

Session 13 – Stage 1 and Meditation

April 13th, 2014

Jai Swaminarayan! 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, and to enhance our knowledge and guide us towards them.

We are now at a very interesting point in our journey. Over last 12 Satsangs we have understood soul, body, mind, deities, trinity, Vairat purush, Ahankar (Aniruddha, Pradyumna, Sankarshan), Mahattattva, Pradhan Purush, MulPurush, Vasudev Brahman, MulAkshar and Lord Swaminarayan. Through this journey we have understood how big, powerful, and extensive the world up there is. We took references from all streams of science, all religions, and eventually, resorted to faith we built through our journey, to understand the knowledge where there are no other references. Having understood all that, we feel, well a little small and insignificant, don't we? But the reality is that what is in the potential of the stratum of the soul in human birth, is not in the potential of any other stratum. Through the meagre efforts during a life time of human being, which is nothing compared to other higher life-spans, one can transition or progress to any level in the hierarchy. That is the gift given only to us! Similar to the saying my Mom keeps mentioning – a sword cannot do what a needle can do. The reason is that in our stratum, the powers, the luxuries, the pleasures, the resources, are very little, so it is easier to overcome the desires and the bindings and progress to higher levels of liberation. This is something that AMPP NarayanMama explained to us, that we are privileged. This privilege comes in the form of an internal spiritual journey, not in the form of external space travel, etc. So let's look at how the souls can progress and what happens on that journey.

When a creation happens, and MulMaya emerges from MulPurush, the souls get their first birth in their creation, is the only time, that the souls have the independence to do any activity and perform any action without any karma-bindings. Karma bindings are the fruits of karma that attach to the soul – we had talked about that a little bit when we were talking about soul, body and mind. In its true sense, only the first action is free from karma-bindings, all subsequent actions are in one way or another affected by the effects of previous actions, and so are the subsequent births. Our ability to perform action is part free will and part fruits or result of past karma. As we get more and more bound, our free will reduces, and the results of past karma and the bindings arising from those, take over. We then mechanically keep going from one life to another. The key in all this is to avoid bindings due to karma, in order to be able to exercise free will. This we saw early on is possible, if we can contain our emotions and emotional attachment to the activities and fruits of the activities. We have talked about memory being created only if emotions from Amygdala are feeding into it. It is a vicious circle, more bound we are, more attached we become, more bound we become and on and on it goes. So the key to freedom or liberation is becoming free from these bindings. It is the first step.



So how to overcome the attachment? There are many paths to overcoming the attachment. One is to get lovefully attached to almighty God Swaminarayan (or any other form one worships), through tremendous devotion – the path of PremLakshana Bhakti. Second is the path of Dharma or obeying the codes of conduct. We can think of codes of conduct as the boundaries of mathematical equation defining the path of attainment of higher levels. Third is the path of knowledge or Gnan, which we took over past 12 weeks. Fourth is the path of Detachment or Vairagya, where one gets detached from everything considering it to be futile and connects only with God. While each is important, and in its ultimate form, just like all streams of science culminate in the theory of creation, all the streams to overcome attachment, culminate in the God that one worships. So all 4 – Dharma, Gnan, Vairagya and Bhakti, culminate into attainment of the form of God that one worships. For our series, we will stay with the path of knowledge. Sometime in future, if there is enough interest, we can talk about other paths as well.

So on the path of the knowledge, the first step in overcoming attachment is control of mind and senses. Both of these can be attained through one singleton activity, which is called meditation. In management we are taught to use meditation to overcome stress. Scientific studies have shown that meditation reduces the stress hormones in the body and helps one relax. There is a very recent research done in genetics, that there is a gene that gets activated by stress, which leads to inflammation of cells. The constant inflammation of cells can lead to other diseases like diabetes, heart disease, etc. The research done in the field of neuro-theology (neuro theology is a field where the scientists are trying to map the effects of theological practices or religious practices on our nervous system or neural system) shows that meditation turns this stress gene off. Thus helping us and our body deal better with stress, and avoid stress related diseases. In other words, meditation has the power to heal. So it helps one manage better and has the power to heal.

Though now the whole world talks about meditation, originally, the path of spiritual progress through meditation has been laid down only by Hindu and Boudhha or Buddhist religion. Gautam Buddha, more or less had his roots in Hinduism as well. Muslims follow the path of Sufism and prayer. Christians follow the path of prayer, church and good deeds. Judaists follow the path of meditation to some extent, mainly through chanting and talking to God. Hinduism does all of that plus it has given the gift of meditation to the world. But what is meditation?

In Sanskrit and in the derived languages, like Gujarati and Hindi, the word Dhyān is used for meditation as well as when we want to do something with focus and attention. Parents often ask their children “Dhyān daine bhanaje,” meaning study with focus and attention. Don’t get distracted. So Dhyān is nothing but focus or attention, and this should be undistracted. More advanced the subject, deeper is the focus and attention that is needed. Meditation in particular means cultivation of focus and attention to attain spiritual progress and freedom. In order to do that, it requires a lot of internal energy, which can be derived by sublimation of some body hormones into spiritual energy. These hormones can be accumulated through observation of celibacy.

There are many ways to meditate. Science has researched what happens during meditation. They put electrodes on the head of the person who was meditating and they tried to find out what happens



inside the brain. When Judaists meditate, since they meditate by talking to God, their brain's language center gets activated. When Buddhists meditate, since they visualize, their vision center gets activated. When atheists meditate, nothing in their brain gets activated. Most Hindu meditations are also related to the sense of Vision. When during meditation, particular brain centers of the senses get activated, Shreeji Maharaj has called it meditation in the senses. Shreeji Maharaj goes on to explain that, that meditation is not complete. Meditation in the Mind or "man" is better than meditation in the senses. The Mind as we discussed earlier in the series, could be the pituitary gland or be located in the pituitary gland. When the meditation happens here, all the chemicals in the body come in harmony, and everything calms down, all the chatter and the noise subsides and there is peace, higher energy state emerges and the path for progression opens up. At this point, there are two paths – first is to transition into meditation in the soul, and second is to go through the process of activation of energy centers or chakras. If one follows the former, which is meditation in the soul, the latter automatically happens. But, if one follows the latter, the former may not happen for a long time. The path of meditation in soul is primarily emphasized by Lord Swaminarayan, Shree Abaji Bapashree and AMPP NarayanMama.

Having talked about three primary places for meditating – in the senses, in the mind, and in the soul, let's spend some time on what happens when a soul meditates. Suppose a soul was meditating on Lord Vishnu, through whichever path of meditation. The soul realizes Lord Vishnu, and merges with Lord Vishnu. At the time of Prakrut Pralay, Lord Vishnu will merge into Vairat Purush, Vairat Purush into Ahankar, and so on... So eventually, the soul will merge into MulMaya and MulMaya into MulPurush. Still bound. At the time of next creation by that MulMaya and MulPurush, while the slate of karma will be wiped clean, since the soul had progressed to the level of devotee of Lord Vishnu, he will be born either as a devotee of Lord Vishnu or as Lord Vishnu of some other trinity in the new creation. The same goes with all the levels all the way up to MulMaya. So while there is progression, there is no liberation from the cycle of birth-death-rebirth, creation to creation to creation. So it is not real liberation.

Beyond MulMaya, is the world of divine brilliance. This world is filled with brilliance of infinite MulPurush, brilliance of infinite Vasudev Brahman, brilliance of infinite MulAkshar and brilliance of Supreme Lord Shree Swaminarayan. Not only the brilliance or the immanent form, the divine world also has their transcendent or definite divine forms as well. The soul who has been meditating on a definite divine form, realizes the definite divine form of that spiritual stratum. This is for the divine world. For example, the soul meditating on definite divine form of Lord Krishna, realizes lord Krishna.

Now let's think of what would happen to someone who is meditating on formless God. To explain that, let us imagine someone living in a lonely farm in Wisconsin, be placed in New York City, in the blink of an eye. This person will be extremely confused and would not know what to do. Not knowing any influential people, this person will start interacting with the first person he or she sees. That's what happens to the soul. Many just get engrossed in their own bliss and think that is the end. Many tune into the brilliance of trinity, many in the brilliance of Vairat Purush, and all of them eventually merge back into MulMaya. For those worshippers of immanent form who are able to go beyond MulMaya, in the divine world, not knowing what is what in the divine world, when the realization happens, the soul tunes in the frequency of one of the divine brilliance it first encounters, and most of the time, it is the divine brilliance of MulPurush since, that is the next higher divine energy level after MulMaya. This soul



does not realize the transcendent form of MulPurush. While being tuned into this frequency, the soul realizes that there other brilliances as well, and continues moving from one brilliance to another, either in the same stratum because there are infinite of those, and progresses in the realization of the immanent form of the next level. But this soul does not realize the divine form of the divine worlds, till he aspires to do so. Just to clarify, for simplicity I have been associated masculine gender to the soul in the language, but soul does not have a gender.

To summarize, when a soul meditates on a definite form of any level within MulMaya, it eventually merges into MulMaya. There is progression but not freedom. When a soul meditates on the transcendent form of any God in the divine world, the soul achieves the transcendent form of that God. When the soul meditates on the immanent form, it is more or less lost, unfortunately, and does not know what level it has tuned into, and gradually finds out other brighter brilliances and keeps tuning into one after the other, through human birth after birth. The soul who has achieved the transcendent form of their deity, may someday aspire to progress further, take a human birth again and progress to the next level depending on what they aspire.

One question that is often asked is, how do we know, that there is nothing above and beyond Lord Swaminarayan? How do we know it all culminates there? I had asked this question to AMPP NarayanMama. What he answered was that many Anadi Mukta like Gopalanand Swami have explored and concluded that there is nothing beyond that. There is nothing beyond Lord Swaminarayan. If we are not able to trust that, then it would help that through the knowledge journey of past few weeks we know that there is superiority described upto the level of Lord Swaminarayan. Let's first achieve that, since there is nothing higher to achieve as far as we know. Once we reach the highest known level, we can explore for ourselves and find out. But let's first get there and then explore if there is something beyond that.

A few minutes ago, we talked about three internal places to meditate – the senses, the mind and the soul. Let's spend some more time talking about different forms of meditation. If one studies the hindu scriptures, there are so many methodologies that are described. They are countless. There is control of Chitta by control of Praan and the eight-fold yoga practice. There is the path of energy center activation or Kundalini, there are other meditation types – one of the most popular one these days is Vipasana, preached by Buddhists. How do we know which one to pick for meditation? As I mentioned earlier, different types of meditations activate different sense centers in the brain. All those paths that activate a sense center are about meditating in the sense. All the paths that talk about worshipping immanent form of God, will only lead to connection with some brilliance, somewhere. Even the achiever will not know for the longest time what he achieved. What I am trying to say is that all these paths stay till a certain destination, till a certain point, and in the end they at the most lead to realization of immanent or transcendent form of MulPurush or some immanent form one level up. That is where the limit is. For those aspirants, who aspire for level of MulPurush and below can practice these different paths. For the realization of Lord Swaminarayan, we have to follow the path laid down to us by Shreeji Maharaj, Shree Abaji Bapashree and Anadi Mukto. Any other path has a risk of distraction or lower achievement.



Let me give an example to explain why this has relevance. Some years ago, after progressing in management in my professional life, life put me in position where I had to look for other job opportunities. It was not the first time I was looking for a job, and I was very confident to get another job, since I thought I had mastered the art of interviewing. Guess what? It took me forever to find another job. Then a friend of mine trained me in interviewing for higher level position. I had to completely transform my approach to answers, my appearance, my posture during the interview process, the way I spoke, the tone of my voice. Everything I knew about art of interviewing had to be changed. Just because now I wanted to try for higher level positions. It is a similar concept in spiritual progress – to progress to the highest spiritual level, every other technique except the one that will get us there should be dropped. This technique is taught to us with utmost clarity by AMPP NarayanMama.

This is where we will spend some time today. There is a lecture in Gujarati by AMPP NarayanMama on meditation. The audio and video of that is available as far as I know. The transcription of that audio is also printed by Shree Swaminarayan Divine Mission. Let's understand in English what AMPP NarayanMama has explained. If I have misunderstood or misinterpreted anything, I would request all the progressed Mukto to correct me.

1. The first step is to select a form of Lord Swaminarayan that we like. This form should have the front posture with both eyes of Lord Swaminarayan visible and not a side posture with one eye. AMPP NarayanMama used to say that the Mangala Darshan of the seated Ghanshyam Maharaj in Vadatal, the form that is established in Shree Swaminarayan divine mission, has a resemblance to the divine Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan.
2. Second step is to memorize this form we chose for meditation
 - a. To do this, find a time when the mind is calm and Sattvaguna is prevailing. Yogis say that the best time is BrahmaMuhurt between 3:00 – 4:00 AM in the morning when the Ida and Pingala representing intellect and emotion are both running, so these two are in balance. Even from worldly perspective, that's when the most calm is.
 - b. At this time one should find a clean and pure place, preferably a separate room to sit down for meditation. If a separate room is not available, select a place that is the most cleanest and calmest.
 - c. Meditation generates electricity in our body using our hormones, which have stored through celibacy, which in turn help in spiritual progress. If our body is touching the ground, this electricity will get grounded and will be lost. So, make sure to sit on something that avoids direct contact with the ground.
 - d. The posture is the most known with folded legs like Padmasan, and straight back and head alignment.
 - e. The form of the God we want to meditate upon should be at the same height as our eyes so that we are able to maintain a straight posture.
 - f. For memorizing the form of God, the best technique is called "Traatak", where you keep looking at the form of God without blinking for as long as possible, even if tears roll down the eyes. This creates an impression on the brain, and makes it easy for remembering, and recalling and visualizing. Then close the eyes and try to remember the form.
 - g. In the initial phases, you may not be able to visualize the entire Moorti, but only parts of it. We can start with feet and go up all the way to the head, and then journey back to



the feet. Gradually, we will start visualizing larger parts of the Moorti and then eventually we will be able to visualize the entire Moorti.

3. Once the Moorti is memorized, there is no need for Tratak, but focusing on the Moorti in between the two eyes where the Agha Chakra is, and visualizing it with closed eyes.
4. Then one will be able to move the Moorti around, bring it close, take it far. At this time, bring it as close as possible. We can bring it only as close as it touches us. We cannot get any closer.
5. At this point, flip the vision and imagine your soul to be the brilliance of Lord Swaminarayan and envision the Moorti in that brilliance. And soon after that, visualize the Moorti from the inside. The soul is now within the Moorti and enjoying the bliss of the Moorti.
6. Continue meditating in this step 5 for the rest of the life. Depending on the capacity, this Ekantik Mukta will realize the divine Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan during the lifetime or at the end of the life.
7. When the realization happens, the soul gets past MulMaya and enters the divine world. At that very moment, since the soul has been meditating on the definite divine form of Lord Swaminarayan, the grace of Lord Swaminarayan showers on the soul, and makes the soul also divinely embodied and merges the soul with the Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan.

So this in a nutshell is the meditation taught by AMPP NarayanMama. This meditation can be helpful to anyone who wants to attain transcendent form of any deity in the divine world. It is simple, straightforward, easy and least risky. It is like we have a got a chopper ride at the base of the mountain to get to the highest peak. Why worry about the many other long drawn paths to get to the peak? Just get to the peak, and enjoy the beauty.

Having talked about how to get to Stage 1 of the hierarchy. Let's spend some time in Stage 1 of the hierarchy. Heading Stage 1 is Sovereign, All-doer, All-controller, All-supporter, All-pervading, Omniscient, Self-illuminated, Immutable, Detached, Integral, Everlasting, Eternal, Boundless, Divine Form of **Supreme Lord Shree Swaminarayan**. Bapashree says that the Moorti is not flat or 2-dimensional, but is solid and has a definite form. Lovefully merged with this divine form or the Moorti are the Anadi Mukta of Lord Swaminarayan. Anadi Mukta are divinely embodied and enjoy the bliss of the Moorti while remaining inside the Moorti. Through God's grace and meditation when a soul becomes an Anadi Mukta, AMPP Mama used to say this Anadi Mukta spends eons enjoying the bliss of a small part of one toe nail of Lord Swaminarayan, and still cannot fathom the bliss and the happiness. After many such eons, the Anadi Mukta starts enjoying the bliss of a larger area, and eventually progresses to enjoying the bliss of the entire Moorti all at once. And still cannot fathom the bliss. In this state, there is no other activity except for enjoying the bliss of the Moorti. There is a constant feeling of Lord Swaminarayan being the giver of the bliss and Anadi Mukta being the enjoyer of the bliss. There is no other feeling. Once in a while, when God wishes, those Mukta that progressed from the same world, realize how other Mukta have progressed. That too is in the initial phases, if God wishes, but later on there is no such knowledge or awareness. Anadi Mukta, as Bapashree explains are the queen and all that belongs to Shreeji Maharaj, the king, also belongs to the queen. In our corporate world example, we are like the family of the CEO of a company. We do not belong to the hierarchy, but we enjoy the bliss of success of the CEO. These Mukta that Abaji Bapashree calls Anadi Mukta, Gopalanand Swami calls them Kaivalya Mukta.



The next level are the Param Ekantik Mukta or Videhi Mukta as Gopalanand Swami would call them. Param Ekantik Mukta reside in the vicinity of the Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan. They always see the front of the Moorti and feel like the Moorti is facing them all the time. They can see the transcendent form – the Moorti, in front of them but are not merged with the Moorti. The next level are the Ekantik Mukta or Jeevan Mukta. These are the Mukta who have done spiritual endeavors to please Shreeji Maharaj and become eligible for liberation. They are however still in the body in which they performed those endeavors, and sometimes are with badhitanuvrutti. They meditate on the transcendent form of Lord Swaminarayan and can see the form during meditation but have not yet realized the Moorti.

The way AMPP NarayanMama used to explain about Mukta was that Ekantik are those Mukta who are enroute the beach. Param Ekantik Mukta are those who have arrived at the beach, are enjoying the gentle breeze, walking in the wet sand, enjoying occasional mist or splash from the ocean, and dipping their feet in the water when a wave comes through. Anadi Mukta are like the divers or the surfers, who enjoy the ocean by jumping into the ocean and enjoying its immense beauty and power. So here's the good news! The good news is that we have started driving to the beach. AMPP Narayanmama is driving us there. He knows the shortest route to the beach for all of us, and soon we will all be there. Once we get there, he has already trained us to surf a little, without our conscious knowledge, and we will start surfing as soon as we get there.

Along these lines, there is one thing that I wanted to touch upon. AMPP NarayanMama has addressed the topic of worship of Anadi Mukta in one of his lectures. He has explained that worship of only the Mukta is not acceptable. If the Mukta is worshipped with Lord Swaminarayan, it is ok. Just as it is ok to worship Hanumanji, or Radhaji. He also however clarifies that a Mukta will never ask or expect that they are worshipped. Anyone who proposes that is an imposter. Secondly, he used to emphasize that no matter what, the only form to meditate upon is the form of Lord Swaminarayan, no incarnations, no Mukta. But it is ok to give our respectful reverence to those Anadi Mukta enjoying the bliss of the Moorti.

Now, from the Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan, emanates the divine brilliance. It seems like the Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan resides in this brilliance, but as a matter of fact, Moorti is the cause of the brilliance, and brilliance is the effect of the Moorti. This brilliance is called Akshardham. MulAkshar in Stage 2, can see only this immanent form of Lord Swaminarayan. This divine brilliance is all pervading in the perishable and unperishable world. However, this form does not interfere with the normal operation of these worlds. It is there and it is available for those who want to achieve this form, but it does not interfere. A few weeks ago, we had talked about multiple Higgs Boson which interact only in their force field and go unnoticed in other force fields. It is a similar concept. The immanent form of Lord Swaminarayan is all-pervading but not interfering. It interacts only with those who want to interact with the immanent form. Just as sunlight is everywhere, equally spread. In one wants to sleep during daytime, Sun god does not come and interfere, saying no sleep in my light. Those who sleep during daytime, chose darkness over sunlight and they are allowed to do that. They are given the independence to choose. Likewise, though the immanent form of Lord Swaminarayan, and other strata from divine world,



for that matter, is all-pervading, it does not interfere with the normal flow of the universe, and lets the machinery of creation run on autopilot. If the equation of creation, or equation of our world or equation of ourself or our karma-bindings, creates certain events or incident, the immanent form of Lord Swaminarayan, does not interfere, unless of course we pray to Him. The same goes with the transcendent form. It is all pervading, but it is visible only to those who aspire to see it. To give a simple example, it is like there is a TV channel being broadcasted, but only those who tune into it, will be able to watch the programs.

This brings us to the end of our journey. One lady satsangi once prayed to AMPP LeelaMasi to bless her to progress on the path of meditation. AMPP Leelamasi replied, "You will, if you make an effort." AMPP NarayanMama used to say that what good are the books, if they do not help in self-development? Likewise, what good is our journey, if it does not lead to meditation and aspiration for the Moorti. Otherwise, it is simply intellectual entertainment. So let's from now this day on, aspire to attain the divine Moorti of Lord Swaminarayan the ultimate goal and the ultimate bliss, and commit to meditate every day, even if it is for 5 minutes. That will be the ultimate attainment of our journey over past few weeks.

With that, lets conclude our journey. I think we have reached our destination. I humbly bow to the feet of Supreme Lord Shree Swaminarayan, Shree Abaji Bapashree, AMPP NarayanMama, AMPP LeelaMasi and anant Anadi Mukto and pray to them, to shower their blessings on us now and forever, and also to shower their blessings to those who listen to this series later. I also once again bow to my knowledge guru or gnan-guru PP JituKaka – Jitubhai Vyas, who has given many tireless hours to impart this knowledge to this meagre dumb person. I am not sure how much I have been able to absorb from what he, AMPP NarayanMama and AMPP LeelaMasi taught me. So I also request forgiveness from them, as well as from the divine Satsang to pardon my mistakes, my shortcomings and my ignorance. I also want to heartfully thank the satsang for giving me the opportunity to render this service. It has been my utmost honor and learning experience. I seek blessings and prayers from the Satsang sabha now and forever, to help me progress on the spiritual path.

Jai Swaminarayan! Sahajanand Swami Maharajni Jay! Bapashreeni Jai! Sadguruo Shreeni Jai! Anant Anadi Muktoni Jai! Swaminarayan Bhagwanani Jai!

