



S.K.S. SWAMINARAYAN TEMPLE (LONDON) – BAL YUVAK MANDAL

Westfield Lane, Kenton, Harrow, Middlesex, HA3 9EA Est. 1966 Charity Reg. No. 271034

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Shikshapatri Bhashya

Shiksha = teaching Patri = letter

The Shikshapatri is in the form of a letter where Lord Swaminarayan starts off by addressing his devotees. He has written the Shikshapatri in such a way where there is a beginning, middle, and end. It is divided into different sections.

The Shikshapatri has a specific order in which it was written. Why in the Shikshapatri has Lord Swaminarayan written the codes of conduct for Acharyas first, followed by his devotees and the Saints last?

MANGLACHARAN & SHLOK 1

The Manglacharan is recited at the beginning of every event, such as patotsav. It praises Bhagwan, and describes his nature, ability and his form. Infact, the Manglacharan has been customary in Hinduism to praise the Lord before initiating a new task. The Manglacharan allows the reader and the listener of scripture to focus on the murti of the Lord. Like other scriptures, Maharaj started writing the Shikshapatri with the Manglacharan shlok.

**“Vamaya yasya shtita radha, Shreescha yasyasti vakshasi
Vrindavan viharam tamshree, krushnam radaychintaye”**

**“I meditate, in my heart, upon Lord Shree Krishna, on whose left stands Radhikaji,
on whose bosom resides Laxmiji and sports divine activities in Vrindavan.”**

Why did he mention Radhikaji and Laxmiji’s name in the first shlok?

(‘Ra’ means to destroy sins and relieves one from the cycle of re-birth ‘dha’ means successful and peaceful life. Laxmiji lives in the heart of Lord Shree Krishna).

Why was Vrindavan mentioned instead of Gokul or any other holy places?

(It is a very peaceful place, where Lord Krishna has performed many lila’s).

SHLOK 2

Lord Swaminarayan is pointing out that he himself is writing the Shikshapatri, whilst residing in Vadtal. He refers to himself as Sahajanand, which means one who has natural happiness and is willing to share it with the rest of his devotees.

SHLOK 3

Swaminarayan Bhagwan mentions his 2 brother’s sons who he has adopted as his own sons. **Name the two brothers, the first Acharya’s and which Ghadhi they took control of?**

What is the importance of having Acharays? (Guru Mantra, without it the path to Akshardham is difficult).



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SHLOK 4

Lord Swaminarayan mentions Naishtik Bramcharis and Grhasthas. A Naishtik Brahmachari is someone who is a celibate (a person who remains away from sexual relationships) from birth to death. A Naishtik Brahmachari studies and obeys the Vedas and performs thap (austerity), and also seeks supreme knowledge.

Mukundanand is an example given of an ideal Naishtik Bramchari. He is also known as Mulji Bramchari. From a very young age, his wish was to observe absolute celibacy and worship God. His service to Shree Sahajanand was impeccable and his devotion for God was wholehearted.

The second part of this shlok is devoted to Mayaram Bhatt, who is framed as an ideal Grhastha (householder). Mayaram was born in a brahmin family and he was a dedicated servant of the Lord. He often sacrificed his own family duties to fulfil Maharaj's duties.

A Grhastha is a married individual who lives a pious/righteous life by observing the laws of dharma and fulfilling his responsibilities as a householder, family member and a community member. Thus, Grhastha ashram is not all about making money, raising a family and being successful in work. It is more about fusing elements of Dharma and Bhakti in everyday working life.

NOTE: - Refer to last week's presentation. What did Mayaram Bhatt do?

SHLOK 5

In this shlok, Swaminarayan Bhagwan refers to all the female devotees (sadhva stree - female devotee and vidhva stree – widowed devotees).

Why has he not named any specific female devotees?

Can you name any great female devotees of the past?

Finally he has addressed the tyagi's. The Lord has mentioned Sadhus, such as Muktanand. He chose Muktanand because he was intellectual and had firm devotion of Maharaj. Although he was one of the elder saints, he had great respect for fellow young and old Sadhus.



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Mukundanand Brahmchari (Mulji Brahmchari).

He was born in Machhiyav (Saurashtra). He was known by the name Muljibhai. At a young age he decided he did not want to get married and wanted to be a Brahmchari. His father tried to convince him that in this age of Kaliyug it is very hard to observe the Brahmchari vrat and his father tried to get him married. After all that was said by his father he still decided he did not want to get married, so he left home and went to Loj. In Loj he met Ramanand Swami where he attained diksha and was given the name Mukundanand. After attaining diksha, sometime later he met Lord Swaminarayan and he never left Maharaj's side once meeting him. He was a faithful servant to Maharaj just as Hanuman was to Lord Ram.

Once Maharaj held a sabha in Vadtal, he requested for some water as he was very thirsty. Mukundanand varni jumped from the top floor to the bottom floor, got some water and gave it to Maharaj. Maharaj asked why did you not use the stairs, you will get hurt won't you? Mukundanand replied if I went down the stairs it would have taken time to attend to you and as for getting hurt you are the protector of all so there is no worry in getting hurt. Mukundanand Varni had this sort of sevanishta.

He would remember good while walking, sleeping, eating etc. He would never fail in attending to Maharaj's needs. He observed the absolute eight-fold celibacy.

Maharaj has praised Mukundanada in the Shikshapatri and the Vachnamrut. It says that Mulji is very dear to the Lord and in the Vachanamrut Maharaj says "This Mulji Brahmchari is a Nishkami Bhakta and therefore I find pleasure in accepting his seva. He has excellent qualities which are comparable with even god himself.

Mayaram Bhatt

He was from Manavadar and was a disciple of Ramanand Swami. He was born into a Brahmin family and displayed famed qualities of his chaste. Mayaram was firmly devoted to Maharaj and would spend his whole day in bhakti and meditation. His worked suffered as a result but he did not care as his devotion to god was so great. Maharaj once came to Manavadar and noticed that all the fields had been ploughed except one. Maharaj came to know the field not ploughed belonged to Mayaram. As Mayaram was in constant meditation he had not done his job. Maharaj decided that we must help him, so he asked the saints and devotees to help and plough the fields. In a short while the whole field was ploughed.

Maharaj often asked Mayaram to deliver important letters when needed, as he would do it quickly. He once delivered a letter from Gadhada to Buranpur and returned in a single night.

The first time he came into contact with Maharaj was when Maharaj came to Loj. Mayaram took Nilkanth varni and Muktanand Swami's letter to Bhuj and bought back a reply from Ramanand Swami. This is the greatness of Mayaram, even though he had worldly responsibilities he still offered devotion to god and obeyed all commands.



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SHIKSHAPATRI BHASHYA

SHLOK 6

Lord Swaminarayan conveys the fact that he hopes that all his devotees everywhere follow the example set by the great devotees such as Mayaram Bhatt, Muktanand Swami etc. He goes on to state if my devotees follow this Shikshapatri they will get the blessings of Shreeman Narayan.

He invites all to be part of Satsang and obey the laws of dharma. If this is achieved then Shreeman Narayan showers his choicest blessings upon his devotees.

SHLOK 7

This Shikshapatri has been written for the welfare of every soul. It can relieve you from the cycle of birth and re-birth.

When we buy a device or machine, we are provided with an operation manual which provides us with the information required to ensure its proper use. In the same way this Shikshapatri is a instruction manual for life which guides us to correct living procedures and how to live a successful life.

Only if we digest and analyse the Shikshapatri will we truly appreciate the great message given by Lord Swaminarayan.

We have all been fortunate to be born in this life as a human into a satsang family under the guiding hand of Lord Swaminarayan. This is a great chance for us to be released from the cycle of birth and re-birth.

RECAP Questions

1. Who is Mayaram Bhatt?
2. Who is Mukundanand Brahmchari?
3. Whom did Maharaj adopt as his own sons?
4. Who is a Naishtik Brahmchari?
5. Who is a Grahastha?

Nar-Narayan Dev Jayanti - Recap

1. Who were the parents of Nar-Narayan Dev?
2. Why was Nar-Narayan Dev born, for what main reason?
3. Where is he doing his penance?
4. Why is he doing penance?
5. Why do we not fast on Nar-Narayan Dev Jayanti?



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SHIKSHAPATRI BHASHYA SHLOK 8 AND 9

This shlok cannot be stressed enough and readers should pay great attention to these two shloks. The Lord here uses a IF - THEN - ELSE statement: -

IF my devotees observe the code of conduct (sadachara) set in the holy scriptures such as Shreemad Bhagwat Purana

THEN they will derive great happiness in this world and the life hereafter or

ELSE they will undergo great suffering.

What does it mean when referring to life hereafter?

Shatanand Swami has explained that this happiness is beyond even the likes of Brahma and others. It is therefore our duty (Dharma) to follow this Shikshapatri. The one who desires Dharma (and thus salvation) should concentrate upon the YAMAS and NIYAMS. Shreemad Bhagwat Purana explains these YAMAS and NIYAMS for the betterment of ones self.

Try and name the 12 YAMAS?

1. **Ahimsa** – Non-violence to all living things
2. **Satyam** – Truth, honesty on action and speech
3. **Asteyam** – Refrain from all criminal activity
4. **Asagno** – Non-attachment
5. **Hrir** – Modesty, humbleness, simplicity
6. **Asarchaiyaha** – Does not accumulate wealth
7. **Astikyam** – Deep faith and belief in god
8. **Brahmcharya** – Control the senses of celibacy
9. **Maunam** – Vow of silence
10. **Sthairyam** – Stability and firmness of oneself
11. **Kshama** – Forgiving
12. **Abheyam** – Non-fearing

Try and name the 12 NIYAMS?

1. **Saucham** – cleanliness and purity of mind, body and actions
2. **Japa** – chanting god's name
3. **Tapo** – penance, physical austerities
4. **Homaha** – yagna
5. **Shraddha** – faith in god
6. **Atithyam** – Hospitable, welcoming all
7. **Madarchanam** – devotion and worship to god
8. **Tirthatanam** – performing pilgrimages
9. **Paratheyaya** – desire for salvation
10. **Tushtira** – satisfaction, contentment
11. **Svadyaya** – study of Vedas, Shastras
12. **Acharyasevanam** – service to a guru



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By following these YAMAS and NIYAMS a person is considered a sadachari and attains a desirable path to fulfilment. Prosperity in life will only occur in this life and the next through righteous conduct outlined in shastras. Only a fool believes that material wealth is the root of true happiness.

Rishi Yagnavalkya has said those who do not obey dharma and do not control their senses face downfall. This human form comes along very rarely and time is very short, we have less than 100 years to work towards banking a place in Akshardham. We should make the most of it or we will be forced into the cycle of birth and re-birth. Living in Kaliyug is a blessing in disguise as the different yugas hold different dharmas and the life expectancy varies.

In **Satya-yug** people live for 100,000 years,
in **Treta-yug** 10,000,
in **Dwapura-yug** 1000 years and
in **Kali-yug** 100 years.

In Satya-yug to attain the heavens man is expected to perform great austerities and control their senses whereas in Kali-Yug we can attain the heavens by chanting the Lord's name. The Lord has made it very easy for us as we can attain god by doing bhakti and do not have to go to the forest to do penance. It is said in Satya-yug a person faces 1000 years of sickness and 100 years of fatal illness in the lead up to their death. With this in mind, we should count ourselves lucky we do not have to suffer this.

Which Holy scriptures should we obey? The Lord mentions Shreemad Bhagwat Puran but there are numerous scriptures that can be followed*. During this day and age it is very difficult to read all the religious scriptures so the Lord has made it very easy for us by giving us this Shikshapatri. If it is followed we are guaranteed salvation, it is written in black and white, this is a promise by Maharaj himself. There is no scripture in the world where God makes a promise and has written it in black and white.

***Name as many scriptures as you can which help us follow the correct code of conduct?**



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SHIKSHAPATRI BHASHYA SHLOK 10

Hence, all my disciples shall love and follow the commandments of this Shikshapatri vigilantly and never violate them.

Shatanand Swami says; enthusiasm and unshaken chivalry reward a person with great happiness. Therefore we must all, with dedication consider and obey the laws of conduct in this Shikshapatri.

This Shloka concludes the introduction to the Shikshapatri. In this final Shloka, He asks that all his disciples love and cherish the Shikshapatri and to follow the commandments with great regard. We should all follow the Shikshapatri with the intention of pleasing the Lord because we genuinely want to.

We must never violate any of the commandments of the Shikshapatri. We must do our very best to uphold every single commandment. This Shikshapatri is the very incarnation of Lord Swaminarayan. To violate or disregard any one Shloka is to disregard Lord Swaminarayan himself.

*Now Lord Swaminarayan begins with the main body of the Shikshapatri. The first part of which is directed to all Satsangi's of all classes and castes. He begins **Samanya** (ordinary) **Dharma** duties by first and foremost glorifying the great Dharma of **Ahimsa** (non-violence).*

SHIKSHAPATRI BHASHYA SHLOK 11

My disciples shall never kill intentionally any living creature, not even small insects such as lice or bugs.

From here on in Maharaj is stating what not to do and then he will go on to say what you should do.

The Smrutis say “NA HIMSYAT SARVABHUTANI” which means never kill any living creature how ever big or small. Ahimsa dharma is the biggest and the very root of Hindu dharma. It is said you can carry out prayaschit for unintentionally killing or harming a creature but there is no such prayaschit written for intentionally killing or harming a creature*. In the Yamdand Scripture Nishkulanand Swami has written, the jeev goes to ‘Andhakupa Narak’ for inflicting pain upon God’s creatures. There he is forced to endure great pain from various animals, birds, snakes etc. as they bite and torment him. Ahimsa is indeed a great pillar of our Sanatan Hindu Dharma that should be accepted by all.

* One should seek advice from a saint regarding prayaschit, as they will specify which course of action to take.

Questions:

What is Prayaschit?

What is the reason for stating all the “Do not’s” first followed by the “do’s”?



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SHIKSHAPATRI BHASHYA SHLOK 12 AND 13

No creatures such as goats and cows shall be killed even for offering as a sacrifice to deities or ancestors, because non-violence is the highest of all Dharma, as stated in the Shastras. || 12||

- This Shlok builds on the idea of Ahimsa (non-violence). **Recap quickly on what this is.**
- Shastras use the word “Aaj” when talking about materials used in sacrifices. This means more than 3 year old rice which is unsuitable for cooking. Kusangis (non-satsangis) have often mistaken this to mean goat.
- Proof can be found in the Story of King Upreecharvasu (pronounced oop-reach-ar-vasu). The King performed many non-violent Yagnas and was rewarded with the ability to ride freely to Indralok (Indra – King of Demi Gods, Lok – His abode (kingdom)). He became good friends with Indra; one day while in Indralok, King Upreecharvasu was asked to give his opinion on something. Indra was planning on sacrificing goats and was arguing with the Rishis who said that the Shastras forbade this. When they asked the King his opinion he favoured Indra so as not to lose his position in Indralok. As soon as he said that both yagnas were permitted he immediately fell down to earth and was ripped of his rewards from his non-violent yagnas. (Reference: Vayu Puran) **What is the moral of this story?**
- A further illustration is that of King Barshi who occupied the whole world for violent yagnas, yet he desired more land. Naradji (**Who is Naradji?**) wanted to show him the fruits of such yagnas, so he put the King in a state of samadhi (A deep meditation state when your body becomes a vegetable; you hear, see or feel nothing in the material world). Within samadhi the King was shown Yampuri (hell) where were many animals waiting with axes to slaughter him again and again. (Reference: Mudak Upanishad) **What is the moral of this story?**
- **Refer back to previous shlok regarding insects and the equality of the soul, despite the difference in its outer garments (i.e. body).**
- A vow of non-violence gives you the fruits of thousands of yagnas without having to perform them.
- **Discussion** – Is there a difference between those who eat meat, those who slaughter it for others (farms), those who sell it (superstores, the cashiers)? **Ultimately your answer should be no, everyone receives equal punishment from the people who slaughter to those who sell and eat the meat.**



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One shall never kill a human being, even for the sake of obtaining a woman, wealth or sovereign powers. || 13 ||

- This shlok is straight forward and builds upon the previous ones.
- Killing is not only a sin but a crime also and those found guilty must serve at least one lifetime imprisonment (25 years). Still this is nothing compared to the punishment you receive in Yampuri when you are constantly tortured for what seems eternity. When you are finally out you must start all over again in the cycle of life and death (8.4million species).
- Discussion: The Shlok seems to imply that women, wealth and having a kingdom are bad things. Do you agree? Why do we see many Satsangi females...are they not bad? Or what about wealthy Satsangi's...?

The discussion should discuss how women are maya (illusion) when looked in a sensual (sexual) manner, but not if you look at them as your mother or sister etc. Also wealth is not bad, be grateful for what you have, think of those less fortunate, and use it wisely i.e. not on cigarettes, alcohol, clubs etc.

NOTE: It does not mean women are bad and should be disregarded. Maya resides within women, that is why they are referred to as maya.

Owning a Kingdom isn't bad if you treat your subjects the way God wants them treated. Substitute a Kingdom for a business and the same thing applies.