

Session 4 – Habit 1 & 2

4th January, 2015

Jai Swaminarayan to everyone! Sahajanand Swami Maharajni jai, Bapashreeni jai, Sadguruoshreeni jai, Swaminarayan Bhagwanani jai, tatha anant anadi muktoni jai!

A humble prayer in their lotus-feet and our Guru AMPP NarayanMama-LeelaMasi's lotus-feet to augment this assembly with their divinity and grace. I humbly bow to their feet and pray to them, to shower their blessings on us now and forever for the bliss of the divine Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan. I also request forgiveness from them, as well as from the divine Satsang to pardon my mistakes and shortcomings and ignorance.

Also my apologies for not being able to join Satsang for last 4 weeks. I had an unplanned work-travel, and after returning, I was sick with cold and flu. Even now my voice is not completely back, so please pardon any interruptions during the Satsang today. Last time we met, we talked about how Supreme Lord Shree Swaminarayan made extraordinary deposits in the Emotional Bank Accounts of human beings. A quality exhibited by a highly effective person. Today we will delve into the first two habits of highly effective people

1. Be Proactive
2. Begin with the end in mind

As we have discussed in the past, the habits have a maturity continuum – first three lead from dependence to independence and the next three lead from independence to interdependence. The habits that we will explore today are the ones that relate to the independence. Let's look at each habit and how Lord Swaminarayan's life incidents show that He had cultivated those habits.

The first habit is "Be Proactive." It is a habit of personal vision based on values. What Covey says is that life is a product of our values, not our feelings. Life is a product of our decisions, not our conditions. Being proactive means taking individual responsibility of our life and choices. We take initiative to do whatever is necessary to make good things happen. Being reactive, on the other hand means our life is a function of our feelings, moods, impulses, conditions, etc. we never seem to be short of reasons other than us, that make us miserable. We feel victimized and under the control of other forces. We then take out frustration on our family, friends and team members. We truly believe that other people are doing this to us. We believe that we are what other people have made us, we are what our past has made us, we are what our surroundings and situations have made us. In other words, being reactive means not taking responsibility. Covey says, "You are the programmer and you can write the program the way you want. Take responsibility – I am responsible – I am response-able." I am able to respond to a situation, I am able to respond to my conditions, I am able to respond to my moods and impulses. Between the condition and the response, is our ability to choose – this choice is man's utmost freedom. Belief that, "I am a separate person from what happens to me, my feelings, my mood, my genetic make-up," is the real freedom. We

have power to choose in any given circumstance, even the ones that we can do nothing about. Liberty is a condition of external environment. Freedom is internal, and it is our ability to choose our response. Eventually this freedom will influence the liberty. Our head will create our world. Our response to stimulus will affect our stimulus. This freedom and its effect on the stimulus has got nothing to do with health, intelligence, etc. It is all about strength of thought and mind, and a vision of the future. This is how Covey explains the first habit of Being Proactive.

We talked earlier in our Satsang that life incidents of Lord Swaminarayan from His childhood we will refer to Him as Ghanshyambhai, from His journey all over India we will refer to Him as NeelkanthVarni and the last phase of His life, we will refer to Him as Sahajanand Swami or Lord Swaminarayan.

These days whenever there is a customer crisis, we use the phrase, “All hands on deck.” Everybody has to put in whatever it takes to make something happen. The phrase itself comes from the old times when ships were the mode of transport across continents, and during a storm or a pirate attack, the captain of the ship would call for, “All hands on deck.” During Ghanshyambhai’s time “All hands on deck” situations rose when the state or the kingdom of a king was attacked. At such times, all young men were called in to fight in the army. There is a very good example of displaying our ability to choose in any given circumstance, from the time of Ghanshyambhai’s stay in Ayodhya. His age was somewhere between 5 to 10 years. He was a young boy, playful and innocent, yet very learned. His elder brother – Rampratapbhai was 19 years older to Ghanshyambhai. Once the king of Burhanpur invited Rampratapbhai over. And Ghanshyambhai went to Burhanpur with Rampratapbhai. Burhanpur is a city in Madhya Pradesh, visible even today on Google maps at the intersection of highway 4 and 27, on India’s map. It is located on the south-east corner of Yawal Wildlife Sanctuary. It is about 1000-1100 kms or 625-685 miles from Ayodhya. At that time, given the modes of transport, it would take at least 15-20 days to reach Burhanpur from Ayodhya. So when the invite came, Rampratapbhai and Ghanshyambhai started from Ayodhya, but upon arrival, they found that the city was engulfed in war and the king for Burhanpur had called for “All hands on deck”. This did not exclude the Brahmin visitor Rampratapbhai from Ayodhya. Ghanshyambhai was excluded since He was only a kid. After taking over the fort, which exists even today on the banks of river Tapi, the army crossed the river Tapi, and looted the village of Janiabad – which exists in the same location today – on the other side of river Tapi, right across the Fort.

Now, we have to remember that the caste system was very well followed at that time, and Brahmins did not fight. But in this situation, it was a call of duty. Rampratapbhai fought with the army. The situation was not favorable. He had to pick up the weapons. He did not have the liberty to say “No” to the king of Burhanpur. Ghanshyambhai was made to stay in the base camp about 10 miles from the battle field. While being visible at the base camp, Ghanshyambhai reached out to Rampratapbhai thrice during the battle, with water to quench his thirst. We have talked during one of our Satsangs that scientifically, it is believed that the same photon of light can be visible at two places at the same time. So Ghanshyambhai made Himself visible at both the places – at the base camp, as well as on the battlefield. Rampratapbhai would tell Him, “Ghanshyambhai, do not come here. This is a dangerous place. You would get hit by a bullet.” But Ghanshyambhai calmly responded, “I will be here whenever you need Me. Whether it is to quench your thirst or for moral support.” Ghanshyambhai could have used His divine powers to get Rampratapbhai out of the situation itself, but He did not do that. He rather gave Rampratapbhai strength

to deal with the situation. He remained with Rampratapbhai all the time, helping him make the righteous decisions even in the battle field. Many-a-times, we are faced with situations in life, where it is very difficult to stick to the values and principles. From this incident we learn that even in a life-n-death scenario, it is possible to make righteous decisions. That is where the freedom lies. That is where our ability to respond to a situation lies.

Of course the army that Rampratapbhai fought with, won the battle, and took over the fort. Following this the army returned to the base camp, crossed the Tapi river and looted the village of Janiabad. Ghanshyambhai was very delighted to see Rampratapbhai back. When the army proceeded to Janiabad, Ghanshyambhai held back Rampratapbhai's hand. They settled with a bowl of yogurt, and did not indulge into the derogatory act of looting innocent villagers. It is so easy to follow the mob, and do things that are against the principles of humanity, than to stand up to the principles. Especially when such acts are performed by people in power. There is a psychological research done that most people do things that they cannot believe they could do, under the pressure of authority or perceived authority. Even in these situations, we have the freedom and the responsibility to stay true to our principles and values. This is the underlying core of the first habit of being proactive. We saw through the incident above that Lord Swaminarayan exhibited these qualities even as a child. The ability to choose our response in any given situation, such that it is aligned with our values and principles.

So the question is how to develop this habit of being proactive? Covey says the key to being proactive is to take initiative to act upon our conscience. Our conscience always knows the right thing to do. Sometimes, our mind, convinces our conscience or heart to do things that are selfish and unethical. But being proactive means to have the courage not just to tell others, but to also tell our own mind, to do the right thing, even if it is difficult to do so. In order to cultivate this courage, Covey talks about two circles – one inner smaller circle is about the things that we can influence. Our inner circle of influence. Surrounding this inner circle is a larger outer circle, about the things that we cannot influence. Effective people focus on the inner circle. They use their strengths to compensate for the weaknesses of others, and thus gradually grow their inner circle of influence. They say to themselves, “No matter what the circumstances are, I am going to be proactive and give my energy to the things that I can do something about – the inner circle.” Gradually, this inner circle will get larger with patience and persistence. And the effective person will be able to influence more and more things, and do something about them.

When we look at life of Lord Swaminarayan, He started very small. He focused on things that He can influence. His values, learning, being there for His parents and siblings, moving on to the path of yog, austerity, meditation, knowledge – these were all the things that He could influence as Ghanshyambhai and during the early life as NeelKanth Varni. Later as Neelkanthvarni He had many righteous people following Him, and He made a wider impact on those groups through peaceful, knowledge-ful divine experiences and divine leadership. When He arrived at Loj and joined Muktanand Swami, He joined as a mere young 18 year old disciple, and started His influence on small things like collecting fuel for the group, help in cooking, cleaning, gathering vegetables, etc. from farms, influencing utmost celibacy in the saints, etc. He laid down a firm foundation of ethics and codes of conduct not just for Himself but for the group of Saints that resided with Muktanand Swami. Later His responsibilities expanded to the entire group of Saints and Devotees with Ramanand Swami. Following which, He further expanded the Satsang in terms

of size and expanse and stretched it to the entire state of Gujarat in India. He created the necessary infrastructure to sustain the Satsang even after He left the body. Today, due to the effectiveness of His personality, Swaminarayan religion has become world famous. The inner circle of influence that started with yog & meditation has now become a religion that spans across the entire globe. Now that, is the sign of a real proactive. AMPP NarayanMama was once asked a question, “Why does Lord Swaminarayan allow institutions with inaccurate understanding of Swaminarayan philosophy, prevail?” AMPP NarayanMama responded, “Lord Swaminarayan is very effective. He lets all these streams prevail for a wide-spread generic knowledge of the religion. Once the initial knowledge about the philosophy comes, the real aspirants will be automatically guided to the accurate knowledge.”

Having talked about being proactive and how to be proactive, let's move to the second habit of Begin with the end in mind. Habit 1 assumes self-chosen values. Habit 2 is habit of personal leadership. It requires a sense of vision and self-chosen values and its application to everything we do in our personal and professional lives. It is about taking leadership in our own life. We decide our value system. It is a value of personal leadership, a purpose, a mental creation, a mission. It is opposite of going with a flow with no purpose. In our programming example – Habit 2 says write the program. Habit 1 says you are the programmer, Habit 2 says write the program. Don't live some other program out that does not meet our needs or values. We decide it. We write it. We live it. It is like doing a jigsaw puzzle. We know the picture that we need to build and we put the pieces together to build the jigsaw puzzle. Or another example is to make a blue print before making the house. Covey says, we go to a meeting with an end in mind, we go out to eat with end in mind. Likewise, we should create a mental and spiritual vision first, then create our life – the house we live in, the car we use. We should have a vision for that. Begin with the end in mind. The other way he says we can look at it is, if we were to die, and a family member, a friend, a co-worker and a person from our religious institution were to give a eulogy, what will they say? The answer to that question should define our values and every decision we make in life along the way as we live it.

After the birth of Rampratapbhai, the elder brother of Ghanshyambhai, harassed by unrighteous ones, Lord Swaminarayan's parents, after moving residences and villages, Dharmapita and Bhaktimata, went to Vrundavan to worship. There they met with other rishis who had also taken a birth as human beings due to the curse of Durvasa rishi. Together they did a yagna and pleased with their devotion, Lord Swaminarayan gave them a divine darshan and pacified their battered spirits by confirming that He will soon be born to Dharma and Bhakti and that the worries and troubles of the righteous ones will come to an end. After ceremoniously ending the yagna, Dharmapita and Bhaktimata headed home feeling very relieved and happy. Along the way they had to cross the forest of Naimisharanya. As they were passing through it, they had various spiritual experiences. In one such experience, they met a man on a darkest of the nights. Upon asking, he introduced himself as Ashwatthama. For those who don't know Ashwatthama, he was the son of Dronacharya – the teacher of Pandavas and Kauravs from the Mahabharat epic, and he favored Duryodhan, the eldest of the Kauravs, in the epic battle at Kurukshetra. At the end of the battle upset by victory of the Pandavas, he used Brahmastra, the most destructive of the weapons to put Pandavas and their entire lineage to an end. Upon which Lord Krishna cursed him to roam around on the earth with a resident pain in his forehead. Ashwatthama, the immortal one, was still roaming around, and met Dharmapita and Bhaktimata on that fateful night in the forest. Dharmapita and Bhaktimata, trusting

people that they were, told Ashwatthama in their excitement and happiness that they were returning home happy since God Supreme was going to advent to put an end to unrighteous ones and protect the righteous ones. Upon which Ashwatthama got upset and said, “The one who will be born to you will not pick up a weapon. If He will not pick up a weapon, how will He put an end to the unrighteous ones?” Saying this he disappeared. Hearing this, Dharmapita and Bhaktimata realized their mistake and became extremely upset and started remembering Lord Ganapati. Though they were remembering Lord Ganapati, Lord Hanumanji gave them a darshan and said, “The one who will be born to you will not need to pick up the weapon, since He will destroy the unrighteous ones by knowledge. He will put an end to ignorance and spread the real knowledge.” Dharmapita and Bhaktimata were very pleased to hear this. This incident happened before even Lord Swaminarayan manifested on Earth. Talk about begin with the end in mind! Even before taking His first step on Earth, the expected end result was all set – destruction of unrighteous acts by knowledge!

After the birth of Ghanshyambhai, once He started crawling, father Dharmapita wanted to find out his Son’s inclination, so that he can coach Him appropriately. In order to do this, he placed a sword, a book and some gold coins on a small table. It was then placed in front of Ghanshyambhai. Ghanshyambhai slowly crawled up to the table and found a few interesting things. We have to remember we are talking about a toddler who has just about started crawling. He immediately placed His hand on the book. Dharmapita knew that his Son Ghanshyambhai will become very knowledgeable and learned, and decided to start His education early on, to leverage His strengths. Once again, a very early and clear indication that the end result of His advent on Earth is knowledge!

Upon entering the boyhood, there is a Yagnopavit or Upnayan Sanskar, popularly known in English today as thread ceremony that is done, especially in Brahmin community. In the year 1789, around the month of January or February, Ghanshyambhai was 7 years old, with 8th year running – the 10th day of the waxing of the moon of the month of Maha of Hindu calendar, it was decided to conduct the thread ceremony for Ghanshyambhai. Invitations were sent out to family and friends, and people started gathering the previous day. The venue was tastefully decorated to go with the occasion and all the visitors could not stop praising the décor. Learned pundits were called in for conducting the ceremony. The air was filled with vibrations of the mantras being chanted. The fragrance from the yagna was filling the venue with an inexplicable serenity and peace. After doing the necessary pre-rituals and donations of cow and gold, Ghanshyambhai was brought in to the ceremony place. After shaving His head, bathing Him, and augmenting Him with the thread, that He bore on His left shoulder, the yagna was completed. Upon which Dharmapita gave his pearls of wisdom to Ghanshyambhai, “Do not sleep during the day. Serve Your guru with respect and love. Do not get angry. Never use bad words. Observe 8-fold celibacy. Don’t gossip. Do not listen to cheap music. Never have Your seat higher than Your Guru’s seat. Never drag or rub Your feet on earth. Never write on earth. Do not grind your teeth.” And many such words of wisdom were given by Dharmapita to 7-8 year old Ghanshyambhai. After this, dressed as a brahmachari, Ghanshyambhai asked for alms from His mother Bhaktimata and Savasini Bhabhi (Rampratapbhai’s wife). Alms was the way of life for those who renounced the world, and it is part of thread ceremony. He then brought the alms to His Guru, and ate some after His Guru asked Him to eat. Following this was the last ritual to prepare to leave for Kashi to gain knowledge, and then run to go to Kashi. As the ritual goes, Mama, Mother’s brother

is supposed to bring the boy back home, after imparting him the first real knowledge. This is a pretend run-away, not a real run-away. In preparation for going to Kashi, the Guru gave Ghanshyambhai Dand, Kamandal, Mrugchhal, a basil-wood rosary, and Mekhala and mother Bhaktimata gave a few goodies to eat along the way. Ghanshyambhai had resolved in His mind to not pretend to run away, but actually run away to Kashi in search of knowledge. As He started running His Mama – Vashram Tiwari followed Him, but could not catch-up. After running for a while he got tired and called out to Ghanshyambhai, “I know what You are trying to do. Do not go now. Your parents will not be able to tolerate the pain. Take care of them first. Then You can do whatever You want. What will I tell Your parents, if I do not bring You back home to them?” Ghanshyambhai saw the responsibility that Mama Vashrambhai was talking about, and decided to not run away, and came back home sitting on His Mama’s shoulder. We all know that He then waited another 3 years, and finally left home in search of knowledge at the young age of 11, after giving ultimate liberation to both His parents and taking care of all His other responsibilities. The inclination for knowledge thus continued, and is visible throughout the life of Lord Swaminarayan. The collection of Lord Swaminarayan’s discourses – The Vachanamrutam, is rated as the best spiritual scripture by the seat of Pundits in Kashi. AMPP NarayanMama has also received an award related to that. Even from worldly perspective, if we observe the history of mankind, we have not made such intellectual and scientific progress in the entire known/documented history of human kind, as we have made in past 200-250 years. Between 2000 and 2012, the amount of information that the human race as generated exceeds the amount of information generated in the entire history of mankind. The kind of information and knowledge explosion that we have seen since advent of Lord Swaminarayan on planet Earth is unheard of in the entire history. As much as we may think that we live in a time of political turmoil and war and violence, this is rated as the most peaceful time in the history of mankind by the historians and students of societal behavioral studies. Lord Swaminarayan began with an end in mind – “Destroy unrighteousness by knowledge.” And it is visible today – more knowledge and less violence. A fact that even the best of the professors and scholars accept, irrespective of whether they know about Lord Swaminarayan or not.

Now conversation on Habit 2 – Begin with end in mind, will not be complete without talking about mission statements. Covey says that the fundamental reasons why families split and organizations fail, is that its members do not share a common vision where everyone has participated and created a vision and share it together as “our vision”. It is the most significant and important decision because every other decision large and small is dependent on that decision. We define what things are truly important, and these become continued sense of guiding in life. Covey says that we should develop a personal mission/purpose statement. Same with Family. Same with Organization – company, board, committee, department. There are 2 Parts to Mission statement – Vision & Principles. Vision deals with a mental picture of what we are about and Principles deals with how we go about it. It is profound deep work. We must pay the price to cultivate the sense of purpose. Vision requires enormous amount of self-awareness and imagination and humility and openness and use of conscience. We do not invent mission, we detect it, we uncover it. Covey also explains the good characteristics of mission statements – be it personal, family or organizational:

- First, They should be timeless. This helps deal with other changes, because the core is changeless and dependable.
- Second, It deals with both ends and means – what we are about, and how we go about it. Once a money-minded acquaintance told me, “Dollar does not have written on it where it came from...”

I had responded to him, “It’s even worse. It is written on your heart and mind, where the dollar came from.” A good mission statement, should not just deal with end (the dollar), but also with the means (where the dollar came from).

- Third characteristic of a good mission statement is, it should deal with all 4 of our needs – Cover says we all have 4 needs – to live, to learn, to love, and leave a legacy (spiritual need for meaning). The mission statement should deal with all of those 4 needs.
- Fourth, implicitly or explicitly deal with all the roles of life – for example, I play the role of a daughter, sister, friend, satsangi, manager, - we need to lead a balanced life and we need to think of all those roles and include them in our mission statement

Lord Swaminarayan’s mission statement is evident from just this one incident. Once Lord Swaminarayan was traveling with a group of Saints in the villages of present day Gujarat. In the town of Anand, the non-satsangis created a scene at the welcome procession of Lord Swaminarayan and threw stuff on the people in the procession and on saints and even Lord Swaminarayan. The saints were very upset, and some with unparalleled divine powers, questioned, “Why should we tolerate such behavior with You, when You are the Supreme Lord and we are Your disciples? As your disciples, we should be protecting You and Your interests with all our powers and strength.” Lord Swaminarayan responded, “We are here to grant ultimate liberation to the souls. Not to reprimand them for their ignorance. This town in future will bloom with Satsangis and temples.” Since many of us in the Satsang-mandal are from Vidyanagar, Anand’s twin town, we know how true this is today. This actually is the mission statement of Lord Swaminarayan – “Grant ultimate liberation to the souls. Not reprimand them for their ignorance. Bloom the Satsang on this Earth.”

So today we talked about two habits and related incidents from life of Lord Swaminarayan. Next time, in a couple of weeks, we will continue further with the habits. My humble, Jai Swaminarayan to all the Muktos. Sahajanand Swami Maharajni Jai, Bapashreeni Jai, Sadguruo Shreeni Jai, Swaminarayan Bhagwanani Jai.