.3 Write on any ONE of the following examples and clarify its principle. (In 4–5 lines.) [4]**
1. Never remember the objects one has renounced, like faeces once excreted.
 2. Example of a horse.
- Q.4 Explain any TWO of the following incidents and give a suitable Vachanamrut reference from the syllabus. (In 3–4 lines each.) [4]**
1. The executive who administered the state of Vadodara was considered to possess blunt intellect, whereas Sagram, who belonged to the lower caste was considered to possess sharp intellect.
 2. Kathi Darbars who went to the Charotar region, believed yellow berries(rayan) to be sweet neem fruit (limboli).
 3. Harbai and Valbai acted against the norms of dharma. Therefore, they were excommunicated from Satsang.
 4. Zamkuba of Udaipur, who had firm atma-realization, hid in the skeleton of a camel for three days.
- Q.5 Complete the following quotations. [9]**
1. It is to liberate the jivas to have been eradicated.
 2. Just as ones mind God and his Sant.
 3. No distance remains my varna or ashram.

**SECTION 2: BHAGWAN SWAMINARAYAN JIVANCHARITRA PART 1 – 6th Gujarati Edition, May 2013
AND PART 2 – 6th Gujarati Edition, June 2012**

- Q.6 Write concisely on any ONE of the following. (In 30 lines.) [12]**
1. Fearlessness of Nilkanth Varni (Only incidents from 'In Jagannathpuri' to 'In the Pilgrim Place of Lojpur').
 2. Divinity shown by Shri Sahajanand Swami after appointed as the head of the Sampradaya (Only incidents from 'Assembly in Manavadar' to 'Bochasan: Shri Hari's Goal').
 3. Ghanshyam fulfilled the wishes of his relatives (Only incidents from 'Birth of Ghanshyam and Childhood' to 'In the Righteous Land of Ayodhya').
- Q.7 Write short notes on any TWO of the following topics. (Each short note should contain two incidents of five lines each.) [8]**
1. A promoter of devotion: Ghanshyam as a child (Only incidents of 'Ghanshyam Given Sacred Thread').
 2. Shri Hari's facial attraction.
 3. On the way to Pulhashram (Only incidents from 'In Nepal').
- Q.8 Describe any THREE of the following incidents and give your thoughts. (Write incidents in eight lines and thoughts in four lines.) [12]**
1. In Agatrai (Umiyashankar learns about Shri Hari's form).
 2. Godliness is not dependent on miraculous powers.
 3. At Khima Patel's house in Dangra.
 4. Shri Hari was welcomed as the groom.
 5. In Faneni.

Q.9 Narrate incidents to describe the personality of any ONE of the characters below. [8]

1. Govardhanbhai of Mangrol (Incidents only from 'In the Lovely Region of Saurashtra' to 'Prohibition on Consecrating Murtis of Ram, Lakshman and Janki').
2. Magniram (Advaitanand) (Only incidents from 'Shri Hari's Powers Revealed Through Samadhi').

**SECTION 3: DHARMIK VIDHANO ANE BHAVNAO – 7th Gujarati Edition, September - 2014
AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ESSAY**

Q.10 Answer All of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. [5]

1. Why is money donated while taking arti?
2. Which series is nityapuja, instructed by Shriji Maharaj, considered to be a part of?
3. Which two names are included in the Swaminarayan mantra?
4. Whose form is the mantra considered to be?
5. Write the invocation(ahvan) mantra for nityapuja.

Q.11 Write short answers to the following questions. (In 4–5 lines each.) [6]

1. Why is mala-kanthi worn around the neck?
2. Write in detail about rajasi food.
3. What should we do in dhyan(meditation)?

Q.12 Write concisely on any ONE of the following. (In 10 lines.) [3]

1. What are the advantages of dandvat pranam?
2. What are the steps in the progress of a child?


Q.13 Write short notes on any ONE of the following topics. (In 15–20 lines.) [6]

1. What is nitya puja? Why is it performed?
2. What is the significance of doing murtipuja of God?

Q.14 Write an essay on any ONE of the following topics. (In approximately 35–40 lines.) [15]

1. Gita – Adhyay 4: Divine birth and actions.
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) May 2017, pp. 4 to 7, 43)
2. Satsang with Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami in Chicago.
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) September 2017, pp. 43 to 45)
3. Upanishads on the human form of Akshabrahman.
(Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) October 2011, pp. 5 to 7, 23)

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 **Important Note:** Past Papers and their solutions can be downloaded and printed free from the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's website - link : <http://www.baps.org/Satsang-Exams.aspx>

 **Matter of above three essays are shown in the following pages**

**(One essay from the list of essays will be asked in the Final Examination
of March-2018.)**

Pragna 1 Essay 1:
Gita-Adhyay 4: Divine birth and actions

I. Paragraph 1

- A. With birth of different avatars, there are many questions that are linked and raised by scholars asking why would God himself have to take birth on the earth? With those questions comes manushyabhav, seeing humanly characteristics in God. Shri Krishna Bhagwan reveals to Arjun the answer to the questions about God's incarnation on earth - Divyabhav.
- B. Divyabhav – seeing divinity in the words and actions of God and guru. To judge others is a human nature. We judge others and our surrounding according to our past and present. The problem arises when we start judging the actions of our God and our Guru.
- C. We find it so difficult to keep divyabhav because both God and guru appear to be just like us. Shriji Maharaj mentions in Vachanamrut Gadhada I 78, “When God assumes a human form, it is customary for him to behave in absolutely the same manner as humans do and not to reveal his transcendental powers.” He looks like us, walks like us and talks like us. One would, therefore, reason that he is like us, but, he is not.

II. Paragraphs 2

- A. Shri Krishna Bhagwan tells Arjun ‘I have come to revive that forgotten yoga of conviction in the manifest form of Paramātmā.’ ‘Yadā yadā hi dharmasya glānirbhavati Bhārata, abhyutthānamadharmaḥ tadātmānam srujāmyaham, paritrāṇāya sādhoonām vināśhāya cha dushkrutām, dharmasansthāpanārthāya sambhavāmi yuge yuge.’ – ‘Whenever dharma declines and adharma increases, I manifest to protect the sadhus and destroy the adharmis. O Bharata, I manifest in age after age to firmly establish dharma’ (Gitā 4.7-8). He further goes on to say in the Bhagavad Gita “Janma karma cha me divyam...” (“My birth and my actions are divine. He who realizes them as divine will attain me”). He tells us that whatever God or guru says is divine; do not doubt it. Whatever God or guru does, it is divine; do not doubt it.
- B. God's birth is different than that of a human. When a human is born, he/she has to suffer in the womb. But when God enters mother's womb, he does so to give his divine sukh to her. When a child is born, he/she will not remember anything of the past births. God, however, is all-knower. He knows about the past, present and future. Moreover, when God is born, the whole atmosphere becomes divine.

III. Paragraphs 3

- A. *Karma Divyam* - All God's actions are divine. A person is out at sea, drowning in the high tide. A lifeguard seeing the swimmer in trouble jumps in to try to save him. The swimmer is thrashing away at the water, gasping for breath, panicking. Meanwhile, the lifeguard is crashing through the oncoming waves, trying to reach the swimmer as fast as possible. To a distant observer, it would seem that both are having a rough time in the water. But in reality, one is drowning and the other is doing the rescuing. We are drowning, God is rescuing. Not only does he look like us, but he also acts like us in every way, but all his actions are divine. Our actions are limited to our abilities, our knowledge and our body. God's actions are limitless.
- B. In Vachanamrut Panchala 4 Shriji Maharaj lists twenty-eight different qualities that God may show, just like humans. The intelligence to realize he is different and divine is what Maharaj calls divyabhav. He looks like us. He acts like us. Yet, he is not like us. It is enough to puzzle the greatest of minds. When it comes to spirituality, keeping divyabhav is incredibly difficult, but essential.
- C. In Vachanamrut Panchala 10, Maharaj says “when a foolish person looks at that manifest form of God with a māyik vision, he perceives a human like himself. Also, just as he himself is born, becomes a child, becomes a youth, becomes old and dies, in the same way, he believes God to undergo the same process. But when one worships God with sincerity, having faith in the words of the Ekāntik Sant of God, one's māyik vision disappears. Thereafter, one realises that same form of God as being the supreme chaitanya, characterised by eternal existence, consciousness and bliss.

IV. Paragraph 4

- A. *Me Divyam* - To keep divyabhav in present form of God. When we hear the stories of God's past avatatars, we often are overjoyed listening about his divine actions. But when it comes to keeping divyabhav in God's present form, we often

fail. Gunatitanand Swami thus reveals the “perspective problem” for viewing the divine: because God and his satpurush assume human forms, they outwardly appear all too similar to us. The interactions, he warns, that devotees share with them may yield moments of bliss, but those moments can be tainted with misunderstanding. When Mahant Swami Maharaj exhibits human qualities, like falling ill, the devotee can be deceived into thinking that God and the satpurush are not truly divine.

- B. A devotee can avoid misunderstanding the satpurush’s true form by recognizing that as a limited jiva, one lacks the perspective to assess the satpurush’s actions.

V. Paragraph 5

- A. Fruits of keeping *divyabhav* is to moksha, to get liberation. Shriji Maharaj in Gadhada II- 10 says, “whenever God performs divine actions, they appear divine to both a devotee and to one who is not a devotee. However, when God performs human-like actions, a true devotee still perceives divinity in them, but by no means does he perceive flaws in such actions of God. Having such understanding is known as having *bhakti* towards God.” He goes on to say that only devotees with such understanding will get the fruit of Akshardham at the end.

Bliss Article:

Please refer to the Bliss Article (September-October 2013) for more information. It can be found on **pages 26-29**.

Please refer to the Bliss Article (March-April 2012) for more information. It can be found on **pages 24-28**.

Pragna 1 Essay 2:

Satsang with Pragat Brahmaswarup Mahant Swami in Chicago.

7 July 2017, Atlanta, Chicago

Swamishri departed from Atlanta and was greeted at the Chicago BAPS Mandir by joyfully dancing *balaks* and *kishores*. Swamishri viewed a beautiful *rangoli* designed on the theme ‘The Satpurush Succession Is Eternal’ and blessed devotees who had observed an 84-hour fast to commemorate his visit.

8 July 2017: Mass Marriage Ceremony

In the morning, while offering *abhishek* to Nilkanth Varni, Swamishri especially prayed for the couples who would be getting married in the *samuh lagna* (mass marriage) ceremony today.

9 July 2017: Guru Purnima

After puja, Swamishri inaugurated the painting album on the life and work of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, *Bhagwan Swaminarayan: A Saga in Paintings*.

Then Swamishri blessed, “Today is Guru Punam. Throughout the world, gurus will be worshipped. The disciple acquires the qualities of the guru. Our guru is Akshar and he will take us to Akshardham. True guru *pujan* is to see everyone as divine. Why should we see the faults in others? Instead, sing the virtues of God and guru. Shun talks of *abhav* and *avagun*. To please the guru is guru *pujan*. To have *nirdosh buddhi* in the guru is guru *pujan*. By doing this, you have performed guru *pujan* from wherever you are seated.”

In the evening, Swamishri held Shri Harikrishna Maharaj in his hands and entered the main Guru Punam assembly seated in a Mayur Rath. He was greeted by children and youths dancing and the devout atmosphere was palpable as Swamishri took his seat on the stage.

At the conclusion of the assembly, Swamishri blessed, “We should live with unity with all; with our family and relatives, with everyone in America and throughout the world. God has made everyone. We should remember this. We are *satsangis* and this is the noble way of satsang.

“We have attained Maharaj, Swami and the *Satpurush*. That is our clear, straightforward understanding. Never doubt this. If you doubt, you will not experience the joy. So, pray to Maharaj and keep *nirdosh buddhi* towards the guru.”

Then, after sadhus had performed *pujan* of Swamishri by applying sandalwood paste on his forehead, the devotees had the opportunity for Swamishri’s *samip* darshan.

15 July 2017

Swamishri performed the *pujan* of bricks for the newly planned BAPS mandirs in Indianapolis and Louisville.

16 July 2017: Pramukh Swami Maharaj Smruti Din

In the evening, in the centre of the stage, a decorative Pramukh Mandiram was arranged, housing a (LED) screen on which various photos of Pramukh Swami Maharaj were continually displayed.

During the assembly, some of the dignitaries addressed the audience.

Governor Bruce Rauner said, “It is a deep privilege, one of the most exciting moments of my life, to meet our new spiritual leader, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj. We celebrate together the values that we share – the ideal of ‘samp’ – unity – and the ideal of ‘das no das’. We are here on earth to help each other. We celebrate the teaching ‘In the joy of others lies our own.’ Therefore, I, Bruce Rauner, Governor of the State of Illinois, do hereby proclaim August 13th, 2017 as Pramukh Swami Maharaj Day in Illinois.”

Mayor of Bartlett Kevin Wallace, said, “It’s been such a great relationship between the village of Bartlett and BAPS. I can’t say enough about what BAPS here in Bartlett has done for our community.” The mayor also declared 9 July 2017 as ‘Mahant Swami Maharaj Day’ in Bartlett.

Mayor of Schaumburg Al Larson declared 13 August 2017 as ‘Pramukh Swami Maharaj Day’ and presented Swamishri with a Key to the City.

Mayor of Hanover Park Rodney Craig declared 9 July 2017 as ‘Mahant Swami Maharaj Day’.

Mayor of Naperville Steve Chirico, together with leading businessman Krishna Bansal, presented the Key to the City to Swamishri.

Children and youths celebrated Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s life with a thematic dance, towards the end of which Swamishri waved a large BAPS flag, acknowledging the upcoming centenary celebrations of Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Finally, Swamishri blessed, “Shriji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami and Pramukh Swami Maharaj came on this earth and worked tirelessly to promote *ekantik* dharma. The shastras contain the concept of *ekantik* dharma, but it had been forgotten. Without the *upasana* of Maharaj and Swami *ekantik* dharma cannot be realized. Only by becoming like Swami can one offer true devotion to Maharaj. We have that opportunity. So, we should become his devotee. If we do not become *ekantik*, we remain incomplete and Maharaj’s goal is not accomplished. Only by becoming an *ekantik* devotee can one repay one’s debt to Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

Thereafter, the devotees also had the opportunity to perform *pujan* of Pramukh Swami Maharaj’s *asthipushpa*.

17 July 2017

In the morning, Swamishri sanctified the new *sinhasan* of Milwaukee Mandir and the *murtis* for the Sterling Heights Mandir.

Pragna 1 Essay 3:

Upanishads on the human form of Aksharbrahman

I. Paragraph 1

A. Purshottam Parbrahman manifests upon this earth with human like qualities to give joy and happiness to His devotees and ultimately grant them liberation or moksha. Similarly, Aksharbrahman manifests upon this earth as well to help devotees firmly attain uttam nirvikalp nischay of Parbrahman, experience His bliss and happiness, and ultimately attain moksha. The principle of Akshar Purshottam Upasna and the importance of Aksharbrahman has been widely mentioned in our sanatan scriptures such as Prasthantraye comprised of Upnishads, Bhagawat Gita and Brahma Sutras.

II. Paragraph 2

A. Mentioned in the Ishavashya Upnishad, *Tadejati* (a mantra from the Upnishads on the human form of Aksharbrahman) means that both Parbrahman and Aksharbrahman manifests upon this earth in human forms for the kalyan and

happiness of the mumukshus, providing us with the first piece of evidence for the human form of Aksharbrahman. In the Munduck Upnishad, the dialogue between Maharshi Angira and saunak has shed more light on the importance of Aksharbrahman implicating his manifestation for the purpose of liberating numerous souls on earth. The mantra *Varishtam prajanaam* (depicting Aksharbrahman as an abode to surrender to) explicitly states that the best form for all mumukshus to offer worship and surrender too is Aksharbrahman. Our worship and surrenderance cannot be directed to just anyone, one has recognize the human form of Aksharbrahman and seek refuge in him. Aksharbrahman is omniscience, as described in the shloka, “*Yah Servagnah Servavid.*” He knows everything (i.e. the jiva, jagat(world) and jagdish(God)). He knows of all the material bonds and the means to liberation. Everything is visible and quite apparent to Him. In short, Aksharbrahman in human form is an embodiment of brahmavidya(science of the supreme spirit) and for this reason only, the Upnishad states that mumukshus must surrender to Aksharbrahman, the best abode. This further validates the importance of recognizing and associating with the human form of Aksharbrahman.

III. Paragraph 3

- A. Maharshi Angira firmly orders everyone to identify the *nartanudhari Aksharbrahman* (the Aksharbrahman in human form) and to attach to him only. He insists that one should only consider Aksharbrahma as one's atma, no one else. This is repeated again in the mantra *Tamevaikam jaanthatma namah* (believe Akshar as your atma). Therefore, one can only attach one's atma to Aksharbrahman. In Munduck Upnishad, Maharshi Angira says that one has to go to a guru in order to realize brahmavidya and that guru can be none other than Aksharbrahman himself. Aksharbrahman is described as *Shrotriyam* (he has knowledge of all the shasstras) and *nishtham* (he is constantly in oneness with Parabrahma or God) through the shloka, “*Shrotriyam Brahma nishtham.*” This is because Parabrahma completely dwells in Aksharbrahman. One cannot identify just any guru as Aksharbrahman. Only Aksharbrahman should be considered as a guru. To realize brahmavidya is to realize Aksharbrahman and to realize Aksharbrahman is to realize Parabrahman. When this is understood, one experiences atma realization or *brahmni sthiti*. Angira also explains that attaining atma realization is extremely difficult. One has to overcome maya, all the panchvishays and baser instincts (i.e. anger, ego, lust). Since Aksharbrahman is beyond maya, he is able to help one with atma realization and attain God. Maharshi Angira further explains, *amrutshais setu*, which means this Aksharbrahman is the bridge between a devotee and Parabrahma. Aksharbrahman helps us cross the sansaar (our worldly life) and takes us to Bhagwaan. Thus, a great mahima and the need of human form of Aksharbrahman has been mentioned in the Upnishads.

IV. Paragraph 4 & 5

- A. The Bhagwat Gita also provides evidence of such great mahima of Aksharbrahman. The Gita provides liberation from maya (worldly temptations). Arjun was greatly distressed from maya. Shree Krishna wished to free Arjun from this distress and help him attain a brahmic state. Shree Krishna says, “*Brahamabhutah prashanatama na shochit na kaashit* (one who attains brahma bhaav acquires abundant happiness),” in hopes that Arjun clearly understands the importance of brahmi sthiti or atma realization. Shree Krishna emphasizes the significance of Aksharbrahman to him throughout the entirety of the Bhagwat Gita.
- B. In the second chapter of Bhagwad Gita, Shree Krishna asks Arjun, “*Isha brahmi sthitihi*, (to remain sthitpragna (steadfast)).” This means remaining steady in both happiness and sadness by controlling one's emotions, and only remaining content in Parmatma. When Arjun wished to model his sthitpragnata after an ideal individual, Shree Krishna presented shakshaat Aksharbrahman to him. He explained that Aksharbrahman appears on this earth in a human form and serves as a guide by which everyone can live their life. The 14th chapter of Bhagwat Gita mentions the three properties of nature: satvagun, rajogun and tamogun. Shree Krishna advises Arjun to transcend above the three gunas and become Gunatit. Once again, Arjun wishes for an ideal role model from whom he can learn to become Gunatit. So, Shree Krishna reiterates the concept of shakshaat

Aksharbrahman to him. Just like the Upanishads, the Bhagwant Gita also mentions the great mahima and necessity of the human form of Aksharbrahma.

V. Paragraph 6 & 7

- A. The third scripture providing evidence of the human form of Aksharbrahma is the Brahmasutra, written by Maharshi Vedvyas. In the 3rd sub-chapter of chapter three titled "*Atma gru hi ty a dhikaram*", Vedvyas utters that one must have atmabuddhi in guru (i.e. Aksharbrahman). Then, in the next sub chapter titled, "*Sambandha dhi karanam*", he immediately specifies that one should not have atmabuddhi in anyone except Aksharbrahman. Thus, Upanishads, Bhagwad Gita and Brahmasutros introduce Aksharbrahman in the human form and explains the utmost need for Aksharbrahman in the human form.
- B. Bhagwaan Swaminarayan has stressed this principle in his teachings as well. He says in Vachanamrut G. I. 71 that, "when God incarnates for the purpose of granting liberation to the jiva, he is always accompanied by his Akshardham." We are very fortunate that Bhagwaan Swaminarayan came upon this earth and brought Mul Aksharmurti Gunatitanand Swami with him. Today, that same Aksharbrahman is present among us through Mahant Swami Maharaj who serves as our doorway to moksha.