Bochasanwasi Shri Aksharpurushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha Satsang Shikshan Pariksha

SATSANG PRAVIN-PAPER-1

Time: 9.00 to 12.00 p.m. Total Marks: 100 Sunday, 6 March, 2022

Note: 1. Answer of the prescribed edition only will be accepted. Any other answer from different addition will not be accepted. 2. Numbers of the right side indicate marks of question number. 3. Numbers in the brackets on the right side of the question heading indicate lesson number & page number.

Important Note Important Note In the question paper the marks of each sub-question should be written in the box (mark: 1) given on the right side and the marks, obtained by the

the box (mark:1) given on the right side and the marks obtained by the candidate should be written in the adjacent box. If the answer is wrong then write '0' (zero) in the given box. The sign or indication of true (\checkmark) or false (\checkmark) of each sub-question should be marked only on the left-side before the question starts.

Important Note 🖘

While checking the answers, when you come across lengthy answers i.e. shortnotes, reasons, brief answer in five sentence etc. Justify to the left side of the paper for any marks deducted. If the candidate has forgotten to mention any mentioned points then the examiner can deduct mark likewise and explain to the leftside of the paper that which point is not mentioned by candidate. For example there is question in March-2013, Pravesh paper-1, "Transformation of JobanPagi" JobanPagi said to Maharaj, 'Oh Lord, I am crooked worthless and foolish. I was unable to recognize you for who are you. Oh compassionate one! please have pity on me. Please free me from my sins.' If any point is not written then write "My sins" at left side.

(SECTION-1: Akshar Purushottam Upasana - 3rd Edition, May 2012

Q.1 Describe any ONE of the following and highlight its significance. (Total Marks: 4)

Note: 3 marks for incident, 1 mark for significance.

- 1. Malji Soni of Bhoyka identified Akshardham. (6/152-153)
- A. Once, on the full moon day of the month of Chaitra, Gunatitanand Swami had come to Vartal. The acharyas of both dioceses as well as senior sadgurus were present at the festival. In the assembly, Gopalanand Swami was seated on the platform. Next to him were seated Nityanand Swami, Shukanand Swami and Gunatitanand Swami. At that time Gopalanand Swami said to Malji Soni of Bhoyka, who had a high regard for him, 'Hadn't I told you that I would show you Akshardham? This Gunatitanand Swami is the incarnation of Akshardham. Maharaj has identified him as Akshardham. Make sure you recognize him thoroughly.'

Significance : Who himself recognises, can make others recognize. Gopalanand Swami was knowing Akshardham, so he could make others know about it. Malji Soni had affection and trust for Gopalanand Swami so he believed Swami and can recognize Akshardham.

- 2. Vagha Khachar felt the removal of all the sensual cravings. (6/148-149)
- **A.** To eradicate the **ignorance of the causal body**, Vagha Khachar of **Sarangpur** had Pravin-1

gone to Junagadh. Gunatitanand Swami had asked him to come to Junagadh and stay in his comapny. On his way to Junagadh, Bhagatji Maharaj told him that Swami was Mul Akshar. Vagha Khachar, however, could not accept this. Once in Junagadh, the devotees were clearing the ground of the mandir farm by removing stones and pebbles. All of them appeared extremely elated. Vagha Khachar thereupon asked Dama Sheth of Mahuva, 'Why do I not experience the joy which all of those devotees seem to be enjoying?' Dama Sheth replied, 'Have faith in Pragji Bhakta's words and know Swami as Mul Akshar; then you too will experience the same joy.' Vagha Khachar replied, 'Only if Swami himself says so, will I accept this.' In a short while, Gunatitanand Swami came there, attracted by Pragji Bhakta's intense concentration. Vagha Khachar asked him, 'Swami, Pragji says you are Mul Akshar personified. Please make it clear to me.' Gunatitanand Swami replied, 'What Pragji says is a fact.' With utter surprise, Vagha Khachar asked again, 'Swami, are you Akshar in person?' Gunatitanand Swami replied in the affirmative. Vagha Khachar was instantly convinced that Gunatitanand Swami was Mul Akshar and felt the removal of all the sensual cravings and experienced immense joy. Significance: It is extremely difficult to understand the true form of Aksharbrahman. If the Aksharbrahman himself graces the seeker, then only he can understand the form.

- 3. 'Wherever he is, I am there. And wherever I am, he is also there. (6/143-144)
- A. When Shriji Maharaj had made up his mind to return to his abode, he advised those sadhus and devotees who were emotionally attached to him and were likely to be affected by the seperation, to go on a pilgrimage of Gujarat. Gopalanand Swami submitted at that time, 'Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, the Mahant of Junagadh has come here. He is very much attached to you and is unlikely to bear your seperation. Ask him to return to Junagadh.' Shriji Maharaj listened. He then replied, 'Swami, Gunatitanand Swami is my gunatit Akshardham. How can I possibly send him away? Wherever he is, I am there. And wherever I am, he is also there. How can he ever be seperated from me?'

Significance : Brahman and Parabrahman have unity in such a way that they can't be seperated from each other.

Q.2 For any <u>TWO</u> of the following, give <u>THREE</u> references from the scriptures. (It is compulsory to write the reference scripture and number.) (Total Marks: 6)

Note: It is compulsory to write the reference scripture and number. In the reference shlok and translation is given. If the examinee has written any one from those reference then it should be given correct and marks should be given. One mark should be given for each reference.

(Note: In Ref. no. 1, 2 & 3, If examinee written any two of the below line than that Ref. should be given correct.)

- 1. Divyabhav Divine Attributes. (3/21-23)
- A. **Reference 1:** 'That God, also known as Parabrahman Purushottam, himself manifests on earth out of compassion, for the liberation of the jivas. When he manifests, all entities that he accepts become brahmarup. The three bodies, i.e., sthul, sukshma and karan; the three states, i.e., waking, dream and deep sleep; the ten indriyas; the five prans; etc. were all apparent in avatars such as Rama, Krishna, etc. Although all of them appear to be like those of ordinary humans, in reality, they are all brahman, not mayik.' (Gadhada I 71)

Reference 2: 'God's form is such that he is anvay within maya and yet, at the same time, he is vyatirek. God is not afraid, 'What if I enter maya and thereby become impure?' Instead, when God associated with maya, even maya becomes like Akshardham; and if he associates with the 24 elements, then they also become brahmarup.' (Vartal 7)

Reference 3: 'The phases of childhood, youth and old age apparent in God, as well as his birth and death are all perceived due to his yogic powers of creating an illusion. In reality, God remains absolutely unchanged. ...In this way, the manifest form of Purushottam Narayan is the cause of all; he is forever divine and has a form. One should not perceive any type of imperfections in that form - it is like a murti made of sakar. ...Furthermore, whichever human traits seem apparent in that God should be understood to be like the 'maya' of a magician. (**Panchala 7**)

Reference 4: 'Human attributes cannot be applied to God. With mortals, the body and the jiva are seperate and distinct. However, it is not so with God' (**Swamini Vato 4.40**) **Reference 5:** 'The human traits that are seen in God are like the magic of a magician' (**Swamini Vato 5.66**)

Reference 6: 'One who understands God's form as being composed of the elements is a sinner, and one who understands God's form as not being composed of the elements is also a sinner. Those who are devotees of God do not at all like to senselessly quibble over whether or not God's form is composed of the elements. A devotee realizes, 'God is God'. There is no scope for dividing or discarding any part of him' (Gadhada II 17) Reference 7: 'The divine form of Purushottam Bhagwan Vasudev is constantly present in that divine light. Through that divine form, he himself becomes visible to everyone and manifests on earth in human form for the purpose of granting liberation to the jivas. But the jivas on earth who are ignorant fools claim that God has mayik gunas within him. In reality, he does not have any mayik gunas within him. He is forever gunatit and has a divine form. Moreover, it is that very same God, who has a form and is divine, that the Vedanta shastras propound as being uncuttable, unpierceable, nirgun, and pervading everywhere. It is to dispel the mayik view from the mind of the jiva that He has been propounded as being nirgun. That God remains as he is during the time of creation, sustenance and dissolution of the cosmos; i.e., he does not undergo any changes like worldly objects do. He always maintains a divine form' (Kariyani 7)

Reference 8: 'That God's form is supremely divine - there is not even the slightest trance of human traits - manushyabhav - in God. Therefore, one should not perceive human traits in God, and one should instead initially view him as a deity; then one should view him as Brahma, etc.; then one should view him as Pradhan-Purush; then as Prakruti-Purush; then as Akshar; and finally as Purushottam - who transcends Akshar' (Lova 18)

Reference 9: 'Therefore, there is a great similariity between the form residing in the abode of God and this incarnate form of Shri Krishna. ...Thus, the same form that is in Akshardham - which is gunatit - is manifest. There is no difference between the two. Just as the form in the abode is gunatit, the human form is also gunatit' **(Gadhada III 31)**

2. Cosmic Evolution. (4/49-53)

A. Reference 1: 'From the Vedas, the Purans, the Itihas and the Smrutis, I have formed the principle that jiva, maya, ishwar, Brahman and Parabrahman are all eternal. Consider it as follows: Maya represents the soil; the jivas represent the seeds in the soil, and ishwar - in the form of Purush - unites with maya. Subsequently, just as the seeds in the soil sprout by the association of rainwater, similarly, the jivas, which are eternal, arises from within maya; but new jivas are not created. Therefore, just as ishwar is eternal, maya is also eternal. The jivas residing in maya are also eternal, and they are not components of God; they are always jivas. When a jiva seeks the refuge of God, it overcomes God's maya, becomes brahmarup like Narad and the Sanakadik, attains the abode of God, and becomes his attendant. This is my principle' (Gadhada III 10)

Reference 2: 'Following the dissolution of the brahmands, it is only this incarnate God who remains. Also, it is this same God who, at the time of creation, creates countless millions of brahmands through Prakruti and Purush' (**Gadhada I 56**)

Reference 3: Tadaikshata bahu syam prajayeyeti. (Chandogya Upanishad 4.2.3)

Reference 4: 'At the time of creation, Purushottam Bhagwan - who transcends even Akshar - inspires Akshar. As a result, Purush manifests from Akshar. After entering Akshar, Purushottam enters Purush, and in the form of Purush, inspires Prakruti. In this way, as Purushottam successively entered the various entities, the activities of creation took place. Thereafter, Pradhan-Purushes were produced from Prakruti-Purush. From Pradhan-Purush, mahattattva was produced. From ahamkar, the bhutas, the vishays, the indriyas, the antahkarans and their presiding deities were produced. From those, Virat-Purush was produced. From the lotus extending from his naval, Brahma was produced. From that Brahma, Marichi and other prajapatis were produced. From them, Kashyap and other prajapatis were produced. From them, Indra and other deities, the demons, and all of the mobile and immobile creation were produced' (Gadhada I 41)

Reference 5: 'That Purush is desireless, he is a mukta, he is brahmarup and he is the cause of maya. Although he stays within maya, he still remains unaffected by maya. Also, he has no desire to enjoy maya since he is content due to the bliss of Brahman; thus, he is fulfilled' **(Gadhada II 31)**

Reference 6: 'Just as there is a difference between the jiva and Virat-Purush, who is an ishwar; and just as there is also a difference between ishwar and Purush, similarly, there is an immense difference between Purush and Vasudev Bhagwan - Purushottam. Purushottam Vasudev Bhagwan is the master of all, whereas there are many such brahmarup, Akshar-like Purushes who worship the holy feet of Vasudev and who offer praise to him. ...I have explained this fact in this way many times, but it is not a result, after listening to the words of the shastras, no stability remains in one's understanding' **(Gadhada II 31)**

Reference 7: Sadguru Premanand Swami has written in his kirtan, 'Bolya Shri Hari re...' Jiva ishwar tano re, maya kala Purush Pradhan, Saune vash karu re, sauno prerak hu Bhagwan. Aganit vishvani re, utpatti palan pralay thay, Mari marji vina re, koithi taranu nav today. **(Sadguru Premanand Swami)**

- 3. Aksharbrahman: As Divine, Personal and Sakar. (6/128-129)
- A. Reference 1: 'In its other form, that Akshar remains in the service of Purushottam Narayan.' (Gadhada I 21)

Reference 2: Murtam tatrasti Krishnasya sevayam divyavigraham : The divine personal form of Aksharbrahman is always there in Akshardham serving Purushottam. **(Harivakyasudhasindhu 21-22)**

Reference 3: 'The incarnate (sakar) Aksharbrahman is divine, has a human-like form endowed with two hands and two feet, is strikingly attractive and is always engaged in the devotion and servitude of his master - Purushottam Narayan - who is even more attractive than him.' (**Harivakyasudhasindhu 21-22**)

Reference 4: 'In his divine Akshardham, God is being served with utter dedication as per his wishes by countless muktas - who have attained the qualities of Aksharbrahman - and also by the personal form of Aksharbrahman' (**Harivakyasudhasindhu 159-5**)

Reference 5: 'As Aksharbrahman is the chief attendent of Purushottam Narayan, he has a divine of Purushottam Narayan, he has a divine and extremely attractive sakar human-like form with beautiful features.' **(Harivakyasudhasindhu 159-5)**

- Q.3 Given below are references from the scriptures, principles or stanzas. Write the topic they relate to. (Total Marks: 5)
 - 1. Pragat praman Haribina prani, kyu jaha taha bhatakanta hai. (5/92)
 - A. Deficiencies resulting from not realizing the pragat form of God.
 - 2. Koti Krishna jode hath, koti Vishnu name math. (6/141)
 - A. Gunatitanand Swami is Akshar: In the words of Shriji Maharaj.

- **3.** Aksharbrahman is also described in its distinct form as Satchidanand which transcends all. (6/125)
- A. The form of Aksharbrahman.
- 4. E vina rakhe jnani gano, jene Hari nayane nathi dekhiya. (5/80)
- A. True knowledge is recognizing the pragat form of God.
- 5. Whoever desires to attain liberation should serve such a Sant. (5/101)
- A. Characteristics of the Gunatit Sadhu.
- Q.4 From the given options, place a tick () in the box next to the correct options. (Total Marks: 4)

Note: One or more options may be correct. Full marks will be awarded only if all the correct options are chosen, otherwise no marks will be awarded.

1. 2, 4 (6/121-122)

2. 1, 3 (6/157-158)

Q.5 Write briefly on any <u>TWO</u> of the following. (In 12 lines each.) (Total Marks: 8)

Note: (1) If the reference is not given by the examinee related to Vachanamrut, Swami Vato or any other scriptures but the explanation is written correctly than it should be considered. (2) The reference should be written according to the distribution of marks. It is not necessary to quote all incidents.

- 1. Glory of the Gunatit Sadhu: In the Bhajans of the Paramhansas. (5/107-110)
- **A.** Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami has eulogized such a great Ekantik Sadhu in Purushottam Prakash, Bhaktachintamani, Chosath Padi and in many of his kirtans. He has written in Purushottam Prakash:

Sant bole re bhelo hu bolu re, Sant na bhule hu ye na bhulu re; Sant vat bheli karu vat re, em Santma chhau sakshat re. Sant juve te bhelo hu jou re, Sant suta pachhi hu sou re; Sant jage te bhelo hu jagu re, Sant joi ati anuragu re. Sant jame te bhelo hu jamu re, Sant bhame te kedye hu bhamu re; Sant dukhane hu dukhano re, eh vat satya jan jano re. Sant hu ne hu te vali Sant re, em Shri mukhe kahe Bhagwant re; Sant manajo mari murti re, ema fer nathi ek rati re. (**Purushottam Prakash 41.6-9**)

Eva Sant jamye Shyam, jamya sahu devata; Jamya sarve lok sarve dham, sahu thaya truptata. Eva Sant malye malya Swami, khami koye na rahi; Kahe Nishkulanand shish nami, sachi sahune kahi. **(Chosath Padi 3)**

Sant krupae sukh upaje, Sant krupathi sare kam; Sant krupathi pamie, Puran Purushottam dham. Sant krupathi sadmati jage, Sant krupathi sadguna; Sant krupa vina sadhuta, kahone pamya kuna. Sant sevya tene sarva sevya, sevya Shri Hari Bhagwan; Rushi muni sevya devata, jene Sant karya raji man. Kamadugha kalpataru, paras chintamani char; Sant saman eke nahi, me manma karyo vichar. (Bhaktachintamani 2)

Dhanya dhanya e sant sujanane, jenu ulati palatyu ap, Sant te swayam Hari. Ap tali malya Bhagwanma, jena apma Harino vyap, Sant te swayam Hari.

Sadguru Muktanand Swami says: (1) Aise mere jan Ekantik, tehi sam aur na koi; Muktanand kahat yu Mohan, mero hi sarvasva soi. (2) Muktanand maha Santne, Prabhu pragat pase re; Anubhavine antare rahe Rama vase re. Sadguru Brahmanand Swami says: Brahmanand kahe Santki sobat, milat he Pragat Murari, Jagatmahi Sant param hitkari. Sadguru Premanand Swami writes: Athe pahor anand jena angma, rame Govind eva Santna re sangma; Eva Sant Harine pyara re, Tethi ghadie na rahe Valo nyara re. Eva Santni balihari re, Jene gune rijhya Giradhari re.

- 2. Importance of Upasana. (1/2-3)
- **A.** All aspirants are striving to attain brahmabhav through vrat, tapa, yagna, dan and satsang. By such religious activities, followers on the spiritual path aspire to attain moksha and thus liberation from the cycles of birth and death. To achieve this, upasana

is absoutely indispensable. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, known to his followers as Shriji Maharaj or simply Maharaj, states in the Vachanamrut, 'Many people become realized yogis, many become omniscient, many become deities, and thus attain countless types of greatness, including the highest state of enlightenment. All this is achieved through the force of the upasana of God. Without upasana, though, nothing can be accomplished. ... Therefore, forsaking one's dependence on the strength of other spiritual endeavours, one should rely exclusively on the strength of God's upasana' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 56) Shriji Maharaj is emphatic about the impossibility of achieving atmainan or brahmainan in the absence of upasana. He says, 'Only through upasana can the atma and Brahman be seen; without it, they cannot be seen. In fact, wishing to see the atma and Brahman without upasana is like attempting to lick the sky with one's tongue; even if one tries for a hundred years, one will never be able to taste it as sour or salty. Similarly, the atma and Brahman simply cannot be seen without the upasana of the form of God- regardless of the efforts one may resort to. Furthermore, the shastras mentioning of the possibility of atma-realization through nirbij Sankhya and Yoga is irrevelant - I have not seen anyone do so, nor is the claim in accordance with my experience. Therefore, the claim is false' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 36). Shriji Maharaj also says, 'Death, however, is like an ocean. In that case, both a person with atma-realization and a person without it require the help of a ship in the form of faith in God. Therefore, only the firm refuge of God is helpful at the time of death, whereas atma-realization alone is of no use whatsoever at the time of death. For this reason, one should firmly cultivate faith in God' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 61). Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami says, 'Moksha - ultimate liberation - can be attained only through upasana. (Swamini Vato 5.135) Furthermore, Swami says, 'Our greatness is due to upasana. Even if one falters in observing dharma or other spiritual endeavours, if upasana is firm, the jiva will not flounder' (Swamini Vato 5.70). Swami also says, 'Even if one encounters intense misery like the final destruction of the world, one who has firmly developed the upasana of God understands that the body will die one day and we will go to God's abode. With this understanding one remains happy' (Swamini Vato 1.56).

3. How is God Sakar? (3/15-17)

Shriji Maharaj has logically explained how God must be sakar and not nirkar. He ex-Α. plains that God is the creator of the moveable and immoveable world. If, however, he is formless, how could he possibly create an earth with a form? Shriji Maharaj says, 'God is not formless. Why? Because it is through God that everything mobile and immobile is created. Now, if God were formless, then how would he create something that possesses a form? For example, akash is formless. Therefore, pots and other forms that can be created from pruthyi cannot be created from that akash. In the same manner, since Brahma and the rest of creation possess a form, God - their creator - also definitely possesses a form (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 10). Reiterating this point, Shriji Maharaj says, 'God eternally possesses a form' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 35). 'He eternally has a form. If he did not have a form, he could not be called the alldoer' (Vachanamrut, Panchala 1). 'God, thus possessing a form is also the all-doer, since that which is formless can accomplish nothing' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 39). Explaining the same point in a different way, Maharaj says, 'Purushottam Bhagwan eternally possesses a form, and that form is extremely luminous. His perfect, all-pervasive antaryami form - Brahman, characterised by eternal existence, consciousness and bliss - is actually the divine light of Purushottam Bhagwan, but he himself possesses a definite form. The Shrutis also mention, 'That God looked towards maya.' Now if God sees, does that mean that he has only a pair of eyes and nothing else? In reality, he does have hands and feet. This proves that he possesses a form. Take the example of water. Its corresponding deity, Varun, possesses a form in his own realm,

while water itself is described as formless. Also, the flames of a fire are described as formless, while their corresponding deity, Agni, possesses a form in his realm. Sunlight is also described as being formless, while suryadev, who resides in his realm possesses a from similarly, Brahman - characterised by eternal existence, consciousness and bliss - is formless, while Purushottam Bhagwan possesses a form. Furthermore, that all-pervasive, perfect Brahman, with the attributes of eternal existance, consciousness and bliss, is the divine light of Purushottam Bhagwan. Someone may claim that the Shrutis propound, 'God is all-pervasive and perfect, without hands, feet, etc.' But those Vedic verses that refute the hands, feet, ect., of God are actually refuting mayik hands, feet, etc. In reality, God's form is divine, not mayik. Moreover, despite the fact that Purushottam Bhagwan's brahmarup light, which pervades all jivas and ishwars as their antaryami, is formless, it should be so considered to possess a form. This is because it governs the granting of the deserved fruits of karmas to all jivas and ishwars according to their respective karmas. This power of governing makes it function as if it possesses a form. Thus, that divine light should be considered to possess a form as well. In the same manner, Purushottam Bhagwan always possesses a form; he is not formless. Those who do believe him to be formless just do not understand' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 45). Emphasizing God's divine form, Shriji Maharaj elaborates, 'On the other hand, an ekantik bhakta realizes, 'When the shastras describe God as being formless and nirgun, they are referring to the fact that he does not possess a mayik form or mayik attributes. In reality, his form is forever divine, and he possesses countless redemptive virtues. There is also a reference to God being an immense mass of divine light. However, if there is no form, then there can be no light either; therefore, that light must definitely be from that form. ...In the same way, having the intensity of a million suns, the divine light, which is like brahmasatta, is the light of the form of Purushottam Bhagwan. ... Therefore, regardless of which shastras are being read, if they describe God as being 'nirgun', one should realize that they are merely extolling the glory of God's form; but in fact, God always possesses a definite form' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada I 66).

Q.6 Explain any <u>TWO</u> of the following, giving reasons. (In 12 lines each.) (Total Marks: 8)

Note: Give marks even if the examinee has written in narration form only and not given the references of Vachanamrut, Swamini-Vato and other scriptures.

Shriji Maharaj initiated 500 aspirants as paramhansas in a single night. (4/61-62)
When Shriji Maharaj was only 23 years old, he initiated 500 aspirants as paramhansas in a single night, many of whom were senior in age, great scholars, and extremely brilliant. This incidnt illustrates his majestic awe, enchanting personality, and his boundless

energy. These paramhansas were no ordinary people. Many were experts in literature, music, sculpture painting, dance and other fields; others were erudite and affluent. What was the charisma of this young man that the Paramhansas renounced their homes, families, wealth, status and their fixed notions of caste to fall at his lotus feet? This single act of Maharaj is in itself an eloquent testimony of his divine supremacy.

- 2. Parabrahman Purushottam is the cause of all. (2/4-5)
- A. Parabrahman Paramatma is sarva karta the all-doer. Unless willed by him, nobody can move even a dry leaf. He gives all living beings the fruits of their karmas actions. Though he does not play an immediate role in creating, sustaining or dissolving the universe, he is the ultimate cause of all causes. Antah pravishtaha shasta jananam sarvatma. Dwelling within the atma of all the jivas, God controls them. (Taittiriyaranyakam 3.11) In the way God governs all living beings, he also governs the deities and supervises their actions, controlling them according to his will. By his ichchhashakti, kriyashakti and jnanshakti, he inspires the appropriate shakti in the jivas. God has the

power to absorb maya. And even while supporting Akshar, he has the power to absorb Akshar. God possesses kartum, akartum and anyathakartum shakti. A dedicated seeker should therefore realize God as the all-doer and seek refuge in him. Shriji Maharaj has said, 'God, who is the cause of all, appears like a human being; yet by his yogic powers, he is able to create countless millions of brahmands from his body and is able to absorb them bac into himself. ...So, one who is wise realizes, 'God appears like a human, but, in fact, he is the cause of all and the creator of all; he is all-powerful' (Vachanamrut, Loya 2). 'In the same way, the factors of place, time, karma and maya can only do as much as God allows them to do; they cannot do a single thing against the wish of God. Therefore, only God is the all-doer' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 21).

3. Shriji Maharaj's manifestation on earth was for higher mission than the other incarnations. (4/40-41)

- A. In the old manuscripts written during his own lifetime, Maharaj reveals, 'The earlier incarnations had a specific cause for a particular end. But my incarnation is to make the jivas brahmaruo and allow them to attain ultimate liberation. For this noble mission, I Purushottam beyond even Akshar, have assumed human form.' Shri Krishna and other incarnations manifest to serve a specific purpose, such as defeating the demons. Having accomplished their mission, they departed from the world. But Bhagwan Swaminarayan incarnated to make the jivas brahmarup and to grant them ultimate liberation, thereby ensuring permanent liberation from the cycles of birth and death. Shriji Maharaj clearly mentions his supremacy in the Vachanamrut,
 - (1) 'It is that same supreme Purushottam Bhagwan who manifests on this earth out of compassion for the purpose of granting liberation to the jivas. He is presently visible before everyone; he is your Ishtadev; and he accepts your service. In fact, there is absolutely no difference between the manifest form of Purushottam Bhagwan visible before you and the form of God residing in Akshardham; i.e., both are one. Moreover, this manifest form of Purushottam Bhagwan is the controller of all, including Akshar. He is the lord of all of the ishwars and the cause of all causes. He reigns supreme, and he is the cause of all of the avatars. Moreover, he is worthy of being woshipped single-mindedly by all of you. The many previous avatars of this God are worthy of being bowed down to and worthy of reverence' (Vachanamrut, Gadhada III 38).
 - (2) 'That uniform divine light is referred to as the atma, or Brahman or Akshardham. The form of God within that light is called the essence of the atma, Parabrahman or Purushottam. ...Realize that the form amidst the divine light is this Maharaj visible before you' (Vachanmrut, Gadhada II 13).
 - (3) 'All of the avatars of God manifest from the very God that is present in this Satsang fellowship. That is to say, he is the cause of all of the avatars and is the antaryami of all. It is he who, in Akshardham, is radiant, full of countless powers and eternally has a form. He is also the lord of all of the lords of the countless brahmands; he is even the cause of Aksharbrahman' (Vachanamrut, Ahmedabad 6).

These words of Shriji Maharaj clearly explain the importance of firm faith in his supreme form. It is imperative for all seekers of liberation to develop such faith.

Q.7 Complete the following statements based on summary. (Total Marks: 7) Upasana: What to understand?

- 1. The form, qualities, powers, etc. of Aksharbrahman are dependent only on Parabrahman. And by the eternal wish of Parabrahman, it is the cause, support, controller and shariri of all of jad creation and chaitanya forms and pervades them. (11) (170)
- 2. In this succession of Aksharbrahman gurus, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj have appeared. This succession continues forever. At any one time, the path of ultimate liberation remains open through only one guru. (16) (171)
- 3. Parabrahman Purushottam Narayan is imperceptible by the mayik indrivas and antah-

karan. While still remaining in Akshardham, by his own divine wish and out of compassion, for the ultimate liberation of infinite jivas and ishwars and to fulfil the wishes of his devotees, he manifests with all his divine virtues, powers, etc., in human form in each brahmand and becomes visible to all. (6) (169)

4. Parabrahman is forever naturally replete with infinite liberating virtues and devoid of mayik qualities. He is free of all faults, forever possesses all powers, is all-knowing, and is the all-doer and destroyer. He is the material and efficient cause of all creation. (4) (169)

Upasana: What not to understand?

- 5. Aksharbrahman as the personal attendent is not murtiman. Aksharbrahman is only formless, is merely the abode or is only divine light. (10) (174)
- 6. It is possible to become brahmarup or ekantik through the refuge of the mandir murtis or shastras without resorting to Parabrahman Paramatma or a God-realized Gunatit Sadhu. (13) (174-175)
- 7. When God manifests on earth, he does not remain in his abode, i.e., his abode becomes vacant during that period. (2) (174)
- Q.8 Write a short note on 'Shriji Maharaj's supremacy: As Explained by Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami' (4/63-65) (Total Marks: 5)

Note: Minumum three example should be written.

The inspiring words of Aksharbrahman Gunatitanand Swami acted as a catalyst in propagating the correct understanding of Shriji Maharaj's supremacy in Satsang. In the absence of such understanding, it is not possible to transcend the dense darkness of maya. Precisely for this reason, Shriji Maharaj appeared to Sadguru Gopalanand Swami in a dream in Umreth and told him, 'Spread the knowledge of my supremacy as Purushottam; otherwise, I will keep you in this human body for a thousand years.' (1) Whenever Sadguru Gopalanand Swami explained the distinction between avatars and their ultimate cause, avatari, Mota Atmanand Swami, who was senior age, used to remark, 'Boy! Do not indulge in comparisons of God.' Gopalanand Swami used to reply with a smile, 'Swami, today you may not understand what I am saying, but in the future, some sadhu will come and explain this truth to you.' When Atmanand Swami reached the age of 116, he wondered, 'I have no desires yet why has Maharaj still not come to take me to his divine abode of Akshardham?' At that time, he mat Gunatitanand Swami who recalled various incidents wherein Shriji Maharaj had told Atmanand Swami in person about his supremacy. Gunatitanand Swami emphasized the importance of understanding the supreme upasana. As a result of these talks, imperfections in Atmanand Swami's knowledge of upasana were removed, following which Maharaj took him to Akshardham. Thus, many a senior sadhu had the benefit of such talks given by Gunatitanand Swami. (2) While bathing, Sadguru Muktanand Swami used to recite the names of various places of pilgrimage. Through Shatanand Swami, a disciple of Muktanand Swami, Gunatitanand Swami said, 'The name of Swaminarayan is supreme and its chanting covers all the holy places.' Muktanand Swami soon realized this and duly corrected his recitation. (3) Whenever Sadguru Premanand Swami stayed in Junagadh, he often sang devotional songs narrating the pastimes of Shri Krishna. Gunatitanand Swami often reminded him, 'Swami, this body will not stay too long. Therefore, leave aside the pastimes of Krishna and contemplate on the pastimes of Shriji Maharaj.' (4) Only when Gunatitanand Swami explained Vachanamrut, Gadhada II 9 to Sadguru Shukanand Swami did the latter realize the divine supremacy of Shriji Maharaj. At that time Shukanand Swami commented, 'I myself edited this particular Vachanamrut and was instrumental in its selection, but only today have I grasped its true meaning.' (5) In the propagation of the supreme form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Gunatitanand Swami was never deterred by scriptural dogmatism. About those who indulged in such fanaticism, he remarked, 'The jiva does not hesitate anywhere, but hesitates in describing Maharaj as Purushottam.' Leading paramhansas had also seen and heard about the pastimes of Shriji Maharaj. Yet they were hesitant in writing about his true glory. In connection to this, Swami said, 'People have been confused by the words of the shastras, so when we continuously bombard like this, it will clear up the confusion.' So saying, he placed three champa flowers on Acharya Raghuvirji Maharaj's cushion and added, 'Some have reached upto this first flower, others have reached upon this second flower, but no one has reached upto this last flower' (Swamini Vato 3.19) In another words, some understood Shriji Maharaj as similar to Ramchandraji. They had reached the first flower. Others who recognized Maharaj as Shri Krishna had reached the second flower. But no one realized Shriji Maharaj as he was - supreme, the ultimate avatari of all avatars, Purushottam - to reach the third flower. To inculcate this understanding to the jivas, Gunatitanand Swami handed over the third flower to Achintyanand Brahmachari and instructed him to compose a unique text describing Shriji Maharaj's sublime form and reflecting his divine glory in every word, so that the supremacy of Shriji Maharaj could be propagated in Satsang. Abiding by Gunatitanand Swami's directive, Achintyanand Brahmachari composed a monumental volume in Sanskrit known as Harililakalpataru, which described the supreme glory of Maharaj. Thus, Gunatitanand Swami not only spread the knowledge of Shriji Maharaj's supremacy through his talks, but also had it noted in the religious literature of the Sampradaya through his disciples. There are many such incidents prevalent in the Sampradaya which have been propagated by prominent sadgurus. We have also come to know about them through the hierarchy of spiritual gurus. The constraints of space do not allow further narration of such incidents. The constraints of space do not allow further narration of such incidents. A clearer understanding will be gained by studying the literature of the Sampradaya.

Section 2: Satsang Reader Part 3, 5th Edition, June 2015 & Portrait of Inspiration - Pramukh Swami Maharaj, 2nd Edition, April. 2011

Q.9 In the sentences below, state who is speaking to whom and when. (Total Marks: 9)

Note: Who is speaking 1 mark, to whom 1 mark and when 1 mark.

- 1. "The first sadhu who met us was Ramanand Swami." (3/37)
- ⇒ Shriji Maharaj Lalji Bhakta
- ➡ When Lalji Bhakta inquired about the persons who had met them on the way to Kutch, Maharaj replied this.
- 2. "Forty years ago, when I was on my way to Kashi." (2/17-18)
- ⇒ When Mukunddas asked him to guide for observing brahmacharya, he said this.
- 3. "A witness to all our actions." (5/4)
- ⇒ Swamishri Jomo Kenyatta
- On seeing the murti of Harikrishna Maharaj, Kenyatta said, 'It's a symbol like the cross worn by Christians.'
- Q.10 Answer <u>ALL</u> of the following, using one sentence (not just one word) for each answer. (Total Marks: 5)

Note: No mark for incomplete answer.

- 1. Where did Maharaj ask Kushalkunvarba to accommodate Jivuba in Dharampur? Why? (5/58)
- A. Maharaj asked Kushalkunvarba to accommodate Jivuba in her own quarters and keep her constant company.
- 2. What does Nishkulanand Swami's verses contain in particular? (3/42)
- A. Nishkulanand Swami's verses contain, in particular, an excellent treatment of topics like the nature of the glory of a God-realized Sadhu.

- 3. What did Muktanand Swami eat with the young sadhus? (2/27)
- A. Muktanand Swami eat stale loaves with the young sadhus.
- 4. How can world peace be possible? (31/41)
- A. Peace can be established if one follows dharma and develops mutual tolerance.
- 5. What did Swamishri ask the Rajputs of Kukad and Odarka to abstain from? (27/33)
- A. Swamishri asked to abstain from drinking liquor to the Rajputs of Kukad and Odarka.
- Q.11 From the given options, place a tick (✓) in the box next to the correct options. (Total Marks: 8)

Note: One or more options may be correct. Full marks will be awarded only if all the correct options are chosen, otherwise no marks will be awarded.

- **1. 2, 4** (2/29)
- **2. 2, 3** (6/66)
- **3. 1, 4** (8/7)
- **4. 1, 3** (26/31)
- Q.12 Give reasons for the following. (In 9 lines each.) (Total Marks: 8)

Note: Only main points are mention here. Examinee should write it briefly.

- 1. Raghuvirji Maharaj's complexes melted away. (4/49-50) OR
- A. After becoming widower, Raghuvirji Maharaj resolved to observe total celibacy inspired by Swami. However, he was restless at heart with a thought that unless all the complexes melt away, real happiness was difficult to obtain. It so happened during those days that he and Swami were travelling together in a coach. When he offered sweets to Swami, Swami remarked, 'Five hundred paramhansas are holding me by my throat and telling me, 'It is poison, don't eat it.' Hearing this, Raghuvirji Maharaj said, 'If you behave like this, what will be our plight?' Swami replied, 'Hand over the seat to Bhagvatprasadji Maharaj, become a pilgrim and come to Junagadh. I should not be addressed as Gunatitanand if I do not melt away your complexes.' Therefore, he went to Junagadh every year to remain in the company of Swami. Thereafter, in the Samvat year 1917, Acharya Maharai handed over the seat to Bhagvatprasadji Maharaj, and reached Junagadh on foot with only one attendent. Here his routine was to attend the holy story session after mangala arti. After shangar arti he would return to his lodging, quickly cook khichdi or chapatti and dal and then return to the session once again. At the time of raibhog arti, he would go back for lunch. In the afternoon he avoided siesta and attended the discourses session. In this way, as he remained faithfully in the company of Swami, discarding indolence, sleep and, taste. Swami melted away his complexes and made him gunatit, too.
- 2. Khushal Bhagat's mother found a jari garment and a foot ornament. (1/2)
- A. One morning when the pujari of famous Shamalaji Mandir opened the door of the mandir shrines, he was shocked to find that the murti of Shamalaji was missing from its sacred throne. He closed the doors and ran to call others to the spot. When the door was opened again everyone saw that the murti was in its place. The pujari was perplexed when he again saw this. The other people suspected that the pujari had something to hide. They examined the clothes and ornaments of the murti and found that one jari garment and one foot ornament were missing. They charged the pujari with theft and began to scold him. Suddenly, a voice came from the murti, 'The pujari is not at fault. I go everyday to Todla to play with one of my devotees, Khushal Bhagat. Today, the pujari opened the inner mandir before the scheduled time so, I had to hurry back. As a result, I dropped one of my garments and ornaments on the way. If you go there you'll find them there.' On hearing this everyone was surprised.

Khushal Bhagat's mother, while sweeping her compound, found a jari garment and a foot ornament in the courtyard.

- 3. Mayor Wilkinson from Ashton became anxious. (12/12). OR
- A. In 1977, the devotees of Ashton-U-Lyne in England had made grand preparations for a procession to welcome Swamishri. Mr. Wilkinson who himself was acquinted with the nature and habits of horses saw that the national prizewinning racehorse named Jacob was arranged to pull the decorated buggy. It will go wild once the marching band play music. On seeing the spirited horse, he drew the attention of C. T. Patel. But the devout C.T.Patel said, 'Swamishri will take care of it, because he has the power to control and calm anyone and any situation. Once he sits in the chariot, everything will be all right.' Mr. Wilkinson did not expect such an answer. During that time Swamishri arrived and before anyone could decide upon anything, Swamishri sat in the buggy. Mr. Wilkinson became anxious but the horse became calm. Throughout the entire procession the horse trotted tamely.
- 4. Mangal was opened a new chapter and a fresh dawn in his life. (23/27-28)
- A. In Bhimpura, Swamishri asked a middle-aged man smoking in the open his name and inquired about his addictions at 11:30 p.m. Swamishri explained him that smoking is worthless and it will spoil your health. It is not for you, therefore give it up and you'll be happy. It has devastating effects on your health and money. His both sons were having addictions of drinking. Swamishri told him to bring both sons in the morning. Next morning, he blessed Mangal with two pats on his shoulder and inspired him to take an oath. Mangal with his two sons also gave up their addictions and started doing daily puja after their morning bath. Swamishri's selfless love has the power to transform people's lives. For Mangal, the divine dialogue of care and love at midnight opened a new chapter and a fresh dawn in his life; and that of his sons, too.
- Q. 13 Answer the following concisely. (12 lines each.) (Total Marks: 8)

Note: Only main points are mention here. Examinee should write it briefly.

- 1. Gopalanand Swami's staunch detachment and renunciation. (1/8-9) OR
- A. Since Swami had mastered ashtanga yoga his body was slim and delicate. But his enthusiasm for observing austerities had not at all diminished. Once a devotee presented a silken dhoti to him and affectionately insisted that Swami should wear it till it tore. Swami devised a plan so that he did not disappoint the devotee, and at the same time, obeyed Maharaj's orders. He tied the dhoti so tightly that as he was about to sit it was torn. He changed it immediately. In this way, he respected the wish of Maharaj for not donning a silken or embroidered cloth. He never consumed milk, ghee or fried foods. He ate chapattis without spreading ghee on them. Often, he offered his own share of ghee to the fire deity. As a result of this his body was weak. To look after his health so that the devotees would benefit, Gunatitanand Swami told him, 'Swami, you are now aged, so please spread some ghee on the chapattis you eat.' Swami did not wish to do so. However, Gunatitanand Swami once gave him a chapatti with ghee spread on it. At Gunatitanand Swami's affectionate insistence, Swami ate it, but then said, 'Now I'll no longer be able to talk on detachment and renunciation. From now onwards, you talk on these topics.' Such was his determination to practice.
- 2. I feel that satsang is no longer predominant in your heart. (7/73)
- A. One day, Swami invited Shivlalbhai to join him in the cart and said, 'You think that

you done something great because you sponsored the murti consecration ceremony at Gadhada and invited Raghuvirji Maharaj to Bhavnagar. But when I look at your jiva, I feel that satsnag is no longer predominant in your heart.' The reason for was that due to some bad company Shivlalbhai had developed an ego of his business skills, and had a slight doubt in Swami's divinity. But Swami could sense his feelings and spoke the above words and also added, 'To abondon such a sadhu and to wish for happiness is like the calf who seperated from its mother and went to the cowshed to drink more milk. But the bulls were there, so wherever it tried to poke its face it got a kick and consequently, its face became swollen. When its mother returned from grazing, the calf could not suck milk due to its swollen face. Similarly, those who abandon such a sadhu and seek happiness elsewhere will get a kick because there will be a lapse in the worship and obeying of orders, and then it will be impossible to sit near the sadhu, just as the calf could not suck milk from its mother.' Swami further added, 'Such talks delivered continuously for two months would enable you to attach yourself to God as before, and thus overcome the spiritual degeneration.'

- 3. The tranforming, auspicious moment for the thief. (20/22-23) OR
- A. In Trichinapalli, A thief was hidden in the water tank in Swamishri's guesthouse. People were searching him. With the help of Ramcharan Swami, Swamishri helped out the thief out of the tank and gave him water to drink. Swamishri told Ramcharan Swami that, 'Don't let him go out. The angry crowd is waiting to beat him up.' Then Swamishri spoke to the thief, 'Look brother, What's the point in making a living by stealing? Why not work hard for yourself! God has given you hands and feet, so why not use them to work honestly. Go knows everything, because he resides within you. He will bless you with his grace.' It was a transforming, auspicious moment for him. The thief bowed thnakfully at Swamishri's feet, and Swamishri, in turn, blessed him.
- 4. Swamishri in barefoot in the hot sun. (18/20)
- A. It was the height of the Indian summer. A devotee entered the Akshar Purushottam Chhatralay one hot afternoon in Vidyanagar to get his brand new truck sanctified by Swamishri. At his request, Swamishri came out of his residence, placed Thakorji in his truck and performed the rituals of sanctification. Then, instead of returning to his residence, Swamishri proceeded towards Sadhujivan Swami, who was standing in the sun. On reaching him, Swamishri asked with love and care, 'Don't you wear shoes?' 'No Bapa,' Sadhujivan Swami replied. On learning that Sadhujivan Swami had vowed not to use any footwear out of austerity, Swamishri removed his own shoes and compassionately said, 'Here, wear these. From now onwards wear either shoes or slippers that suit you.' Sadhujivan Swami refused to wear Swamishri's shoes, and on seeing him barefooted in the hot sun he begged Swamishri to take his shoes back. As Swamishri returned to his residence, Sadhujivan Swami reflected upon Swamishri's profound love and empathy for him.

(SECTION-3: ESSAY)

Q.14 Write an essay on any <u>ONE</u> of the following. (In approximately 60 lines.) (Total Marks: 15)

Note: Essay is an independent original subject. In addition to following points many other point might be included. Examiner has to examin essay on the basis of originality, knowledge of sampraday, special analysis and point from any other scriptures.

1. Pramukh Swami Maharaj's Divinity (Written By: Pujya Sadhu Bhaktipriyadas (Kothari Swami)

When I was associated with Brahmaswarup Yogiji Maharaj I had the firm belief that only he could attract the attention of youths by befriending them and inspiring them to follow the path of moral conduct and bhakti. This was a role which no one else in the entire world could play.

Before Yogiji Maharaj returned to Akshardham he had declared that Pramukh Swami was the form of Shastriji Maharaj and that he (Pramukh Swami) was also everything to him. So (after Yogiji Maharaj's earthly departure) I gradually bonded with him. In the beginning, the feeling persisted that Yogiji Maharaj was unique and that Pramukh Swami Maharaj would not be able to attract youths like he did. But, within a short span of time Pramukh Swami Maharaj (Swamishri) cleared this misconception of mine.

Swamishri took deep interest in the youths, expressed his love, graced them and greatly attracted all those who came into his contact. Because of this, some enthusiastically joined in the satsang activities, some even joined in doing lifetime seva in mandirs, and some took diksha as sadhus and engrossed themselves in satsang seva. Then, I understood firmly that there was only a change in the outer form, but not in the spiritual substance. Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who was working in the form of Yogiji Maharaj, was now working through Pramukh Swami Maharaj.

During Swamishri's satsang tour of South India in 1989–90, I experienced the jampacked public assemblies in centres which had only a few devotees. Many well-wishers joined satsang because they were impressed by Swamishri's divine glory. Some realized that the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself had come. Many people became pure by giving up addictions, many more had their wishes fulfilled, hundreds became yolked to selfless service and worship, and thousands got guidance for a better, higher life.

Once, an assembly of devotional songs with music was arranged at the Deshpande Hall in Nagpur. The large hall was situated at the far end of the city. So, all felt it would not be fully occupied. But to everyone's surprise, the hall was overcrowded from the beginning. When Banwarilal Purohit, the chief guest of the event, was contacted on phone to remind him to come, he inquired whether there were any people in the hall. He was told to come and see for himself. When he arrived he was amazed to find the hall overcrowded. He experienced Swamishri's divine attraction. Like a mountain of magnet which pulls all the iron in a region, Swamishri attracted hundreds of spiritual aspirants seeking moksha.

Once, Swamishri was standing at the entrance of a train compartment on a railway station. While he was meeting the devotees, a boy came and requested Swamishri to give his autograph on a piece of paper. The attendant sadhu told the boy that as the train was about to depart Swamishri would sign it later. But Swamishri did not want to disappoint the boy. He signed the paper while standing, which pleased the boy immensely. All those who were present learnt not to disappoint a small boy.

Once, Swamishri reached Akola station at 12.30 a.m. to catch a train. But the train arrived one hour and fifteen minutes late. Till then he waited in the VIP room. After boarding the train, he lay down to rest at 2.30 a.m. At 5.45 a.m., the train arrived at Amalner station. Swamishri came to the door to give darshan to the devotees, then blessed them and accepted their salutations. His chief aim was to please the devotees and so he silently tolerated the hardship and discomfort. He had sacrificed his life for the devotees.

In 1973 (Vaishakh vad 12, VS 2029), the birthday of Yogiji Maharaj was celebrated in Gondal. At that time, I went to Gondal with regards to my PhD thesis. After Swamishri completed his morning puja, he came to Shastriji Maharaj's room to have darshan. I requested him, "Yogiji Maharaj had promised me that he would bless me to attain ekantik dharma, but shortly thereafter he went to Dham. Now, how will I attain it?" Swamishri took a rose from the sanctified cot and gave it to me, saying, "Whatever Yogiji Maharaj had promised, I will fulfil it. There's no need to worry." Because of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's compassion and blessings, I am able to observe religious vows to perform bhakti, service and satsang, and am peaceful at heart.

It was a common experience that Swamishri possessed the power to transform the lives of people totally.

2. Yogaha Karmasu Kaushalam - Jodaan with Satpurush

Saints and great men achieve many things through the synchronization of their speech, thought and behaviour. The resultant good actions spread like an aroma all around. What may appear difficult for many people, the saints can achieve. Their lives, woven like the threads of worship and service to God, show proficiency in planning and management. The saints, who are above the three gunas, are modest and offer their selfless services to God with joy. God alone spreads the glory of their divine works. In Yogiji Maharaj's times, though Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the recipient of Shastriji Maharaj's divine love and constant care, he always remained unseen and served under the guru's wings. He never made a show of his devotion and successes. He always avoided fame by merely doing his duties and in abiding by the highest tradition of asceticism. It was difficult to understand him. Even after becoming the guru it was very difficult to grasp the divine spark in him because of his simplicity. There was no pretence, not an iota of conceit, nor a hint of his peaceful personality. Hence, it was more difficult to know his greatness. But, after being with him, when we realized his true personality, we were transported to the heights of his grandeur of unfathomable, transparent asceticism and generosity which dwarfed even the highest peak of the Himalayas. Though Swamishri was engrossed in various activities all the time, through his humility he continuously spread his divine warmth everywhere. Swamishri remained totally absorbed in God, yet he believed himself to be a servant. He performed wonderful and relentless selfless services without detaching himself from Paramatma for even a moment. In 1985, after visiting the exhibition halls at Swaminarayan Nagar in Ahmedabad, Swami Chinmayanandji came to the visitors' room. Here, on meeting Swamishri, he asked, "Who has organized all this?" Swamishri replied in his usual tranquil and patient manner, "God has done all this." Swami Chinmayanandji accepted the answer, but felt that the inexhaustible divine power of Vasudev was working through Swamishri; otherwise such planning would not have been possible. Swamishri's radiant saintliness was reflected through his big and small humble activities. Thus, all were convinced that someone (God) performed all the activities through Swamishri. He had merged his existence in Shriji Maharaj and his preceptors – Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj. He always said that all things happened by their wishes and blessings. Swamishri organized, served and took rounds during big or small occasions and festivals. During the Suvarna Kalash Mahotsav of the Gadhpur Mandir in 1961, the strong summer winds of Vaishakh (June) were playing havoc. In spite of the shortage of water, dearth in lodgings and the strong winds knocking down the mandap, Swamishri solved these issues and completed each task with equanimity. On seeing all this, many got the inspiration to serve. On all occasions, big and small, Swamishri would be seen serving steadfastly in all the departments. In 1965, Swamishri was overseeing all the arrangements during the Centenary Celebration of Shastriji Maharaj in Atladra. He did not care for food, water, rest or sleep. Yogiji Maharaj used to enquire, "Has Pramukh Swami taken food?" But Swamishri would be engaged in seva in the hot sun at the festival site. Mota Swami requested Swamishri to come and have lunch with him, and he waited anxiously for him till he came. This way, Mota Swami ensured that Swamishri would have lunch with him. Swamishri's humble enthusiasm for devotion and service was very much evident whenever he was supervising the festival work all through the night prior to the inaugural day. Once, while the assembly stage was under-construction, many devotees explained to him that they would finish off the work while he could go and rest. But Swamishri left only after the brick wall behind the stage was constructed and painted. Thereafter, he completed his ablutions and attended the morning sabha. During the Amrut Mahotsav in 1967, Gondal, Swamishri did his best in making the water arrangements as per Yogiji Maharaj's order. He had all the other responsibilities of the festival on his shoulders, so he worked relentlessly. However difficult the problem, he would solve it. Others could not even dream of such solutions! Many problems cropped up while providing lodgings (during the Amrut Mahotsav), as it was impossible to allocate premises that were satisfactory to all. In that case too, he tried to please all. His power to take decisions was

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amazing. He was firm in his decisions. Initially, he would ask all and take everyone's advice. However, when all were perplexed, he would give a decision by remembering Maharaj. He would say, "Maharaj will make things work out well." With these magical words, everyone experienced ease, and no doubt or worry would remain thereafter. In 1969, during the murti-pratishtha festival of the mandir in Bhadra, there were great difficulties in acquiring water. But with the blessings of Yogiji Maharaj, water was discovered in a well on the opposite bank of the River Und. A pipeline was quickly laid from the well across the dry riverbed and up to the mandir and dharmashala; a distance of more than 5,000 feet. Swamishri got the work done by continuously standing with the workers from noon till late at night in the torrid Vaishakh heat. He did not relax for a moment or feel tired. His total dedication to seva was evident to one and all. Along with that, there was no burden of work, worries and distress on his demeanour. He was always busy, patient and sincere with no uneasiness and pretences. That was why so many people derived inspiration from him. In 1981, prior to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's Bicentenary Celebrations in Ahmedabad, an anti-reservation agitation had erupted in Ahmedabad. The movement became increasingly violent day by day, which affected the Sabarmati Ashram area close to the celebration venue. A question arose as to whether to hold the festival in such circumstances. Preparations had begun months before, but it was feared that the agitation might escalate further. Numerous leading lights met Swamishri and expressed their views that the festival should be postponed. In such circumstances, Swamishri never took unilateral decisions. He would consult all and asked for their views. All had suggested to postpone the festival. But Swamishri said in a calm and confident tone, "We should hold the festival as decided. Maharaj would set everything right and resolve the agitation." And truly, due to Swamishri's blessings the agitation was resolved before the celebrations commenced. The entire celebrations were carried out without a hitch. As such, Swamishri's faith in Shri Hari and his strong will assured all that he was an extraordinary saint with a very strong bond with Shriji Maharaj. In 1985, before the Bicentenary Celebrations of Gunatitanand Swami in Ahmedabad, there was an acute water shortage and a students' agitation. Some social leaders opined that the celebrations should not be held. But Swamishri was firm in his decision. He said Maharaj-Swami would help us. Shortly thereafter, by his blessings, there were heavy rains and the water crisis was solved. In the same way, Swamishri engaged his sadhus and youths in the service of mute animals during the drought and famine in 1987. He inspired and organized cattle camps and said, "This is service to God." He planned the cattle camps in such a way that his sadhus and volunteers took utmost care of the cattle so that they could be useful for farming the following year. The youths were always amazed at the efficiency and ability of Swamishri's planning and management. In one such instance, a youth from Canada, Nareshbhai, enquired from Swamishri about the secret of his success. Swamishri replied, "From the beginning, I was engaged in the mandir activities, and secondly, I was inclined towards welcoming and taking care of the devotees. I was engaged in managing the boarding and lodging facilities, and in providing other facilities to the devotees. Shastriji Maharaj was much pleased with this. Such types of seva increased during the time of Yogiji Maharaj. From the beginning I was inclined towards the planning of festivals and solving various issues that arose. I had the habit of completing whatever task I undertook. Because of Shastriji Maharaj's and Yogiji Maharaj's grace the work goes on." In 1985, HE Giani Zail Singh, President of India, was sitting in the visitors' room after visiting the Swaminarayan Nagar in Ahmedabad. On meeting Swamishri, he exclaimed, "Wonderful planning!" Swamishri humbly replied, "Our sadhus and youths have unitedly done all this." Swamishri gave all credit to his disciples. Then Zail Singh, a student of spiritualism and a discerner of saintly power, replied, "This work might have been done by anybody, but you are the motivating power and current behind all, otherwise this is impossible." Thus, anyone, after having the slightest acquaintance with Swamishri, could perceive the secret behind such success. Swamishri found bliss in pleasing PurushottamNarayan, the supreme being. This was his only aim and source of fulfilment.

No worldly storms ruffled him. He was never affected by the dualities of love and hatred and praise and insult. Because of Swamishri's innate qualities, his body and soul were radiant with divine lustre. Those who viewed and followed him with divinity could visualize further and further the path of Yogaha karmasu kaushalam – proficiency in work is yoga.

3. Ghar Sabha: Two important Virtues

Pramukh Swami Maharaj gifted two wonderful ways to defuse family conflicts and other issues through the practice of satsang and ghar sabha: understanding others and being broad-minded Pramukh Swami Maharaj introduced the efficacious practices of satsang and ghar sabha (home assembly) for all in overcoming discontent, enmity, spats, fights and a wide range of other problems. Through these two means Swamishri stated that one would be able to understand others and also develop a broad, generous outlook. Let us try to fathom the importance of understanding others and having a broad-minded outlook through the medium of ghar sabha.

Ghar Sabha for Developing Understanding

Every person has a deep desire to be understood by others. Whenever you experience that someone understands your perspective or your feelings you feel happy and relaxed. Hence, your relation with that person becomes cordial and robust. Other than that your relationship remains dry and formal.

Parents often have a common complaint that their teenage child speaks less with them. Whenever parents ask a question to their child he or she replies briefly, and often coldly, whereas with friends their child talks enthusiastically for hours. The child reluctantly bonds or deals with parents, whereas with friends he or she bonds naturally and fluidly. What is the reason behind this? How come teenage children relegate their relations with their parents, who have taken care of them for years, and instead bond more with their friends? The reason behind this seems to be that a teenager experiences that his friends understand him. Whereas, with his parents, he experiences a yawning generation gap.

So, understanding one another is an indispensable aspect of healthy and flourishing relationships. Ghar sabha provides a conducive environment in developing mutual understanding. In homes where family members talk to each other only when some work is to be done or something is required, then ghar sabha facilitates conversations and dissolves the generation gap.

Diptesh Patel, a satsangi youth in New Jersey, narrates his experience, "My retired parents live with me. Often, one finds gaps and bitterness in relationships between a mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and between a son and his father. The case between my parents and us was similar. My parents were adamant about certain things, whereas my wife and I thought differently. My parents insisted that we raise our children the way they had raised us. But in America our situation was completely different. Additionally, there were small communication gaps between us and them. For example, I never informed them that I had planned to visit my friend's home the next day. On the contrary, my parents had planned something else for all of us. My wife would often cook something and my mother wished to eat something else. Gradually, through ghar sabha, we were able to solve our problems due to lack of communication. After completing the ghar sabha we would discuss our schedules for the next two to three days and what meals to cook. Subsequently, the problems between my mother and wife and my father and myself were defused."

Another issue that arises in a family is mostly related to retired parents or seniors in the house. They complain that they are never informed or consulted about the social affairs of the family. As a result they feel they are not valued or considered as members of their own home. On the other hand, the youth who has the responsibility of running the home feels there's no need to inform or consult their parents about every matter. When the youth is told to at least inform whatever is possible or important, then the youth answers that he or she does not purposefully abstain from informing them but that there's simply no time or opportunity to do so. Here, ghar sabha provides the opportunity and time to share whatever

it may be with one's seniors or parents.

Hareshbhai Patel of Houston shares his experience in this matter, "By doing ghar sabha the distance between me and my parents was bridged. Mostly, I never talked to them about my business and social matters. Consequently, there was a distance between us. But now, during ghar sabha, such matters are shared, discussed and answered. By talking candidly during ghar sabha our distance disappeared."

One of the reasons for family discord is doubts or suspicions. Many times, due to lack of frank talks with the family, doubts arise and grow to disproportionate levels, eventually leading to quarrels, fights or divorce. Casual conversations during ghar sabha resolve suspicions and dissolve prejudices. Quite often a family on the verge of a break-up is salvaged due to such conversations during ghar sabha.

Shaileshbhai Dhanani of Rajkot relates his experience, "Some time after my marriage troubles started between me and my wife. I worked in a factory. Sometimes, due to an overload of work, I used to come home late. As a result my wife became suspicious of me and this led to heated arguments and increasing conflicts. My parents become fed up with her bickerings, hollow suspicions and unfounded accusations. I found my life hellish and our relationship came to the point of breaking up. One day, the conflict climaxed to such a point that my exasperated wife attempted suicide. But she was saved because of Vinubhai, our landlord, who came and calmed her." Thereafter, Shaileshbhai witnessed the ghar sabha carried out at Vinubhai's house next door and the resulting joy and ease in their family. He was inspired and started ghar sabha in his home. Shaileshbhai adds, "In the beginning, I used to do ghar sabha on my own. But, gradually, all the members joined me. Slowly, my wife became interested in satsang. Our differences started to dissolve and our problems were solved. Finally, there was peace and joy between us."

In this way, ghar sabha mended a broken family with trust and love.

Ghar Sabha Inspires Broad-Mindedness

It is not incumbent that members of a family should live in a large house, however, it is necessary that they should have a broad-minded outlook. A family is not a commercial outfit or a government system where its members have to abide by disciplines out of fear or compulsion. There is a need for rules and regulations in the house, but they should be followed with ease and love, and be practised out of respect rather than out of pressure. This can only happen when members accept each other with broad-mindedness and generosity.

When a person gets angry for a minor mistake made by someone, the consequences are far greater and more destructive than the loss or effect due to that small mistake. By doing ghar sabha the members gradually become attuned to positive understanding, which enables them to tolerate and forgive another's mistake, cultivate patience, take care of that person and rein in their own anger. Countless families have been liberated from anger and other personal faults due to ghar sabha.

Divyangbhai Master of Vadodara elaborates, "My wife's nature was very volatile. Daily, she had differences and friction with my mother. When we started doing ghar sabha she did not sit with us for one-and-a-half years. But when she started attending a gradual change occurred in her nature. Her relationship with my mother improved. Now, whenever someone in the house misplaces something she does not get angry."

Miteshbhai Bhatiya of Jamnagar writes, "I was very hot-headed. I used to simply burst out with anger on trifle matters, which caused anguish and conflicts in the house. Sometimes, there used to be friction between me and my customers and as a result my business declined. But by Pramukh Swami Maharaj's inspiration I commenced doing ghar sabha, and in five years I became calm and quiet. Today, there is peace at home and due to my friendly relations with the customers I have benefited monetarily."

Pankajbhai of New Jersey writes, "Due to my furious nature I used to get mad at my children for small things. As a result my wife became averse to me and my parents didn't like my edgy nature either. Because of this, friction started between me and them. Thereafter, with Swamishri's agna we started ghar sabha and read the book Swabhav Vash Sansar.

We got answers in the ghar sabha to the problems arising out of our swabhavs. Slowly, we became tolerant and broad-minded and things took a turn for the better in our lives. We started understanding each others' greatness and realized that each one of us was right in his or her own way. We thus came closer to each other and our bitterness vanished."

Janaksinh of Odarka describes the efficacy of practising ghar sabha, "Because of ghar sabha internal unity, camaraderie and love has increased in our family. When our land and property were divided among us three brothers we did not require the presence and help of a committee of five neutral persons from the village. We discussed among ourselves and decided upon three parts and received the title deeds of each share at Doctor Swami's hands. When we divided the property as part of our social arrangement all the female members of our house were sad and expressed that they did not want to be separated from each other. The reason behind these sentiments was the observance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's instruction to hold ghar sabha."

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's instruction to do ghar sabha has worked wonders in countless families by solving internal frictions, personal problems and blessing all with inner peace and enlightenment. Ghar sabha has empowered innumerable individuals and families to become flexible and broad-minded in their inter-personal relations. Ghar shabha has also resolved issues related to land and property entitlements after the death of parents and curbed conflicts that were on the verge of resulting in murders or legal proceedings.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj's contribution in providing ghar sabha as a master key to unlocking and resolving a wide spectrum of problems and conflicts will forever be appreciated and remembered, and leave countless more families indebted to him. May we regularly practice in order to experience a happy ambience and divinity in our homes and also inspire others to do ghar sabha.

Mahant Swami Maharaj's Blessings

On 18 May 2018, during an evening satsang assembly in Chennai,

Mahant Swami Maharaj spoke in Gujarati about the need to do ghar sabha.

When a mother-in-law believes her son's wife to be her daughter then all conflicts between them will end. However, when a mother-in-law remains suspicious of her daughter-in-law then things will get out of hand. Pramukh Swami Maharaj revealed a solution to this, 'To be mutually accommodative [anukul thavu].' Only by understanding others can one become accommodative.

Suspicion is a terrible thing; it ruins a home. No one in the house can live with peace and happiness. And mostly, there's no solid reason behind one's suspicion. One makes a mountain out of a molehill. One who is suspicious of someone believes his suspicion to be true. Everyone believes what they say [or think] is right; they never understand. They feel, 'I am right and the house should run the way I say.' To solve this, Pramukh Swami Maharaj had shown a wonderful means – ghar sabha.

Through ghar sabha the family members come to trust each another, and, thereafter, all problems get solved. One's son or daughter will not ask for something unnecessarily, because they understand. And parents should try to help them as much as possible. Subsequently, even if there is little in the house there will be peace because all conflicts have been solved. On the other hand, if a billionaire suspects of something [wrong in his house] he will not be happy and peaceful. The reason for samp [harmony] lies in samjan [understanding]. One who becomes accommodative [anukul] and gives up his wilful resolves [man dharya muke] then he becomes happy. However, if he believes that he is right then he will never ever be happy. Ghar sabha enables one to understand others and accept what they say.

In the beginning, you may not get success [in doing ghar sabha], but, gradually, you'll get the hang of it. When one [person in the family] understands then the second person will also understand and then everyone will understand. The effects of [ghar sabha] will take place slowly and then solidly. It takes time for everyone in the family to adjust with each other, and then peace and happiness will prevail. Today, countless families experience such peace. If you want to experience the miracle of ghar sabha then start doing it.

