



(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, 1 March 2020. 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. From whose did have attain the state of Ekantik Dharma?
 2. How should a devotee of God realize that the form of God and what should he explain to others?
 3. Who does Shriji Maharaj not like, as per to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 37?
 4. How do examine to eradicate desire?
- Q.2 Write on any ONE of the following examples and clarify its princile. (In 4–5 lines.) [4]**
1. Ship and Ocean
 2. Using the example of Shri Krishna Bhagwan's 16,100 wives, explain the jiva's mind
- Q.3 Write concisely on any TWO of the following questions. (In 4–5 lines each.) [4]**
1. According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 47, what are the characteristics of firmness in Vairagya?
 2. According to Vachanamrut Gadhada I 21, write the description of Akshar given by Shriji Maharaj.
 3. What is remedy to purify the polluted intellect of the jiva?
 4. On what type of devotee does Shriji Maharaj effortlessly and naturally develop affection?
- Q.4 Complete the following quotations. [9]**
1. Just as the jiva indulges in a countless variety of sights the most foolish of fools and the vilest of the vile.
 2. Whatever types of flaws a person.....absolutely flawless as well.
 3. A person who safeguards his liberation considered to possess a blunt intellect.
- Q.5 Explain any TWO of the following incidents and give a suitable Vachanamrut reference from the syllabus. (In 3–4 lines each.) [4]**
1. When the ash of Maharaj finished, Joban Pagi passed away.
 2. Duryodhan said, "When the Pandavs and Draupadi roam in the forest then I will be pleased."
 3. Harikrishna Maharaj gave darshan to Girdharbhai and said, "I am manifest in Satsang through this Pragji Bhakta."
 4. Petty-minded Bava Mohandas liked Nilkanth Varni's water pot, so he took more care of it.

**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. Kings awestruck by the company of Nilkanth Varni during his travels (Only incidents from 'At Nar-Narayan's Ashram' to 'In the Region of Saurashtra').
 2. Ghanshyam fulfilled the wishes of his relatives (Only incidents from 'Manifestation of Purushottam and the Divine Incidents of Childhood' to 'In the Righteous Land of Ayodhya').
 3. Satsang in Kutch.
- 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 from 'Ghanshyam Given the Sacred Thread').
 2. Ramdas Swami comes in contact with Ramanand Swami (Only incidents from 'The Meeting of Ramanand Swami and Nilkanth Varni').
 3. Meeting of Varni with Amichand and Laldas (In Vadodara) (Only incidents from 'Beginning the spread of Bhagwat Dharma').
- 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. Nilkanth Varni gave boons in Bochasan (At the Prime Pilgrim Bochasan)
 2. Bhekh's harassment to the Sadhus of Shri Hari
 3. Shri Hari in Jamnawad
 4. At Setubandh Rameshwar
 5. Shri Hari in Jetalpur (Incident from 'Shri Hari in Umreth')

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

1. Narsinh Mehta (Piplana) (Only incidents from 'In the Region of Saurashtra' to 'Travels in Sorath').
2. Mayaram Bhatt (Only incidents from 'Shri Hari's Powers Revealed Through Samadhi' to 'Prohibition on Consecration of Ram, Lakshman and Janki')

**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. Give two examples of sanskars acquired in utero.
2. Why is a ghar mandir necessary?
3. Which feeling is strengthened in the Mandir?
4. What type of Shastra is the Shikshapatri?
5. According to the Manusmriti, what does sleeping in the early morning destroy?

Q.11 Write concisely on any ONE of the following. (In 10 lines.) [3]

1. What does Pramukh Swami Maharaj say about TV?
2. Why Mandir?

Q.12 Write short notes on any ONE of the following topics. (In 15–20 lines.) [6]

1. What is the tilak-chandlo?
2. What is the sequence of rituals in personal daily puja? (From 'Ideal time of Puja' to 'Arrangement of Murti'.)


Q.13 Write short answers to the following questions. (In 4–5 lines each.) [6]

1. Whose and what type of murtis should we keep in personal daily puja?
2. What is gharsabha?
3. Why is murtipuja of the guru performed?

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

1. The Divine Call of the Vachanamrut: To Become Engrossed in Akshar-Purushottam (Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) April 2019, Pg. No. 6 to 9)
2. The Foundation Stone-Laying Ceremony of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu-dhabi (Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) May 2019, Pg. No. 21 to 31, 49 to 50)
3. Vachanamrut: The Essential Scripture of the Philosophy, Strength and Effect of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya. (Swaminarayan Prakash (Gujarati) May 2019, Pg. No. 16 to 19, 48)

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 **Important Note:** Past Papers and solutions of main exam 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-2020.)**

Pragna 1 Essays

Essay 1

The Divine Call of the Vachanamrut: To Become Engrossed in Akshar-Purushottam

Vachnamrut is the scripture of the true principles uttered by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. In the Vachnamrut, He has embodied the nectarine or Amrut-filled principle of being engrossed in Akshar Purushottam.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan illuminated and revealed the everlasting truthful philosophical principle of Akshar Purushottam in the Vachnamrut. He fully propagated the spiritual principles of Akshar Purushottam, which are already represented in the Sakal Shastras, like Vedas. He also established a group of large number of followers that integrated this principle into their lives.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan's heartfelt utterance of this supreme Akshar Purushottam principle in the Vachnamrut has been, further, propagated by the Gunatit Sadgurus, through whom Bhagwan Swaminarayan dwells in totality. They glorify the importance of the Akshar Purushottam principle as mentioned in the Vachnamrut and the mumukshus who have deeply studied the Vachnamrut through the aforementioned Sadgurus have attained the ultimate essence of the Vachnamrut, which is the Akshar Purushottam principle.

All mumukshus are bound by eternal ignorance and seek to escape the misery of maya and enjoy the supreme bliss of God, but their sadhanas or efforts vary in attaining that bliss due to their past karmas or deeds and characteristics. The uniqueness of Vachnamrut is that each mumukshu is able to relate to it despite his own characteristics and his sadhanas, and it eventually leads him in being brahmarup and attain Purushottam. Thus, only after being brahmarup he is able to offer bhakti. This fact is distinctly depicted in the Vachnamrut.

In Vachnamrut Loya 7, Shriji Maharaj says, "Only the one who becomes brahmarup has the right to offer bhakti to Purushottam." By using the word 'right', Shri Shriji Maharaj alerts every worshiper of Purushottam to the necessity of becoming a Brahmarup in order to offer bhakti. It's not an option to be that way. It is mandatory. Thus, the principle of offering bhakti, established by Shriji Maharaj in being engrossed with Akshar Purushottam clearly radiates in the Vachnamrut.

Brahma-gnan is considered as the essence of all the scriptures. Just as it is important to become Akshar in order to attain bhakti, it is just as important to become Akshar in order to attain brahma-gnan. Parabrahman Swaminarayan Bhagwan has defined the true meaning of Brahma-gnan in the Vachnamrut. He says that "On the path of brahma-gnan, one should understand in the following manner.....Brahma is the cause of all – Prakriti-Purush etc., It (Brahma) is their supporter and pervades all through its antaryami powers.....Transcending that Brahma is Parabrahman, Purushottam Narayan, who is distinct from Brahma, and is the cause, the supporter and the inspirer of Brahma. With such understanding, one should develop oneness with one's jivatma and with that Brahmabhaav, worship Parabrahman while maintaining a master-servant relationship with Him." (G.II.3)

Bhagwan Swaminarayan has also revealed that only by understanding the two divine elements, Akshar Brahma and Parabrahma Purushottam, the Brahma-gnan is complete. This brahma-gnan is known as Brahavidya in the scriptures. Shriji Maharaj says, "The devotee possessing gnan behaves as brahmaswarup and thoroughly realizes the greatness of God. (V.G.I.56). Thus, Brahma-gnan proclaimed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the brahma vidya that gleams as being engrossed with Akshar Purushottam in the Vachanamrut.

It is important to become Akshar in order to attain Nischay in Pragat Swarup of Bhagwan just as it is important to become Akshar in order to do Bhakti and attain Brahma-gnan. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has said numerous times in the Vachnamrut to do the nischay of Pragat Bhagwan's swarup. When a sadhak treading on an adhyatmik path, pursuing the sadhana of pragat Bhagwan's Swarup's nischay, he has to realize the true characteristic of that nischay. This is revealed by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in the Vachnamrut. "Finally, one possessing the highest level of 'nirvikalp' faith realizes that countless millions of brahmands, each encircled by the eight barriers, appear like mere atoms before Akshar. Such is the greatness of Akshar, the abode of Purushottam Narayan. One who worships Purushottam realizing oneself to be Akshar can be said to possess the highest level of nirvikalp nischay/faith." (Loya 12). So, the sadhak must do nischay of Bhagavat Swarup being Akshar in order to attain the highest level of nirvikalp nischay. Thus, Bhagavat Swarup's nischay as declared by Bhagwan

Swaminarayan is beaming radiantly in the Vachnamrut as being engrossed with Akshar Purushottam.

Swaminarayan Bhagwan has given excellent guidance, in the Vachnamrut, to the worshipers seeking Atma-nishta or atma realization. He said that initially the instincts of conscience, are so prevalent in the affairs of the outside world, but eventually they become stable within one's atma. "Finally, the vrittis of the indriyas and antahkaran becomes absorbed in the atma. It is then that the jiva's karan body, which is full of worldly desires, is said to be destroyed.....and he has the realization of himself as being brahmarup and, within that Brahma he has the darshan of Parabrahman Narayan... Such a sustained state is the highest level of atma -realization." (V.G.II.62)

These words of the Vachnamrut transcend atma chintan to atma nishta and atma nishta is transformed into Akshar Purushottam nishta. Thus, the excellent state of atma nishta propagated by Parabrahman Swaminarayan is shining in the Vachnamrut as being engrossed with Akshar Purushottam.

Thus, all the above mentioned adhyatmik endeavors, bhakti, brahma-gnan, nischay and atma-nishta in the Vachnamrut, are shining through and are commanding one to become engrossed in Akshar Purushottam.

It is clearly evident that in the Vachnamrut, Shriji Maharaj spoke of himself when he spoke of Purushottam Parabrahman. and when he spoke of Akshar Brahma, He spoke of Gunatitanand Swami. His clear message in Vachnamrut is to attain any sadhana being engrossed in Akshar Purushottam. This tradition of the Gunatit Akshar brahma is still prominent today in the form of Brahma-Swaroop pragat Guru-Hari. Currently, Mahant Swami Maharaj is the Gunatit Satpurush, so whoever associates with Him and whole heartedly recognizes Him as Akshar brahma, his life too will radiate being engrossed in Akshar Purushottam.

Essay 2

The Foundation Stone - Laying Ceremony of the BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu-dhabi

The foundation stone laying ceremony is a sacred Hindu ritual wherein the first foundation stones are sanctified and fixed in the ground as the base of the Mandir. The foundation stone laying ceremony of the UAE's first traditional BAPS Hindu Mandir took place on April 20, 2019, on 27 acres of land in Abu Dhabi, on Dubai-Abu Dhabi High Way, in the city of Al Rabha.

This ceremonial event marked a significant millennial moment in the history of the UAE. Around 5,000 devotees and well-wishers from around the world, thronged to participate in and to witness this historic moment of the first BAPS Hindu Mandir in UAE. Volunteers began to arrive at the site location as early as 6:00 a.m., with participants arriving at 8:00 a.m. The Shilanyas Ceremony, which is an ancient Vedic ritual performed to bless and sanctify the main foundation stones, commenced at 9:00 a.m. A 55ft.x35ft.x6ft foundation was excavated in the ceremonial grounds, where the first stone of the mandir was to be planted. This ceremony signified the beginning of the construction of the Mandir.

The Vedic ceremony was performed by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj, the spiritual leader of BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. The occasion was also graced with the presence of His Excellency Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili, Chairman of the Department of Community Development and Member of the Executive Council, His Excellency Dr Thani Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, Minister of Climate Change and Environment, and His Excellency Dr Ahmad Bin Abdullah Humaid Belhoul Al Falasi, Cabinet Member and Minister of State for Higher Education and Advanced Skills. Also present were His Excellency Navdeep Suri, Indian Ambassador to UAE, Vipul, the Consul General of India, Dr. B.R. Shetty, Chairman of Mandir Ltd. and the world famous Chinese architectural designer of the Mandir, Mr. Lai. After laying the foundation stones in position, cement was poured over the stones and then water from the three main holy rivers of India - Ganga, Yamuna and Sarasvati was poured on the stones by His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj and the distinguished guests.

The enthusiasm and devotion of all participants and volunteers was evident as they arrived for the Vedic ceremony.

Prior to the celebration assembly, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj and the Ministers unveiled a Gift of Gratitude, an intricate piece of artwork comprising a base made of pink sandstone – the stone that will be used for building the Mandir and metal fins of various sizes forming an image of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. The unique artwork celebrating the Year of Tolerance was a gift to The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, on behalf of BAPS Hindu Mandir and the larger Indian community in appreciation of the support of the rulers and people of the UAE. The mandir is being built on 13.5 acres of land gifted by His Highness Shaikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme

Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, to the Indian community. They also gifted additional land 13 acres of land, for building parking facilities in the mandir premises.

During the assembly, Pujya Brahnavihari Swami, a senior BAPS sadhu who is overseeing the construction of the Mandir in Abu Dhabi stated, "I would like to thank the King HH Khalifa Bin Zayad Al Nahyan and Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan and all rulers and leaders for gifting a generous, 27 acres of land for the Mandir and for extending their complete support during the construction of the Mandir." He also said that two different designs were presented to the Crown Prince, one with the Mandir being enclosed within a building and one beautiful, open Mandir with sky high shikhars and fluttering dhaja. The crown Prince whole heartedly, chose the gigantic Mandir. He added that, "This Mandir is not just inspirational, generational but civilizational, bringing together two countries, two cultures, two communities and two religions. It will become 'a spiritual oasis for global harmony' in the middle of the desert."

Indian Ambassador to the UAE His Excellency Navdeep Suri addressed the assembly, "It is an absolute honor to be in the midst of this journey which happens only once in a millennium." He then read out a letter on behalf of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which said, "When complete, this Mandir will symbolize the universal human values, and spiritual ethos that form a shared heritage of both India and UAE.... UAE is celebrating the Year of Tolerance. This Mandir, is an expression by the United Arab Emirates, of their love, friendship and faith in India and the Indian community."

His Excellency Dr. Mugheer Khamis Al Khaili addressed the gathering: "It is my honor to stand here with you today to celebrate this day by laying the foundation of the Hindu Mandir. This constitutes a great relation between the two countries, nations and cultures. Our presence here today shows the really strong relationship between the two nations. This Mandir reflects the greatness of tolerance."

Dr. B.R. Shetty, Chairman of Mandir Ltd then thanked Sheikh Mohammed, Sheikh Nahyan, and Sheikh Zayed as well as the government and community for their whole-hearted support of the Mandir.

In conclusion, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj blessed the assembly, "Right now, peace, love and harmony are all over this campus. We cannot buy peace with money or intelligence. Peace comes to those who love peace. May goodness and peace spread further from here."

The event was meticulously planned by volunteers of all walks of life living within and outside of the UAE. Small children were seen serving the community by meticulously organizing shoes, women volunteers were helping with decorations, food distribution and ushering the public to the venue. Additionally, the contribution of youths from the UAE, US, UK and other countries illustrated the significance of this landmark community project and the spirit of service embedded within the BAPS fellowship.

After the conclusion of the ceremony and assembly, throughout the day over 17,000 devotees and well-wishers from numerous spiritual and social organizations, including Art of Living, Chinmay Mission, Jain Samaj, Dubai Gurudwara, Brahma Kumaris, Iskcon, Ayappa Samaj, Tamil Samaj and all others, visited to offer their respects and devotion.

This historic event was attended by devotees, volunteers and well-wishers from India, USA, UK, Europe, Japan, Africa, China, South East Asia, Australia and many other countries.

Essay 3

Vachanamrut: The Essential Scripture of the Philosophy, Strength and Effect of the Swaminarayan

Vachanamrut is the essential scripture of the spoken words of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, in which He talks about Swaminarayan Sampraday's satva- tatva (philosophy), samarthya (strength) and prabhaav (effect) to His devotees.

In Vachanamrut Loya, 14 by pointing out on His philosophical thinking, Bhagwan Swaminarayan says, "I do not agree with Shankar Swami's propagation of the non-dual Brahma. Ramanuja Swami describes Purushottam Bhagwan as transcending the Skhar (perishable) and the Akshar (imperishable), and I worship that Purushottam Bhagwan. My bhakti towards that Purushottam Bhagwan is like that of the Gopis, and the virtues of vairagya and atma-realization within Me are like Shukji's and Jadbharat's. These are My principles and preferences. The intelligent can realize this if they analyze My talks as well as the scriptures of our sampradaya which have been accepted by Me as authoritative."

In this and various other Vachanamruts, Shriji Maharaj has repeatedly debated on the swaroop of PurushottamBhagwan, on the distinction between Parbrahma and Brahma, on the nature of maya and on the Jivatma and Parmatma(God) with many points of view.

In VachanamrutG.I.1 Shriji Maharaj instructs on constantly engaging one's mind on the form of God, whereas in other Vachanamruts He says that by associating with Bhagwan, Satpurush, swadharma and scriptures, one is able to achieve the fruits of Satsang. He distinguishes between jiva, Ishwar, maya, brahma and Parbrahma through anvay and vyatikram philosophy (Sarangpur 5). He proclaims that one should not wish anything except pratyaksh Bhagwan, and that an ekantik bhakta must have atma nishta, priti, vairagya and swadharma. Maharaj also asserts that one who has attained satsang has the ability to have the darshan of his own soul.

Shriji Maharaj explains that, "For a person who has attained satsang, realization of his jivatma does, indeed, lie in his own hands. (G.I.20) He has said that Akshar has two forms. One is formless and, is known as Chidakash or Brahmamahol and in its other form, that Akshar remains in the service of Purushottam Narayan. A devotee who has attained the Akshardham possesses the qualities similar to those of Akshar and forever remains in the service of God (G.I.21). He mentions that a satsang must have gnan, vairagya and bhakti, be nirvasanic and have staunch nishchay to attain moksha. Satsangis can attain this by associating with a Satpurush that possesses noble attributes like nishkaam, nirlobh, nirmaan, niswaad and nissneh qualities and has the direct relationship with Bhagwan.

Shriji Maharaj also talks about pind (human body) and brahmand (universe) saying that whatever exists in this universe, also proportionally exists in our body too (G.I.65). He says that Bhagwan is always sakar and murtimaan in Akshardham and He simultaneously exists in infinite brahmands.

In Vachanamrut Shriji Maharaj has included the talks related to jiva, the world and Brahma. His philosophical and subtle vision is apparent. The depth and the broadness of his spiritual vision, his respectful nature and integrity directly affects us. He has first thoroughly studied and experienced the Shastra gnan (knowledge) before serving it to us. It shows how man can attain peace, happiness and strength through observance of nishkaam dharma and bhagawad bhakti.

Vachnamrut is the scripture of Shriji Maharaj's own spoken words. Shreeji Maharaj has used simple and understandable household analogies and illustrations to explain His talks. Since He is of a Brahmin origin from the North of India and a Sanskrit scholar, He has widely used Sanskrit words throughout the Vachnamrut. It is apparent from His word choice that Shriji Maharaj has spoken various dialects including Kathiyavadi dialect while delivering His messages.

In Vachnamrut Shriji Maharaj has used the multitude of complex and compound sentences that draws a great deal of attention. The manner in which His sentences are presented, are not in the way it is written, but more so in the way He has actually spoken them.

In order to simplify the Bhagavad-varta Shriji frequently uses household parables so his devotees can easily understand his talks. When Shriji Maharaj makes a statement saying that when one develops absolute faith in God and thoroughly understands His greatness, then all of his vicious thoughts are eliminated. For this he uses a household parable to explain this fact. He says that if one has sucked a lot of lemons, he is unable to chew even cooked rice because his teeth become extremely sensitive because of the sourness from the lemons. So similarly, when one develops sourness in the form of faith in God and fully understands His greatness, one's teeth in the form of the four antahkarans and ten indriyas - become sensitized. (G.I.24)

Shriji Maharaj's ability to deliver His discourses in an effective, and influential way are quite notable. In order to illustrate that the jiva is a distinct element different from the body, but not the body itself, Shriji Maharaj explains, "when the body clings to the jivatma, consider a person wearing a shirt (dagli) stitched by a tailor. That person then begins to believe that the tailor is my father and the tailor's wife is my mother. Such a person is considered a fool. In the same manner, the jivatma is given a dagli in the form of this body, may be born through a brahmin couple or a low-caste couple, or through any of the 8.4 million life forms. Therefore, a person who believes the body to be his true self and believes the parents of that body to be his own parents is called a fool and should be considered to be like an animal." (G.I.44) Similarly he has used many such illustrations throughout the Vachnamrut to make His discourses easy to understand by his devotees.

It is quite apparent that, Vachnamrut reveals Shriji Maharaj's popular personality and His eloquent speech (vaani) through and through in the entire scripture. Thus, Shriji Maharaj fulfills the instrumental principle of faith to understand the Swaminarayan sampradaya's philosophy (satva tatva), strength (samarthya), and effect (prabhav) through His essential scripture - the Vachnamrut.