

BHAKTI NIDHI
(Devotional Treasure)
by
Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami

INTRODUCTION

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami was one amongst the five hundred great saints of Shree Swaminarayan Bhagwan. He was a released soul of Akshardhaam. Swami's life and works are evidence of this. He was a prestigious person in his society and was known in the town and region as a noble professional. His conjugal life was happy and cheerful and he was father of two handsome sons. But when Lord Sahajanand Swami asked him, all of a sudden, about his desire for a person like him, he forsook his householder responsibility, fame, wealth and worldly relations to become a saint of Lord Swaminarayan. This is not within the capacity of a layman. Only a released soul of Akshardhaam could do this.

With the grace of Shree Hari, the goddess of knowledge and learning – Saraswati – dwelt in his heart. Though he was illiterate, he wrote a large number of scriptures, and was profound in knowledge, devotion and philosophy. If an aspirant read his scriptures with his heart and soul, he would undoubtedly attain tranquil bliss in his worldly life. The scripture **Bhakti Nidhi** describes the form and attributes of devotion. It is a great scripture dedicated solely to devotion.

Bhakti Nidhi means the treasure of devotion. It is a work of higher order in literature that exclusively deals in devotion. It is the nectar of *Dharma* (ethical duties), *Gyan* (knowledge of ultimate reality) and *Vairagya* (asceticism). There are 44 *Kadavas* (Stanzas), 11 *Pada* (Songs) 2 *Sorathas* and 2 *Dohas*. It is a treasure of devotion. We should know that *Swadharmas* (Personal Ethical Duties), *Gyan* (Ultimate Knowledge), and *Vairagya* (Asceticism) are the real charms of devotion. Dharma, Gyan and Vairagya are a must for devotion. Just as ornaments and attires make a beautiful woman more adorable, in a similar way devotion becomes charming with Dharma, Gyan and Vairagya. One should do Bhakti with Dharma. One can understand this scripture through faith.

SORATHA 1

("I bow to Lord Purushottam. Though the Vedas and the scriptures have addressed him as infinite and unique beyond imagination and reasoning, may He, Lord Shree Hari, be easily available to me in his charming human form.")

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami bows to Lord Shree Hari. He prays, "O Lord! My Creator! My Sustainer! O Giver of Pure Intelligence! O Emancipating God! You are my mother, father, friend, relative and

everything. Your powers are infinite! Your life is beyond assessment. Your wisdom is profound. Your ways are unique and unfathomable. O God! Just as the ocean cannot be filled in a pot, similarly your virtues cannot be counted and narrated in full by a soul. Shrutis (Vedas and Scriptures) have sung your praises as *Neti* – ‘there is no end to it’.

“O Bhagwan! O Almighty! You can do whatever you desire. Nothing is impossible for you. O God! You are the perfect image form of all the virtues and you are the treasure of the virtues. You are absolute holiness. You are the eternal truth. Your majesty is supreme. You are most charming in your human form. O Lord Shree Hari! Please be available to me. O Lord Shreeji Maharaj! You have now become easily available.”

“O God! O Merciful one! You have not made us into a tree, stone, rock, bird or an animal, but have favoured us by giving us birth as a human being. Then favouring us again in profundity, you have incarnated yourself for us in your human form, and have come to us for our emancipation. Your favours and obligations are unimaginable. You have blessed us with eyes to do your darshan and with ears to listen to your praises, you have blessed us with feet to walk and intellect to think and ponder upon! O God! We pray for the best virtues of servitude risen from and inspired by your lotus like feet and our refuge at its blessed shelter. Please have mercy! Bless us with your devotion and devotional love.

1. The Mind Set: Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami prays, “O God! Please reside and dwell in my heart by removing ills from it.” Swami then says to the Satsangis, “The inner weaknesses malign our heart. To escape sins, check daily for your mistakes and follies. Be alert against sinful acts. A trader checking his accounts daily and regularly saves himself from fraud or loss. Similarly, a man witnessing, observing and checking his mistakes daily becomes a virtuous man one-day. One should repent with one’s heart the mistakes he has committed during the day. He should confess in front of God for all the wrongs of the day, and should beg for pardon heartily. To check the follies in a daily routine, one should think, reason and ponder on the day’s activities at night before sleep. One should think whether he has spoken any bad of others. Has he spoken any bad in the welfare of others? Has he misguided anybody? Has he pained anybody? To what extent has he paid attention in imbibing virtues? How much has he thought wrongly? How much has he acted religiously or ethically? Pondering thus on these vital areas every night before sleep, one should examine and check thoroughly ones mind and thought processes, and during the course of checking, if any wrong or malignant thing is found, then one should cleanse ones mind and soul by repenting heartily for that wrong action.

We can save ourselves from sins if we look back at the faults in our mind and remove them at first sight like a stain removed from the face on seeing it in a mirror. The process is slow but it yields the desired fruits of self-improvement. It saves us against sins, makes our everyday life purer and

increases our devotional fervour. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami submissively prays, "O God! Please allow me with love to serve humbly at your lotus feet."

Once a merchant was in a hurry. He intended to attend an urgent assignment. The day was about to end and the place was too far to reach. In those days, there were no modern vehicles to travel faster in. The vehicles were of primary use, such as horses and bullock carts. He hired a bullock cart, set right the rent and rode it to travel. He asked the bullock cart driver to speed up. The driver-farmer was trying his best to go fast but the bullocks, despite rousing calls and punishing sticks, were not moving any faster. The merchant then said, "Why are your bullocks so lazy? Are you giving them food to eat or not? Why don't they walk faster, I am in a hurry." Then the farmer, said "The bullocks, though excellent in pulling the cart, have become tired of their days work. Therefore they can't pull it any faster."

After much time, they reached the destination late. The merchant finished his work and started for his return journey with the same bullocks and the same bullock cart. But as he rode the cart and the farmer loosened the rope ends in his hands, the bullocks ran fast like a bullet from a gun! The merchant was greatly astonished, "How so? Why do they go so fast? While on the way here, they were very slow! Now, why are they so fast with haste? Old man! You told me earlier that the bullocks were too tired to walk and pull. Now at such a late hour and after such a long journey, why are they running fast and eagerly?" Then the old cart-driver said, "Seth! The bullocks are now returning home. And therefore they run hurriedly. They are in hurry of reaching home."

The explanation given by the farmer was quite thought provoking. The Seth thought over it. Animals too are hurrying to reach their home - their final destination. But we human beings are so unfortunate that, we never prepare ourselves and show no hurry to go back home to the service of our God – our destination Lord Shree Hari. We are not as wise as these animals. We never go on the path of religion. Like an insect of dirt, we relish in this sinful world and in the illusions of the eternal entity (Maya). This alerted the mind of the trader, enlightened his inner-self and spiritual wisdom prevailed upon him. He realised that his real home was Akshardhaam. He was not hurrying for his real home. He was not as wise as the bullocks were. This episode changed the course of his life and the trader became a devotee of God by practising the religious tenets and observance of the rules and decorum. Now his heart and mind was attached to God!

What are the required changes for attaining *Dhaam*?

2. Bhagwan: Once, Lord Swaminarayan was gracing a huge assembly at Gadhada. He preached to his devotees, "O Saints! O my devotees! The world is mad after material gain and blindly chases the elemental pleasures. Its insane attitude is like the futile efforts of holding smoke in one's fists. Mankind is frustrated due to excessive physical and mental labour spent towards fruitless tasks. Indeed, some of them gain greater rewards with lesser efforts. They do not have to run here and there for money. They are not

worried about the future, because they have submitted their life to God. They are in oneness with their Lord. God is the only one who gives everlasting pleasure, He is their life."

Shree Hari continued, "O Great saints! Nothing can win God. Nobody can win God. Only devotion wins God. Learn to win God by devotion. God is firm and steady, know him through ultimate knowledge. God is desire free, please him with your devout service. Learn the art of pleasing God. God is beyond the limits of language, beyond any description, and the Vedas therefore describe him with the word 'Neti - Neti' (not like this, not like that). God cannot be easily described. Remove your inner impurities and be clean to sing the praises of God. Learn the ways to please God. Such changes in the inner-self will help you to get the most precious treasures of divine pleasure. A desire free mind will take you to the Dhaam of God. God will receive your service."

Swami says, "The devotees offer meals to the Lord, talk to him and spend time in pleasant pastimes when God manifests on the earth in his human form. But such rare opportunities are not available to the devotees when God is not manifest upon the earth. God is with us in his human form to strengthen our devotion and reaffirm our devotional love. Our Lord is indeed great, unfathomable, beyond the limits of cognitive senses and he is easily available to us – his devotees - very easily.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 1

("O God! You have manifested on the earth by incarnating yourself in human form. The souls on the earth were without a master. You have assigned them personal identity by making them the servants of your worthy self for their ultimate emancipation. O how I praise the profundity of your mercy and kindness!")

Those who are without a sustainer are called supportless or orphans. The souls on the earth were orphans – supportless. O God! In you, they have found their master! O God! You are our master. You are our support. You are our sustainer. Shreeji Maharaj has said in his Vachanamrit, "The cattle of a master comes back home at evening after grazing for the whole day in the fields. But a stray cattle, without any master or owner would loiter here and there throughout the day and would pass the evening and night anywhere aimlessly. Someone may kick or hit it or at times a wild animal may kill it. Like this domesticated animal, you may come back to our master's refuge or may spend your days and nights anywhere loitering here and there in the wilderness like a disowned or stray cattle. Will you go back to the protective shade of dependence and to the meals of devotional songs by leaving and forsaking the worldly ways or chase day and night the pleasures of worldly objects?" Then the devotees submitted, "O God! O Maharaj! We are doing

Satsang of Bhajan, Kirtans and Japa of God and dwelling in the nest of God." Therefore surrender to your master; don't live without your master.

A man becomes a bride's husband or master through marriage when she wears the ornaments submitted by him. He could be called "a master by marriage". But God is our husband or master by the vital air (*prana*). Therefore we should wear ornaments for him - the master. What are those ornaments? His ornaments are very precious. The ethical duties (*Dharma*), ultimate knowledge (*Gyan*), asceticism (*Vairagya*), devotion (*Bhakti*), mercy (*Daya*), forgiveness (*Kshama*), peace (*Shanti*) and other such virtues are his ornaments. Swami Nishkulanandji says, "O God! In you we have obtained our master. O God! You are most merciful and emancipative! You are the ever-flowing river of pleasures and joys. All are happy in the kingdom of God."

The saintly poet further sings the praises of God:

("O Lord Shreeji Maharaj! All are happy in your kingdom. You are pleased with all your devotees. But now, it seems you are greatly pleased with your followers, as you have blessed your devotees with the donation of fearlessness".)

3. The Donations : Donations are of several kinds: Donation of attires, donation of land, donation of a maiden, donation of food, donation of knowledge, donation of gold and wealth etc. But remember it well, among all donations the greatest is the donation of fearlessness. Donating fearlessness means to take one to a fear free place – Akshardhaam, where there is no fear, no death, no birth, no enmity, no eternal entity or its evolutes and no effect of *kala*. Such Akshardhaam is filled with immense and eternal pleasure. Words cannot describe it. O Lord! You have incarnated on the earth to give such donation of fearlessness to your devotees. You have emancipated many souls by consigning them to your divine abode of *Brahman Mahol*. In such age of Kali, you have sanctified them with the innocence of Satyuga.

("O God! You descended to the earth to emancipate a large number of souls to consign them to Brahman Mahol. O God! You have removed their drawbacks and faults by the religious tenets and ethical duties. Nothing is impossible for a great God like you. You are Lord Supreme! You are ever-free of desires").

God wields supreme majesty with absolute satisfaction.

The main land of Saurashtra is the sacred land of Shreenes, and there exists the dense forest of Mt Girnar. Lord Varni dwelled in that forest. His blissful darshan removed the ferocity from wild animals. Ferocious animals stared at him peacefully and Vanmali – Varni, showered blissful mercy while walking through the dense forest. Thus he crossed the forest and came to

Gupta-Prayag. From there he came to Dolasa – a small village. The village was inhabited by nomadic communities of *Ahirs*, *Rabaaris* and *Bharvads*. A good shepherd named Bhala was a resident of this village. He received Shree Varni at his house. Bhala Bharvad was a rich farmer and philanthropic by his inherent nature. His villa-like house was always open for needy people. He was providing free meals to such unknown visitors and was helping them by donating in kind with due respect towards them. Nilkanth Varni graced his house. Bala saw a Yogi standing in front of him. He ran to Nilkanth Varni, offered salutations with due respect and honourably escorted him to his courtyard and offered a seat on the cot by spreading a rug. With due respect he offered a raw meal to cook the food. Nilkanth Varni cooked the meal and prepared Thaal to offer it to Lord Thakorji. Then Varni had his meal for the day. In the late evening they went to their respective places to sleep.

In the late night a mendicant came to Bhala's house. Bhala gave food to him and offered night shelter to share with Nilkanth Varni. This mendicant was in the habit of calling out to God loudly and frequently. As and when he changed his posture or position he would call out to God loudly. Even in his sleeping state, as and when he changed from one side to another, he would speak aloud the name of God 'Hey Raam'. There too, he did the same and said 'Hey Raam' as and when he changed his side. But in this case, Bhagwan invariably responded to each of his calls with a 'Yes?'. The mendicant never knew that God was beside him.

As he heard one such response, he quickly got up and asked, "Who has responded?" Looking at Varni he asked, "Are you Rama?"

"Of course I am - If you recognize me that is." The episode is highly educative. We too should remember God while sleeping at night.

Then the mendicant said in a challenging tone, "If you are Rama, manifest yourself in the image of Lord Rama, only then will I believe you to be God." As the mendicant uttered the words, Nilkanth Varni manifested himself in the image of Lord Rama holding the majestic bow and emanating tranquil luminosity from his divine person. In this divine light he did darshan of Lord Rama, Lakshmana and Sitaji. The whole family surrendered at the lotus feet of Lord Rama. Then Lord Rama merged himself in the form of Nilkanth Varni, and Nilkanth in his celibate form stood in front of them showering hearty blessings on the family.

Then Bhala Bharvad said, "O God! You are our personal God. Please live in our house for five days and remove the darkness (ignorance) of our hearts. We are ignorant souls. Please preach and teach us religion – ethical duties. By living in this forest we too have become like wild animals." The merciful Lord, Nilkanth Varni, lived there and enlightened them with the knowledge of the ultimate. Bhala Bharwad was most fortunate amongst the people. God graced his house, and lived with him, and emancipated him and his family. He did darshan of God with his own eyes.

God has come to transform us into pure consciousness.

God has manifested himself to transform the souls to pure consciousness. He has emancipated many souls by gracing forests, villages, towns, houses and nomadic camps (*neesadas*). God has taken initiative to grace places for giving darshan to the aspirants and needy souls. Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan made himself easily available to the deserving souls:

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 2

(God who was most impossible to attain, has become easily available. It has become possible to do his service. Virtuous souls have known him. They are most fortunate.)

(One who is most fortunate in this world is he who knows Almighty Supreme Lord Shree Hari. One who has become unique and unparalleled in all the three Lokas is he who has embraced and warmly hugged his Lord. He has received his Lord in His divine human form. Shiva, Brahma and other deities are worshipping this same form of God.)

Lord Shreeji Maharaj has said that meditation and meditational concentration in the image of God should be continued non-stop, whether the image is visible or invisible. He shall not act cowardly by discontinuing meditational concentration. Meditational concentration destroys the canal desires of the causal body. It cleanses our mind. There are many advantages of meditational concentration.

4. Meditation : Meditational concentration is to the soul how water is to a tree and food is to a body. A plant deprived of water dries of death. A body weakens and loses energy in the absence of food. Similarly, a soul loses its spiritual stamina and becomes weak in devotion, if it is deprived of *Japa* (rosary chanting of mantra) and meditational concentration. To do *Dhyaan* (meditational concentration) means to establish face-to-face dialogue with God. The kings, ministers, statesmen and other such great people never liked a dialogue with small people – a layman. But God, though the supreme of all the lokas and cosmoses, greatest amongst the greats, always desires to talk to the smallest of his devotees by means of meditational concentration.

Meditational concentration protects and maintains the purity of a sacred person, and makes him purer by increasing the level of purity. A sinner who regularly does meditational worship and concentrates mentally will reduce and destroy his sins. Therefore, all us devotees should learn to do meditational concentration. Just as a healthy man becomes hungry at regular periods, in a similar way, a devout soul should ardently desire to do dhyaan at regular intervals.

Sadguru Muktanand Swami has said:

We spend many births in the sleep of ignorance. Now we should do the work for which we are here on this earth. Don't abandon your bed as you awake from the sleep. Remember well the most important thing: awake early in the morning at least two and a half hours before sunrise (during *Brahman Mahurta*). Remember God by chanting his divine name in your heart. Then leave your bed and go for the morning rituals of physical ablution, bathing etc. Don't indulge in householder matters, set aside everything to singularly do Japa of Shree Swaminarayan Mahamantra (hymn of Lord Swaminarayan) and concentrate meditatively on the divine image of Shree Hari in your heart.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

(The Supreme Lord manifests Himself in human form and at His own will. He incarnates Himself on the earth. A devotee meets and sees God face-to-face, when God manifests Himself in human form. That is the most fortunate time for a soul, when Maharaj becomes like a man and appears on the earth to bless fearlessness to the dependent souls.)

Shreeji Maharaj once went to Vadtal from his Gadhada dhaam. He graced Sodhi – a small village, on his way to Vadtal. Shree Hari said, "Sura Khachar! Give me a piece of a green branch of acacia tree (Babool) to brush my teeth."

Sura Khachar said, "Maharaj! All the trees of acacia have dried away due to the scarcity of water. There are other wild plants in its substitute to brush one's teeth. If you don't mind, please have one of these."

Shree Hari ordered, "Visit the houses in the village and find one small piece of acacia plant." Sura Khachar checked every nook and cranny and inquired with the householders for a piece of green branch of an acacia tree. Checking the village thoroughly house after house, disheartened Sura Khachar came to the periphery of the village. There at a distance he saw a house of a Moslem. As he looked in the courtyard, he saw the evergreen and refreshing plant of acacia.

Sura Khachar said to the woman, "Sister! Allah wants to brush his teeth with the branch of an acacia tree; will you please give one?"

The lady was pleased with the words of Sura Khachar. She said, "We have nursed this plant for Allah by giving precious sweet water to its root. I will come personally to Allah to submit a green branch at his service to brush His teeth."

She went with Sura Khachar and submitted a piece of green acacia branch. God was pleased with her timely service. The scriptures have noted that Lord Shree Hari went to her and took her to his divine abode when she died. No Japa or Tapa were ever done by her but a small but timely service had become great enough to consign her to the divine abode of God.

(Opportune time matures for the souls, when the Supreme Lord manifests Himself upon the earth).

God has become easily attainable and emancipates the souls in no time.

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says: "Do selfless devotion with the innocence of a child. Don't ask for anything except the image of Maharaj. Be fear free and desire nothing else but devotion of God.")

Desire-free devotion should be performed. Expect nothing. Do not bargain – there should be no give-and-take in devotion. Devotion for curing a disease, devotion for becoming rich, devotion for getting a male child, devotion for relief in debts, etc. are not the ways of selfless devotion. Devotion is not a means of exchange. There is no room for give and take in devotion. If you are doing devotion, do it solely for God's pleasure, expect nothing in return. If you desire to receive or get something from God, then ask as was begged by Premanand Swami:

("Lord! Almighty! I beg for single-minded devotion. I beg devotional service at your lotus feet. I beg to you O God that there may be no malice towards a fellow Satsangi, a devotee of yours. O God! I beg for the companionship of a single-minded devotee of yours. Please O God! Take me as a servant of your servants. O Lord! Listen to the prayer of Premanand Swami and bless me with such boon.")

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 3

Therefore, beg for such things, but not ephemeral objects or worldly pleasures. It is always good if one does penance, japa, pilgrimage, donations and religious activities within his personal capacity. But if he aspires greedily for any sense objects, then.....

(It is the childishness of a devotee if he tries to please the Supreme Lord with his devotion and desires ephemeral pleasures from him - it is like one asking for buttermilk by giving away his butter.)

The short-sighted devotee, whose vision has not yet seen the eternal pleasures, indulges in smaller and ephemeral pleasures. His intellect is immature like that of a child. He is the kind of person who would ask for buttermilk instead of butter:

(It is like pleasing a great king and requesting a royal gift of an Onion! Similarly, God would shy away while granting such sense objects to a devotee.)

A king, if pleased with a man, may ask him to beg for a gift. If the man begs for a few onions from the king, would it impress upon the court and the king? The king too would feel very bad of this. How can a great one like him give such a cheap gift? He would ask the man to beg for some better things, as his prestige would be at stake on granting such a cheap vegetable. Be careful of this. Ensure you do not beg such a small thing from God. Don't ask for a sense object. Such small things cannot remove your torments.

Artificial flowers cannot give fragrance. Similarly, worldly pleasures are not capable of giving true happiness to the soul. Butter oil poured into the fire ignites taller flames. Worldly pleasures never give satisfaction and indeed the soul becomes spiritually weak.

(Don't go for the rice-skin by forgoing real rice; don't ask for grass by forgoing real grains; don't ask for rootless pleasures by forgoing the image of Maharaj.)

Who would prefer rice-skin to pure and polished rice? In the same way, only a fool would accept a dirty lump of sensual pleasures by forgoing his God. Disown ephemeral objects and receive in your heart the image of God. Be a true and faithful servant of God. God will shoulder your personal responsibilities. Even at this very moment, it is not you, but God who takes care of your personal responsibilities. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says "don't beg pitiably like a poor beggar."

Once a poor man went to the king and begged, "Maharaj! Please donate to me some torn and used clothes." Is it a just demand in front of a great king? Not at all. It was an insult to the king. That merciful king donated him precious clothes, some land and property!

If we beg for money, wealth, progeny or other such things in front of Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan, then the Supreme God of the cosmos would take those things as torn and tattered clothes holding no eternal value. Therefore, it would not be a proper demand. God's mercy is infinite. God is great. We have become like children, not knowing the eternal value of the gift given by our Lord. We desire and run like a child for the temporary pleasures by rejecting eternally devotional love.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "Do devotion of God with absolute love and with pure heart. Yoga (Yogic penance), Riddhi-Siddhi (good fortune) and other such means reside solely in devotion and the divine names of God. Do try to do devotion with absolute love. Meditate upon the divine names of God. These two are the abodes of blissful pleasure. The scriptures have praised the majesty of the image of God. People take care of their precious belongings, but in this world, the most precious belonging of ours is God and

our faith in God. Take total care of it. Protect it for the sake of your own protection.

Sadguru Premanand Swami sings:

(Swami says that he loves the divine and charming image of Mohan – Lord Shree Hari. He hides this image secretly in his eyes. He is not showing it to anybody. His Lord and the Lord's image are most charming and pleasure giving. The poet is mad after his Lord's charms and sings his praises day and night all the time and everywhere.)

Swami asks us to constantly sing the praises of God. Give away your householder chores. Stop bothering after anything else. A true devotee of God desires nothing but the image of his God. They don't desire any kind of emancipation of the four kinds, but desire only God. They desire to do devotion of God.

(Therefore, earn the pleasure of the pleasure giving God. Think deep and place your demands. Nishkulanand Swami suggests that those things, which run a high risk, should not be demanded.)

Swami asks us to please our Lord. How can an aspirant please God? There is a good way to please God:

Once a youth came to a saint and said, "How can we know that God is pleased with us?"

The saint replied, "Whom do you love best?"

"I love my wife. She is dearest of all relations to me," said the youth.

"And what do you do to maintain that love?"

"To maintain that love, I act as per the wishes of my wife. I do whatever she asks me to do. I extend love and respect to all her relatives. I entertain her friends to my very best. I love and like only those who are loved and liked by her."

Then the saint said, "Just as your love for your wife, makes you love her relatives, her lifestyle, her wishes and aspirations and accordingly she too reciprocates in a like manner by exhibiting similar love, affection and attachment to you - in other words she too loves you in a like manner; in a similar way, when you love God, you will obey his orders and will act as per the wishes of God. Just as you did in relation to your wife, here too, you will do everything to receive the pleasure of God by doing small but meaningful service to God. And as and when you begin to do so to please God, God too will reciprocate in like manner. Just as you have liked and loved your family relatives, in a similar way you will like and love the saints who are the relatives of the soul and the dear ones of God. Just as you have no repulsion now for her relatives and their lifestyle, the saints, ascetics and devotees too,

will be equally cherished treating them as family members of God and the soul. The day you feel such love and attachment for the saintly souls and the ascetics shall be the opportune time of God's favour – God's pleasure – God's love for you. Just as you love and respect your relatives, love and respect similarly the saints, ascetics and single-minded devotees. The service extended to them earns the pleasure of God. God will be pleased with your devotion."

The young man now knew the ways and means of pleasing God – his truest relative. God is supreme and the truest well-wisher of the soul.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 4

(There are many obstacles on the path of devotion and truth. Gods, demons and mankind try their utmost to bring down a devotee of God, from his path of devotion by means of covetousness, anger, greed and delusion. Prahlad's devotion and Japa was stopped by his father, and unbearable pains were inflicted to bring him down from the path of truth and devotion. Truthful King Harishchandra, virtuous King Shibi, pious King Nala and great ascetic Mudgala were tested very strictly.)

The birds prick their beak more on a ripe fruit. Similarly a true devotee is troubled more by people. But one should not be scared of this. It is quite natural that stones are thrown more on a tree that bears fruits. Man is naughty by his inherent nature. Man is a testing tool for the devotees of God. Prahlad was troubled much by his father, who gave him unbearable pains, but Prahlad never receded in his devotion. Harishchandra was tested rigorously by great ascetic Vishwamitra, who compelled him to sell himself, his wife and his son, to work as a servant in a burial ground. Despite such harsh tests and adversaries he never receded in truthfulness. King Shibi was troubled much by heavenly King Indra. Shibi was forced by him to cut his own body into pieces to weigh it against the weight of a dove. He thus sacrificed his body to favour and protect the life of a dove. Think about great King Nala. Heavenly king of Gods - Indradeva gave him much trouble and adverse time Kaliyuga threw on him odds and conspired adversaries to make him roam helplessly in the ferocious forest. But Nala and Damayanti never receded in their path of truthfulness. They were all successful due to the grace of God. God always protects his devotees.

King Ambarisha was troubled by Rishi Durvasa:

(Ambarish underwent unbearable pains for performing a *Vratta* (religious fasting). And king Narghosha invited innumerable troubles upon

himself by his donations. Durvasa came to Panchali and Pandavas to spoil their virtues.)

Draupadiji possessed a blessed gift of a divine food container. The container would continuously provide whatever one desired. When the meal was taken by all the family members inclusive of Draupadiji, the empty container was kept upside down after cleaning, only then would it cease producing any food. Once, the great Rishi Durvasa came to Pandavas with his ten thousand disciples. The Pandavas welcomed them with due hospitality. Rishi Durvasa blessed the Pandava family and said to Draupadiji, "Draupadiji! We would like to have lunch after our morning rituals at the bank of sacred river Ganga (Ganges). We will be back soon for the meal." Draupadiji was greatly perturbed. The mealtime was over, and the divine food container was kept upside down after cleaning. There was no scope of getting any food from it, and nothing was available at the hermitage to cook food for the ten thousand disciples of Durvasa. Durvasa was famous for his anger and his harsh curses. He never spared anybody – not even God, for his or her ethical misconduct. Not to give food to the guests was a very serious lapse in a householder's ethical duties. Draupadi made up her mind to sacrifice her life to escape the potential curse of Durvasa. She and the Pandavas therefore collected burning wood and formed a pyre for self-immolation.

The omnipresent Supreme Lord Shree Krishna, knew the intention of Draupadi and Pandavas. He immediately rushed to them and asked Draupadi, "Sister Draupadi! I am very hungry. Give me some food to eat."

"O Lord! We have just had our meals and have cleansed the utensils thereafter. There is nothing to give as food," said helpless Draupadiji.

"Don't say that there is nothing left to eat. Go and see. There must be something left to eat."

Draupadi brought back the divine container and gave it to Lord Shree Krishna. Lord Shree Krishna checked the container and said happily, "Look. Here is a leaf of a vegetable stuck to the inside of the container."

Picking up the leaf and showing it to them, Lord Shree Krishna kept it in his mouth with great satisfaction and proclaimed, "Let the three *lokas* be fully fulfilled and satisfied!"

As Shree Krishna uttered these words whilst consuming the piece of vegetable, Rishi Durvasa and his ten thousand disciples repeatedly belched with total satisfaction of consuming a meal while concluding the abulative rituals of the day. Durvasa then said to his disciples, "If we do not take the meal of the Pandavas now, Bhima will hit us with his *Gada* (mace) for spoiling their food. Therefore, avoid Pandava's hermitage at all costs and dart elsewhere." Thus the Rishi and his ten thousand disciples ran away from the bank of Ganga fulfilled, and the Pandavas, with Draupadi, were thus saved by Lord Shree Krishna, from the potential curse of Durvasa and breach of ethical duty.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says: "True devotees of God have been troubled by the world. Some devotees were agonised by their own caste and community, the kings tormented some and Gods and deities vexed some. A true devotee was always put to an agonising test, but none of them took a back-step in their devotion and penance. Be firm in your faith and do devotion of God. Devotion is a precious gem, protect and take care of it." Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says: "Do devotion of God for a fear-free life. It is a must for attaining fearlessness." Devotion is a must, for that love, devotional love, for our God is the root and the lifeline of devotion.

A disciple once asked his guru (teacher), "O Gurudeva! Where are the seeds of devotion sown?" His Guru answered: "The seed of a good tree needs fertile land for growing. Mango trees, sugar cane, cotton etc., need rich and fertile soil for their growth. For seeds of devotion and devotional love, a detached heart shall be the proper land to sow it in. The seed of devotion will not germinate and grow, unless the heart is really detached from the world and from the pleasure of the sense objects."

The scriptures have prescribed Dharma (religion), Gyana (knowledge), Vairagya (detachment), Yama-Niyam (tenets of self-discipline) and many other means for the emancipation of the soul. Among these, the means named devotion is the most effective. There is no alternative for it. Devotion is the best amongst these means for self-emancipation. God is pleased with the single-minded devotion of an aspirant. Devotion grants ultimate emancipation.

PADA (SONG) : 1

Some do Japa and some do penance and pilgrimage, some people do virtuous activities by doing donations and holy fires. But what will happen if they do not do devotion and service of God? In that case, they earn the *Punyas* by their virtuous acts and attain heaven - the abode of infinite pleasures. They live there in the heaven while their *Punyas* (reward of virtuous acts) last and are sent back in the endless cycle of the births and the deaths, when their *Punyas* end. All are treated equally, without any discrimination between the small and the big! Therefore, should one stop doing penance, pilgrimage, japa and sacred fires? No, it should not be. One, when doing other religious activities like penance, pilgrimage or donation etc., should engage himself with greater intensity in doing devotion and service of God. All other virtues and activities should become an integral part of devotion. Devotion of God should be attached firmly to all your religious and virtuous acts. In a nutshell, understand and grasp heartily the majesty of God and do hearty devotion of God. Sadguru Brahmanand Swami sings:

(Forsake ego, affection and delusion, and
love God. Life on the earth is not so long. O
dumb-headed one! Why do you put yourself in

such wasteful inconvenience? Therefore do devotion.)

Devotion is a fear-free treasure:

Devotion is like a pot made from gold. A golden pot would be damaged if it fell or if it were thrown on the ground. Such a damaged gold-pot, cannot be used as a container, yet it would not lose its value – importance – as its gold shall be equally valuable and would fetch a lofty amount, if sold as a metal. There will be a time when your devotion of God pays its virtuous rewards. There shall be a favourable time when your devotion bears fruits. Devotion is the pinnacle of all the means. It is the best amongst the means of attaining God and God's pleasure. Just as river Ganga is the best amongst the rivers, *Amrit* (nectar) is the best amongst the drinks, Garudaji (the heavenly eagle) is the best amongst the birds, the Brahmin is the best amongst all the castes, and in a similar way, devotion is the best amongst the means to attaining God and God's love.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 5

A devotee receives divine pleasure if he wisely did devotion of God. Blissful pleasures reside forever in wisdom and spiritual enlightenment. Wisdom is true happiness. Shreeji Maharaj says, "I hold an excellent rapport with the spiritually wise."

Devotion brings in divine pleasures

In a small village, there lived a poor family consisting of a man and his daughter. They were very poor. The daughter was wise and very hard-working. She would see to the cooking of food at home as well as taking care of all domestic chores such as sweeping the house, cleaning utensils, grinding grains in the domestic grinding wheels, washing clothes and collecting fuel for the kitchen. Besides her duties at home as a domestic woman, she worked as domestic servant at other houses and helped her father to earn a livelihood for them.

Later, this impoverished girl got engaged to the grandson of a wealthy family. The groom came with a large marriage party to the bride's house and brought precious dresses, ornaments, jewellery and other precious things as a marriage gift to the bride. It was a grand marriage and in the reception they served sumptuous sweet dishes to the whole village and offered them attractive gifts in sweet memory of this auspicious occasion. Brahmins and Brahmin-priests of the marriage rituals were given huge donations and cash-gifts. The conventions and traditions were maintained in a grand style. The destitute girl was greatly astonished with the generosity of such luxuries. Such wealth, luxury and generosity surprised her. Gold and silver coins were freely donated and silken attires and dresses were embroidered in gold threads and real pearls. Her husband then said to her, "This is a small village

and therefore we have come here with limited people and a small stock of rich presents. You will get a complete idea of our wealth and power when we reach our home.”

The girl then came to her husband’s house. It was like a splendid palace, surrounded by a beautiful garden. Luxurious rooms were furnished with most precious items, large chandeliers of gems and jewels, sofas, swings, treasure chests filled with ornaments, jewellery and gems, a sizeable fleet of luxury cars – chariots and male and female servants to attend to various services. It was a royal family residing in a luxurious palace. All imaginable luxuries and services were made available for the members of this family. The servants and attendants were courteous and were ready to serve their master. The servants and family members treated the bride with great respect. Every thing was made available to her. Her desires and wishes were treated as an order to serve her at their best. This poor village girl was very happy. In her remotest dream, she had never imagined of such a wealthy husband for herself. The girl was now happy that she was engaged to such a rich and decent family. She found herself the luckiest amongst the people.

We too are like that poor village girl. As we do devotion, we instantly get engaged with God. Such an engagement gives blissful pleasure. *Katha* and *Kirtans* become more interesting, and worldly pleasures become repulsive to us. Such devotional attachment expands our mind and heart and in natural course, we find and desire pleasures and satisfaction in the state granted by God. The pleasures of this world are like the pleasures viewed by the people in that village. Real pleasures – eternal pleasures, are available with God and in his Akshardhaam. Those pleasures of Akshardhaam are beyond our imagination and cannot be guessed without witnessing it with our own eyes. The pleasure of doing devotion is unique in itself. It cannot be described in words. Tread the path of devotion and receive blissful heavenly pleasures. Try your best to engage yourself with Shree Hari. Submit yourself at the lotus feet of Shree Hari. Sadguru Muktanand Swami sings:

(“Lord Shree Hari is my master and husband. He is married to me by embracing me heart-to-heart and soul to soul. He has made me wear this eternal bracelet. Death too is scared of this bracelet and runs away on seeing it. Death bows his head at the devotee who has received God. Death is a humble slave of God”).

The souls, roaming in the darkness of ignorance, have become truthful, respectable and virtuous by doing devotion of God. Sainly companionship of Narada changed the heart of violent nomadic looter Valiya and in no time made him a great and enlightened Rishi – Valmiki. Rishi Valmiki wrote the epic-cum-scripture Ramayana. The pleasure of God’s companionship is divine pleasure. Why should you miss such divine pleasure by losing your inner-self in this tasteless and dry world? Do devotion with absolute

concentration and faith. Absolute devotion means desire-free devotion. Don't expect anything in return of devotion rendered. Submit absolutely at the lotus feet of Shreeji Maharaj. Do his devotion like a virtuous and faithful wife. Your devotional love should be for God only, nothing else.

A true devotee of God should not desire physical pleasures. He should not expect such happiness. If one expects or desires so, he is not a true devotee and his devotional services are not true devotion to God. We are required to be a slave of God but not a slave of our body. The worldly pleasures are not capable of delivering eternal pleasure and eternal peace. Wealth, property, lordship, kingdom and other worldly objects cannot give the taste and sweetness of eternity. Artificial flowers neither contain nor emanate fragrance; in a similar way worldly pleasures cannot contain or give divine pleasures and peace. Bodily pleasures are short-lived and perishable. Just as a man sleeping on a bed of thorns cannot enjoy comforts, a man living with worldly wealth cannot enjoy the real bliss of heaven. A fish tempted to a tasty morsel ends its own life when the hook of a fishing rod cuts through her throat. The soul in a similar way runs after worldly pleasures but gets only pain and grief. Nishkulanand Swami preaches, "Forsake desires and do devotion of God. Know the value of time and utilize it wisely in devotion of God. That is a true sign of a servant of God. Be careful, well in time, and do devotion of God. God showers his hearty pleasure on such devotees:"

The devotion of such a devotee is very dear to God. Nishkulanand Swami says that God is always pleased with such a true devotee.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 6

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says: There is a best way – a very good means - to please Shree Hari. Do soulful devotion of God. Do devotion with great courage and enthusiasm. Do devotion religiously and dutifully. Devotion deprived of Dharma (ethical duties) is lame and helpless. Live as per the tenets prescribed by Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan in his Shikshapatri. Just as nectar resides in heaven and wealth resides in the wish-fulfilling stone, in a similar way pleasures of every kind dwell in ethical duties. Emancipation is not possible without ethical duties. Devotion without ethical duties cannot bear the fruits required. Dharma accompanies the soul till his last step. What is this Dharma? The words of Dharma's Son (Shree Hari) is Dharma or ethical duties. The tenets constituted by Shree Hari and the preachings delivered by him are the tenets of religion. Live within the limits of these tenets. That is true religion. Act religiously and do devotion.

(The pleasure or displeasure of others would neither mend nor spoil anything. Those are immaterial for a gain or loss of pleasure. The real

thing is the pleasure of Shree Hari. A soul should strive for Shree Hari's pleasure.)

God has blessed us with birth as a human being. God has given us this majestic Satsang. We are here, not for pleasing the world, but for pleasing God.

Devotee Rajbai, once asked a question to Shreeji Maharaj, "O Maharaj! Which virtuous attribute pleases you the most? And by which viceful attribute are you most displeased?" Then Shreeji Maharaj said that the repeated talks like "I did this" and "I acted like that" were not good and were most repulsive to him. Whatever is desired to be said, should be said once and without any repetition. One should not jump into the middle of a conversation between two people. That was repulsive to him. He disliked man overruling his order or disobeying his instruction.

If one shifts the responsibility of doing devotion to God and practising religion, and he thinks of doing it, only if God supported him to do so, then it would be incorrect thinking on his part. God will not tolerate such cunningness. Maharaj disliked such nature. God dislikes an egoistic nature. God dislikes those who do not believe in the divine majesty of God.

Do not laze in performing householder chores. Don't shy from doing householder duties. Don't shy from talking about the glory and greatness of God and God's divine acts. Don't retire from playing *Raas* to please God or in doing *Tilak* and in wearing *Kanathi*. God says that those who are lazy and weak in the above acts and those who shy away from doing the above acts are not liked by him. Egotism of self-detachment and devotion is not liked by Shree Hari also. Those who boast here and there about the *Malas* (chanting names of God on the moving beads of a rosary) they did, the holy-fires they performed, the *Parayan* sessions they hosted, and such other religious acts, are not liked by Shree Hari. Egotism of donations and the virtuous deeds they performed, is not liked by Shree Hari. Those who do not sit in an appropriate place in a *Sabha* are not liked by Shree Hari. Those who are elbowing others to make way for oneself were never liked by Shree Hari. God is pleased with those who live with decorum. Those female aspirants who cover their body properly with suitable dress, walk by casting their sight earthward and avoid looking here and there while gracing a seat at a public meeting are people liked by Shree Hari. Thus, in his blessed words of Vachanamrit, Lord Shree Hari has narrated in detail the likeable attributes and repulsive attributes of the male and the female Satsangis. Lord Shreeji Maharaj loves those souls who did devotion with the knowledge of his greatness and divine majesty. Nishkulanand Swami says:

("All the scriptures of axiomatic religions unanimously advocate the supremacy of devotion. It preaches the performance of devotion without conspiracy. A treacherous soul cannot swim through the ocean of births and deaths. True

and unspired devotion gives blissful pleasure and eternal peace.”)

True devotion means absolute surrender at the lotus feet of God. True devotion has nothing to do with external decoration of attires or rosaries. When the soul surrenders heartily on the path of true devotion it internally develops the attitude of unconditionally surrendering to the wishes of God. Such attitude strengthens the devotional fervour of the devout soul. He then locates his own faults and removes them accordingly. His desires vanish by the fire of true devotion. This kind of devotion is true devotion - selfless devotion.

External show is most undesirable in true devotion. To put religious symbols on the forehead and to visit the temple as a convention is not true devotion if one does not firmly practice the tenets and rules of the religion. Such external acts are not devotion but a sort of cheating. There should be enough inner strength in a devout soul to obey and act in accordance with the orders of God. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks the aspiring souls to forsake wickedness of external show, be conspiracy-free and surrender at the wishes of God. It is the most essential commandment of all the scriptures. Do real devotion. Just as sugar is the sweetest amongst the sweeteners and silken clothes with gold thread embroidery are the costliest amongst the attires, in like manner devotion is the best amongst the means for attaining the devotional pleasure of God.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 7

(Devotion is unparalleled in the life of the souls. We should understand this truth wisely. It is the greatest means to please God and there is no alternative to devotion.)

Devotion is the instrument to sail through the ocean of births and to please God. Devotion is like the wish-fulfilling tree of the heavens. That heavenly tree (*Kalpavrisksha*) is said to fulfil all the wishes of an aspirant. A devotee attains divine bliss and emancipation by his devotion to God. A true devout soul becomes free from the ocean of life and death. Those who aspire for infinite pleasures should do single-minded devotion with their body, mind and faith. A true devotee should heartily love God. The selfless love of a devotee takes him closer to his Lord. Just as the sandalwood tree is the best amongst the trees, the philosopher's stone is the best amongst the stones, gold is the best amongst the seven metals, the heavenly eagle is the best amongst the birds, Mt Meru is the best amongst the mountains, Lord Suryanarayan is the best amongst the luminous and lights, the moon is the best for coolness, Akshaya Patra (never emptying divine container) is the best amongst the containers, a gold coin is the best amongst the coins; similarly devotion is the best amongst the instruments augmenting love for God. Devotion is the supreme best amongst such means.

(Space is the best amongst the five eternal elements, immortal Indra is the best amongst the immortals; similarly, devotion of Shree Hari is the best amongst the devotions. These are the eternal truths.)

Just as the infinite space is the best amongst the five elements, King Priyavratta is the best amongst the kings, Kamadeva is the best in beauty and charms; in like manner, devotion is the best amongst the means to attain God. Nishkulanand Swami asks us to do devotion and to love God. How should we submit to God to augment love and affection for God:

“O God! O Supreme Master of the souls! Only you deserve the love of the souls. We are at your refuge. You are our only destination. O God! Our drawbacks and vices are greater in number than the hair on our head. None other but you hold the power to waive our sins to make us pure. O merciful God! Please forgive the sins of the worldly souls. Please make our hearts pure, and bless us to serve at your lotus feet. Please bless us with unparalleled love only for you. The soul's love for the worldly pleasures, parents, spouse and children is not real love - not true love. It is *Moha* - delusion. Love for God is the truest love, and love for anything else is delusion. Animals, human beings and deities etc. in the *loka* invariably love someone or something. Nothing can survive without love. Love is the source of existence. And love is the strongest shackle of Maya (eternal entity) to imprison worldly souls. No other shackle is stronger than the shackle of love.

Love means tender feelings. If such love is attached to the eternal, then it lasts forever. It becomes eternal and omnipresent. If one scours the lokas and the universe in search for such eternal and omnipresent pleasure then they shall be found nowhere except in God only. God is the omnipresent ocean of pleasure and virtues. The love of Gopis to Lord Shree Krishna became eternal and omnipresent. But who would augment such love for God in our heart?

(Saints are greatly beneficial to souls. They remove illusions and augment love in the soul for the service of God.)

There was once a King. He was a king of a wealthy state and had docile subjects. His wealth and power had made him proud and egoistic. The power of wealth and weapons worked like intoxicants for him. To scold and punish the subjects and officers was routine in his life. He lost his temper frequently at negligible points and exiled many of his respectable subjects and his loyal officers from his kingdom. Some lost their property and wealth, to spend the rest of their life behind the walls of a prison. The king never thought of the pain and curses of innocent people. He had become blind deaf and mad in ego and pride.

Once, one of his senior ministers committed a small mistake. The King, as per his nature, took a serious note of it and sacked the minister in a most

humiliating style. But the god-fearing minister was wise and intelligent. He took it as a wish of God. He left the kingdom without any grief or sorrow. The minister then came into contact with a saintly person. His meetings and the sessions with the saint acted like a philosopher's stone and made his heart pure like gold. Saints are like a philosopher's stone. They transform iron-hearted people into virtuous and kind-hearted souls. They cleanse our hearts and remove the dirt of carnal desires. Saints make us sparkling bright and precious like gold. Saints preach the aspirants to tread the path of universal welfare as God has given them the most precious birth as a human being. We should not forget about this precious gift of God. We should not be swept away by the illusive attractions of the eternal entity (*Maya*). We should not forget the desirable path for the self of the ultimate good and should not run madly to chase the sense objects and the pleasures of it. Just as you have been bravely fighting the battle for earning bread and butter and other objects for the self and the family; fight with equal bravery the battle for doing devotion, *Bhajan*, *Kirtan*, donations, *Satsang*, Holy-fires, *Japa* and penance for the ultimate salvation of the soul.

The saint told the minister that relations were ephemeral and the world was like birds gathered in a nest on a tree and living together for the time being. They too lived like them in the world and at home with their family. They have come here all alone on the earth and in their final departure they will have to leave the world alone also. Nothing was to go with them when they left the world. He asked the minister to ponder on this and reminded him that he would be required to face his Supreme Master all alone empty-handed when he left the world. Only devotion and devotional love was to accompany him. Death was imminent for all. Nobody could avoid it.

These words – the truth – penetrated his heart. The minister surrendered at the lotus feet of the saint. He prayed, "Please have mercy on me. Please purify and protect me. I am at your refuge." The saint placed his blessed hand lovingly on his head. The blessed touch calmed his emotions and he felt eternal peace. The hand of a saint is like the blessed hand of God. It is God's blessed touch. He now knew the eternal truth. The gates of ultimate knowledge opened. Worldly pleasures cannot give absolute satisfaction. The sense objects are like the salty water of the sea, though plentiful, it cannot quench one's thirst. The minister now realised this truth with the help of the saint.

The minister spent his time happily in singing the praises of Lord Sahajanand. He was now engaged in a good occupation. However on the other side, the King faced some problems in running the state. He needed guidance and counsel from the minister. The king then sent two of his secretaries to call back the minister. But the minister refused to come back. Then at last the King personally came to seek advice and invite the minister back to the state capital with a prestigious appointment as Home-Minister. The king said, "Please come back to the state. I wish to appoint you as Home-Minister. Please help me in running the state administration."

The minister replied, "Earlier, I was – praying and begging to you but now I have surrendered to God and am praying to Lord Shree Hari. Everything has changed and now you are praying to me for your problems. I don't want to leave the service of God to serve you. I don't want to come back to pray and serve you. I have attained the precious treasure and heavenly nectar in the form of *Satsang*. I am now worry free." Nishkulanand Swami says:

("Devotion is the best of both worlds.
Objects, other than devotion are of no interest.")

Devotion possesses divine majesty to transform even iron into gold. Devotion is capable of salvaging souls trapped in the murky ocean of Maya. A beautiful woman cannot look adorable in her barest form. Our knowledge becomes dry and superficial in the absence of devotion and devotional love. Try your best to make knowledge more useful and try your best to increase love and devotion for Lord Sahajanand Swami.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 8

I have repeatedly thought and have concluded that devotion is an unparalleled means to attaining God. People – the worldly souls, take much care of the things augmenting lesser pleasure and greater pains.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that there is no pleasure in expanding worldly activities. One should learn to overcome them a certain age. The vehicle of the world and worldly responsibility is very big and long. Learn to apply a brake. Little and gradual retirement is a must. On attaining the age of 50-60 years, leave loose the ties of affection and liking. For how long are you to run after these? Do your daily *pooja* (worship) peacefully, listen peacefully to *Katha-Varta*, do *Satsang* freely. Temples have been built in the heart of towns and villages for darshan of God and for *Satsang* with the saints.

At any time, God may send word, without prior notice, and may ask us to quickly leave for Akshardhaam. At such time, if a sudden brake were applied to your vehicle of life, it would not stop the vehicle smoothly. Sudden brake would topple the vehicle, leaving a huge amount of debris in the form of unfulfilled desires. Learn to apply brake at a longer distance to give enough passage to the after shocks of the rebounded speed. A brake applied with ease and over a longer distance will reduce the speed gradually and will smoothly stop the vehicle at a desired point.

As you attain fifty years of age, begin to retire from the householder responsibilities by transferring household and business duties to your sons. Live a life of retirement by doing devotion at home. Do darshan of God at the temple. Listen to *Katha*, submerge yourself in *Satsang* and read scriptures. As and when required, you may guide them in householder duties and in their

occupation, but do it as a good guide. Don't hold those responsibilities on your head. Don't fix yourself in the middle of those worldly duties. Lord Shreeji Maharaj had said in the Vachanamrit that the pleasures available on closing the eyes to do darshan of God in our innermost, is a greater than the pleasures enjoyed by ruling over the kingdom of the fourteen lokas. If pleasures had been in the kingdoms and the sense objects, the great kings like Swayambhu Manu and others would not have forsaken their royal majesty to retire to the forests to do penance and meditational worship. The pleasure that is available in the worship of God is not at all available in any other object, not even in an empire. Kingdoms and empires are like bundles of problems and worries. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

A Goldsmith will incur a loss of twenty-five thousand when he invests rupees one lakh and twenty-five thousand in recovering the refined gold but sells the gold thereafter in rupees one lakh. A wise and seasoned merchant will not do business to earn losses. A true businessman will balance both sides - his investment and his return. To be busy in worldly activities, without sharing time in Darshan, Bhajan, Katha-Varta or Kirtans, is also a business, but a loss-making deal. It is your prime duty to raise your family by fulfilling their needs and requirements, you are supposed to discharge it dutifully. But at the same time do not forget to do Bhajan-Kirtan and devotion, because it is essential for your ultimate good.

What is the true colour of worldly pleasures? It is illusive and treacherous like a gold-plated fake ornament. It glitters, but it is not real gold. Worldly pleasures are like the water seen in a mirage. It is not real. It is illusive. It does not exist. Similarly, the world and the pleasures of the sense objects are not real. It is just an illusion.

The sense objects are like the fruits of a Banyan tree, which appear red and juicy but give no taste or juice. It is dry and juiceless. Real pleasure, true happiness, resides in God only. God is the eternal source of divine pleasure – pain-free pleasures. Pleasures are of two kinds: eternal pleasures and ephemeral pleasures. Ephemeral pleasures are bundled in a long series of pains. Ephemeral pleasures are short-lived. We are required to dismount our mind from the ephemeral pleasures - detach it from the ephemeral pleasures and attach it firmly to devotion and God. Forsake laziness and work hard to enjoy the eternal pleasures of devotion.

There was once a king. The king had a son, the prince of the state. The prince was virtuous and wise. He was God-fearing and obedient. He would arise early in the morning to bathe and would do *poojan-archan* and devotion of God. He spoke less and softly, and respected his guru and elders. He was disinterested in worldly pleasures and was leaning more towards detachment. He lived like a saint.

Once, the king sent for the prince. The prince came obediently to his father and offered respect by saluting him. The king said, "O Son! I am really

very happy with your virtuous attributes. Now you are a mature youth, it is time for you to share in the stately responsibilities with me. Please rule the state on my behalf."

The prince said with folded hands, "Father! O great King! I am your son and it is my duty to obey your orders. It is my duty to fulfil your wishes. But I am not interested in the kingdom. I don't want to rule the state."

The king tried his best to hand over the kingdom but his sincere efforts turned futile against the asceticism of his son. For the prince, the world was like a flaming object enveloped in a burning fire. He rejected the kingdom outright. The king asked him about his wish. The king was now anxious to fulfil the wishes of his son. The son then prayed politely, "O Father! O Great King! Please give me the thing that is everlasting, give me a life that never ends, that death should not touch me, that old age should not come to me. Give me the pleasures which never end."

Then the king replied, "O Dear Son! You are asking for the imperishable. I can fulfil none of your demands. The things you desire are not within my hands. I cannot give it. These are the things that only God can give. It is within the divine powers of God Almighty."

Rajkumar (prince) said, "This is why, I surrendered to God. What will I do with the ephemeral pleasures of a kingdom by leaving God?" The prince then retired to the seclusion of the forests, did penance and attained the eternal bliss of Akshardhaam.

The worldly pleasures are charming like flowers of the *Aaval* (a wild plant). Those charming flowers, though appearing pleasant in colour and shape, cannot be used in the poojan-archan of God, or in auspicious rituals. Similarly, the ephemeral pleasures, though they appear pleasant, cannot join us in our journey to the other worlds. They are perishable and tempting but not auspicious and everlasting.

The *todday* trees are very tall. It requires great labour to pluck fruits from the top of the tree. Even after such risk and labour, if the fruits are plucked, they still cannot be consumed. They are not edible. Similarly, the ephemeral pleasures - the worldly pleasures, cannot be enjoyed happily even after such great risk and labour to possess them. A honeybee collects juices in the form of honey and stores it in the honeycomb to have during adverse times. The honeybee labours much with tremendous efforts to collect it drop after drop. But if a bird-catcher sees the honeycomb and bees, he would put smoky fire under the honeycomb, forcing the honeybees to leave their dwelling, and will then rob the honey with the honeycomb. The honeybees did the hard work of collecting honey and spent energy in preventing invaders, but lost everything at the hand of the bird-catcher.

Like these honeybees, we too on the earth, put in massive toil to develop assets, property and wealth, capture land, states and kingdoms for personal

ego, but spend nothing towards cash-gifts, donation, saints, Brahmins, cows, God or temples. We souls do nothing virtuous from that massive wealth, and live poorly like a miser clinging onto his savings. Thus the soul fails miserably in utilizing his income and wealth. It is like a dog-in-the-manger; neither do they use it for the self, nor for others. And what happens in their absence? When such souls pass away, it becomes a boon to their rowdy children. They will spend it - waste it for nothing. Lord Shree Hari has said that income and wealth should be spent reasonably for the self, family, society and religious purposes. We should live happily and should donate liberally to the poor, needy people, Brahmins and to the temple of God:

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks the devotees to know it for themselves, that the blissful pleasure they derive from the devotion of God, shall not be attainable from elsewhere.)

Food gives strength to the body and water gives strength to the plants. In a similar way the soul receives strength from the devotion he did for God.

PADA (SONG) : 2

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "Who is eternally blissful? Who emanates eternal pleasure?" Once a fool became ill. He went to the hospital and stole some medicines from the chemist's desk. Knowing nothing about the properties of the drugs, he consumed it to treat his illness. The reactive drugs killed the patient. If a medicine is not known properly, it may kill a person instead of curing his ailment. In a similar way, if a householder's soul chases sense objects day and night without any knowledge about them, they may, in the course of time, kill their consciousness. Rich people are considered to be happy people by a worldly wise man. But it is not so. If true pleasure were in such objects, the great ones like Bhartrihari and others would not have forsaken their royal majesty and kingdoms, and would not have retreated to the seclusion of the forests to do meditational devotion of God.

Affection and delusion pain the soul

Rishi Bhartrihari (once an emperor but who later turned to asceticism) was dwelling in the dense forest by forsaking wealth, kingdom and householder life. There near a bush and on the walkway, he saw a glittering object. It was a big and a very precious diamond. He thought at first to pick it up. But on second thought, his alert mind argued spontaneously that now he had forsaken kingdom, majesty, power and wealth to do devotion and meditational worship of God, how on earth then could such a millionth part of his erstwhile wealth, dare to tempt him?" He recomposed himself and withdrew his mind from the diamond. Bhartrihari, now in a meditative state, sat beneath a tree. The glittering diamond and the other pebbles around it, were nothing more than pieces of rock in the eyes of Bhartrihari. While in

such witnessing state, he saw two warriors walking fast and inquisitively to locate a prey. When they came near the bush, they found that precious diamond emanating brilliance from within. Both of them rushed to the diamond, to pick it up for themselves. Both of them claimed the right to possess it and a quarrel took place between the two. The temper turned into fighting and that into a fight to finish! In no time swords were unsheathed and attacks and counter attacks changed the serenity into a mini battlefield.

They wounded each other in lethal attacks and fell dead on the ground. Rishi Bhartrihari witnessed the scene. He arose and rushed immediately to the diamond, dug the earth near it and dumped that dangerous object into it! It was a killer diamond! The diamond kills! He realised that wealth is a lethal weapon that kills man!

Irrespective of their wealth and assets, whether one may be a king or a pauper, all are unhappy because they are not spiritually wise. If wisdom prevailed, they would know and tread the path to the true way of living and their life would become enjoyable. Instead of crying and complaining about adverse times, stop unwise thinking and submit humbly at the lotus feet of God!

He explores the places where there is no happiness. He tries to get happiness from the sense objects and entangles himself in the trap of *Maya* inviting sorrows in this world and bundles it with himself for the life in the other world.

Devotees who are aspiring for the eternal pleasure and divine bliss, should forsake worldly affection and should practice ethical duties by imbibing virtues. All the means namely time, energy, body, mind and wealth should be activated by them through doing devotion of God. There is no alternative to devotion for ending the cycle of birth and death. Bhakti is the unfailing means for ultimate salvation:

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that the treasure of devotion is an unfailing tool to become fear-free. Nobody can attain salvation without devotion of God. I urge you to listen to these words of wisdom.)

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 9

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says: Devotion is of various kinds. The devotion in which they try to evade opinion and principles of

each other through debates and arguments to put others to inconvenience by such leg pulling would be nothing but lack of asceticism. Such acts give displeasure to the common man. When a person or a group of people lack in inner asceticism, they receive displeasure from within and without. They pull and push each other among themselves and others as an opponent group. At times they respect others and at times they indulge in backbiting and ill criticism. Thus, none of them receive comfort or peace. There are nine different types of dedicated devotion. All these paths of devotion lead a true devotee to God. If an aspirant were to do any one of these types of devotion with the truest asceticism, he would never be shadowed by any kind of displeasure.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami sings the praise of devotion. There are different kinds of devotion. As we glance at various kinds of devotion performed by devotees in various countries, it is amazing to see the blissful majesty and tranquillity derived from it. It gives us great pleasure. We see the supremacy of devotion. The devotional talks of Ramanujacharya are majestic. Devotion-filled narrations presented by him are enough to melt our heart. Similar is the devotion of Shreemad Vallabhacharya. It is simply blissful and tranquil. His pure love of Vaishnava devotion is still visible in contemporary Vaishnava devotees. The devotion and the devotional path of ancient Acharyas were highly respectable, tranquil, pure and holy. They lived in absolute purity. Their devotion and devotional path was not begrudging. It was envy-free.

Our ancient scriptures have suggested and narrated nine different methods of devotion.

Listening to devotional discourse is called **Shravanam** (devotion by listening to religious discourses). To sing the praises of God is called **Kirtanam** (devotion by singing devotional songs of God). To chant blissful names of God on beads of a rosary, while concentrating on the divine image of God is called **Smaranam** (devotion by chanting names of God). To do devotional service at the lotus feet of God is called **Padsevanam** (devotion by doing personal service of God). To do mental devotion or to do devotion by presenting *chandan* (sandalwood paste) and other sacred objects to God is called **Archanam** (devotion by presenting sacred objects at the service of God). To salute God with folded hands or by spreading one's body on the ground or by touching reverently the blessed feet of God is called **Vandanam** (devotion by saluting submissively to God). To live like a slave of God by sweeping and cleaning the courtyard and temple building, to decorate it charmingly by sprinkling water, auspicious leaves and decorative flowers is

called **Daasyam** (devotion as a slave of God). The eighth in these devotional modes is to do devotion of God by becoming a friend of his – **Sakhyam**, to express emotions of pure love in oneness with God. The ninth and topmost is **Atmanivedanam**. Atmanivedan means to humbly submit the soul at the lotus feet of God. This is a sort of absolute surrender and total submission leaving nothing as personal of an aspirant.

These are the different ways of doing devotion of God. Devotees, as per their nature, select the particular method of devotion to earn the pleasure of God. Everyone has his own choice in devotion, just as people enjoy and relish a particular kind of taste in their meals. Some love hot and some salty, some love bitter and some like sweet. Similarly some like to listen to spiritual dialogues, some like to sing praises and some like to do service of God!

™kœu ðkœu Au yuf yuf ™u, yu Ęnw Úttœ Au nuhtý.

Don't be jealous of the devotion by others. Don't try to find faults in their devotional ways. Don't pay attention to the external expressions of their devotion. Be happy by appreciating devotional love of such devotees. Don't speak ill of others. Don't oppose a devotee. Don't be confused by the different modes available in doing devotion of God. The key or the starter of a huge machine or a big engine is always a small device. The helm or rudder of a very large ship is always a small device. The stick to control an elephant is a small instrument. The brake to stop a large and long train is a small device. The key of a huge treasure chest is very small in size. In a similar way, the axiomatic religion of the Aryan is tremendously large in its size and its presence. It envelops the whole universe. The key to such a great axiomatic religion which is enormous in size and spread, is very small and very charming. That key is 'devotional love'. The key named 'divine love' or 'heavenly love' is popularly known as 'devotion'. The soul's association to God is called devotion.

As all huge machines have a small key to activate the machine, the key named 'God's love', though small in appearance, operates successfully the axiomatic religion of God. If you desire to receive this master key of God's love, do devotion of Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan - Merciful Lord Shree Hari.

True devotion is all pervading devotional love. God constantly resides in the heart and soul of an aspirant who does true devotion. There is no room for ego in doing such devotion. When making a sweet dish of milk, one should add the sugar of selfless love but not the salt of ego and pride. Ensure that the sweet dish of your devotion is not spoilt by the pinch of salty ego!

Be alert in your devotion. Devotion too at times becomes polluted by ego. Ego will be an obstacle on your path to God. It will stop you from meeting God. This ego will imprison you like the steel door of a prison.

The soul is a part of God yet it is separated from God. It desires reunion with God. It will receive eternal bliss when reunited with God. Then why can't the soul walk forward on the sacred path of the Supreme Lord?

The key named devotion will eradicate ego.

A man occupied a berth in a steamship to visit Mumbai. Mumbai means the opposite shore of the sea. The steamship was ready to embark. The engine was in full steam to leave the port. The passengers were eager to enjoy the sea-journey. The captain was ready to start the steamship. He repeatedly whistled to alert the crew and ordered them to start the journey. Though the engine was in full throttle, the steamship would not leave the port. It stood rock-still in the water despite the force of the engine. What was happening? The passengers were worried and the crew tried their best in the engine room to locate the problem. The machines were in perfect condition, the engine was on in its fullest capacity and the water level was correct. Then what was the problem? They found the cause when they checked the exterior. The rope anchoring the ship was tightly holding the steamship. The steamship was tightly roped and anchored. They hurriedly rushed for a cutter and broke the rope. As they cut the rope, the steamship swiftly rushed to its destination.

Though they were fully prepared and their vehicle too was in perfect condition, they were detained and held up by the rope! It is a symbolic representation. If tied by a rope, one cannot go ahead. Tie means no progress - No forward movement. If the rope of ego or false pride has anchored you, then there would be no progress in devotion. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to cut the rope of ego by the sickle of pure knowledge! Devotion then moves fast and in the forward direction. The ego is like a steel shutter. The small key of 'devotion' will unlock the imprisoned and offload the ego. A poet sings these words of advice:

Our devotional love will break the lock of ego. Devotion is the key to opening
the lock of ego.

While explaining the difference between absolute devotion and devotion with desire, the poet says that there may be many who do devotion for a desired reward from God. They always beg for something in return of their devotional service. Though they possess plenty as a householder, their wealth, power and possessions do not satisfy them. As they receive from God the desired reward, they are always hungry and thirsty for further fulfillment. Desires are endless. Wishes are infinite by nature. It becomes bigger and greater at each following moment. The roots of desires are very deep within the human mind. The body becomes old and fragile, teeth give way, eyes lose vision, hair grows gray, ears become deaf, the legs tremble and feet cannot hold the ground. Despite such physical recessions, the desires within the body and mind become stronger and youthful on each passing day.

A widow had a son. The youthful son once asked his mother to permit him to go elsewhere for his livelihood. He asked her to prepare a tiffin for him, while he packed for the onward journey. The mother cooked for him some snacks and a sweet dish and packed it properly. Holding his luggage and tiffin-box, the boy came to her and saluted her for the departure. The mother blessed him heartily. At some distance from his village, there was a place named Ghogha. The boy went to that place. He sat there beneath a tree, had his tiffin under the cool shade of the Banyan tree, rested for some time and by evening he came back home. In the late evening, when the old lady came back home after her daylong toil, she found her 'good for nothing' son resting. She looked at him and asked in a desperate tone, "Son! In the morning you were so impatient to embark upon the upcountry adventure, and now I see you here! Why so? Are you scared of hard work? Where is your tiffin? You ate it all! I see that the Tiffin itself is a big burden in regard to you!" She repented and cried. Our Mother – the Supreme Lord - has sent us here with a lofty tiffin of human life to earn the livelihood named devotion. God has given us a human body to serve this purpose of devotion. God has asked us to go and earn. Of course we do Satsang, but we do it in great haste. We then become soft, loose and dull like rubber. A piece of rubber looks firm and broad when pulled properly and with balance. This represents the truest state of our mind. Our detachment and asceticism too are casual and short-lived like the feelings of detachment experienced at the graveyard during a funeral. During such rituals, a man talks the language of detachment and spiritual enlightenment. Man during such adverse time thinks and speaks about Maya and its evolutes. He finds pleasures and wealth ephemeral; he distrusts the life of his body. He is scared of the sins and its consequences. He temporarily nurses the fruitfulness of donations and temporarily resolves to do donations. But all these are mere talk. Nothing is actioned. As soon as he leaves the graveyard, he again wears the worldly robe. God has not sent us here with a human body for the back steps of futility. God has sent us to walk firmly on the path of devotion. Like that boy from Ghogha, we should not go back without devotion. We will have to earn devotion.

Laduba, Jivuba, Radhaji, Nand-Jashodaji, Devki-Vasudevji, Muktanand Swami, Brahmanand Swami and other saints have pleased God by their devotion.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 10

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "Do devotion aiming for self-emancipation. Do devotion with the singular aim of pleasing Shree Hari. Don't expect anything else. Whether reputation lasts or not, do as per the desire of Shree Hari. Desire only for the pleasure of God. Whoever did devotion of God has not lost his reputation. God has maintained their prestige and honour."

RISE OF FAITH

Great devotee Narsinh Mehta of Junagadh was poor in his worldly ways but was very rich in doing devotion of Shree Krishna. What is wealth? Who is rich? One who possesses the wealth of generosity, the wealth of donation, one who holds the wealth of donation is a rich man - he is the wealthiest. On one occasion, Narsinh Mehta was in need of sixty rupees. He borrowed the money by depositing 'Raga Kedara' as security. He was not to sing that Raga until he repaid the amount. Raga Kedara was such a majestic tune of Shree Narsinh Mehta, that whenever he sung in that tune, God appeared from the idol to give darshan to his devotee. That raga was rich in faith, feelings and in oneness with God.

King Mandalika was ruling the state of Junagadh. He was blind with the intoxication of power and ego. He summoned Narsinh Mehta and threatened him with dire consequences for doing devotion of statues. He asked him rudely, "Why are you doing *pooja* of a statue? Why do you offer meals to it? Do you think it is God?"

Narsinh Mehta politely replied, "O My Master! It is not a stone. God himself resides there."

The ego of power blocks the path of reasoning and wisdom. The King barked at him, "If God resides in that stone then he would garland you by morning. I will behead you, if God has not garlanded you with a flower garland before sunrise!" With these words, he shut the doors.

Devotee Narsinh sang for the whole night the praises of God, and the night was about to be over. It was the last quarter of night-time. Time was passing swiftly, but God was not pleased enough to give darshan to his devotee! God had not come, as the great Raga Kedara was not available for singing. It was kept as a security deposit to the moneylender. Narsinh was singing from the core of his heart to call his Lord - Shree Krishna, "O Krishna! O Madhava! The king will kill me, if you do not come to me. It is not the question of my prestige, but of your majesty. Therefore, be kind to me and come here."

The night was almost over in such hearty prayers but God did not give Darshan. Narsinh Mehta was almost inwardly shattered by God's indifference to him. He prayed again with tear filled eyes, "O Bhagwan! Because of my poverty and weakness, you have not come to me. I have

remembered you and have prayed constantly for the whole night without a wink of my eyes. I am your slave. I am your devout servant. How can you sleep, when your devotee spends a sleepless night in tormenting troubles?" Narsinh Mehta scolded God in this way. He asked him to awake from the deep sleep. He asked him to awake quickly to save his devotee's soul:

"O Krishna! Look at the pains of your devotee. Goddess Radhikaji serves at your lotus feet at the cool grove of Brindavan near the bank of the tranquil river Yamuna. O Krishna! How can you sleep like this? O Keshava! Just think - if you do not come to me, then the king here will kill me. O Lord! Transform this atheist king to make him a theist. O Lord! How great is your majesty."

"You have gifted to Satyabhama the heavenly tree of Parijata flowers. Then what stops you from bringing one flower garland for me?"

"O Krishna! You are not short of flowers. Hundreds of your devotees have been garlanding you with thousands of flowers and flower garlands. Therefore, O Krishna! Please come to me and give me a flower garland. O Lord! You are an ocean of mercy and compassion. Why have you become so harsh, cruel and stonehearted? Why are you not coming? Come to me, O Lord!" Despite such hearty prayer and repeated begging, God did not come to Narsinh. This provoked anger for his dearest one:

("O Lord Krishna! Your father and mother passed away through natural deaths. (There was no fault on my side in their deaths). Then why are you angry with me? O Jadava! Please awake from the sleep. It is nearly daybreak.")

How can God sleep when his devotee is awake and in trouble? God rushed to the earth in the guise of Narsinh Mehta and came to Dharnidhar Nagar - the money-lender. He asked Dharnidhar Nagar to give back his Raga Kedara and paid rupees sixty to clear the debt. Dharnidhar Nagar gave the receipt with the Raga Kedar. God in his invisible form came to Narsinh Mehta and dropped that receipt and note in the lap of Narsinh. Mehtaji found that the Raga Kedara was no longer with the money-lender, as the debt was now cleared. Immediately, bhakta Narsinh sang a devotion filled song in Raga Kedara:

("O Lord Krishna! O Murari! Please give me darshan of your divine image. My eyes are thirsty for such darshan.")

The temple doors opened and Lord Shree Krishna manifested himself from the idols. King Mandalik witnessed Lord Shree Krishna walk straight to Narsinh and garland him lovingly. King Mandlik rose from his throne and

saluted at the feet of Narsinh Mehta. He then prayed at the feet of Narsinh Mehta for his pardon, "O Mehtaji! O Great Devotee! This was my mountain like blunder. I have realised my mistake and wisdom has prevailed upon me. I have learnt that God, with his omniscience and majesty, dwells within any idol, whether it is be made of metal or stone." Thus the atheist attitude of King Mandalik was uprooted, and faith and religion prevailed forever in his heart.

(Nobody has lost his prestige and goodwill
in singing praises of God).

Those who have remembered God have become immortal. True devotees of God are not hurt by the insulting behaviour of ignorant people. They never feel proud of the praises made by others for them. There may be insults or there may be praises but in both circumstances, they hold an equipoise lifestyle. They live beyond the ephemeral state of pleasures and pains. God never leaves such a devotee of his. The devotee and his God are tied together tightly by the ties of selfless love. God is bound to act as per the wishes of his devotee. A true devotee of God never bothers for the opinion of the world about him. He looks only at God and the wishes of his God. A devotee has nothing to do with the world. A true devotee never depends on the opinion of the world but thinks that the world at times may praise and give honour or may hurl insults and humiliate him, depending on their ever-changing personal mood. Like a chameleon, the world changes its colours and moods very rapidly. The true devotee, therefore never looks at, nor pays any attention to the worldly ways.

When a tightrope dancer displays acrobatic feats on a tight rope at the highest height of the poles, the thrilled crowd of hundreds of viewers admires his skills and excellence with a thundering applause and unblinking eyes. But the rope-dancer never looks at them to measure the size of the crowd or to appreciate their greetings. He concentrates fully on his performance. And per chance, if he tries to look elsewhere, he would surely lose his oneness with the performance and would spoil the show by falling flat on the ground. The true devotee acts like such a rope-dancer, by concentrating absolutely in God and devotion. They never pay any attention to the crowd - the world.

Do devotion firmly. Do devotion with total surrender. Concentrate absolutely in the devotional service of God. Don't pay attention to the faults of others. Do devotion constantly:

You will have to repent if you look at the faults of others. There is nothing fault-free in this world. Man is not complete; there would always be something missing in him. Only God is absolute, ideal and perfect. We have not come here to peep into the faults and wrongs of others, but are here in this Satsang to remove our own personal drawbacks.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 11

There has never been any amiable relation between the world and a devotee, even since the day of evolution. Envious folk have shown jealousy for the devotees of God. They have tried at their utmost to harm the devotees of God. They have not allowed them to live peacefully. They have hurled stones, harsh words and have beaten them without mercy. But the true devotees of God have never come under the shadow of such jealous people - the sinners.

Devotee Prahlad was a real son and the royal heir of King Hiranyakashipu. Demonic King Hiranyakashipu gave extreme pain and the penalty of death to his son, Prahlad. He asked his son to stop remembering Lord Vishnu, as Vishnu was his enemy! Devotee Prahlad prayed, "O Father! There should be no enmity with Lord Vishnu. We must love Lord Vishnu." Such love of Prahlad for his dear God Vishnu, acted like a fuel to ignite the fire of anger and envy. Demonic Hirnyakashipu punished his own son by getting him thrown from a mountain peak, but God held him gently on a flower carpet. He tried to get him crushed under the feet of an elephant, but the youthful elephant held him gently by his trunk and installed him gracefully on its back. Then at last, he tried to get him burnt by forcing him to embrace a red and hot iron pillar. He asked his son to disassociate himself from Vishnu, else embrace the burning pillar of steel. Seeing the heat-emitting steel pillar in front him initially scared Prahlaldji, being a small child, but Almighty Supreme Lord consolidated the faith of his devotee by his divine majesty. Prahlad saw a colony of ants walking leisurely on the hot red surface of the pillar. It strengthened the devotional spirit of Prahlad.

Well composed and steady-minded, Prahlad walked to the pillar to embrace it. As he touched the pillar, it burst with a thundering sound and Lord Narsimha (man-lion) manifested himself. The time was perfect, not day - not night, it was dusk. The place was perfect, neither in nor out of the house - it was at the threshold. Lord Narsimha sat on the threshold, grabbed Hiranyakashipu in his thunder-bolt like palm. Hiranyakashipu - the mighty demon, looked like a tiny kitten in the giant paw of the man-lion. Lord Narsimha placed him on his lap - a perfect location - neither on the earth nor in space. Lord Narsimha then tore him into two with his great paws and sharp nails. It was a brutal death.

The sinner cannot avail their life fully. He tried to trouble his devout son, but lost his own life. Don't trouble saints and saintly people. Honour them to your best. Salute them heartily. Great devotees Vasudeva and Devakiji were troubled extensively by Kansa - the King of Mathura. He imprisoned them and mercilessly killed their progeny. But in the final battle, he was killed and his family was destroyed. Look at the devotional fervour of Draupadiji, and try to understand the destiny of the evil minded Kauravas.

Evil minded Dushasana, dragged Draupadi by her hair lock when the royal court was in full session. He tried to humiliate her by removing her sari. Dushasana invited by his sinful behaviour, the destruction and death of the self with his whole dynasty. Whoever tries to torment a devotee of God has invited his own destruction and death. Devotees are very dear to God. God protects his devotees and never forgives an enemy of his devotees. God says:

(“I uproot and destroy those who try to give pain to my devotees. O Uddhava! My devotees are everything to me. Nothing is dearer to me than my devotee.”)

Lord Shree Krishna himself went to Duryodhana and the Kauravas to save his dear devotees the Pandavas. Lord Shree Krishna advised them to stop the sinful acts of tormenting the Pandavas. But the Kauravas, driven by their ill fate, declared the war of Kurukshetra and invited their own destruction. Man is killed by his own sins.

(The tormented heart of a saint destroys the wealth, kingdom and dynasty of a tyrant. Tulsidas says: “Ravana, the Kauravas and Kansa were wiped off from the earth with their dynasty.”)

Duryodhana brought about horrible destruction by disobeying Lord Shree Krishna. He lost his wealth, kingdom, life, dynasty and subjects in the Great War of the Mahabharata. Lord Shreeji Maharaj says in his Vachanamrits that even the tiniest soul – such as an ant – should not be pained. Then how can we trouble a major one such as a devotee of God? Please note this fact, whoever tried to trouble a devotee, has never attained peace and pleasure for the self.

(Sitaji was a single-minded devotee of Lord Rama. Demon Ravana committed the sin of tormenting Sitaji and by such sinful acts, he invited unimaginable torments upon himself.)

Ravana was the most powerful demon king of Lanka. That strongest man of his time – Ravana, had ten heads to think and twenty hands to act with. He held an absolute hold on his death. Nobody could kill him. He was a matchless warrior and an undefeatable war-figure. He was also highly intelligent and well knowledgeable person of his time. But he polluted his mind and thinking with sinful thoughts about Sitaji, and like a criminal he abducted her. He inflicted pains and torments to crush her virtuous spirit. Queen Mandodari tried at her best to counsel the demon king. She explained to him that Rama was no ordinary man. Rama was the king of kings and the supreme most of all deities and Gods. She asked her husband to give back Sitaji honourably to Lord Rama. Only this was the path of maintaining peace

and tranquillity. But Ravana dismissed the advice of Mandodari. He ruined his own life and that of his entire dynasty.

(A true devotee of God never thinks of tormenting a tyrant. A burning log of the Kegar tree extinguishes the fire.)

Saints are the idols of solace and peace. Insults, backbiting or mud slinging never generate anger in a true saint. They live beyond the world of ephemeral pleasures. Here is a true story about a saint's patience:

Lord Shree Hari graced a Sabha of his saints at the royal residency of Dada Khachar of Gadhada. Shreeji Maharaj said to his disciple-saints, "O saints! We have not come here to sit idle. Go to the villages, walk across the countryside, visit huts and houses, initiate dialogues with the landlords, farmers, peasants and labourers to enlighten them. Bring them out from the darkness of ignorance. Go and teach them religion." Then Shreeji Maharaj added, "O saints! Don't expect comfort, co-operation or good hospitality when you are on such religious tours. Ignorant people may insult you. They may avoid or ignore you. Don't look at such odds and hurdles. Tolerate with forbearance the insults, and explain to them the tenets of true religion. Ignore their insulting words and bless them with emancipative blessings. Desire the ultimate good of those misguided souls, don't wish any harm to them." This was a sort of tiffin for the saints. Just as the elders in a family arrange for a tiffin for a travelling member, in a similar way, Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan fixed a sumptuous tiffin for his saints: "O saints! If somebody hits you or torments you, then think and pray to God to bless him with good sense."

Our Nand Sants stood unparalleled in tolerance and solace. The saints on a religious tour came to a farm in the hot noon of mid summer. A farmer was ploughing his field. The saints went to the farmer and walked with him on the ploughing track and said, "O Farmer! This life and human body is a gift from God. Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan dwells on this earth. Practice devotion for him. Human life is not easily available. No relation is really our own. All are self centred."

The farmer lost his temper and barked, "Get out from here. Stop your nonsense. We are not idle and useless like you. There are lots of jobs to be attended to. Go away."

But the saint, although he was insulted rudely, said in a calm and well-composed tone, "I am telling you this for your own personal good. Do devotion of God. Worship him. It should go harmoniously with your present work. That would improve your life and life-style. That is real work."

The farmer shouted, "I will teach you what is right and what is wrong. Here is a nice teaching exclusively for you," and with that the farmer held in his hand the baton meant to discipline, his bullocks, and hit it hard on the Sadhu's head, and chased him out from the field threatening him with dire consequences. The Sadhu went away from the field while chanting the sacred hymn of Lord Swaminarayan.

The Sadhu then came to the village. He and his group took shelter at the village *chaura* (a public place for community events). Some senior villagers came here to have a casual talk. Meanwhile, that farmer too came there from his farm. He arrogantly told the villagers, "This mendicant had come to me in my field. He was talking much to correct me. He addressed me with an unsolicited sermon to do devotion of God and told me to do pooja. He tried again and again despite my displeasure. At last I gave him a nice hit with my bullock stick and he left my field in no time! Now he is here to spoil your mood too."

There in that group was a gentleman. That man said, "You fool! If you don't like the words of wisdom, you should not accept it. You should ignore and avoid it. But how could you raise your hand on a saintly soul? We hate you. Look at his wound. It bleeds profusely. We must not hit a saint through no fault of his own. God will not forgive you for such major sin," said the man in a sorrowful tone. The farmer who was at fault, felt bad of his misdeed. He realised his sin of paining a saintly soul. He cried and surrendered at the feet of the saint to beg pardon for his insane behaviour. He repeatedly prayed to him to forgive him. He confessed that he was a sinner, a merciless soul. Then the saint said in a soothing tone, "O elderly farmer! Your sins are removed. Don't repeat such an act in the future." The saint then taught him the principles and rules of personal religion by tying a *Kanathi* around his neck and gave him an idol of God for daily pooja. The farmer now became a Satsangi of this Sampradaya with the due blessings of the saints.

This and other such episodes show us the tolerance of our saints. This great sect stands on the strong foundation of tolerance and solace. Those saints never used a vehicle for their religious tours and never availed any comfort. They walked on their feet, travelled through the countryside, village-after-village bearing heat, cold and rain on their personage. It was selfless service to direct lost souls to the path of salvation.

(One desiring to attain ultimate salvation should favour the fellow Satsangis in their adverse times. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that this is the real truth and everybody must know this.)

Take the side of a fellow Satsangi. Stay away from the opponents of religion. This reminds us about the episode of Somafai. It was the religious day of Ganesh Chaturthi. Darshan of moon is prohibited on this fourth day of Ganesh Chaturthi. The Moon had become inauspicious by his sinful act of eloping with the daughter of his teacher - Guru. Therefore, he has been cursed that whoever did darshan of Chandra (the moon) on that day should be blemished. Lord Shreeji Maharaj by chance did darshan of moon on that night. As he did the darshan, he uttered softly about the curse and ignominy. Now how to mend it? Somafai was having supper at her hut. Shreeji Maharaj threw some stones on her house. It was an old hut, with a weak roof of rotten bamboo. It collapsed in no time. This fumed the anger of Somafai. She

shouted, "Who is throwing stones? Who is that nasty man?" Shreeji Maharaj said with a sense of relief, "Now, there is no problem of a serious blemish." Then in the morning, some backbiters briefed the old lady and told her that the Sadhus of her sect have broken her hut by throwing stones on the roof. They tried to use some bad words against the Sadhus. Then Somafai replied back with pride and asked those men to stay away from her personal matters as the hut was her own hut and the saints were the Sadhus of her own sect. Everything was her personal matter and no outsider had any right to meddle in it. "Those are my saints. Who has given you the right to use harsh words towards my Sadhus? Get out from here, This is my house. I and my Sadhus will bother about it but not outsiders like you," said Somafai firmly. The hut had been broken, but there was no repulsion for the saints! Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to be firm like Somafai. He asks us to support the side of a fellow satsangi. Whoever aspires for ultimate emancipation, has to take the side of the fellow Satsangi. Know this much.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 12

(Malice towards devotion and a devotee brings pains and grief. Life becomes most miserable for such a malicious man. There is no doubt in this time-tested truth.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks the devotees to progress steadily and firmly on the path of devotion. There may be hurdles and obstacles on their path, but they should walk ahead on the path of dedicated devotion. Lord Rama, the great Pandavas, King Nala and other such great people have faced torment in their lives. One hundred sons of Rishi Vashishta were killed and Vishwamitra burned their hermitage encircled by the forest. Thus even great ones such as Vashishta were compelled to bear the pains of elemental life. Our Lord Dharmadev and mother Bhaktimata too had faced calamities and adverse times. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "Don't give away to worldly torments. Don't lose your patience. Don't receive it as a pain. Troubles are good teachers. Hardships build and shape our character and our personality. It is like penance. Raw metal does not get a higher price, unless it is crafted and shaped into a charming or utility oriented object. Gold is a very precious metal, but nobody would like to hang around his neck a lump of gold or its brick! A goldsmith melts such a lump or brick in the extreme heat of a furnace. He then gives it a desired shape by cutting, hammering and engraving it with his sharp and hard tools. The lump or brick of gold, which was not so useful earlier, becomes a most adorable ornament when it undergoes torturous crafting and shaping through fire and chisel." Like such metal, man too adds to his value by undergoing a reconstruction process. Thus pains are the tools of God to shape man into an aspiring devotee of his. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that one should not leave devotion in fear of sinful people.

(A true devotee of God always acts with courage. He never utters words of pity in his adverse times. Pleasures and sorrows are like a mirage to him. He never feels sorry for the loss of life or wealth.)

(Maintain absolute faith and trust. There is always an end to a troubling time. Those who try to fling mud at the sun find that it falls back upon themselves to hurt their own eyes.)

The Sadhus and aspirant devotees do devotion and meditational worship without any disturbance to others. If anybody tries to torment such a saintly soul, he will invite trouble on himself. There would be no harm to the saints but rather, the attendants of Yama will punish, without doubt, the sinner who has tormented a saintly soul. The fire ignited in winter by burning firewood keeps our body warm and protects life in the cold winter. Burning fire will not give warmth or protection if water is poured onto it. Water is used for cooling. It gives soothing coolness and refreshes us if poured on our body. Who would make it hot by putting fire to it? If done so, it would surely burn the body and give pain. Similarly if saintly souls, who are cool and tranquil by nature, are given pain and torments, the sinner of such acts would receive unbearable burns and pains to his innermost. There would be no remedy, no treatment and no cure for such self-invited pain. Physical pains are curable by treatment and medicine but the pains born from sinful acts are not curable - such pains are terminal. One has to bear them.

What will happen if some poison is mixed in a sumptuous meal? What will it remove - Hunger or life? While doing devotion and singing praises of God, one should not mix the poison of enmity. If polluted by the venom of enmity, it would consign the doer to hell. The attendants of Yama would torment him there. Enmity of Hiranyakashipu for his son Prahlad brought the end of the mightiest demon. The stepmother's enmity with Dhruvaji compelled her to burn herself in the wild fire. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks his aspirants to stay away from such enmity. He asks them to live happily with fellow satsangis. Love is a heavenly gift; there is nothing greater than selfless love. But an enemy is remembered more than a friend is. Therefore, stay away from enmity. Sadguru Muktanand Swami has said.

("Live happily with the devotees engaged in devotion of God. Don't try to look at their drawbacks. Don't create ill feelings for such God fearing souls. Speak always the words of wisdom. Be pure and live in the company of saints.")

Attire or clothing is a must for the body. It covers the human body. What would we think of a man throwing away his clothes? He is a fool and insane. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami therefore says, "Wear the clothes of wisdom and decorum, failing which, you would be in a bad shape – repulsive. Politeness and wisdom are the true attires of the soul." Lord Shree Hari says in his nectar like Vachanamrit, "Who is a wise man? - He who never looks at the faults of others." Wisdom and politeness are the ornaments of a man. It makes man handsome.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "You shall be left behind on the path of progress if you look at the faults of others. Only the sky shall be the limit, if we intend to progress on the path of ultimate emancipation, but it shall be held far behind if we peeped into other people's faults. We waste our energy and power in search of such dirt. A look at the other's drawbacks pollutes our mind – our thoughts. It is a waste of precious time and energy. It burdens our religious knowledge, and narrows our intellectual plane. Spiritual ascent cannot materialise with such a faultfinding attitude. Man becomes adorable by a cover of politeness and wisdom.

This elemental body is land. The seeds of Punyas (virtuous rewards) should be sown in it. Our birth and journey of life shall be futile if we sow the seeds of enmity. The seeds of venomous enmity cannot give the heavenly fruits of immortality. A fool is he who expects immortality by sowing the seeds of enmity. As we sow - so shall we reap. Man wants to enjoy pleasure and peace but he is not striving for the proper means for it. Devotion is the means for pleasure and peace. Sadguru Muktanand Swami says:

("I have received infinite pleasure by
surrendering at the feet of Lord Shree Krishna.
Worldly pleasures are not real and everlasting.
God's pleasures are infinite and beyond the limits
of time.")

For pleasure, we are looking at the places where it is not available. And we are not searching at the places where it is available.

(The unlucky dislike devotion of God. If
devotion were repulsive, how would we swim
through the ocean of life? A man riding a boat
made of stone cannot sail through the sea.)

A wooden log floats in water but a stone cannot. One should travel in a boat made from wood. You cannot cross the sea by a boat made from stones. Both the boat and the traveller would sink in the sea. Some people dislike the company of saints and devotees. Some fools say that they are not interested in temples or saints. These fools are like the hardest granite. Water has no effect on a stone. The stone becomes dry as soon as it is removed from the water. If sculptured by a chisel and a hammer, sparks shall be emitted by the stone.

Such stonehearted people cannot absorb the wetness of devotion – the feelings of devotion. These stonehearted people emit the sparks of anger and enmity if not as per their desire. Such people cannot swim through the ocean of life. They are to sink together in the sea along with their company.

The unwise are those who dislike a milking cow and dislike Satsangi Saints who are like the holy cow, and live in company of sinful bullocks. These unwise people are like those who have given away real rice to fight fiercely to retain fake rice! They are insane. They run after and chase the pleasure of sense objects. They fight nail and tooth to secure such fragile things.

Such unintelligent people are irrational in their thought processes and hold always opposite to a favourable counsel.

There were two brothers. Both were brave warriors. Once they rode a camel and went on a tour to hunt their fortunes. On the way, they found a saint. The saint blessed them heartily and said, "Don't go by this road. If you want to go towards that direction, travel by some other route, but not by this road. A witch awaits at a distance to kill travellers on this route." The saint then walked away. The unintelligent brothers did not like the wise words of the Sadhu. They thought that the Sadhu was a cowardly person and a non-violent saint. He therefore had advised them not to use this lonely path of the forest region. But they themselves belonged to the brave caste of Rajputs (warriors). Therefore, they should not be afraid of such hearsay. And what harm could she do when they were capable of killing her at the shot of their gun? Thus the camel riders continued their journey by the same road, and with greater confidence.

After a few minutes, they found on the road a large bag. They stopped the camel to inspect the bag. They kept aside their weapons and inspected the bag. It was large and heavy. Its mouth was neatly tied and was properly sealed to ensure safety of the contents. They opened it by their daggers and found it fully filled with gold coins. There were thousands of gold coins. They counted it in great pleasure and amazement. There were ten thousand gold coins weighing in several quintals. Then they discussed among themselves about that Sadhu and his cunning ploy. They concluded that fellow was a cheat. He knew about this treasure and left it here as it was, as he was not able to shift or carry it. They thought that he had surely left it there and would return later with some labourers to help carry the coins. To save his fortune and to keep it unnoticed, he told us the tale of a witch waiting for her prey! Thus toying with such amusing ideas, they kept the gold coins back in the bag and fastened its mouth tightly by a thick rope. Now they were millionaires! They no longer had to hunt for a job or livelihood. Both with their family and lineage were to live a luxurious life by this newly found treasure. Thus, there were no limits to their pleasure.

The brothers were now hungry. Of course, they were very rich money wise, but there was no food to eat. The younger brother said, "Brother! The village is not so far from this place. Please go there and buy some eatables for us. I will guard this treasure." The elder brother went to the village to buy some snacks. Now the younger brother was alone to dream about the newly found wealth. His greedy mind conspired to grab the entire treasure. He thought to kill his elder brother and planned it perfectly to kill him by a gunshot as soon he arrived.

When the elder brother came to the sweet shop and bought some sweets, he too thought to grab his brother's share and mixed some poison in with the sweets. He planned to offer the sweets to his brother. Ready with the poisonous sweets, when the elder brother was closer to his brother, the younger brother triggered off his gun and killed his elder brother. Now he was the sole owner of the ten thousand gold coins. He was excited by the intoxication of the newly found wealth. Now he desired to have some food. He went near the dead body and took out the packet of sweets. He satisfied his hunger with the sweets. But the sweets were poisonous and therefore the poison killed him too!

The Sadhus words were full of wisdom. It was the right kind of advice. But the brothers lost their lives by not taking it in right spirit. Lack of common sense or wisdom makes our life miserable.

PADA (SONG) : 3

(The spiritually wise should know that lack of spiritual wisdom attract torments in worldly and spiritual strides. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, "Devotion shall be futile, if a devotee while doing devotion looks at the faults of fellow Satsangis. Though engaged in innocent devotion, he will attract sin by peeping in other people's lives. He will become a sinner by his unintended act.")

Don't look at the fault of others. This would keep you far behind in your devotional meditation. A devotee loses his own virtuous rewards (Punyas) when he looks at the faults of fellow Satsangis. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami warns us against this: 'you will not progress in devotion if you look at the faults of others'.

(Shreekhand (sandalwood) is cool by it's inherent nature. If it's paste is smeared on the forehead and body, it gives soothing coolness to the body and soul. But the same sandalwood becomes a burning charcoal if put on fire. And if such charcoal of sandalwood is placed somewhere

in the forest, it burns the whole forest through a flaming wild fire.)

Devotion is like sandalwood. This fire of faultfinding should not pollute it. Eternal pleasure and bliss are not attainable without devotion of God.

(A polluted and unwise mind invites troubles for the self. If he found a wish-fulfilling tree, he may desire an axe to cut it's branches!)

A man sitting beneath a wish-fulfilling tree receives every thing he desires. Long, long ago, in a village, there lived a carpenter. It was a small village and there was not enough work to earn a livelihood. The impoverished carpenter thought of leaving his village to earn a livelihood elsewhere. On his way he found a good tree, green and shady. He sat beneath the tree to remove the fatigue of the journey. While relaxing under the cool shade of the tree, he wished to drink cool water. As he desired so, he saw near by him an earthen pot of cool water. He drank the nectar-like water to quench his thirst. The cool shade was soothing, the atmosphere was peaceful and tranquil to refresh him and the soothing coolness of drinking water penetrated his mind and heart. In such pleasant moment, he thought that a cot, if available, would be wonderful to enjoy a nap for while. As soon as he desired thus, he saw a well-furnished cot to sit and sleep on. While on that comfortable cot, he looked up at the tree - its trunk and branches. Carpenters love timber of every kind. He thought how nice it would be to make strong handles with his carpentry devices from such long, thick and straight branches of the tree. He wished how nice it would have been if an axe was there at that very moment. As he thought of it, he found a sharp axe hanging on the branch above him.

Though the wishes were granted, the carpenter never knew that the tree was fulfilling all his wishes, and whatever he thought of, would materialise in no time, in front of him. Therefore, the carpenter when he saw that sharp and well-crafted axe hanging above him, he suddenly thought that if the axe fell, it would cut his throat. Lo and behold! As he thought so, the axe on the branch dropped on the carpenter and cut his head. Unwise thinking took the toll of his life.

This Satsang is like a heavenly tree. It fulfils the wishes of an aspirant. If we wish for our emancipation, we shall be emancipated. If we wished devotional love in God, we shall be elated by such devotional love. If we aspire to receive Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan, our aspiration shall be fulfilled. If we thought that there is peace and pleasure due to such an attainment, there shall be tranquillity and heavenly pleasure in our life. In a nutshell, the heavenly tree of Satsang gives desired fruits to those who are under its benign shade. It is in our hands and within our reach to aspire for and receive as a blessed fruit, the emancipation and blissful pleasure.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that an obstinate and wicked person cannot do well of others. Not only that, but he will not accept the good

advice from others, though it may be beneficial to him. He will not walk on the path of emancipation. It is due to the hard shell of sins, which has imprisoned his consciousness. These sins prevent his devotional progress. We should leave such people at the mercy of their destiny and should engage ourselves in devotion of God.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 13

(Truest is the devotion of God. All the greats have begged for such devotion. The rest are ephemeral and worthless. One should stay away from these.)

All great devotees of past, such as: Shukdevji, Prahladji, Dhruvji, Narsimh Mehta, Brahmanand Swami and other Nand Sants - have prayed for devotion but nothing else: "O God! Bless us with love for your lotus like feet. Let our mind hum like a bumblebee, your devotional praises. Let there be inner ease in our devotion for you everyday. O God! Bless us with selfless devotion like that of Sitaji and Lakshmiji, such are the prayers and demands from a true devotee. Please note this cardinal truth that eternal pleasure and uninterrupted happiness comes from God through hearty devotion.

In ancient times, many great devotees have faced adverse times and torments. Despite such odds they did devotion more devoutly. They never withdrew from the path of devotion. They were firm and steady like a rock. The devotees like Prahlad, Dhruva, King Shibi, Ribhu, Rantidev and others have maintained religion and devotion at the cost of their life. They were not scared by torments. For such devotees the wealth and troubles have it's own meaning. For them the true wealth was devotion, and receding in devotion was the greatest torment for them! Worldly wealth and worldly torments held no standing in their lives. Pleasures and grief are not forever. Be courageous and do devotion of Shree Hari.

Hanumanji surrendered at the wishes of Lord Rama and did service of his. Nobody would come forward to search for the whereabouts of Sitaji, but Hanumanji accomplished that challenging search. The stones floated on the surface of sea when they were thrown onto the sea with the name of God and a broad and long bridge was built up. Lord Hanuman accomplished the tasks as was desired by Lord Shree Rama and like an obedient and devout servant, his body moved and acted as per the orders of Lord Shree Rama. He earned the pleasure of Shree Rama and attained eternal life. The means like *Japa* (chanting names of God), *Tapa* (penance) and pilgrimage of holy shrines are all included in the orders and desires of God. Act at the will of God and attain all these virtuous fruits. The monkeys never did Japa, Tapa or any chants on the rosary-bead, but they did do service of Lord Rama by following God's orders. Such sincere conformity had emancipated those monkeys by the pleasure of Lord Shree Rama.

(Man stood unequal to those animals when they did service of Lord Shree Rama and earned His divine pleasure. One should consider the call of time to do service of God; no other means is equal to such service. One should act as per God's will and should do it with absolute contentment.)

Man was not successful in winning the pleasure of Shree Rama, but the animals - the monkeys, succeeded in pleasing Lord Rama. They, by their dedicated services, were revered and attained proximity of Lord Rama. Lord Shree Rama admired their virtues and services at a largely attended court by proclaiming, "O Hanuman! On strength of your undefeatable will, I have defeated and killed the greatest demon Ravana. You are the cause behind Vibhishana's enthronement. My devotees, while singing my praises will sing heartily, your praises also. Whomsoever praises you in his devotion shall be liberated." Thus the devotees like Hanuman are liked by Lord Shree Hari.

Devotion is very dear to Lord Shreeji Maharaj. Devotion wields immense power and God himself takes care of such a dedicated devotee. A son travelling with his father does not have to worry about his tiffin. The devotion acts like a hammer, breaks a stone-like heart and softens it into fine and soft granules. Devotion acts like a plough on the land of our heart and softens the fertile soil of the heart by uprooting weeds and thorny bushes of the carnal desires. The devotees doing devotion of God have not to worry for the self. To travel with God is to do devotion by installing God at one's heart through single-minded devotion. God acts at the will of such a devotee. Do devotion with pure love and with a pure heart.

When God dwells on the earth in his incarnation as a human being, one is required to act as per the wishes of that God in front of him. One is required to know and realize his majesty and divinity. One should act promptly as per the wishes of God. One should not confront him. These are the most important things to consider. If a devotee does not believe in the God who is in front of him, and takes somebody else to be God, it is like money installed on a throne instead of the king. This is because Shree Hari is the God of Gods. None held supremacy above him. He is the Supreme Lord Purushottam Narayan.

(The Brahmins of Brij did holy fire with much enthusiasm, though they offered much to the holy fire, they gave nothing to Lord Shree Krishna!)

The Brahmins of Brij region performed a magnificent holy fire with very rich sacrifices of butteroil and sacred grains to please the Fire-God. The space

was filled with the sounds of “*Swaha*” (rousing hymn of the Fire-God). Once, Lord Shree Krishna with his friends, were grazing cows at the meadows of Brindavan. Krishna’s friends said, “O Krishna! We are very hungry. Please arrange something to eat.” Krishna said, “Friends! Look there. It is holy fire. Go there and ask for the food on my behalf.” The Gopa children went to the Brahmins and prayed for the food on behalf of Lord Shree Krishna. However the Brahmins refused them. They rejected the Lordship of Shree Krishna and viewed him as an ordinary cowherd. They insulted his friends and sent them back empty handed.

The children came back to Krishna and narrated their story. Shree Krishna then said, “O Friends! Do one thing. Instead of those Brahmins, go to their wives. Their wives are my devotees. They love me with great devotion. Tell them about our needs. They will do their best to provide food for us.” When the children came to the female members of those Brahmin families, they readily agreed to prepare sumptuous dishes for Shree Krishna and his friends. They bathed and wore fresh and clean clothes to cook meals for Shree Krishna. They then prepared *Thaal* for Shree Krishna and came personally to the forest to serve them the meals. Shree Krishna and his friends had the meals at their satisfaction and gave *prasadam* to the wives of the Brahmins. Lord Shree Krishna granted them a boon. “I am pleased by your devotional service. From today onwards, you shall not be required to cook the meals for you and your families. You will get readymade meals, cooked by your husband. Your husbands will look after the domestic duties, but not you. You will enjoy your life in comfort and leisure.” Even today, the Brahmin males (Chaubas) in the Mathura area are seen doing domestic chores in their homes!

(What have they earned as fruits of the sacred-fire? Nothing but repentance! Such was the fruit of worshipping the unseen and the abstract).

Those unlucky Brahmins knew after some time, that it was Shree Krishna, the Supreme Lord, who desired meals from them. But it was too late to act upon this. God offered an opportunity to them, but they failed miserably in reaping the rewards of the opportunity presented to them - a lifetime’s opportunity was missed!

(Great are the wives of those Brahmins! They offered meals to the Supreme Lord and at the same time emancipated themselves by devotion of God manifested in front of them).

A spiritually wise devotee knows that the devotion of the manifest God is truly great.

(Face-to-face talk is much better than a message. There are many that narrate the stories

they heard from others. But nobody narrates as his own experience).

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that some tell us the stories they heard from elsewhere. And on basis of it they narrate how God speaks, eats or behaves. But as Swami says he had lived for 25 to 30 years with God! He had conversed with him. He had seen him eating, speaking and conversing. It is a real life experience, no story and no hearsay. It is face-to-face meeting with the Supreme Lord. Such direct talks are far better than exchange of messages. More clear, more reasonable, more logical. Nobody had seen God but Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami had seen him. He had lived with him.

(A woman feels happy when she reads a letter from her husband. But her happiness is no match to an experience and pleasure of a face-to-face meeting.)

A woman is a happy when she receives a letter from her husband. But her happiness and pleasure is not as enjoyable as the pleasure and happiness of meeting him face-to-face. In case of a meeting, her happiness shall be many-fold, as she will talk to and exchange among themselves the pleasure and sorrows of life, they will laugh and enjoy the life together. She will be able to serve him by offering tasty meals. Thus the pleasure of meeting face to face is unique and extensive. A letter or a message cannot give such pleasure or happiness.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that he has seen God with his own eyes. He had been with him to serve him personally. One cannot experience such pleasures until he has attained God!

The narratives and episodes describing divine *leelas* of God in human form give us unbound pleasure and divine bliss when we listen to or sing the praises of God, but yet we still have not seen or experienced God in human form. Then imagine the pleasure that one received when he has seen God face-to-face! The bliss and pleasures shall be limitless – unbound! Nobody can describe it.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 15

(Devotion of God in human form is the essence of human life. It is the truth beyond doubts. Many have emancipated their life by devotion of God in human form. Not only men and women but the birds and animals too have attained ultimate salvation.)

God had liberated the souls in species like birds (vultures etc.) and animals (monkeys, bears and others). Jatayu was a vulture who never did any Japa or Tapa. But as he favoured the side of God, he had face-to-face darshan

of God and attained ultimate salvation. When demon King Ravana flew back to Lanka with Sitaji, he passed in the sky above Jatayu – the great vulture. Jatayu caught a glimpse of Sitaji crying in struggle and pain, “O Rama! O Rama!” Jatayu saw the helpless woman calling Lord Rama to help her. Himself a devotee of Lord Rama, he thought it fit to favour a devotee of Shree Rama. He put his devotion in practice. When he looked at the abductor, he found demon King Ravana with his ten heads and twenty arms – he had much power in both brain and body! Jatayu was sure of his own defeat, but made up his mind to fight with the demon to favour a fellow devotee – Sitaji. By his beak and paws, he attacked Ravan and fought till his last breath to defeat Ravana. Ravana realized that time was escaping out of his hands and the vulture was detaining him by his physical weapons. Though the bird was not to win, it was still to snatch away most of his time by obstructing his flight to Lanka. And if he was delayed thus for some more time, Rama and his people would surely catch up with him and rescue Sita. With such ideas, he cut with his sword the wing of Jatayu. Jatayu fell wriggling on the ground, screaming and chanting for help from Lord Shree Rama.

Lord Rama knew about the sinful act of Ravana when he came to Jatayu. Jatayu conveyed his prayer and gave away his life at the lotus feet of Lord Rama. Lord Rama took him in his lap and removed delicately the soil from his wounded body. While taking care of him, Lord Shree Rama looked at him with love and compassion and asked, “O Noble Eagle! Please ask me for a desired object. I shall be happy to fulfill your wishes. Do you desire new wings, or youthful body or immortality or my abode? Tell me what you want?” The old and injured eagle prayed, “O Lord! Though belonging to the lowest species, I knew that:

(“O Lord! O Rama! Your blissful name liberates a sinner even if chanted by him during his last breath. O Lord! You are divine and majestic, and I am in your benign lap to attain ultimate emancipation. O Lord! Please do not leave me until I have breathed my last.” In this way, Lord Shree Rama showers his divine pleasure and fulfilled the wishes of his devotee – Jatayu.

Lord Shree Rama acted like a human being. He, who had not done the funeral rites of even his own father, did with great care the funeral rites of Jatayu. By such unbroken devotion, Jatayu was placed honourably by Shree Rama in the spiritual plane of the Yogis. Noble vulture Jatayu did darshan of God in human form and attained ultimate salvation. Thus God emancipated those souls who did personal service of his when he dwelled upon the earth in human form.

God’s manifestation is blissful and he emancipates an infinite number of devout souls:

(Human beings have been redeemed by doing darshan of the manifest God. The attainments of such devotees are lofty and beyond imagination).

Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan has redeemed many souls by his divine and blissful presence in the life of such souls. The robbers and thugs have renounced their sinful acts and have become sin-free devotees of God. Merciless kings, princes and nobles have become servants of mankind. Violent people have become merciful and thieves now refrain from stealing even a smallest branch from others to brush their teeth! The circumstances and the conditions have been changed without any change in cardinal doctrines. Millions have been emancipated and the Shree Swaminarayan sect of Lord Shree Hari has shaped the life of millions of people.

Those are the blessed souls with whom God lived and did *leelas* with. Only the most fortunate souls are favoured by such opportunities. There are many souls who have not attained darshan of God despite their persistent efforts through devotion, penance and Japa. But those souls who lived in the company of God are the happiest. The residents of Vraj were the most fortunate as they enjoyed limitless joy from God's proximity. Only those who have attained divine pleasure, who have known God in human form, can enjoy such pleasure, but not others.

God is tied by the devotional love and decorum of his dearest devotees. Though it was not proper or just, God ignored this for the sake of his devotees.

You have all visited the holy shrine of Gadhada to do darshan of Shree Hari. There, near the main temple, exists a canopy. The canopy is the place where Shree Hari had held a rope to churn buttermilk with his devotees - Motiba and Jivuba.

Lord Shree Hari, who is not manifest even in front of scholars of the six schools of philosophy, held here in his human form and with his rustic devotees, the ropes of a churning pot. It shows God's intense love for his devotees the residents of Vraj. God runs breathlessly to save his devotee, if a devotee holds absolute faith in God. Shree Hari had churned buttermilk by holding ropes with Motiba and Jivuba. The devotion as such, wields immense power to compel God to do work for his devotees."

The pleasure that was desired by Lord Shiva and Brahma was made available easily to the devotees of God. Such faithful devotees lived to the fullest their life with God, in his divine company, and witnessed leelas of God in human form – God manifested and lived with them. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

Lord Shiva was regretful for not being a cow or a calf of Vraj Bhumi. He wished for such a birth to do darshan of Lord Shree Krishna and to participate in leelas with him. Such is the glory and majesty of the devotion of God.

Lord Shree Krishna and his friends would take the cows to the meadows for grazing. Shree Krishna, like other children there plays with them. He enjoyed with them at noon the meals with the children. Brahma once desired to have *prasadi* from Lord Shree Krishna, but in view of his high status as the creator he was shy of sharing prasadi meals with the children of Gopa families. Therefore, he disguised himself in the form of a fish in the sacred waters of Yamuna and hoped that he would enjoy the prasadi grains from the fingers of Shree Krishna when he washed his hands in river Yamuna. When Lord Shree Krishna, the all knowing supreme God learned about the creator's plans, he disliked such a disguise of his. God desired that one should be simple and forthright without any slyness. Therefore he asked all his friends not to wash their hands in Yamuna and directed them to clean it in the sacred soil of Brij Bhumi. Krishna and his friends did this. Brahma was upset for not getting prasadam. Thus the pleasures, which were not available to the heavenly Gods, were made easily available to the devout souls of Brij.

Great Rishi Valmiki had praised the monkeys in his sacred scripture of Ramayan. And Rishi Ved Vyasa had praised the Gopas and Gopis (cowhered families) of Brij. Why have those lowest ones been praised? Why have those been respected? Because they loved God. It is not child's-play to love God, manifested in human form. Lord Rama was lamenting and searching for his lost spouse in the forests. Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvatiji saw him grieving in the pains of separation. Lord Shiva went to Lord Rama and saluted him. Goddess Parvatiji did not do so; instead she asked him, "Why did you salute him?"

Shiva said, "Parvatiji! He is the manifestation of the Supreme Lord. You too should salute him."

"Now I know why you are called Bholanath (innocent), my Lord. You would salute whoever comes your way, invariably and with reverence," said Parvatiji.

Mahadevji then explained, "Devi! I have told you the truth. He is the Supreme Lord."

"Is he really God? Why is he crying like a helpless madman then?" asked she.

Mahadevji then explained to her about the grief of Rama and told her that Lord Rama's wife – Sitaji, was abducted by someone and Rama was grieving for her. But Parvatiji was not ready to accept him as God. According

to her, he was a common man and the eldest son of king Dashrath. As was assumed by her, Rama being a commoner was not able to foresee the whereabouts of Sitaji. His ignorance itself was the supportive proof of a human being. Thus, though God was manifest in front of her, due to her misfortune, she was not able to accept him as the omnipresent Supreme God. If faith is not so firm and if devotion existed in a receding mood, the soul would not be able to recognize and attain God, though stood in front of him. Vyasji praises therefore the faithful devotees of God:

These devout residents of Vraj were famed due to their unbroken faith and devotion in Lord Shree Krishna. The scriptures have mentioned their devotion to establish a model and an ideal for the single-minded devotees.

Every Gopa at Vraj had attained ultimate emancipation by serving at the lotus feet of Lord Shree Krishna. Those who were worldly wise and suspicious about Shree Krishna, were left alone without devotional love. And faithful residents of Vraj, attained divine pleasure of living with Lord Shree Krishna.

Devotion means total submission and pure love for God. Once, a disciple asked his Guru "Gurudeva! What is one supposed to do as a means of doing devotion of God?" His preceptor replied, "Dear Disciple! Devotion means to live together with the saints and devotees, to do devotion and to sing the praises of God in their benign presence. One should discipline and control one's sense organs with an absolute hold on them. They should act generously to help needy people. They should understand the hollowness of worldly relations and should maintain proper aloofness and distance from such attachment. They should know that the world and the worldly pleasures are not everlasting. These various acts strengthen the devotion and devotional love for God. Nothing else is required to be done by you. In other words, love thy God."

Devotion of God in human form is the highest of all means. Nothing is higher than such devotion. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that all should understand this fact.

Our sect, the Shree Swaminarayan Sampradaya advocates the devotion of God in human form - the idol form of God. Though God is not present contemporarily in his human form, we still feel the constant presence of Shree Hari when we do devotion of God. And a devotee should submit with such feelings the devotional services to Lord Shree Hari. In this great sect of Uddhava, God Shree Hari is present for all time. Please know this fact clearly and make others understand it.

Be firm in your heart to do devotion of God in human form. Nothing can be compared with it. It is unique and unparalleled. Don't miss the chance of his worship and devotion. Do devotion at your full satisfaction. That which cannot be accomplished by Gods and deities, is possible to be accomplished by the human beings in human body. Such is the capacity of the human body. The life of a deer, cow or elephant is a virtuous life, but those animals cannot sing the praises of God. Thus the human body and human life is the only means to act on the path of self-emancipation. Thus the human life is very precious and with such precious life, we have got this emancipatory Satsang and the saints. The supreme preceptor of our sect – our Guru Acharya, guides us on the path to ultimate salvation. All such means and opportunities should not be wasted in intoxication, carnal desires or greed.

Don't miss any opportunity. Act carefully in accordance to time. Don't worry about what is just or unjust when you wish to please God. Arjun was not interested in war due to his ethical views, but when he knew about Lord Shree Krishna's wishes, he fought the war to the fullest, regardless.

Arjun did not desire the war of Mahabharata, but he acted upon the wishes of Lord Shree Krishna, to obey the wishes of God. The Pandavas were the true heir of the empire of greater India, but Dhritarashtra and his sons – the Kauravas, refused to give even a smallest piece of land. Lord Shree Krishna himself went to the Kauravas to make them understand the judicious step of sharing the empire, but the venomous Duryodhana refused to share the empire. Not only that, but he challenged their capacity and competency of holding even a smallest particle of land. Challenging the Pandavas in the front of Shree Krishna, Duryodhana told the Lord to do what ever they liked to get their share, but he was not prepared to give even the finest particle of earth on the name of a share. That political dialogue culminated into a real threat of war to destroy mankind. Arjuna at the battlefield, lost all interest in the empire to be won by killing his own relatives, he refused to hold weapons against the army of the Kauravas.

Lord Shree Krishna then said to him. "O Arjuna! Those are sinners. They have grabbed the property, wealth and dignity of others. They are actually dead, you are just instrumental in their physical end."

Arjuna prays, "O Lord! My mind hesitates to act. I don't want an empire by fighting a war."

Lord Shree Krishna then says, "O Arjuna! They are predators. They had tormented you at no fault of your own, and had conspired to kill your family by burning you alive in the house made of wax. They had administered poison in Bhima's food to kill him. Thus, they had conspired repeatedly to kill you and your family and had challenged your prestige and decorum of your lineage by snatching away the dress of your wife – Draupadi. Such sinful predators should be killed without any hesitation. There shall be no sin in acting as so."

Then Shree Krishna manifested himself in his eternal colossal form – Vishwaroop, where Arjuna saw the cosmoses and the living organisms of different species born and sustained, these merged into the Universal manifestation of Supreme Lord Shree Krishna. Just as the river merges into the sea, he found thousands and millions of warriors merging into the mouth of the cosmic manifestation. Arjuna was frightened of this magnificent form of God, where the sun and moon were his eyes. Arjuna was not able to identify his God. He immediately asked, “Please tell me who you are?”

Lord said, “I am Kala. I am death itself. I have come here to destroy all the evil-doers.”

As and when the unbearable burden of sins increase upon the earth, God manifests himself in the form of Kala (death) and kills all liars, sinners and unjust spirits. God said, “O Arjuna! None is to be spared except you. I will kill all of them. If you want to obey my wishes, arise now readily and fight tooth and nail this religious war to kill all these sinners. The human beings in front of you are dead. I have killed them long before and in the present circumstances you are nothing but an instrument or a means for their destruction. The world and cosmoses act at my wish. O Arjuna! Though you have been refusing, you will have to fight and kill the enemies, because it is my wish to destroy all of them. Relieve yourself from this illusive notion that those are your uncles, seniors, teachers or elders. Make sure of yourself to act as per my wish and surrender at my feet. I will relieve you of all the sins.”

Lord Shree Krishna looked at Arjuna and said, “Arjuna! The knowledge I unveiled in front of you is the supreme and eternal knowledge. Now speak out your choice and tell me what you desire to do.”

Arjuna then said, “O Lord! O God! Your benign counsel and your eternal knowledge have removed my ignorance. Now I know what my ethical duties are. All my doubts and suspicions have been eroded. Now I am fully confident and absolutely doubt-free. I will act as per your orders.” God was pleased by such submission.

(Act as per God’s wishes and earn the pleasure of God. There is no room for the auspicious or inauspicious. Nothing moves without God’s will. Therefore, check your worldly wisdom, and act as per the will of God. God’s wishes are always auspicious and benign.)

A destructive war was fought between the Pandavas and Kauravas, and most of the warriors were killed. God was pleased with Arjuna for his total submission at his wishes. Millions of soldiers, captains and kings were killed in that war, but Arjuna was saved from sin. He was protected and saved by Lord Shree Krishna. What does this teach us? Act as per the will of God and forget all else!

(Arjuna killed many soldiers, relatives and seniors, in the war of Mahabharat. While fighting in the battlefield he never paid attention to the clan or caste of the warrior opposite him, but acted solely as was desired by Lord Shree Krishna. Thus the act of his was a sinful act of killing thousands of human beings, but Shree Krishna was pleased with him, instead of getting angry.)

Though he killed many of his seniors and relatives, the Lord admired Arjuna for his valour on the battlefield. Why did he admire him? Lord admired him, because of his obedience to his orders. Learn this basic principle: Act as per God's wish. Only this pleases God. Throughout his life, Dada Khachar took care of Shree Hari's wishes and acted swiftly to fulfill them. Shreeji Maharaj has said repeatedly:

”

There shall be no change in this!”)

Just as the Gopis are mentioned repeatedly in all the scriptures, similarly, the name of Dada Khachar appears invariably in all the scriptures of the Uddhava Sampradaya. Act as per the will of God, 'That is the cardinal principle of devotion – that is the cardinal principle of Bhakti Nidhi scripture'.

(A devotee should act as per the will of God and in such act he should not be sorry or elated for any loss or defeat or gain or victory of any kind.)

Act as per the will of God and don't attach your mind to the fruits of such acts. A defeat should not make you unhappy and a victory should not give you pleasure. Maintain an equipoise state of mind in loss or gain. God says that he always keeps an eye on his devout devotees. One has nothing to worry about when he knows how to live a virtuous life. One need not worry about the depth of water when he knows the art of swimming.

(Do devotion with a well-settled and doubt-free mind. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami desires to preach this basic principle of devotion.)

Lord Shreeji Maharaj has preached in his Vachanamrit, to not be suspicious about the acts of God and should not raise any doubt in regard to God. There should be a total positive approach in regard to the acts of God.

PADA (SONG) : 4

(O saintly souls! This is the opportune time to do devotion of God. All your wishes shall be fulfilled through devotion of God. Such devout

service will remove your ego to usher in humbleness. It will remove, branch and root, the inner desires of the sense objects. The Supreme Lord himself is here in front of you for your ultimate emancipation. Lord Shree Hari is the Omniscient Supreme Lord of Akshardhaam.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to do devotion of Shree Hari. Leave no stone unturned in service to God. Such service delivers the desired fruits.

Friendship with a wealthy man gives him pleasure and comfort in his daily life. In such company, he enjoys worldly pleasures and companionship of other such wealthier people by attending parties and outings. Such company removes small risks and fears from the daily life of the friend. If such friendship to a rich man gives such pleasure and social security, then what is to say about the reward of friendship if established with the Supreme Lord? Friendship and company of God gives eternal peace! It gives eternal pleasure! It removes fear of death and rebirth!

Remember this well. Friendship with God is the best type of friendship. Nothing can be impossible, if one establishes such friendship with God. All virtuous rewards, worldly and heavenly, reside forever in oneness with God. But such friendship is not that easy to attain. For God's company, the soul has to surrender exclusively at the will of God. He will have to act without hesitation and with promptitude to execute the orders of God.

Lord Shreeji Maharaj has said in Vachanamrit (Gadhada-56) that in reality the truest defect in one's life is his desire for the ephemeral things, instead of his desire for God. If one who has become desire free and detached but becomes egotistic in regard to his detachment ignores or avoids fellow *satsangis* by becoming rude or rough towards them in conversation, then it would become a major loss on his part and he will recede in his single-minded devotion to God. Such an attitude will act adversely on his strength of devotion. It will hamper the growth and progress of devotion. Lord Sahajanand Swami knows everything by his divine power.

(Nothing is unknown to him. Know him as the omniscient Supreme Lord. To abandon him and to do devotion of another than him is nothing less than acts of betrayal!)

The Lord is omniscient. He knows everything by his divine powers. He knows if we acted truthfully or spoke lies or committed sinful acts. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami calls him an ungrateful traitor, who worships others, and not the omniscient Lord. Water and nutrition supplied to the stem and root of a tree reaches all its branches, leaves and buds. It is not necessary to feed each branch and leaf individually. Similarly, the omniscient supreme Lord is like a stem of the tree and the Gods and deities are like branches and

leaves. Worship unto Lord Shree Hari is like worshipping all deities and Gods. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

(A devotee becomes sin-free by touching the lotus feet and by doing darshan of Lord Purushottam. The image of Lord Purushottam gives eternal pleasure to the devout soul.)

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 17

(Take care of your body and mind, as it is a precious means to attain proximity of Shree Hari. It is the most sought after opportunity to do darshan of Lord Purna Purushottam. It is the most precious moment of one's life, when we rendered personal service unto Lord Shree Hari. Think again and again on similar line and do devotion of God.)

Human life is very precious. One cannot buy for himself a birth as a human being, even at a cost of billions or trillions. Our birth as a human being is like a heavenly tree and man can attain the highest attainments by his body and mind if he uses it judiciously. The human body is a reward of the accumulated *punyas* of the past several births of the soul. When such punyas rise to the occasion, the soul attains company of a saint – a holy man. Be careful and don't waste such precious birth in ephemeral ego and pride. It is a rare instrument and a most precious chance to do devotion and Satsang:

(Think again and think thoroughly. The situation should not go out of control. Act swiftly by assessing the time and circumstance. Leave no stone unturned in your efforts to please Shree Hari. Discard your ego and arrogance. Be positive in your approach. Ego and arrogance attracts pains and God never warms to such a soul.)

Once, a *Rishi* was living in a hermitage with a senseless disciple. The disciple was dull and foolish. However the Rishi was kind and merciful. He was a scholar of the divine knowledge and religious scriptures. He taught selflessly to the aspirants who came to him.

One morning, he left his hermitage to do morning rituals of bathing and meditation at the riverside. Meanwhile at the hermitage, some small sparks from the holy fire, fell on the wall of the hut. The walls were made of grass. As a result, smoke and flames quickly engulfed the walls. When the disciple saw the smoke rising from the grass-wall, he jumped from his seat, held a jug

and ran to the river to fetch water. The hut had become a heap of ashes, by the time he came back with the jug! The disciple was surprised and shocked at such sudden end. Meanwhile his Guru came back.

He scolded his disciple, "How did the cottage burn when you were here to protect it?"

"What could I do?" submitted the helpless disciple. "There was a water pot here. If water had been sprinkled in time, the fire would have been extinguished. But, it was drinking water. How could I waste it on a small fire?" responded the pupil.

"O fool! If there had been the tiniest amount of intelligence in you, then there would have been no question in wasting even a little of water. Fire begins with a light smoke, and such initial fire could have been extinguished with a palmful of soil thrown on the smokey portion," said his Guru.

Then after some months, the disciple and Guru were seated together in the wintry cold to enjoy the warmth of a fireplace. It was late evening and the Guru yawned lazily. As his mouth opened wide, he sucked some smoke into his mouth. When the disciple saw this, he immediately thought and assumed it as a sign of the fire in his Guru's belly. As his Guru yawned again, the obedient disciple took a handful of soil and stuffed it with force into the Guru's mouth. The Guru ran in hurry and rinsed his mouth repeatedly to clean off the soil particles.

He then barked angrily, "O Fool! Are you mad? What did you do?"

"You told me before to sprinkle soil to extinguish fire as soon as I see smoke. There was smoke erupting from your mouth whenever you yawned, I assumed this as the initial stages of a fire. Therefore I stuffed soil into your mouth to extinguish the initial fire."

Such people cannot earn the pleasure of their Guru – their preceptor. One cannot please God, if he is not ready to accept wise words for his own good.

(If the servants and attendants of a king cannot discharge service in time and in proper manner, how then can a king be pleased with them?)

A king will dismiss an attendant if he has not discharged his duty in a just manner. If a servant serves water when the king has desired milk, or presses the head, when the king has desired massage of his feet, then such a disobedient and careless servant shall be thrown away from royal services. The Supreme Lord – Bhagwan – is the emperor of all kings. He will allow us in his service if we acted by his wishes and orders. If not acted so, we shall be discarded from his benign fold. Adjust yourself at the wishes of God and live happily the whole of your life, at the lotus feet of God.

Devotee Hanumaan lives forever with Lord Rama; Goddess Lakshmi lives eternally with Lord Vishnu. Goddess Radhaji lives happily and eternally with Lord Shree Krishna. Live at the wish of God and be happy. If acted contrary to this, the soul shall be punished to live as an animal to suffer at the hands of predators!

(An unintelligent man tries to show bravery at the place where an escape was more favourable. In circumstances needing a swift and forceful action, he acts slowly and with great solace in such circumstances.)

Lord Shreeji Maharaj had said in his Gadhada discourses that if circumstances arise where an escape is more beneficial than waiting there, then he should run away from such place to avoid blows and beating. There should be enough swiftness in morning rituals. One should not spend two hours of the early morning by wasting time in a bathroom. There should be enough swiftness in doing morning rituals of bathing and should be done so with greater cleanliness. Thus at the earliest, one should present himself at the service of God. Act properly and judiciously in accordance to time, place and circumstances. This is the main attribute of a wise man:

(An unwise soul prefers to contest, where submission in defeat is most advisable. Such an unwise person desires to make others bow, where he himself was needed to bow and surrender.)

A saint was living at a hermitage in the forest with his disciples. There were eight disciples with him. The Guru was correcting his disciples incessantly if he found any fault in him. He was not tolerating even a minor drawback of his disciples. 'One minor drawback invites many big blunders' was the cardinal principle of his life. Shobhitdas was one of his disciples. He was extrovert by nature and spent more time and energy on worldly ways instead of worship, meditation or devotion. Physical steadiness is a must for mental steadiness. Only a steady mind concentrates firmly in meditation and worship of God. Study and learning need a steady mind. Shobhitdas was not steady bodily or by his mind. He spent more time with his friends and loitered here and there.

Once, in a morning assembly, the Guru said, "Shobhitdas! You are not concentrating in learning, study and meditation. Your sense organs are not under your control. You are not steady bodily. If you are not steady physically, how will you control and discipline your mind? A steady mind needs a steady body. If the mind is not steady there shall be no concentration. And God cannot be attained without total concentration. You are not attending devotional sessions but are wasting your precious time with friends of your age. Now stop this nonsense and do devotion. Attend meditational

sessions regularly. Pay attention to your study. Act sincerely upon this instruction, failing which, you will not be able to adjust with our program." The Guru then retired back to his chamber.

Egotistic Shobhitdas was burnt badly in the fire of this insult. He nursed hate for his Guru and spoke badly about his Guru. He spent twenty years there at the hermitage without showing respect towards his Guru. He stopped saluting him and talked always badly of him. Other disciples tried at there very best to normalize such strained relations, but efforts turned futile from the side of Shobhitdas. He never bowed at his Guru to pay respect. On the contrary, he desired an apology from his Guru!

Such ignorant souls, though living in Satsang for decades or for a life time, would not be touched by the virtues of Satsang. Such souls are called ungrateful souls. Shreeji Maharaj preaches to us to stay away from such ingratitude.

(When required to be alert and conscious they live carelessly. When required to speak and convey, they keep their mouth shut.)

How strange the ways are? One should rise early in the morning and should do *poojan*, *archan* and *darshan* of God. But man with his negative mind rises late at about 8 or 9 a.m. instead of rising early. At a *Satsang-Sabha* he keeps his mouth shut instead of singing with others in praise of God. But in case of some quarrel between two, he runs to them and jumps like a madman in such quarrel and speaks unsolicited nonsense. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

(They speak nonsense when they were required to shut their mouth. They leave the place and go away, when they were required to be there. Such learning and devotion are not helpful, if it cannot earn the pleasure of God. Such men should do work that was required to be done by them. They should not do work that was supposed not to be acted upon.)

They use bad words and rustic language. They, by their own acts, make their own mouth dirty and spoil the sanctity of the environment. They are unintelligent and ignorant souls. A true devotee of God is he who wears a *Kanathi* and worships God, who sings praises of God and speaks nothing else except the names of God. If you wish to speak, speak the language of devotion - speak the names of God!

Devotee Mirabai sings:

(‘Don’t speak anything else but sing the names of Lord Radhakrishna. Don’t drink bitter *margosa* by rejecting the sweet juices of sugar cane. Speak only the names of Lord Radhakrishna.’)

The name of Lord Radhakrishna is worth listening to. If desired to speak, speak the names of Lord Radhakrishna.

In later stages, when such an arrogant soul fails miserably on the path of virtues, Shree Hari rejects them outrightly for their repeated failure on the path of devotion. Such ignorant souls spoil by their own hand the precious opportunity of serving personally at the lotus feet of God.

Once, there was heavy rain, a monsoon rain. The mother-in-law asked, “Dear daughter! It is raining. Keep one empty pot under the watershade to collect water from the roof. Fresh water shall be useful to cook meals.” The daughter-in-law followed the instruction and kept the pot accordingly. Early next morning, she asked her daughter-in-law to bring the water-pot. She came back with an empty pot. Her mother in law asked, “Why is it empty? Where is the water?”

“There was no water in the pot. It was empty,” said the daughter-in-law.

Mother then asked, “It should be fully filled. There was heavy rain during the whole of the night. Was it kept properly or not?”

“It was kept up side down,” replied the daughter-in-law.

Like that water pot, the heart and mind of many people have become upside-down and therefore preachings, sermons and counsel cannot be filled in their heart. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that God’s eternal mercy is an ever-flowing stream, and men’s follies are limitless.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 18

(One who has not learn’t the ways to do devotion of the visible Lord in front of him commits mistakes repeatedly. If a crown were desired from him, he would bring instead a pair of footwear. These souls always act negatively.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that such negative souls commit hundreds of mistakes in their daily life, but know nothing about their wrongdoing. On the other hand, a Satsangi’s soul shall be engaged in devotion of God by singing praises of God and listening to his devotional episodes. He will not recede in his virtues, and per chance if he makes a mistake, he would check it immediately to rectify it. He will take a conscious note of not repeating such mistakes in the future.

(A habit of negative approach cannot be changed into positive thinking. A soul with such negative habit cannot do pleasurable devotion. If demanded water, he would give a stone and if asked for food he would deliver fire. They are so negative that if desired attire from him, he would deliver a hand fan. They always act oppositely.)

Such negative souls cannot earn the pleasure of God.

Nathubhai belonged to a Brahmin family. Once he came to Gadhada to do darshan of Shree Hari. He then came to Sadguru Gopalanand Swami. Swami blessed him Shree Hari's pleasure and preached him *Varnashram Dharma* befitting a noble Brahmin. Sadguru Gopalanand Swami blessed him to be a virtuous Satsangi and preached him basic principles of ethical duties. He asked him to maintain personal purity and cleanliness and to forsake intoxicants and non-eatables. He told him to do daily poojan-worship of Lord Lalji and *Shaligram* and gave to him the idols of God for daily pooja. Nathubhai promised to live like a true Satsangi and a pure Brahmin.

He came back home and asked his wife to maintain sanctity in daily life. He asked her to cook the food after morning rituals and a complete body bath. She should cook the meals by wearing fresh and clean clothes. She should not consume intoxicants and should not use onion and garlic in meals. The cooked meals shall be served first as a *Thaal* to Lord Thakorji and the meals consumed thereafter as *Prasaadam*. He taught her to do *darshan* at the temple, and told her to use filtered water and filtered milk for domestic purpose.

His wife, though was born a Brahmin woman, was an addict of chewing tobacco and was careless in her personal cleanliness and hygiene.

On the next day, she cooked the meals whilst chewing tobacco. When Nathubhai saw her consuming tobacco, he corrected her on the spot, "What were you told before? Why are you consuming tobacco? Go and get your mouth washed."

She barked, "What? Why should I stop it? I will live as per my convenience. I will not stop chewing tobacco. Don't poke your nose in my business."

Nathubhai took the *thaal* to submit it to Lord Thakorji. As he offered the *thaal* and prayed, she spat the tobacco out of her mouth into the fire of the cooking stove. Nathubhai scolded her for such nasty acts of hers. Instead of feeling sorry, she was angry at him and she continued to spit madly at the place and seat of Nathubhai and the *Thaal* of God. Such insane rude and dirty act of hers disheartened Nathubhai.

This episode holds a deep moral message for women in contemporary society and conveys equally the important message to our society. The wives,

whose husband has to repent for her sinful acts are a shame to society. Such disciples are a shame to society, whose Gurus have to repent on their behaviour. Those children are a shame to society, whose parents have to repent for their acts.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

(The devotion of those devotees shall not be a true devotion if they don't come to the place where they were required to be present, or they don't go to the place where they were required to go. Those devotees of Lord Krishna shall not attain supreme destination if they don't grace the seat where they were required to sit or they run away from a place when they were required to hold a position.)

The saints preach to them and invite them at the temple to do devotion and darshan of God, but they act opposite to the preachings and reject religious feasts. When the saints object to their acts, they act repeatedly in visiting cinemas, hotels and other such cheap entertainment. Such block headed people cannot attain any greatness. They are like animals. If our seniors, Guru, and elders beckon us, we should see them immediately to receive orders and advice from them. A devotee should forsake his ego and stubbornness.

(Such a crazy soul is he, if he has received God in human form, yet would act like an insane woman and shall not be able to know his Lord. Such foolish people are like an insane woman. If an insane woman were asked to take care of the house against a fire and other hazards, she would jump to the roof with a burning torch and put the house to ashes, instead of following the instructions.)

We should act wisely and should follow the instructions in words and in spirit.

(A devotee will not earn the fruits of devotion if he has adopted undevotional ways in his service to God)

We have been born on this earth as a human being to earn the fruits of devotion by meditation, worship and Satsang. We have to earn the virtues like donation, compassion, mercy, obedience, truthfulness, faith etc. Shreeji Maharaj has said in Vachanamrit. 'I like intelligent and spiritually wise

people.' Wisdom is the true spirit of a man. It is the true light of a man. Try to imbibe virtues. Live in holy company of the virtuous saints. Be virtuous in your thinking and imagination. A virtuous man is far better than a wealthy man is. Virtuous attributes are the real ornaments of a man - it is real eminence. Such lordship cannot be acquired by sitting on a tall seat. A crow cannot become an eminent entity, though held the highest seat on a palace tower. Though a Swan dwells at the lowest position in a lake or a river, it holds supreme majesty in the world of the birds. Thus, the position may be the highest or the lowest, but such elemental position cannot make a significant contribution in the spiritual status of a being.

(How would a man earn virtuous fruits, when he did nothing fruitful? Whatever he did were acts of pains and torments. How would such acts help him in the devotional ways?)

This poor soul, fails in positive thinking - wisdom cannot be borrowed, and true love is not a commodity available at the shops. Natural charms cannot be borrowed from others and affection cannot be created by force.

Long, long ago, there was a king. Once, a fool came to the king to be a servant at the palace. He did odd duties such as cleaning and polishing the royal chariot, throne and palace furniture. He also provided services at the royal gardens. He was good at arranging flower bouquets and garlands of colourful and fragrant flowers. The King was pleased by his services and therefore he promised the servant to give him a thing of his desire. He asked the servant to ask for anything of his choice. The crazy attendant thought for a while and prayed instantly, "Maharaja! O Great King! Please give me a pair of footwear." The King was shocked by his demand. There were ornaments, wealth and assets to ask for but that fool asked for shoes! The footwear was his destiny. Thus, the man by his misfortune becomes unwise in his life.

(Such an unwise person gives his master woollen clothes and wraps him up in a rug during the hottest of summers. His services would be worse if he then brought a flaming stove near him!)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami tells us about the souls who are not worldly wise. Such unwise people - ignorant souls serve God through their most undesirable services! At the end of such 'painful service', they pray to God to shower his pleasure. Such undesirable services cannot earn the pleasure of God. Swami says:

(Wisdom should prevail upon us to join Satsang consciously. Such Satsang will benefit us eternally. We should do devotion and *Katha-Kirtan* to serve Shree Hari at our best. This is the path of eternal pleasure.)

Wisdom is the attribute of greatness. A man is great if he acts wisely. Wisdom is the greatest virtue. A virtuous man holds the highest respect and honour in all circumstances everywhere. A small man becomes great in the company of a virtuous man. A flower garland is the ideal example of such companionship. An ordinary thread becomes an adorable ornament by company of flowers and God wears it close to his heart! Copper added to gold, becomes equally valuable like gold, because of the virtuous companionship of gold. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks aspirant souls to apply their wisdom on the path of God.

(Such a servant of God is like an enemy, if he serves in hot days of summer, hot spices and musk as a mouth freshener to his Lord.)

Mace and musk are hot spices. Hot spices should not be served to God during hot days of summer. While walking with God to help him in his religious progression, a devout servant should take enough care to guide him to walk away from muddy areas. In winter he should not serve cold water for God to bathe with and should not use wet clothes to cover his person during wintry days. He should not garland God with wet flower garlands and cold sandal paste during winter. In short the ways of serving God are quite different in the season of winter than those required in summer. Serve Shree Hari by your services matching with time and place. A devotee earns the pleasure of Shree Hari by such suitable service. Sadguru Nishkulanand Muni sings:

(Serve God at you best and serve him wisely. The idol in front of you is not mere stone but within it resides eternally the Supreme Lord of Akshardhaam)

When installed and invoked, God resides eternally within an idol - whether a stone image, a picture or a metal idol. He does so to receive devotion, meditation and worship of his devotees. When doing darshan at the temple, never see or think of the idol as mere stone, paper or metal. While on a pilgrimage, don't speak about an idol as wood, metal or stone, because you are visiting it to do darshan of God, not for an inspection of the material. Trust the image as God in human form and do so with unbroken faith. Lord Shree Hari says in his Vachanamrits: God dwelling in the idol receives *poojan-archan* from a devotee when a devotee does so by becoming pure and holy like God.

Know it well. A devotee of God should be wise, religious minded, firm and well disciplined. This is the strength or power of a devotee. Your devotional success depends on this. If you have starved for the past fifteen days and then challenged a group holding heavy sticks to a dual, you are sure to get your bones crushed and injured pitifully. You were required to check

and test your physical strength before you held a stick. A stick or cane delivers desired results only when strength and power is exerted properly by a fighter. Similarly, when worshipping an idol, the fruits of worship depend solely on the penance, faith, concentration and devotional strength executed by a devotee.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 20

(People worship the idols of God made from stone. The worship and poojan of God in idol form should be in accordance to time. Our devotion and devotional services should match with the time. God is pleased by an appropriate service.)

Do devotion and poojan, with an unbroken faith in the idol in front of you. Offer devotional services in accordance to time, season and circumstances. Hold absolute faith and trust in God dwelling in an idol. Act not at your wish, but as desired by God.

(Do poojan and devotion for God's pleasure, not with any selfish motive. Do poojan in accordance to time and place. Don't do untimely poojan - poojan inappropriate for a particular time.)

Don't do devotion with a selfish motive. Our saints have alarmed us by narrating episodes of selfish priests: One householder was appointed as a priest in a rural temple. He served God regularly through timely service of bathing, *poojan archan* and *aarti*. He did everything on time and with great care. But what was the intention or aim of that householder priest in doing such extraordinary service? Somebody once praised his service and appreciated him for his devout efforts. The priest than reciprocated, "God is merciful. I am earning my livelihood by this service. Though the visitors are not plenty, I am getting two kilograms of grains daily with some money to spend on my householder needs. God sustains my household!" This is the grey area of devotional services. Expect nothing while you worship.

(Serve God in accordance with time by cleansing his mouth, massaging and comfortable bathing. Bring bathing water befitting a season and time. Serve in accordance to time and season the paste of sandalwood or saffron. Act wisely in your devotional services.)

The factor of time must play a vital role in your devotional service of God. Submit a toothbrush at a suitable time to help God to cleanse his mouth. The temperature of the bathing water should suit the seasonal changes. Sandalwood paste and other objects to be served to God, should match perfectly with the season and time. Attires and ornaments to be graced by God should fit with the requirements of the season and time. Act accordingly in submitting flower garlands, *thaal* and bed to sleep. Massage and press his

feet gently when God sleeps on a comfortable bed at a proper time. While submitting such services, hold absolute faith in his divine majesty. Trust and faith plays a vital role in devotional services offered by a devotee.

(A devout servant of God presents himself timely at the service of God. He submits himself humbly and stays away from an untimely occasion. He acts according to the pleasure of God and acts most reverently. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that a true servant of God acts without ego or self-pride.)

Act at the wish of God and act in timely fashion. Such devout service liberates a devotee. Devotion and devotional sessions are the abodes of eternal peace and ultimate emancipation. A devout servant of God attains ultimate emancipation by blissful pleasure of God. Yoga and holy-fires conducted in this present age of *Kaliyuga* cannot give eternal peace of mind. Japa, penance and pilgrimage too, fall short in delivering eternal peace. In contemporary times, the soul receives eternal peace at the lotus feet of Shree Hari. Do devotion with unbroken faith.

PADA (SONG) : 5

(It is good to act politely. Believe in my words and behave decently.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to be polite and ego free in our worldly ways and in our devotional service of God. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami tells us to be simple, submissive and ego-free in our service to our God - Shree Hari. Be polite and modest to others. Solace and modesty are the most important virtues. Lord Shree Hari has preached in his Vachanamrit to live like an obedient servant in the benign presence of God. Don't be egotistic.

(Be ego free in your thoughts, speech and actions. Forsake your false pride. Obedience with folded hands spoils nothing.)

Submit exclusively at the lotus feet of God. Forsake ego and pride. Ego free service consigns a devotee to the divine abode of God. Man lives happily in this world and in other worlds too, if he forsook ego. Ego drags one's life to a shameful end, and scriptures have narrated many such biographies of a tragic end of ego. Ego destroys virtues and produces sins in the life of a man. It blocks the path of progress. Ego is a tormenting element.

Long, long ago there was a devastating war between the Gods and demons. The demons were defeated and the deities won the war. This victory

resulted in ego and the egotistic deities boasted their excellence and smartness in warfare. God disliked such attitude of the deities and disguised himself as a Yaksha (a demi-god and an attendant to deity Kubera) and came to Vayu Deva (the wind God).

Yaksha asked, "Who are you?"

"I am Vayu Deva," said Vayu Deva.

"What do you do as Vayu Deva?" asked Yaksha.

"Don't you know who I am and what my powers are? Even the smallest child knows what I can do. I rock the mountains by force of the wind. I am very strong and powerful!"

"Who gave such great power to you?"

"It is my own power. It is my own attainment, not gifted by others. Who else has the capacity to give me such strength?" proclaimed Vayudeva.

God then held a thin blade of grass on his palm and said to Vayudeva, "Cast aside this blade by your so called power and prove your strength." Vayu Deva tried his best and applied all his energy to blow away the blade by force of a stormy wind, but he failed miserably to move or shake it. The Wind God confessed his defeat and surrendered.

God is supreme and the world moves as per his wishes. It is God's divine power. God dislikes ego and false pride. He loves his ego free and polite devotees. An egotistic son invites the displeasure of his parents. God loves ego free souls.

(Don't be egotistic in front of a saint if desiring self-emancipation. Take it as your good fortune if you are blessed with a seat at the footwear of a saint. Such humbleness and decorum would consign you to the divine abode of God).

It is good to be simple and polite. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami shows us the path of an ideal life: Be obedient and serve reverently your God, Guru and seniors. Follow the instructions and orders of your master. Be polite and sincere to them. Feel sorry and beg pardon for your unintended mistakes and confess it open-heartedly. Humbleness and decorum are the cardinal teachings of Bhakti Nidhi.

(Timber that is hard and stiff like an arrogant man becomes smooth and soft when a carpenter processes it under heat and high temperature.)

The carpenter makes the timber smooth and soft by heating it under high temperatures. He then uses such softened timber in making attractive

furniture and other useful items for domestic use. The timber, which was worthless like firewood, became valuable when it was reshaped and designed into a piece of furniture. Similarly, God disciplines an arrogant man by breaking the hard shell of his arrogance and ego, and makes him soft and tender to imbibe the virtues for the expansion of his inner values.

(Our nature should not be like the stinging nature of a scorpion. Nobody will show pity or mercy on such stinging nature, but instead the head shall be crushed by heavy beating and blows.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to improve our inherent nature. We should not act like a scorpion. Our speech and conversation should not be bitter or painful. Some people are in the habit of inviting quarrel and dispute on small and negligible things. The life of such dispute may be longer than the life of a man! Try to forget such events. Be adjustable and act with solace.

Kathi Sagaal was a single-minded devotee of Shreeji Maharaj. He observed most religiously the tenets and discipline of this sect. Once, in his religious tour, Sadguru Muktanand Swami came to the village of Sagaal Kathi. He preached personal religion to the aspirants at the religious sessions and asked, "Sagaal Bhagat! God has given you this precious life as a human being. Do devotion of God to emancipate yourself. The world is like a nest and human beings are the birds. Nobody lives with us forever. Our family members will leave us one after another at an appropriate time and we too will have to leave this world carrying nothing with us. Lord Sahajanand Swami graces the sacred shrine at Gadhada to emancipate his dependent souls. Indeed, Lord Shree Hari fulfils even the undisclosed wishes of his devotees. Ensure you come to Gadhada. Do devotion and live in company of Satsangi souls. Live with firm faith in God. God will grant all your wishes."

The nectar-like words gave him tranquil bliss and Sagaal Bhagat made up his mind to do darshan of Lord Sahajanand Swami. He prayed submissively to Swami, "Swamiji! I will come with you to do darshan of Maharaj."

Swami said, "Go and get permission from your wife first."

Bhagat went to his house and informed his wife about the saints and desired expressly for a visit of Gadhada Dhaam. He then told her that he would join the saints to visit Gadhada and will live there in their Satsang for a couple of days. However his wife was an ill-natured woman and though he would be back within a week, she barked angrily, "Why should you go? Stop this nonsense! Gadhada is not your father's property. Sadhus have nothing better to do, than to roam around, they are irresponsible loiterers. Don't run after them. I will harm you, if you try to run to those mendicants.' So saying, she shut him in a dark room.

Sadguru Muktanand Swami knew about this sad event. He sent words of wisdom "Bhagat should not insist for a pilgrimage of Gadhada. His wife is an enemy of his past birth. He should try to maintain peace and order at home to avoid any clashes."

Married women are required to be polite and co-operative to their husband's requests. They should not use indecent language. They should maintain decorum. Those women, who fail to control their tongue fail miserably in their household and after death, such wicked souls receive harsh punishment at the hands of the attendants of Yama.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

Love filled words should be treasured warmly at the heart. Here is an episode from Shree Hari's divine words. Lord Shree Hari was gracing a religious gathering at Faneni. Enlightening dialogues were revealing the mysterious folds of religion, ultimate knowledge, detachment and spiritual philosophy. Vela Soni and other faithful devotees were listening to the nectar-like words.

Shreeji Maharaj said, "Veljibhai! How much grain has been stocked at your house? If the stock is not enough then sell the ornaments and jewellery and buy enough grain lasting for a year to sustain your family and relatives. There shall be severe drought in the coming year. Not a drop will rain and no grain shall be available anywhere. People will die in want of grains."

"Maharaj! We will act as per your advice," said Veljibhai Soni. Shreeji Maharaj then went for a walk and passed through the main street of Faneni. One wealthy goldsmith was doing business at his shop. Maharaj blessed him and said, "Soni Bhagat! Next year shall be a dry year of devastating drought. People will die in want of grains and eatables. Make a good stock of grains."

The goldsmith replied in pride and vanity, "I have plenty of money. I can buy anything and everything by my wealth." Holding a handful of silver coins with both his hands, he displayed his richness with ego, "Look here Swaminarayan! There are two extra-large treasury-chests at my home filled with such hard cash in silver and gold. I need not worry about grains. I will buy it with my money."

Maharaj took from the ground a handful of pebbles and said, "These pebbles and your silver coins shall be equal in value. It is better that you prepare a plan to face the drought." The egotistic goldsmith disobeyed the favourable words of Shree Hari. In the following months there was severe drought as predicted by Maharaj. Not a single drop of water fell on the earth. Trees and bushes dried and vegetation disappeared from the surface of the earth. No grains were available. The goldsmith went with bag-fulls of money and visited house after house and village after village to buy grains for meals, but he got nothing - not even a handful of grains. The disheartened goldsmith came back home after a long search and hard toil of days. No grains - no food - no meals, despite a large amount of money in his hands! At late night, some

thieves intruded the house and stole his wealth. Thus, the rich goldsmith passed his last days in great misery without any food or clothing. And Velji Soni, though was not so rich, passed the adverse time easily by obeying the order of Shreeji Maharaj. Honour the favourable words always!

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 21

There is total orderliness in the empire of God. Forget about happiness if you've committed sins, betrayed others or acted irreligiously. The pains are the fruits of sinful acts and the pleasures are the fruits of ethical duties. Remember well this cardinal truth. God's acts are most judicious. There is no corruption and no bribe at the eternal court of the Supreme Lord. 'Give and take' - Harvest the crop of your own sowing! No underhand treatment is allowed at the majestic court of God. The moment will come when everybody will have to submit a balance sheet of his *punyas* and *paaps* (virtuous acts and sinful acts). Swami therefore says:

If desired self-emancipation, act always like a needy man in devotion and Satsang. A beggar begging alms at the doors, presents himself as a needy man and begs repeatedly and most pitiably for alms. He will not leave the place and will not stop begging and pleading until he gets some food. Similarly, an aspirant of emancipation should continue his efforts non-stop for the attainment of God - for attaining ultimate emancipation. He should adhere persistently to Satsang and should continue his Satsang with the saints. He should not recede in faith and devotion despite pinching comments from society or by mental unrest caused by it. He should not nurse any ill feeling or rivalry against a saint or a Satsangi. He should act without ego. If he nurses ego, false pride or rivalry, then he would surely invite self-destruction and descent.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says:

The Almighty Lord bestows emancipation, nothing else. Devotion is the only means to please the Almighty Lord. There is no other means except devotion to please Lord Shree Hari for our ultimate emancipation. Act as per the wishes of God. Merge your aspirations in God's will. Act as per the orders of God. One may challenge us and ask, 'How can we act at the will of God when God is not present these days in his human form?' To answer this, there are words of Shree Hari given in the Shikshapatri. By his benign presence in the word form of Shikshapatri, Shree Hari has commanded: 'All my dependants should act within the tenets of Shikshapatri. One who acts in accordance to it shall be benefited with the eternal pleasure in this world and shall be happy eternally when consigned to the divine abode. We shall be true dependants of God, only when we act at the will of our God.'

If food and water is not available anywhere in the world, but only at one house, then where are we to go to satisfy our hunger and to quench our thirst? We should go to the place, from where we find it. That only is the way to fulfil our needs. Similarly, emancipation and emancipation are made available by the Supreme Lord. In God resides ultimate emancipation. One has no other way to attain it; surrender in total at the lotus feet of God. Great kings and emperors have forsaken their kingdoms and empires and have surrendered to God by residing in the seclusion of a forest. The wealth and prosperity are of no use for a man and he shall be at a loss in his life, if he had not surrendered at the lotus feet of God or not done devotion of God. It maybe a philosopher's stone or it maybe a pebble, but for a fool, there shall be no difference between these two. A thorny tree and a fragrant sandalwood tree look alike to a fool. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'God is the divine abode of eternal bliss and pleasures.'

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 22

The souls dwelling at the elemental plane enjoy ephemeral pleasures of the eternal entity (Maya). Such souls try to locate pleasures in domains of the eternal entity. The ephemeral pleasures of eternal entity are all unsteady and incomplete. Those ephemeral pleasures require hard toil and contain hidden pains. To get such eternal and ephemeral pleasure, one has to implement many means and has to face various kind of inconvenience. Where as, devotional pleasure and meditational peace need nothing to acquire it. The blissful pleasure of doing devotion and of singing devotional songs is the hearty and eternal pleasure existing in every molecule of the inner self. Such devotional pleasure is divine and majestic. The pleasures of the eternal entity are ephemeral, not lasting for a longer time and not absolute in itself, in fact it carries hidden pains. Try to get eternal pleasure and bliss. Avoid time bound ephemeral pleasure. Make a firm resolute to please Shree Hari through single-minded devotion.

The omniscient Supreme Lord Shree Hari protects, sustains and controls the cosmoses and presiding Gods. He is supreme controller of the Lokas and galaxies. He is the abode of absolute protection for all his dependent souls - his devotees. He is a supreme master for his devotees. Lord Shree Hari is the eternal wealth and divine majesty of all his dependant devotees. He protects and sustains his weak devotees. For his tormented devotees, he is a friend in need. His powers are divine. His acts are divine. His wisdom is unfathomable. Just as the ocean is unable to fit in a pot, similarly the divine attributes and virtues of the Supreme Lord cannot be enlisted by worldly wisdom. He is the eternal showman displaying a puppet show on the stage of the Lokas by holding the strings of the souls in his blissful hands.

O God! O All-pervading Supreme Lord! You have manifested your human form and descended on the earth to give divine pleasure of your companionship and divine *leelas* to your dependant souls. This episode and its preachings are very meaningful. It is important to understand it thoroughly.

We may be good at managing finance of millions and billions. We may be good at communicating in various languages of the continents. We may be good at testing and locating the whereabouts of gold and diamonds hidden in deep mines. We may even be expert in knowledge of the history of the nations and empires of the world. But such knowledge, expertise and skills are of no use for our self-emancipation and eternal happiness if we knew nothing about devotion, faith and the Supreme Lord Swaminarayan. True happiness and eternal bliss cannot be attained without devotion. Lord Swaminarayan is the eternal ocean of happiness and divine pleasure. One attains eternal peace and divine pleasure everywhere and in any condition, if Lord Swaminarayan dwelt in his heart.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami prays 'O Supreme Lord! O omniscient Lord! O eternal and divine! Your divine presence and majesty are unfathomable for mankind. You are the supreme emperor of the galaxies. Nothing is impossible for you. The universe and galaxies act at your wish.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 23

The cognitive senses and such other knowledge cannot assess God's divine presence in human form. God is beyond ephemeral means. God is eternal and divine pervading every molecule of the galaxies and space. O God! You are beyond the limits of knowledge. Though pervading the space, you are moving about everywhere and the celestial objects, planets and the stars move in accordance to your will. You are the supreme creator and all your creations act in accordance to your command. They act as per your tenets. Obeying your orders, the earth produces grains, the rain gives water, the air gives life to all beings, the seasons too change time and time again to earn your divine pleasure.

God incarnates himself as a human being to grace the earth. His dependant devotees serve God as and when God manifested himself in human form. God incarnates himself to give devotional pleasure to his devotees. In contemporary times, God has incarnated himself as a human being. The service and devotion presented to God is like the service extended to all the deities. God is the ultimate shelter for all the deities. Do service of Shree Hari to earn the fruits of serving all the deities. The water supplied to the stem reaches every root, branch and leaf to sustain them with the tree. Lord Swaminarayan is the stem of the universe, galaxies and the Lokas. All

incarnations merge and disappear in the divine image of Lord Swaminarayan. Such Supreme Lord - Swaminarayan Bhagwan dwells with us to give devotional pleasure to his dependent souls. We are required to do devotion of him for our self-emancipation. God has given us human body to do devotion of him for freedom from the cycle of births and deaths.

Swami says, 'The pleasure we receive by doing devotion and by singing praises of God is eternal and blissful - then what about the divinity and majesty of the pleasure received at the divine abode of God - Akshardhaam!' The blissful and eternal pleasure of Akshardhaam is beyond words and human imagination. The pleasure of devotion is divine and supreme.

Once upon a time there lived a poor man. The village he lived in was very small and the man was blind from birth. As a result he was poor and unhappy. Vision is the means to knowledge and the blind are therefore most pitiable due to loss of eyesight. They cannot see the world and know nothing about sunlight, moonlight, twinkling stars, colourful flowers and natural beauty, as they are unable to see it.

After many years, a *Vaidya* (a doctor of *Ayurvedic* medicines) came to that village and inquired about his eyesight. After a thorough check-up he agreed to treat him to cure his blindness. He asked the blindman to meet him on the next full-moon day, and assured him of total recovery of his eyesight. The blind man went to the doctor on the full-moon day and received treatment at night. He got his vision back and for the first time, he saw moonlight. It was a thrilling experience for him. The whole of his life was passed in darkness. Light was a miracle for him. It's cool and soothing brightness gave him great pleasure. He danced and sang madly and worshipped the doctor as his God. He held reverently the feet of the doctor and submitted hearty salute. "O Vaidraj! You have given me a new life – an illuminated life. The Light and brightness I have experienced now is a new experience for me. It is amazing - it is full of excitement. The world has become for me most charming and worth living. Vaidraj! By giving me the eyesight – the vision - you have made me the wealthiest man in the world."

Then said Vaidraj. "My Son! This is night and the light you have observed is moonlight - soft, dim and soothing. Real pleasure and excitement shall be in the sunlight of the day. The sun is the source of light and life. You will love that."

The man then asked him with excitement, "How more exciting shall be the light of sun than this very pleasing light of the moon?"

"My Son! You know nothing about the majestic light of the sun. The present moonlight is nothing in comparison to the sunlight."

The man was now more excited and eager to experience sunlight. Crossing his fingers in utmost curiosity he waited impatiently for daybreak, the sun and the sunlight. The rising sun spread it's rays on the earth and sky.

There was bright light everywhere and the whole world looked like shining gold. The blindman's pleasure knew no bounds.

The moral of the story: We are born blind, our vision has been stolen by Maya and it's magic of ephemeral affection. Sadgurus are the Vaidya who treat us by their knowledge of the ultimate and give us vision. They show us the blissful pleasure of singing devotional songs and of doing devotional acts just like the moonlight to soothe our soul, but the divine pleasure of living in the presence of our God shall be the sunlight - it shall be the joy of the divine abode of God. The luminosity of Akshardhaam and its divine pleasures are unparalleled and unique. Nobody can describe it. It's pleasures are available to the dependant devotees of God.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 24

Faith or trust is the first step on the path of devotion. Swami asks us to do devotion faithfully. Devotion itself is supreme favour. It is the highest reward. What does faith mean? What does trust mean? It is devotion with hearty pleasure and enthusiasm. How does one come to know true faith or it's absence? This is worth noting. If you are happy by joining Satsang of devotional sessions or of *japa* and desire it more and in greater frequency, than know that you have faith in God, you are a faithful devotee. A man lacking faith does not like Satsang or devotion. He is weak in God's service and acts with enthusiasm in the worldly ways. Faith is the supreme force leaving nothing impossible. A true and faithful devotee will not miss any chance of serving his God.

A blacksmith softens iron in the heat of a furnace to make steel implements and weapons. He cannot shape or harden the metal if he is not accustomed to the appropriate softening of a metal. The right level of heat and hammering at the right time brings the desired results.

Here is the opportune time – a right time - to do devotion. The right time to do darshan of God. The right time to visit the temple. If we failed to act in a proper direction then our life shall be ruined in the cycle of births and death. There shall be no peace or satisfaction. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to forsake laziness and inspires us to do devotion of God. Lord Shreeji Maharaj has said in his Vachanamrits: 'Either you accept and understand it today or do it after an interval of one hundred years, but there shall be no way forward without understanding it - without accepting it.'

Act at the will of God and do devotion. Do it with an alert mind.

Bhago and Mulo were true devotees of Shree Hari. They both lived at Pithwadi. The marriage Party of Dada Khachar was returning homeward after the auspicious conclusion of the marriage ceremony. Lord Shreeji

Maharaj was gracing the marriage party to bless the occasion. On the way back, they came to Pithwadi. Both devotees prayed to Maharaj to grace their dwelling. Shreeji Maharaj honoured their request and graced their house. Shreeji Maharaj graced a cot covered by a hand made rug. Bhago and Mulo did *Poojan Archan* of Shree Hari and submitted jointly a handsome gift of five hundred rupees. Shreeji Maharaj then asked "Are you happy if I distribute this gift to the poor?" Both said, "Maharaj! It is your pleasure. We shall be happy to act at your will." This was the highest category of dedication and devotion. A true devotee acts according to the wishes of God. Shreeji Maharaj is the human form of compassion. He is a saviour of tormented souls. He helps the poor and showers mercy. Shreeji Maharaj arranged for the money to be distributed amongst the poor people. Bhaga Bhagat acted at the will of God and earned the pleasure of Shree Hari.

One has to keep ready a needle and a thread if desired to thread a bead during the moment of a spark of lightning. As soon as the lightning is sparked, the alert one has to thread the needle swiftly to thread the bead. But a lazy and careless person would begin a search for the needle and thread when the lightning is sparked and therefore he will not be able to thread the needle. Our life as a human being is short like lightning - like a spark. We know nothing about the next moment, Therefore live in the present. Live your life fully and live every moment of it by investing every fraction of it in emancipation of yourself.

Water held on the palm spills gradually drop after drop. It drops like smooth sand. This is the bitter reality of human life. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami brings this hard fact to our knowledge and says, 'Time is an ever flowing stream, a moment passed which went out of our hold and is never to come back. God has determined for every individual the total number of his breaths. Nobody can change it. Therefore every second of our life is very precious.'

(Each passing moment is valuable.
Therefore do japa of Lord Ghanshyam.)

Not even one more breath shall be granted even at the cost of billions when you are breathing your last. If a rich man desires an extension to his life at his deathbed and offers one million rupees for each one-hour of extra life, the doctor treating him shall not be able to extend it even for a second. The Doctor will say 'sorry' by shrugging his shoulder. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks the Satsangis to sow heartily the seeds of devotion, in the fertile field of human life:

If a farmer sows his field in the wrong season or at the wrong time, he shall not be successful in harvesting a bumper crop. There is one opportune

time - a proper time - for each task - for every work. One should act according to time. The human body and human life - is an appropriate time to do devotion. Man should do devotion, donation, darshan and meditation whilst in a human body as such devotion filled acts will bring virtuous rewards (Punyas) for the doer. Wealth and relations will not come with us to the after life. Man is born empty-handed and will die empty-handed. We cannot face God empty-handed. We should go with hard-earned devotion. We should go to him with devotional love and rewards of our virtuous acts.

PADA (SONG) : 6

(We pray and meditate to God. We pray to him most reverently. We have forsaken all sorts of worldly relations to submit ourselves in his benign presence.)

The prayer of Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami percolates deep in our heart to soak it in devotional love. 'Your lotus like feet are our ultimate refuge. Our blunders and follies are enormous in numbers - much more than even the hairs on our body. You and only you can forgive us for our blunders. O God! Please forgive our sins and take us in your benign refuge *feò Ęđo™E ĘtÚtu ˆttuze hu....* by forsaking all others. We have fascination and attachment for wealth, relatives, land, assets, sons and family. Fascination and attachment are the chains of the eternal entity Maya. These are charmful chains to imprison worldly wise souls. Break these chains of the eternal entity and attach yourself to Shree Hari. Desires make us roam and loiter in the ocean of worldly life. Desires torment us.

Muktanand Swami came once to a farm and he saw there an old man guarding the farm against intruding birds and animals by holding a position on a platform. Swami looked at the old man and said, "Bhagat! Bajra crop is very fine this year!"

The old man responded, "Swami! It is the result of our hard work. Would you like to have some roasted bajra? It is fresh and tasty." Muktanand Swami had some fresh *ponk* (roasted green crop of Bajra).

Muktanand Swami then said, "Bhagat! Would you like to come to the abode of God?"

The Bhagat replied, "You and your God have no work to do. You both are waiting idly at the divine abode of your God to receive people like yourself. I am not idle or without work like you. I am supposed to guard day and night the crop of this large farm. I am a responsible householder and as a head of the family, I sustain my whole family. I have only one son, and this shall not be a right time for me to leave for the abode of God."

Muktanand Swami then said, "Bhagat! What is your age? How old are you?"

"I am of eighty five years of age," said Bhagat.

Swami then explained, "Bhagat! You are now very old. This is the time to forsake worldly attachments. Forsake these elemental attachments of the eternal entity and entrust householder responsibilities to your son. Let him discharge his duties as the head of the family."

But the old man barked, "Swami! You mendicants cannot realise the importance of the householdership and know nothing about worldly relations!"

Muktanand Swami then left it to him and quit the place to grace other places.

The old man died after some time and due to his excessive involvement in the worldly affairs became a bullock in his next birth. Thus the soul, shackled and engrossed in manifestations of the eternal entity, got itself reborn as a bullock to do hard labour at the farm of his own son. The bullock was labouring hard, pulling the plough and farming the land for sowing seeds. The poorly fed bullock was losing weight and strength, but was labouring hard to help and support his son-cum-master. Muktanand Swami graced again the place of that old man and found him labouring day and night as a bullock. Swami recognised him instantly and said, "Don't you want to now come with me to the divine abode of God? I have come here to take you."

The bullock then spoke like a man, "Who else would be able to sow the seeds in my absence? The farming activity shall be halted, if I went with you to the divine abode. I will stay here. I don't want God's abode."

Swami then left for another place to do Satsang. Why did Swami take the pain repeatedly to emancipate an adamant old man? Swami did so as the old man helped him by his service of fresh Bajra *ponk* (roasted green ears of bajra corn). Swami was focused to emancipate that poor soul. Therefore, while visiting aspirants, he would come to the house of the old man. In his visits, the old man was found as a bullock, labouring hard like a donkey, for his son. In his next visit, Swami finds him as a dog, protecting the gates of his erstwhile son. The soul, enveloped in layers of Maya loiters here and there. Muktanand Swami knew him in his body of a dog. Swami said to the dog, "Is there any pleasure by this body of a dog? You have been roaming aimlessly and consuming leftovers and forbidden and obnoxious things. Would you like now to come to the abode of God?"

The dog barked, "Many thieves intrude these days to steal the valuables of my erstwhile son. I am protecting his wealth and assets. I am not idle." The dog was under the impression that only those who are idle were looking for the abode of God. Muktanand Swami went back. After some years, when he came back to the poor soul, he found the soul dwelt in the body of a tomcat, to catch his prey of rodents and mice. In each following birth, the soul had gathered more and more burden of sins.

When the age old and tormented cat died of starvation and hardships, the soul was born again as a snake in the farm of the erstwhile son. The snake was roaming in the farmhouse and was pleasing himself occasionally by cuddling the cradle of the grandson while looking at the child. When the son came back from his farm duties, he found the snake surrounding the cradle of his child. Helped by the labourers, he got the snake trapped in big wooden forceps and threw it in the dense forest to become a prey to eagles. Muktanand Swami went there in the forest and said, "You poor soul! You have received thorough beating, hitting and hammering by the hands of your own son but still you don't wish to forsake Maya. You are almost dead by the torments you underwent. Now tell me, would you like to come with me to the abode of God?"

The serpent said, "Now I have experienced everything. All relations are selfish. I did everything for my son, but he harassed and tormented me. Now, I have no affection for my son or relatives. Please take me to the abode of God." The moral of the story: The smallest service, if extended to a saint, results into a most emancipatory reward for a fallen soul.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Affection, attachment and worldly pleasures are the shackles of the eternal entity. Break the shackles by the axe of detachment and present yourself at the majestic court of the Supreme Lord.'

Be humble to your relatives and family. Help them in the time of need. Take care of them in their adverse times, but with the consciousness that those relations are related to the body, not to the soul.

God is the truest relative of the soul. God was with us when we were not born. God is with us when we are on the earth. God will be with us when we are no more. He is the truest companion. The truest relative lives with us all the time and in all circumstances. The relations of this earth are not true relations.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 25

God doesn't like ego. Don't be proud of your virtuous attributes. Don't be proud of your wealth, knowledge or expertise. A saint is not egotistical of the salutes offered by hundreds of devotees. On the contrary he thinks that the salutations and worship paid by the devotees through him are really for God.

Customers desiring to deposit money, hand over bundles of currency notes to the cashier at the bank. Thus a cashier receives millions of rupees everyday from the hundreds of customers of the bank. Now, if the cashier thought that he was so great a person that hundreds of people had tendered everyday the money in millions, his assumption like that and pride he derived are absolutely unsolicited, because the money he had received was

for the bank and it was his duty as a cashier to receive the cash on behalf of the bank. Similarly, a true saint receives salutes and praises only to pass them onto God, and accordingly considers himself as a humble servant of God. Thus, a saint is never proud of the salutes he has received.

God by His eternity and omniscience resides everywhere and dwells in every being conscious or inert, living or non-living, material or abstract. Know this fact very well and take care of others, so that they are not hurt knowingly or unknowingly by you. In this Satsang, devotees are of various types, of different inherent natures, cultures, lifestyles and habits. As a true Satsangi, always look upon others as the children of God. All are equal. All are your family members. Think good about them wish them devotional pleasure and eternal peace. Look at their virtuous attributes and praise them heartily with true love.

The travellers in a train pass their time together like a well-knit team or like a large group of family friends, even though their destinations are not alike. We too, are like those travellers, but our destination is Akshardhaam. We should live together in the warmth of universal brotherhood, and like a royal swan we should receive the virtuous attributes from others by avoiding and ignoring their non-virtuous attributes.

Be kind hearted to all – small or large. Kindness is the root of religion.

Be kind. Kindness is the root of religion. Ego is the root of sins. Be merciful till your last breath. These are the humble words of Tulsidas. Our life would be meaningless if our words or actions hurt somebody. Be merciful to man, animals, birds and vegetation. Some people are very harsh and rude to others. It is their inherent nature. They hurt unintentionally a street dog at no fault of its own if it happened to be at the street corner. They feel happy and fulfilled by such torments! This is his demonic nature.

Once there was a businessman. He was very rich and lived in a bungalow like a lord in a palace. Once he was brushing his teeth by standing at the balcony of the second floor. He saw from there a very old person walking with the support of a walking stick and begging alms at the gate of the bungalow. He begged to the rich man and prayed for a piece of bread. The businessman rejected his prayer and said that there was no food at his house. The beggar then requested for a small coin of twenty-five *paise* to buy some roasted grams to eat. The businessman refused this too. Then the beggar requested him for old attire to cover his body, but the miser merchant refused to give anything. Instead of helping the needy old man, the merchant behaved most harshly with him by using uncivilized language. He arranged for the beggar to be removed from his land by the gatekeepers!

What use is the money of such a miser, if saints and the needy are not helped? If a needy beggar is not helped by a millionaire with a piece of bread to satisfy his hunger, how could such a miser-millionaire be considered rich and wealthy? In fact, he is mentally poorer than that beggar in front of him is.

Animals and insects also live on the earth. To live and exist on the earth as a living animal cannot justify the life as a human life. Mercy and compassion are the core virtues of a human life - of a conscious life. Nishkulanand Swami asks us to be merciful and kind. ...u³⁄⁴e ...u³⁄⁴e ¼⁴hu ...,,÷tk, h³⁄⁴u ÚttÐ y...htÄ ftkE Take care of the smallest, whilst walking. Look at the ground and walk carefully so that small insects like ants and others are not crushed under your feet. Be careful; clean well the grains when cooking meals. Don't have a meal without offering it to God. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami praises the majestic glory of a true saint.

(The saints have overcome their sense organs and they have no enemy. The saints are humble and compassionate. For them the world is like a great family, where all are his relatives.)

Please note this for yourself. The soul is lonely on the earth. It has no relatives. Only saints are the true relatives of a soul. The heavenly tree fulfills all wishes. The saints, like a heavenly tree on the earth, fulfill all wishes through their holy company. Holy company of a saint destroys sins and generates virtuous rewards.

Such an association makes us wise and destroys the darkness of ignorance. The cycle of the worldly ties - birth and death - shall not be destroyed, if we have not associated with a saint, even though we may have fully realised God. If we have realised God but have not realised a true saint, the soul in such state shall not be able to attain true knowledge. A true saint can give us true knowledge and darshan of God.

(The saints are the well wishers of the world. They always act for others. They are great and highly intelligent. We cannot estimate their unfathomable wisdom. One who receives company of such a saint becomes free from the three kinds of major torments. Nishkulanandji says that such fortunate souls are the true and sin-free devotees of God.)

To do good for others is a noble task. Such acts earn virtuous rewards for the doer. Consequently, no sin is greater than the sin of doing evil to others. To dedicate and submit absolutely for the greater good of others is an act of benevolence. To save others from misfortune is an act of benevolence. Remember the episode of Tukaram. He saved a woman from committing suicide. He took the blame on himself and saved her. Saints are always

benevolent. They take souls to the refuge of God by protecting them against the misfortunes of births, deaths and the torments caused by Yama. Only true saints are able to do this.

The human body looks beautiful – charming even by the benevolent acts performed by the body, but not by a superior quality sandalwood paste or precious attire or valuable jewellery. Saints are benevolent and they do good for everybody. They do good even for those people who have harmed them earlier. In ancient times, when our *Nand Sants* visited the villages to spread the message of Satsang, they were attacked very badly like animals by those ignorant village-folk when they instead should have been accorded decent hospitality. The ignorant people tormented and troubled the saints intentionally, but our saints preached to them steadily the principles of non-violence, mercy and faith to change their mind frame and to make them true devotees of God. Those saints have never cursed any such person who had tormented them earlier. Instead they blessed the criminals and changed their hearts. Such saints are emancipatory to the individual and indeed the world.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 26

(Those souls engaged in devotion are the true devotees of God. Such devout souls are not harmful to anybody. They know the glory and majesty of God. They know that God dwells in every phenomenon of nature.)

‘O God! You have made us human beings, and have favoured us by giving us noble lineage, high caste, virtuous parents, prestigious birthplace and best companionship – holy company (Satsang) to attain emancipation at the end of worldly life. Everything – right from the scalp to the soles of the feet – belongs to you. There is nothing in our possession, which has not been given by you. O Lord! We are indebted to you. You are our saviour and you are our refuge.’

‘We walk on your earth and receive energy from the sunlight sent by you. We live by drinking water that was produced by you. We breathe the air produced by you. O God! We exist and live by your support. You are compassionate and reside in every heart by your divine powers.’

(The omniscient Supreme Lord resides in every heart and knows our heart well. How can I hide my resolute from Him when He knows everything of every moment?)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami displays here the ideals of a true saint. A true saint believes that God is omnipresent and resides forever in the heart

of a devotee. A devotee never commits a sin when he knows this fact. Here is a story to explain the point of omniscience.

Once a man went to a saint and prayed to accept him as a disciple. The saint never believed in raising a large team of disciple saints. He chose only those as his disciples, who were virtuous and held saintly attributes. A large group of disciples would be like having no disciples if they held no virtue and acted rudely or carelessly. On the other hand, a virtuous disciple would be better than a large flock of undisciplined disciples.

The guru thought for a while and said, "I want to test you. Take this dove somewhere with you and kill it secretly. Make sure, nobody sees or knows that you killed the dove. Come back to me as soon as you finish the assignment. I will take you as a disciple."

He took the dove to the forest and searched for a lonely location to kill the dove. While searching for such a place, he pondered on the work assigned to him and advice of his Guru. He was not able to understand the reason behind assigning such a merciless job. He was not able to understand why a Sadhu should assign a violent task. Anyhow, he was sure that the Guru's advice contained some hidden secret. He then looked at the ground and found colonies of ants forming rows like soldiers at a battlefield. There were some small insects too, thus the place was not secluded and indeed the air, heat, insects and others were all witnessing him. There were trees shaking their branches and because it was night, the moon was also witnessing everything. Thus he roamed day and night, in and around the forest and at other places but total seclusion was not available anywhere.

In the morning, he went back to his Guru and said that he was not able to secure total seclusion to kill the dove. God was everywhere and dwelt in various objects – the living and non-living, mobile and immobile. God resides everywhere and resides in every being. How can I kill this innocent soul?

Guruji was pleased at such submission. He rose from his seat and hugged him lovingly. The Guru then said, "My Child! I appreciate your wisdom. You shall commit no sins." One who is afraid of God, never commits a sin, because he sees God everywhere. Those who are afraid of God never do an untruthful act. The life of a saint is unique. Saints are the shields of the world. We all live in the blessed shade of those saints. Such saints are the real happiness and fullness of this Satsang. God himself sings the praises of saints.

Those who did darshan of a saint or listened to the nectar like discourses of a saint or served a sumptuous meal to such a saint or had praised a saint have become immortal along with their family and relatives. The sinful killer Valio became a true saint and a faithful devotee despite his sin stained acts. Valio, Joban Pagi, Verobhai and others are all examples. Though, they were sinful they became sin-free by doing darshan of saints and by doing service at the lotus feet of Shree Hari. A saint opens the gates of emancipation for the devout souls. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that the gates of the divine abode of God opens for a soul when a soul sees in the

saint the holiness befitting a shrine, the respect and majesty befitting an idol and affection befitting a relative. It may be said that such a soul attains the divine abode without discarding his body. A Saint is the shrine of shrines. The sixty-eight great shrines reside at the feet of a true saint. The soul earns the *punya* of offering meals to the whole world when he offers sumptuous meals to a saint. Lord Shree Krishna says, 'The saints are my heart and my soul and I am the heart and the soul of a saint. I consume my meals by residing in a true saint. I preach to the others by residing in a true saint. I sustain the axiomatic religion by residing in a saint.'

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to do devotion attentively and alertly. Miss nothing in your devotion. One should not forget it and should take good care of it.)

What type of alertness should we adopt in this case? The alertness and detached mood observed by a lotus is a prime ideal example. Though in the middle of water, not a single drop touches it, if fell a drop on a leaf or a petal it slips away from it. We too should live fully detached to its inherent attributes while living in a householder's world. A devotee of God, though in the world of relations, lives fully detached to it. He is not perturbed by the worldly ways. He lives detached to sentiments and emotions.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 27

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'There is no room to recede in true devotion. Such devotion gives pleasure to everybody. God likes single-minded devotion. Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma did such devotion of Bhagwan.')

What type of devotion does God like? God likes envy free and faith oriented devotion. The mind, speech and intellect have no capacity to attain God. Only trust and faith can do it. God is even more enormous than the infinite space yet he dwells happily in the heart of his devotee. The Supreme Lord of infinite cosmoses, though not seen or perceived by Rishis, saints, deities or demons, gets himself drawn lovingly by the devotional rope of his devotees! Therefore, Lord Shiva and Brahma impatiently worship Shree Hari.

(In true devotion, there shall be no room for conspiracy or treachery. A cheater or a conspirer cannot be called a devotee. A devotee trusting in omnipresence and proximity of God, never walks on the path of lies - untruth.)

(A devotee lives happily in the proximity of God. Such a devotee cannot do any unethical work - like stealing, lying or any such undesirable work.)

Once, there was a pious and religious minded Brahmin. He was the priest of a native Prince. He was used to attending the Royal court of the Prince. Both the Brahmin and his wife were devotees of God and lived a happy life, but they had no child. A child adorns the householder life of his parents. The child is the life and joy in a householder's life. It transforms a house into a home. Though they were in their late forties, no child was born to the couple. They regularly used to consult the *Vaidya* (vedic doctor) and saintly people. Once, the Brahmin went to the forest and consulted a hermit. He advised the Brahmin to do devotion happily. The lesser are the householder responsibilities, the greater are the chances of doing devotion. He asked him to stay away from the temptation of progeny. But the Brahmin prayed repeatedly to bless him with a child. Then the saint said, "What type of child do you want? A child with a long life or with a short life? If wanted a son with a long life, he would be a great sinner. If wanted with a short life, he would be a virtuous child. Tell me, what kind of son should I give to you?"

The Brahmin gave a thought to the proposal and said politely, "O Great saint! Please give me a child with a long life. If he lived longer, we in our old age shall be able to receive service and sustenance from him. He will serve us in our old age."

The ascetic said, "As you wish. Be happy and receive a male child with a long life. Name that child Vivek Sagar. May God bless you with devotion and peace." As time passed, the Brahmin couple begot a male child. They were very happy. Their wish was granted. The newborn was named Vivek Sagar as intended. The Brahmin gave him a good education by teaching him ethics, religious duties, decorum and manners. The child was doing pooja and was reciting Narayan Kavacha and other scriptures regularly. The Brahmin priest taught him daily the virtues and virtuous attributes to develop his virtuous personality. He taught him to stay away from stealing, lies, conspiracy, cheating, backbiting, arrogance and other such unethical acts. He taught him to be faithful, honest, ethical and religious minded.

At the age of twenty-two years, the son attended the royal court in place of his father. He carried on independently the executive duties of his father - the chief priest of the state. Once he went to the palace to perform some religious rituals. When he came to the residency of the queen, he found her sleeping in the inner room and precious jewellery was laid on the desk of the dressing room. There was nobody to attend to the dressing room. Vivek Sagar noticed it and was tempted. It was most charming, precious and tempting. He thought for a while to steal it for his wife. Nobody would know who stole it. As he moved his hand towards the jewellery, his god-fearing mind corrected him. He thought to himself, 'Father had told me repeatedly not to steal money.' He withdrew his hand instantly. He thought, 'If I stayed

there for any longer, the mind would surely haul me down from my ethical duties! He left the palace quickly in a great haste.'

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'With the knowledge and experience of the presence of God felt everywhere, a devotee never walks on a sinful path of stealing and robbery.' Verabhai of Upleta was a hardcore criminal involved in daylight robbery, but he became a wise and truthful devotee and rose to the highest height of virtues when he surrendered to Shree Hari. He never plucked even the tiniest branch of any neem tree without permission from the owner even for brushing his teeth. Think well before you act. Use your sense organs for the service of God. Don't recede in religious duties even in the most adverse times.

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'It is not easy to obtain a true saint of God. If obtained a saint by chance, it becomes more difficult to know him. All scriptures have praised such saints.')

A youth went to a saint. The saint was very old, seventy to eighty years of age. He boasted in front of the saint, "Guruji! What is the difference between the two of us? Like me, you too are having good food, good company, comforts and a luxurious lodging at our bungalow! You are doing the things I am doing here in a like manner. Then why do people bow at you and not to me? Why do they discriminate and on what ground?"

The Guru looked at him with compassion and said, "I will answer your question but not now, later on." As the session ended, the Guru rose from his seat and left the place.

The youth too followed him in the hope of getting his answer. They walked silently for long and entered a dense forest at the distance of ten kilometers. Now the youth was very tired of walking silently and was in no mood to wait further for the answer. Therefore, he asked impatiently, "Guruji! May I go back."

Guruji said, "My child! What would you do by going back? As you had said earlier, there is no difference between you and me. We both are equal. Come on, feel free and walk on. We will sit together there at the heart of the forest to do penance and devotion. If others come to us, we will help them to do penance like us."

The youth said in a shock, "O Guruji! How could I do that? I cannot accompany you. What about my village, my wife, my son and my family? What about my business, wealth and property? How can I come with you to abandon all that I have? I cannot leave all that. I cannot afford to do so."

Guruji then said, "Look! This is the basic difference and the answer to your question. You are bounded helplessly by the rope of *maya* – the sense objects and other forms of the eternal entity. I am free and detached. This is the basic difference between you and me." The youth knew now the truth and

saluted the saint. Devotion needed to be performed with the knowledge of the ultimate reality – the supreme truth. Don't try to compete with a saint.

(Those devotees, who have love for God are very dear to God. Don't misinterpret the word 'ॐ,' 'devotee.' A devotee is a most virtuous soul.)

A devotee – a true devotee – of God cannot be identified by his external appearance. Saints should not be identified on the grounds of the dress they wore and the objects they held. Their virtuous attributes should be identified. Ashwatthama wore like a saint, a saffron coloured robe and Ravan too – the supreme emperor of the demons was disguised in saffron coloured robes when he took away Sitaji on excuse of begging alms like an ascetic. There were many cheaters disguised as a saint in the time of Lord Sahajanand Swami. They tried to trap many to bring them down from the path of devotion. In the sky, there are many stars but all are not shining equally. Similarly, there may be many saints on the earth, but all are not equal. Associate yourself with such a saint who is truthful, detached, compassionate, ego free and unselfish in his life.

(Accumulated punyas of the past many births help a soul to meet a true saint. The soul has nothing more to do when he has found such a true saint.)

A soul engaged in devotion, poojan, devotional praises, meditation and donation etc. as per the directions of a true saint, needs nothing more to do.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 28

(The soul desiring to please Lord Ghanshyam, should please Lord Shree Hari by single-minded devotion. Lord Ghanshyam is the abode of infinite pleasure. The devout soul, with a firm will to attain Shree Hari, fulfils his mission only after serving at the lotus feet of Shree Hari.)

Do devotion consciously – do it alertly. Don't ignore religious rules, concentrate meditatively and stop not on your path of devotion. All the work and toil of a householder soul who did much in this world but failed to do devotion would end in a big zero. The sum total of his life would be a big zero. Those who have won the world are those who did devotion of God.

(Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami discloses here his mind and says, 'For many years I have desired to do devotion and darshan of God in human form. My ambition and desire was to be fulfilled if I did darshan of Lord Shree Hari. But how would I attain God in this body in this present time. Where would I search for my Lord!')

There was will and courage at the heart of Rishi Bharat. He did great penance. Though he was born to a royal family, he disowned the powers and royal life. He graced the Holy Land of *Pulhashrama* and did great penance. He desired darshan of the supreme Lord. But there, during that penance, he got attached to a baby deer rather than to his Lord. His love for God was diverted to a deer – an expression of the eternal entity Maya! Thus, the great Rishi Bharat was lost at the hands of Maya and in his next birth he too became a deer. In his next birth he was born to a Brahmin family, where he took great care of maintaining distance in the world and of worldly relations. Despite such detachment and disinterest as Jada Bharat, he was not successful in attaining darshan of God in real form.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'My wishes are fulfilled now. My soul was longing for face-to-face darshan of God. My thirst for darshan and service has been fulfilled and quenched now that I have done darshan of God in His human form. I see him now by my own eyes and converse to him face-to-face. I hug and embrace my Lord heart-to-heart and soul-to-soul. We eat together. I am so fortunate that God himself serves me meals by gracing the dining lanes of saints. We saints take lesser amount of vegetables, *dudh paak* and *khichadi*, served by a service spoon but instead take repeatedly the *chapattis* and *laddus* as they are served by Shree Hari's hand. Saints always loved the divine touch of God – Lord Shree Hari, and preferred therefore the foods touched personally by Shree Hari. Those are the most fortunate souls who have served God in human form and have served him face-to-face. Deities in heaven crave desperately for Darshan of God in his human form.

(A lifetime opportunity, which is not available to the deities, has become easily available to mankind. God has become available to mankind and man is now able to establish a direct relationship with God.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that the deities have been left on a long waiting, Yogis have got tired in their Yogic meditation, Rishis have built on their body colonies of white ants while doing penance to attain God but their thirst for darshan has been unfulfilled. They all have waited desperately to receive the supreme Lord. But God has manifested himself on the earth and has incarnated himself at the family of a Brahmin householder in *chhapaiya* – He is born to Dharmadev and Bhaktimata. 'We are most fortunate to avail such rarest opportunity.'

(The path of devotion is not easily available to everybody. Only the most virtuous souls attain it. I should not mention this fact repeatedly.)

Devotion and the devotional faith cannot be had easily by everyone. Only virtuous chosen ones are fortunate to be blessed with devotional favour. If a poor beggar desires sumptuous sweet dishes, he would not get it. Such poor and weak souls cannot do devotion. Only those who are brave amongst the souls can do devotion. Goats are seen in flocks but not lions. Those who are brave like a lion can do devotion. A lion-like Sahajanandiya (follower of Sahajanand) can surrender at the lotus feet of Lord Shreeji Maharaj to do devotion. Swami had spent about thirty years in blissful proximity and presence of God in human form. How can a limited human mind narrate the infinite and divine pleasures of blissful presence of God!

PADA (SONG) : 7

(O saints! O Great Devotees! Devotion is like an ocean. It is an infinite ocean of pleasure. I am too small to narrate its infinity.)

Devotion is the ocean of pleasure. Those who did devotion of God have attained infinite pleasure.

(Rishis and hermits at the forest aspire impatiently to do devotional service of God. All detached souls desire to do devotional service. They try many ways to get an opportunity to serve Shree Hari.)

Devotional service is the principal means of self-emancipation. Such devotional service destroys the desires of sense objects. Service bestows blessings on one who serves. Cleanliness of a temple gives blissful peace to a visiting devotee. Such a happy devotee showers hearty good wishes towards such neatness and cleanliness. Such good wishes give pleasure to the devotees who have kept it neat and clean. Devotion and devotional service gives virtuous rewards. Devotion is always fruitful.

Shabari was a virtuous woman. She served at the hermitage of Matang Rishi. She swept everyday by her hand the walkways and paths leading to the hermitage of Matang Rishi. She did it everyday and did it secretly, early in the morning. The Rishis visiting the riverside for early morning bathing and morning prayers never knew about this silent serviceperson – in silent devotion. Great Rishi Matang was pleased with her. He blessed her one day and said, “Shabari! Time has come for me to leave this ephemeral human body. I am pleased with your devotional service. You have served this

hermitage and its roads by your devotion filled service of cleaning and maintaining.”

Shabaribai was very sad. A great saint was parting for his final journey. She cried like a child. The great saint Matang, placed his blessed hand on Shabari's head and said in soft voice, “Shabaribai! Don't cry my child! There is no chance of me doing darshan of Lord Rama. I shall not live long enough for this but Lord Rama will sanctify this land and our hermitage (and you will be lucky enough to do darshan of Lord Rama).” The great saint then passed away to the divine abode of God. Days, months and years passed. Shabaribai swept and cleansed the hermitage daily like always, early in the morning, plucked fresh flowers, Tulsi leaves from the forest, hand picked sweet berries (Bor) from the wild thorny plants and waited eagerly for Lord Rama. She waited readily everyday till late evening – and waited for many years with total preparedness. Each passing day was strengthening her hope for the next day. On each next day she collected with devotional love the objects of *Poojan* and maintained neatness and cleanliness of the hermitage to receive Lord Rama. There was no recede in her faith and trust. On the contrary it became stronger as time passed. We so called civilized 'people' – lose hope and faith in a short while and stop pooja - worship. We must aspire like Shabaribai, aspire with a strong will of devotion and meditation.

Her penance of years together became fruitful. The Rishi's words materialized. Lord Rama graced the hermitage when he emancipated Demon Kabandha. Shabaribai was profusely elated when she did darshan of Rama heading towards the hermitage. She ran to him and dropped her fragile body at the lotus like feet of Lord Rama. Lord Rama graced the hermitage of Shabaribai. Shabaribai desired to do personal service of Lord Rama by washing his feet and presenting poojan. But there neither was an utensil nor a drop of water. She placed her palms under the feet of Rama and looked at him with pity filled eyes. Lord Rama read in her eyes the prayer to place the feet in the palm of her hands. Lord Rama did so with sublime love. Those were the palms that had served at the lotus like feet of great Rishis and Satpurushas. The tears of devotional love rolled from the eyes of Shabaribai to wash the feet of God! She washed with devotion the feet of Lord Rama and offered a comfortable seat on a slab like rock.

Then with love and devotion she brought a basket of edible roots, flowers and fruits to offer to Lord Rama. She sat beside Lord Rama and with great care and love she picked each individual *bor*, tasted it and then offered it to Lord Rama. She said, “O Bhagwan! Please take this one. It is sweet and beautifully flavoured.” She offered the bor personally to Lord Rama and Lakshmana. Lord Rama took each bor from her and praised it. Lord Rama said, “O Brother Lakshmana! Today I see mother Kaushalya in Shabaribai's motherly love. Mother Kaushalya had served us meals in similar fashion with such love and affection.” Lord Rama remembered motherly love of Kaushalyaji and wept in her memory.

This shows devotional love of Shabaribai. She offered snacks of wild fruits and did *pranaam* to Lord Rama and Lakshmanji. She prays, "O God! O Supreme Lord! I don't know how to pray. Please show me the ways of devotion." Lord Rama said,

(Holy company of a saint is the first amongst the ways of devotion. The next amongst the devotional paths is singing and listening to the *leelas* of God.)

(The devotees of past, present and future have made their position eternal by devotion of God. The cycle of births and death will not cease without devotion.)

These great devotees have been admired through history and the scriptures since ancient time. Narada was a son of a domestic maid. But he acquired an unparalleled supreme position as the greatest saint of Bharat Khanda. He had attained it by his devotion. The greatness and majesty received by devotion are eternal and infinite. Worldly greatness is temporary and cannot last forever. Worldly greatness ends with the body. Greatness lasts forever if acquired through devotion of God. Gadhada, Junagadh and other place are an ideal example. If someone inquired about those towns, nobody would introduce it as a town of a particular king. Those places have become known as a place of a particular devotee, Junagadh of Narsinh Maheta and so on. The saints have said:

If a philosopher's stone touches iron, the baser metal becomes gold. Similarly, a sinner who is like a baser metal becomes a saint or gold-like when touched and blessed by a saint. Therefore saints are like a philosophers stone. They transform a sinner into the spiritually wise.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 29

(Devotion is the best in both the worlds. There should be no doubt in it. Take devotion as an asset for the adverse time. This is a time-tested truth.)

Devotion is a boat to sail through the ocean of worldly life. Nobody can cross a sea without a boat. A soul cannot cross the sea of worldly life without a boat – that boat is devotion. Eating a meal may satisfy hunger. Thirst may be quenched by drinking water. Similarly, devotion is a must if one wants to cross the ocean of life. If food is not eaten to satisfy hunger or water is not drunk to quench the thirst then the man will die by hunger or thirst respectively. If not done devotion, the soul will not be able to pass

across the ocean of life and death – the unending cycle of births and deaths. The soul will roam aimlessly in the dense forest of life and shall be pushed and dumped into various bodies such as dogs, cats and donkeys. In accordance to his past deeds, he shall be poked, tormented and shall be left to starve. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami warns therefore repeatedly and asks us to do devotion, with total submission at the will of God.

The body is sustained by the soul and God sustains the soul, therefore the soul is a part of God. Just as rain is life to the earth, water is life to the aquatic animals and food is life to the mammals; similarly, God is life for a devotee. A fish cannot survive without water, but frogs and tortoise can. Frogs and turtles can survive in both conditions. They can survive in water or on land. Some people are like frogs or turtles. They like the rustic talk and worldly ways and at times they may use devotion and devotional ways as a tag or label to show it to the world. They visit temples, wear *kanthi* and do *japa* to exhibit devotional ways. They spend less time in *Katha-Satsang* and pay no attention to devotion but try to poke their nose in the private matters of others. They use all devotional ways just for show. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'A true devotee should do devotion, with love and with faith':

(A devotee should not forget to do devotion. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that such devotion should be done most affectionately to become fear-free).

Do devotion attentively – do it with utmost attention and affection. Here is a story to illustrate:

Dhuva is a small village in Uttar Pradesh. There lived a youth of the blacksmith community. He was a devotee of God. Through Satsang of a true saint, he practiced ethical duties most religiously and lived life of a true devotee by saluting God and saints at the temple and by attending devotional discourses. During daytime he would toil through the hard work of a blacksmith. While hammering the fire-like steel rods, he chanted the name of Swaminarayan on each stroke of his hammer. He attended *Samaiyas* and religious festivals to sing praises of God. His parents were very happy for such a pious son. He shouldered all householder duties of the family. His parents were very happy for their addiction-free son, but his paternal aunt was not. She was rude, quarrelsome and an ill-natured woman. She criticized the religious acts of the youth and tormented him for his religious activities.

Once at night, when having supper, he was sitting in the lotus position with eyes closed to offer prayers to Lord Shree Hari. When she saw him in such position in front of a meal, she passed invariably a sarcastic remark "You pretender! Why are you acting like a crane in front of the meal? In fact, to eat a meal without prayer is not less than a morsel of sin. Our meal becomes *prasadi* when offered a prayer to God and had thereafter."

Though he was tormented repeatedly by harsh comments and sarcastic remarks, the youth was not uttering a single word to defend himself or to stop his ill natured aunt. When the villagers found this unjust and uncalled for abuse, they advised the youth, "Young man! You are the breadwinner of the family. You are discharging your householder duties most sincerely. Why don't you correct your aunt?"

The youth replied, "When she scolded, she scolded God too! She calls me sarcastically a "Swaminarayan Satsangi" and says so repeatedly several times. If she were asked to speak names of Lord Swaminarayan, she would have not spoken so. But in anguish she speaks it repeatedly throughout the day, whether in anger or in hate, but she speaks the name of God – Lord Swaminarayan. Each such utterance benedicts her. As it is in her favour, I am not correcting her for her uncalled for remarks or abuses. May Shree Hari bless her."

She concluded her life in such quarrels and sarcastic remarks. When Yama's representatives came to shackle her, she screamed in her last breath, "O You Satsangi of Swaminarayan! Come soon to save me." As she said "Swaminarayan" the representatives of Yama withdrew in honour of Lord Swaminarayan.

She shouted repeatedly and Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan with his *parshadas* (attendants) came there to protect the agonized aunt. As she saw them, she said hastily, "Who are you? I don't know you."

"I am Lord Swaminarayan. I have come here on your repeated calls. We will take you to my divine abode," said Shree Hari.

She wept and prayed, "O Lord! I am most unfortunate. I never spoke your name with love. I always spoke it in anger and spoke it sarcastically."

The Lord said, "Whether it was with knowledge or unknowingly, but a foot when placed on fire will invariably burn. Similarly, whether with love or without, but you have spoken my names repeatedly and therefore, utterance of *Swaminarayan* has burnt all your sins."

She said, "O Maharaj! You have come here to save me by ignoring my ill treatment. O God! You have saved me from the cycle of births and deaths."

Though the aunt was irreligious and an opponent, she was still emancipated instantly. Why? Why did God come to such a sinful soul? Why was she liberated when there was no devotion? Why did God come in person? The answer is – only in a fortunate family comes a soul who kindles the light of eternal knowledge and saves the family and society from the torments of hell.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 30

Devotion should be rock steady like a mountain peak. It should be unshakable. Many devotees – Dhruvji, Prahladji, Dahya Bhagat of Supedi and many others have pleased God by their firm faith. Devotees have acted promptly on the words and orders of Shreeji Maharaj. There were devotees like Dada Khachar who gifted his wealth and kingdom to Shree Hari. In his whole life, Dada Khachar never disobeyed the words of Shreeji Maharaj. Be a true devotee like Dada Khachar.

Dada Khachar submitted everything of his at the lotus feet of Shree Hari. He always acted as was desired by Shree Hari. He never disobeyed the orders of Shree Hari. We should follow the path of devotion laid by great devotee Dada Khachar.

Mayurdhvaja was a virtuous king. Not even a beggar would be sent back empty handed from his palace. Lord Shree Krishna and Arjuna tested him. God in the guise of a Brahmin, went to the king and prayed for the life of his son, by begging from the king the donation of his body. King Mayurdhvaja donated his body most happily with due consent of his virtuous queen and religious minded son. With the help of his mother, the son cut vertically the body of the virtuous king Mayurdhvaja. None of them showed unhappiness or disliking towards such agonizing act of running a hand saw on their dear king. The King too was very happy and fully satisfied by his act of donating his body. The tolerance, peace and tranquility of the king and the royal family too amazed Lord Shree Krishna. Lord Shree Krishna showered his pleasure by manifesting his divine image and blesses them. The King desired nothing in return - ephemeral or personal and prayed politely to spare mankind from such hard tests. The devotees like Mayurdhvaja have earned a respectable position in our religious scriptures.

Episodes of penance, compassion, benevolence, and solace have been described elaborately in our scriptures. Swami mentions here briefly a few. He mentions the episode of King Harishchandra who sold himself to a man of the lowest caste and did the job of a watchman at the cremation ground and received a toll of the covering cloth with some money for his master from the dead bodies to be cremated. Similar were the agonies of his wife and his son, but none of them receded on the path of truth. The Supreme Lord showered his pleasure but the king desired nothing for himself or his family. He desired selfless service at the lotus feet of God. God sent him back to Ayodhya to execute the royal duties, and promised the pleasures of the divine abode for Harishchandra and his entire subjects.

Devotee Prahlad was tormented ruthlessly by his father Hiranyakashipu. Hiranyakashipu was the king of demons. He tried his best to stop Prahlad in his devotional activities. Though Prahlad was tormented severely, he never stopped his devotion. God incarnated himself in the form of a Lion-man and killed Hiranyakashipu to favour his dearest devotee Prahlad.

Great Rishi Dadhichi had donated his bone to carve a thunder bolt for Indra to destroy evil forces – the demons. Devotee Jada Bharat had pulled the chariot of the king and maintained distance between the soul and the body. Devotee Mirabai drank poison to be attached to single-minded devotion of God. God transformed the poison to the nectar of longevity and immortality. All these devotees have treaded the path of truth and devotion.

Dahya Bhagat of village Supedi was hung upside down in a well by his father. His head was sunk repeatedly in water. He was beaten by a thick cane and was tied tightly by a thick rope. He was left in this way to be bitten by insects and worms. Though he was tormented to the extreme, he was not shaken in his faith and solace. Dahya Bhagat did devotion firmly despite his adverse times.

Detachment and forsaking is the path of the brave. Cowards and the weak cannot walk on the path of devotion. Devotion is dearer than life. Devotees have paid their lives for the sake of devotion. They have forsaken their family, social life, wealth and kingdom, yet they have not receded in their devotion to God. We salute those great souls - we salute their devotional excellence.

(They have found infinite wealth in the supreme Lord and therefore, they had laid their body on the sharp pointed arrows.)

Great father Bhishma awaited his death by laying his body on a bed of sharp pointed arrows. He did penance and chanted blissful names of Shree Hari till the sun entered the Northern Hemisphere.

(They did great penance and forsook the pleasures of the elemental body. They were great devotees and displayed great courage in order to do darshan of God.)

In our sect, the life of Queen Zamakubai of Udaipur inspires even today the devotees and aspirants. Her devotional will and aspiration for doing darshan of Shree Hari made her abandon the kingdom, family and royal pleasures. She forsake everything, wore a dress of a man and left the palace and kingdom at midnight to do face-to-face darshan of Shree Hari. All alone in the forlorn desert and barren land, she passed three days and three nights in the carcass of a dead camel! She faced bravely the adverse time and with solace she underwent the torments of time. She came to Gadhada and did darshan of Shree Hari who was graced beneath the *neem* tree in a grand session of devotional discourses. There was no limit to her pleasure when she did darshan of Shree Hari.

If we look at the life and time of earlier devotees, we find them rock firm despite the torments and adversaries they faced. They had suffered a lot,

but have been favoured personally by God in human form. Therefore, a true devotee should not hesitate or withdraw from the path of devotion. Adverse times and torments are natural for a devotee of God in human form. He should not speak words uttered by a coward. He should not stop devotion. He should pull together his courage and strengthen his will to face and defeat his adversaries.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 31

(Carelessness should not be taken as a virtue. It spoils our work and a careless man spoils his own life. Such a man has to repent for his carelessness, but the loss caused by carelessness cannot be made good later on.)

Such careless people waste time and life by talking loosely about others and spend more time in rustic talk and carnal desires.

A careless man has to repent for his misdeeds at the end of his life, but such repentance shall be of no use. Time and opportunity lost once is lost forever. Man has to repent for such lost opportunity. Opportunity is like hair on front of the head, but it is bald and clean at the back of the head. Once removed from the front, it cannot be reused at the back.

Human life is very precious. If we as human beings walked on the path of devotion or failed to do service of Shree Hari. If we failed to do *japa* by our tongue or failed to sing *kirtans* of Shree Hari by our lips and mouth or if we failed to do darshan of God by our eyes, than what shall be the use of this body? It shall be the greatest loss and failure on our part. Think on this by assuming birth in billions of species – birds, animals and insects, but in those bodies, the soul cannot do devotion or service of God. Therefore, this birth - the birth as a human being - is the best and most suitable for worship of God. Wise people have praised therefore the birth as a human being and had admired this human body.

We have obtained this precious body as a human being and verily that would become a major cause for our liberation. The social life and society that we live in as a human being is not available to any through other species. We are required to learn the core of this subtle reality - the truth. If we were to spoil or waste such body in animal-like acts then that would be a most regrettable blunder on our part. Be wise, be judicious and treat your body and life as a most precious gift from God, don't treat it at par with other species. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to do devotion of God. The human body is not easily available to souls. The soul has to undergo billions of births as birds, animals and insects to attain birth as a man - a human being.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 32

(Human birth is not easily available. Why should we waste it in cheap conspiracy and ephemeral pleasures? Be wise and do devotion. Avoid worldly pleasures. Discard it totally.)

Do devotion for self-emancipation and support others in their devotional activities. Ask others to do devotion. The human body is most precious and helps the soul to attain ultimate pleasures. The attainments that are available by a human body are not attainable even to demi-Gods and deities. The deities in heaven desire for a birth as a human being on the holy-land of *Bharata Khanda*. They envy at the good fortunes of mankind. They pray for a birth as a human being. In heaven there are eternal pleasures but company of a *Satpurusha* and discourses of saints are not available to them. They long for this.

(Dislike and reject false pleasures. Understand and grasp the true pleasures. None have benefited by losing such rarest opportunity.)

True pleasures become understandable when we repulse untrue pleasures. Divine pleasure of devotion shall not be understandable if the mind is drawn to the untrue pleasures – the ephemeral pleasures.

Once a saint came to the court of a King. The King rose from his throne and went forward to receive the saint with honour by saluting him politely. The saint too saluted the king. The king was astonished by such act of the great ascetic. Saints are detached souls. They have forsaken worldly relations and therefore, the householders in the world look at them with respect and due decorum. But the saints are not required to salute a householder – even though they may be a king. The King thought upon this for a while but could not come to a proper conclusion. To remove his confusion, he prayed politely to the saint, "O Great saint! I bow to you. Ascetics are released souls. You are free and detached. We householders live our life at the physical plane and feel happy by ephemeral pleasures. Though I am a king, I live like a householder desiring pleasures of the sense objects. However, you are fully detached and dedicated absolutely to the cause of religion. As per scriptures, you deserve respect from all of us. I have saluted you with this little knowledge of the scriptures that I have. Religion and scriptures confirm my act of saluting you. May I know the reason, why you have chosen to saluted me?"

The saint said, "O King! As you have said to me, you have saluted my detachment. You had saluted me as I have repelled the sense objects and desires. But in terms of detachment and forsaking, you are far greater than I am. I have forsaken the sense objects and it's pleasures but you have forsaken that which is far greater and most precious - the omniscient Supreme Lord! Compared to that, my forsaking is very small and negligible! This is why I am

saluting you.” The king realized his mistake and became a true devotee of God.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, “Don’t forget God under undue pressures of the sense objects. Do devotion and submit yourself at the lotus feet of God.

A man is not wise if he emptied a full pot of butter oil. Our human body is a pot of butter oil. It shall not be a wise step if we wasted this human body in the pleasures of the sense objects or addictions. Such a man shall be a fool if he spoiled the precious means of the body. The King spent much time in holy company of the saint. As a result, the discourses and devotion liberated the king. Thus the company of a Satpurushsha liberates a soul in his present life. Live in holy company of a saint. Receive in one’s heart the preachings of such a saint. Do devotion and emancipate yourself.

Nishkulanand Swami says, ‘Take good care of yourself so that God is not forgotten in the commotion of the sense objects.’

Gujarati poet and saint Bhoja Bhagat says in his vivid language:

(We made money by hard work and donkey labour, but the money will not go with the dead body. Instead a stone shall be placed at the place of funeral rites. We accrued money by all means - just, unjust and even by cheating others. We became known as a billionaire - stinking rich - but spent not a single paise towards charity or welfare of others. In such journey of life, the soul shall be robbed midway by sudden death leaving him empty handed!)

Though food, wealth and sense objects are charming and entertaining, they cannot accompany the soul in its final journey. Such people do not spend money and other things for the welfare of others but waste it in ephemeral pleasures. When they die, the food and wealth will be left unused at the house and the body will have to remain in the ashes of a funeral pyre! The same destiny is for the rich or the poor. The sky-high palace shall have to be left and the body will be buried deep at the lowest place. According to Bhoja Bhagat, the soul has to repent much, after death.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to believe in his words. Be happy by doing devotion of God.

PADA (SONG) : 8

(Devotion is the treasure of divine pleasure. It is the wealth of the poor. It is the eternal abode of happiness. One who has attained devotion, has nothing more to attain.)

Lord Shree Krishna says, 'Religion gives heaven, knowledge gives emancipation but devotion holds the power to give face-to-face darshan of My human form to a devotee.' Lord Shree Krishna says that he is pleased only by devotion. Devotion takes a devotee to his God. Devotion is independent. It needs no support from elsewhere. Meditation, knowledge and other such means depend solely on devotion. Were the Gopis literate? Though they were not, the *vedanta* and other such knowledge of the higher order flowed from them. Read the dialogues held between Uddahvaji and the Gopis. What did they say to Uddhava? Knowledge will follow devotion. Do devotion and sing the praises of God.

How can we develop love and affection towards devotion of God? Holy company of a saint enables a devotee to do devotion of God. A devotee should be polite and submissive. He must hold faith in the saints and in service to such a saint. He should be firm and faithful to his religion - the ethical duties. These attributes and virtues help a devotee to do devotion with love. God is pleased with such devotion and his devotion becomes brighter and luminous by the blessings of God.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Saints have said repeatedly since ancient times and have said so for centuries that devotion is the eternal source of divine pleasure. Believe in those words. It is the wealth of the poor and Lord Shree Krishna is the most valuable wealth.'

Don't be negative. Don't assume that you cannot do devotion. Stop troubling others. Be good to your parents. Do devotion of God.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 33

(He is not a servant of God if he has not served God.)

There are so called 'Hari Bhaktas', who print on their forehead a *tilaka*, wear a rosary around the neck and come to the temple daily to do *darshan* of God. But as and when needed, they won't come forward to serve God. They are like a baser metal. A baser metal shines like gold when polished in gold. They are in the guise of a devotee but in reality and in their heart, they stink of the foul smell of desires of the sense objects.

Lord Shreeji Maharaj was constructing the temple of Gadhada. All his Paramhansas, saints and senior devotees of the *kathi* community were busy in various works related to the construction. Some were fetching water, some were fetching sand and some were carrying stones. Thus, all were engaged in the construction work. Lord Shreeji Maharaj himself carried on his head the

stones by placing it on his red coloured turban. But among those hundreds there was one, sitting rock steady at a distance, calm and cool chanting silently the names of God on his rosary beads. Shreeji Maharaj saw that unique scene and went to the devotee.

Shreeji Maharaj looked at him and said, "Bhagat! What are you doing?"

"Maharaj, I am doing Japa on my rosary," said the devotee.

"Don't you see the devotees and saints busy in the temple, in the service of God? Instead of serving personally at the door of God's abode, you're sitting here idle!"

At festivals and *samaiyas* we often find people like that 'Bhagat' who instead of doing real service, either they look at those who are engaged in God's works or may sit leisurely doing nothing and enjoying a siesta! According to Nishkulanand Swami, those 'good for nothing Bhagats' are like a brass piece of metal coated with the gold polish of 'so called devotion'. Devotion is service with sublime love.

(People respected him as a devotee, being attractive like gold. People saw his external appearance of a true devotee and began to worship him.)

Nishkulanand Swami warns the saints wearing saffron robes. The saints are honoured and respected by the householders. They salute them with due respect and give them sumptuous meals, attires and donations. They know them as saints (ascetics) - detached souls and therefore, in light of their ethical duty, they serve heartily these servants of God. The saints have received *deeksha* on the name of God and have become free from worldly attachments. Householders know about the sacrifice and dedication of saints and therefore they honour the saints heartily. The river of wealth and prosperity flows continuously from the houses of religious minded householders and such flowing river support the cows, ascetics and devotional activities. Temples are constructed and cows are fed from the funds of religious minded devotees. Householders are doing this to perform their ethical duty. The saints receiving such service should bless the householders with amnesty and salvation.

A saint in his religious tour visits village after village and receives decent hospitality and sumptuous meals. The householders, who are extensively reserved in regard to the requirements of their children, spend liberally and generously toward the service of a saint. They donate large amounts for their meals, clothing, free-inns and temples. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says this from his own experience. A *tyagi* is required to do devotion constantly. They should pay attention more in Satsang activities and should do silent Japa day and night. That is the proper way to reciprocate.

Such householder devotees bring dearest things purchased for the home first at the temple. They present it first to God and use it thereafter as a *prasadi* of God. This shows their unbroken faith in God and religion. They offer meals to the saints and ascetics because God receives meals through his saints. They know that after having a meal, saints submit themselves in devotion of God. They would do devotion to emancipate these devout householders. This is unshaken faith and trust of a householder towards the saints. Householders are serving the saints with this intention. Saints on their part are required to do devotion for the emancipation and ultimate good of householders.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 34

He is God's devotee, who praises God in each his breath. The praises of God – devotional songs – purify our mind. Devotion protects purity and holiness of the soul. Each *japa* makes the soul purer. It expands our virtuous rewards – *Punyas* - and removes our earlier sins. A faithful devotee receives divine pleasure of God. The rising sun removes darkness and spreads light. Devotional songs and devotion of God spreads the light of ultimate knowledge to remove the darkness of ignorance. It gives peace and bliss. Devotion too calls for extra care and caution. There are occasions when a humble devotee becomes proud of his devotion and thinks that nobody matched his meditation, 'nobody held knowledge like him or preached like him.' There should be no room for personal ego. Be ego free. Be humble.

(Devotion rises from the ashes of ego and possessiveness. An ego free devotee enjoys eternal pleasures.)

Ego and possessiveness are the forms of darkness - ignorance. Ego acts like a hurdle on the path of spiritual wisdom. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to repel affection and ephemeral ties.

Lord Sheshnarayan (thousand headed heavenly serpent) holds the whole universe on his head, but at the same time, he sings the names of Swaminarayan Bhagwan with his thousand tongues. As a householder, we hold a tiny burden of one house or one family at the most. That does not mean that we should not do devotion. We are required to spare some time for devotion and meditation. Some householders are found to be a bit liberal in regard to *Niyams*, religious duties and principles. If a saint inquires about his absence at the temple, a careless devotee extends excuses of his household duties, householder responsibilities or of having no free time. Devotees are required to know that the children born to them were sent by God with their

own luck and a householder is an instrument at the hands of destiny. God is the real sustainer of all the souls and universes. We are required to work hard by leaving all else to our God. Don't nurse false pride or ego. Do your duty. Work hard and leave the rest to God. Orphans are brought up and sustained by the mercy of God and are sustained in the manner where no need was left unfulfilled. Therefore desist false pride and ego. If a dog under a cart pretends to be the puller of the cart, it shall be nothing but falsehood. Bullocks are the power behind the cart. God is the energy in actions operating the living, the non-living and the cosmos. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Forsake instantly your ego, devotion will rise from the ashes of ego.' Shreeji Maharaj had said repeatedly to the devotees to leave ego and do devotion of God. That is the best way to please God.

(Do devotion for self-emancipation. Don't do it for show.)

Whilst doing Japa-meditation on the beads of a rosary, he looks hither and dither to ensure other people can see him and his devotion. Whether you would inquire for it or not, such a person who does things for show would narrate his hard earned attainments in doing Japa, fasting, salutes, holy fires, donations, contribution in construction of temples etc. He uses 'I' and 'me' and omits all other pronouns from the dictionary. Devotion and donation are meant to be kept secret. There should be no show of such humble efforts. God knows about our penance, meditation, devotion and donations – why should we show it to the world? Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Don't do devotion for showing it to others. Do it for self-emancipation.'

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 35

(Company of a true saint is very rare. A devotee finds worldly pleasures repulsive compared to company of a true saint. He concentrates and meditates daily upon the lotus feet of God. He forsakes all his worldly pleasures).

A soul shall be emancipated on receiving a true *Guru* - preceptor.

Bhagwan Dattatraya was on his religious tour. While walking, he was lost in meditational devotion of *Japa*. To rest for a while, he sat on a raised platform in front of a house. The house belonged to a prostitute. She looked at the saint and immediately her sins were burnt by such darshan. She then came to Guru Dattatraya and prayed, "Maharaj! Please grace my house. Please accept meals from my house. Please sanctify my dwellings."

Dattatraya said, "I will come definitely, but not now. I will come after cleaning my dirty robe." She invited him and went back to her house.

A gentleman was observing this. Gradually he came to Guru Dattatraya and said, "Maharaj! Perhaps you don't know that she is a prostitute. She is a sinner. Alms cannot be taken from such impure people." Guru Dattatraya said nothing. True saints speak little. They are enduring and profound.

At some distance, there was a shallow ditch of dirty water. Dattatraya went there and washed his dirty robe in this dirtiest of water. The prostitute saw this from her balcony and ran to stop him. She came hurriedly to Guru Datt and prayed, "Maharaj! The water is very dirty. Your robe cannot be washed clean in such dirty water. It will become dirtier."

Guru Dattatraya said, "My Child! If it cannot wash clean my dirty robe, then how would your heart be washed clean by the dirt of your daily routine? Have you ever thought of that?"

These enlightening words illuminated her heart. She cried profusely and said, "Maharaj! I had committed lots of sins. I had spent sleepless nights to lure other men. Maharaj! My feet are paining due to dancing day and night to entertain their baser instincts. My throat pains due to singing constantly for their entertainment. I am tired and helpless. O Maharaj! I know not what I should do? Please advise and guide me for my enlightenment and emancipation."

Guru Dattatraya asked, "My Child! What have you attained by such sinful acts?"

"O Maharaj! I have attained nothing."

"One who has given you a belly will definitely give food to fill it. When he has given you a body, he will give definitely the cloth to cover it. God is the supreme sustainer. He sustains us by giving food, water and light. Everything is free from Him. What shall be the destination of your sins? You will fall ultimately to the hell to receive unbearable punishment from Yama. You will have to roam in an endless cycle of births and deaths. Though you shall be born in innumerable bodies, you will not get this precious body of a human being again. You are wasting this precious human body. Forget everything and start afresh. Do devotion of God, sing devotional songs, sing *kirtans* and chant *japas* and do *poojan* Aarti of God. Spend time in Satsang and in devotional discourses."

According to Guru Datt's words of wisdom, she did devotion and spent time in service of God. She improved her present life by the teachings of Guru Dattatraya. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'It may look to him like poison when a soul receives a true Guru – Preceptor. But devotion will grow more and more on each new day.'

(Make a firm resolute and install forever
Shree Hari at your heart. Take constant care of

Shree Hari, irrespective of whether in waking, sleep or dream state.)

(A spiritually enlightened devotee never forgets devotion. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that true devotees are not boastful.)

Don't be pretentious. Don't be boastful. God has destroyed the ego of many of the egotistic greats. Some people boast about their devotion, meditation, *japa*, *Kirtans* etc without even doing it! They boast about *Katha*, *Parayan* and devotional sessions – without attending them.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Listen to Shree Hari with total attention. Remember God in all your acts.'

(In each breath take care of Shree Hari and forget Him not for a single moment. Sing hymns of 'Swaminarayan' while doing your work.)

Do devotion, sing praises of God and be attentive in Japa of the divine names of Shree Hari. Concentration in the image of God needs constant unbroken practice everyday. A rope drawing water from a well makes deep tracks on the parapet of the well due to its constant and steady movement. Devotion and devotional ways reduce the negative forces of Maya and affection.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 36

(Unless the ephemeral desires of the sense objects are discarded, there shall be no peace and bliss for such a soul. A desire free life is a holy life.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami had pronounced here a fundamental truth. A true devotee is required to remove all his desires. Devotion is not possible if perplexity and deterioration are not uprooted. These inner drawbacks affect adversely the steadiness of a mind in devotion. Anxiety at the heart blocks the path of eternal bliss.

Once, there was a teacher – a Guru. Anand was a disciple of his. Anand was a pious youth, innocent and kindhearted. He would do pooja, devotion and meditation. That was the routine of his daily life. However, when he was engaged in pooja, doing japa on the rosary beads and his limbs engaged in rituals, his mind would loiter elsewhere, thinking about the flowers to be plucked, fruits to be collected and the other tasks to be attended to after pooja and japa. At times, his mind was roaming in the world of his family, his village, relatives and other such ephemeral attachments. All of a sudden, when an idea of his seclusion and detachment struck, he withdrew his mind

abruptly from those voyages. Thus, though engaged in devotional activities, he was not able to concentrate fully in devotion.

His Guru was an enlightened soul. He knew about Anand's problem. Once, the Guru said to him, "Anand my child! Calm down. Be steady. Don't look here and there. Don't allow your mind to think on other things. Sit in a lotus-like position and meditate."

Anand said, "Guruji! I am trying my best to control my mind and my thinking. Despite my best efforts it runs here and there leaving me helpless."

Guruji said, "My child! Instruct your mind. It is necessary to teach and educate it."

"Guruji! How should I teach and instruct my mind?" asked the disciple humbly.

Guruji said, "Tell it, and tell it firmly with confidence. Explain to your mind about the value of this present life. Explain to it the importance of a human body. Only the human body holds the capacity to do devotion and devotional service. It is most important to do devotion. If not done, the soul shall be sent to the cycle of births where it shall be born as a donkey, dog, or another animal inclusive of birds and insects of every kind. Who will sustain that life and how? What type of treatment shall be received in each such birth? It will have to loiter and roam in mud and dirt. It will have to eat every kind of non-eatable. The teachings on such line of threat would scare the mind to be patient, calm and tranquil. Once it is overpowered by such real threat, it will hold steadfast the concentration during meditation and devotion." Anand tried at his best and acted upon the teachings of his Guru. He won his mind by the grace of God and did devotion of God.

(Therefore, a devotee should do devotion earnestly and should do it in greater magnitude. He should stay away from the elements harmful to his devotion.)

Sugar cane is full of sweet juices of sugar, but one cannot taste sugar in any bite of the sugarcane. For real sugar, one should process the sugarcane by extracting its juices and refining and hardening the juices into the fine crystals of sugar. Nutritious butter oil exists in every drop of milk but one cannot obtain it by having the milk. For pure butter oil, one is required to process the milk to separate its cream and the processed cream shall then be transformed into pure and flavourous butter oil. A fruit with its typical taste exists in every part of a tree right from the leaves to the roots. A tree processes it thoroughly in a well-planned channel of buds, flowers and fresh fruits. Such a fruit gives real flavour and real taste of its own kind. Similarly in devotion, there exists the elixir of salvation. Such elixir percolates deep in the innermost of our heart when we do single minded devotion and meditational concentration. Just as food is life for a soul, devotion is life for a devotee. All devotees are required

to fix a timetable for doing devotion of God. Devotion is a must for emancipation of the soul.

(A devotee is required to be steadfast bodily and mentally. If we missed this opportunity of protecting our hard-earned wealth of devotion, then this life shall be ruined miserably.)

If a devotee desires self-emancipation, he should do devotion attentively. Devotional services strengthen the soul. A good lawyer or a prestigious medical practitioner maintains at a personal level a regular timetable to execute their duties most accurately. Devotees too are required to maintain a proper timetable for executing devotional services. The time and opportunity, which were not available to the Rishis, Kings and saints of ancient time, have been made available to us. If we look carefully at our daily engagements and tasks, we will find lots of time wasted in non-constructive activities. We should utilize each such spare or wasteful moment in devotion and meditation of God. That shall be the true honour of time.

PADA (SONG) : 9

(A true aspirant should not leave the path of devotion. One can obtain the kingdom of the three *lokas* - the earth, heaven and lower regions, by painful penance. But that shall not be an everlasting attainment. The kingdom will not last beyond the period when virtuous fruits of the penance are over)

Though enjoying the pleasures of heaven for a long time, the soul has to go back to the chain of births and deaths when the *Punyas* (virtuous rewards) are over. Thus, the soul shall not be benefited at all by its consignment to heaven. He has to bear again and repeatedly the pains of birth and death. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Be brave and ferocious like a lion and do devotion bravely.' Eternal release – salvation – is not possible without devotion. An ailing person cannot be cured of disease by talking and debating about the medicine. Such a man has to consult a physician, has to undergo a proper treatment and has to take medicine, if he desires to be cured. Doctors are expert at curing physical ailments and saints are expert in curing spiritual ailments. Do Japa and devotion as per the advice of a saint. Practice restrictive rules for personal discipline and take the medicine of *Katha-Varta-Satsang* for release from the ties of births and deaths.

(The spiritually wise know that devotion sustains their body and life. The wisdom of the

worldly wise cannot help in devotion of God.
Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that devotion
bestows salvation and eternal emancipation.)

People living at the material plane, consider themselves as wise and intelligent. Though they may be poor in the mental faculty, they always place themselves at the top of the world. Only those who are true and wise, who are spiritually wise, who are thankful to the sustainer of the universe, know that every breath of their life is borrowed from the Sustainer - God. Worldly wisdom rises and perishes here on the earth. Spiritual wisdom helps the soul on the ultimate path of salvation. Worldly wisdom cannot help in devotion. Devotion is a must for attaining *Abhayapada* – ultimate emancipation.

The soul has become a worm of the eternal entity (Maya) and has developed the inherent nature of liking pleasures of the sense objects. He chases ephemeral pleasures but doesn't like eternal pleasures. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'If desiring freedom from the ties of the eternal entity, then love God and do devotion to please Lord Shree Hari. Break the shackles of the false pleasures of this world and do devotion of God. Attach your mind to God.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 37

(Do devotion of God. Serve at the lotus feet
of God. God is the supreme pleasure. God
removes the pains of every kind. A devotee should
know this truth and surrender absolutely at the
lotus feet of Shree Hari.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Serve at the lotus feet of God. God removes the pains of his devotees. God saves him from all the torments of the three kinds. God's image is most charming and pleasurable. Such souls, who are attached firmly to the supreme Lord are the happiest amongst people.' Sadguru Brahmanand Swami sings:

(Tall verticle lines on the lower foot-sole
look charming. Though not meditating, I can still
see them very clearly).

This is not surprising if doing darshan of the lotus feet during meditational concentration. But you are a true and dedicated devotee if you have such darshan of God without meditational concentration. Such devotion becomes free from every kind of pain.

We should remember here the great devotee Shree Parvatbhai. Parvatbhai of Agatrai. He was a true devotee of Shree Hari. Lord Shreeji Maharaj wrote once a letter to Parvatbhai and asked him to visit Gadhada at the earliest opportunity. A messenger carried that letter to Agatrai and

delivered the message to Parvatbhai. The son of Parvatbhai was bed ridden in those days. Mayaram Bhatt and others were present at the residence of Parvatbhai. They tried at their level best to stop him from his visit to Gadhada Dhaam. His son was in a critical condition, counting his last breaths of life, but Parvatbhai refused to stop even for a minute. He said, "I can't delay it. It is a call from my dearest. God has asked me to visit Gadhada at the earliest. I cannot wait here." He left for Gadhada and after travelling for half a kilometer, his son unfortunately took his last breath. A man ran after Parvatbhai and informed him about the sad demise of his son and requested him to come back to the house to do funeral rites of his deceased son. Parvatbhai heard him most compassionately and replied at the end that it would not be a proper act for him to return home. His homecoming was not to yield any fruits. It was Lord Shreeji Maharaj's desire. He had consigned his son to His divine abode of Akshardhaam. He informed him that all others present at home should perform his son's funeral rites. They should not cry. The deceased soul rests at the divine abode of Lord Shree Hari. Nobody should grieve or weep on his final departure to the divine abode. He was not for this ephemeral world. He belonged forever in the divine abode.

Parvatbhai lived at the higher plane of spiritual enlightenment. He was like King Janaka. He was able to cut and forsake the ties of the world by his weapon of detachment. Worldly torments cannot touch or harm a soul living at such a spiritual height. Parvatbhai lived above the worldly ways and did single-minded devotion of Shree Hari.

(A faithful married woman never looks at any man other than her husband. Even though there may be hundreds of good attributes in other such men, but for her, such a sight shall be a sin.)

A faithful married woman is never pleased by another man or at his good attributes. She always loves and admires only her husband. Her husband is everything for her. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to do devotion like a faithful married woman. The birds, animals and other living beings on the earth hold love and affection for someone. Nobody survives without love. A peacock loves clouds and a *Chataka* (a kind of cuckoo that drinks only drops of rain) loves the rain of *Swati Nakshatra* (fifteenth lunar mansion). The Chataka drinks only the drops of rain fallen during the fifteenth lunar mansion. It dies by thirst but drinks no water other than the rain of Swati. A *Chakora* (the Indian red legged partridge) loves the moon and becomes therefore unhappy if he has not seen it. One who loves Lord Swaminarayan should look at Shree Hari, like a Chakora looking at the moon. Whether the eyes are open or shut, install Lord Shree Hari at the core of your heart. Our Nand Sant sings:

Devotion like that of a Chakora for the moon is liked most by God.

(Lord Shree Hari loves such devotion of a devotee. God is pleased by such a devotee.)

What kind of devotee is liked most by the Lord? An episode is famous in our sect. Once Shree Hari traveled from Junagadh to grace Gadhada and came to the village Kamadhia on his way to Gadhada. They rested for a while near that village. A villager came to them and saw the saints and Shreeji Maharaj. He did darshan and paid his respects with folded hands. Shreeji Maharaj welcomed him sweetly and said, "Do come, Kayabhai!" Kayabhai was surprised on such call by his first name. Kayabhai went near Shree Hari and saluted again at the lotus feet of Shreeji Maharaj. As he was an aspirant from his past birth, he realized God in human form.

He submitted humbly, "O Lord! O Allah! Please take me in your refuge. I will abide by your rules."

Shreeji Maharaj said, "Kayabhai! Your own community shall torment you if you became a Satsangi of the sect. Maintain respect and faith toward this sect." Shree Hari then taught him the basic principles of this Sampradaya. Kayabhai served the satsang and its activities to his best. He did it at the stake of his life. Kayabhai was famed for guarding always the celebrations and *samaiyas* held at Gadhada, Vadtal and other places.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 38

Shreeji Maharaj was gracing a Sabha held at the royal court of Dada Khachar. Saints were gracing the seats beneath the shade of a margose tree. There was pin-drop silence to receive the nectar like words of Lord Shreeji Maharaj. Kayabhai came to the Sabha to do Darshan of Lord Shreeji Maharaj. His attention was concentrated in Shree Hari when he crossed the huge courtyard of the palace, and in such meditative moments he accidentally kicked a dog in the courtyard. Though a Muslim by birth, he was compassionate and merciful. He stopped instantly and paid a salute to the barking dog.

When Shreeji Maharaj saw this, He said, "Kayabhai! What are you doing? Are you saluting a dog?"

Kayabhai prayed, "Maharaj! It was my fault. This dog is most fortunate. This lucky soul sits on the most sacred places sanctified by the your holy touch. Only the most fortunate of souls has such a rare opportunity. Deities and demi Gods aspire impatiently for such an opportunity. The dog deserves the dust particles of your lotus feet. It was my wrong doing to kick it at no fault of that dog. I was saluting him for a pardon."

Shreeji Maharaj was pleased with his kindness. Such an ego-free soul never displeases anybody - even the tiniest of creatures like an ant. God is pleased by such souls.

(All earnings are disposable. All benefits are non permanent. The greatest attainment is devotion. Devotion leads to perfection.)

Devotion is the truest earning. Whatever is desired for the next day should be accomplished today. What ever is desired to be done today should be done right at the present moment. Death is certain and sudden without any advance notice. It never thinks about our pending assignments in devotion and Satsang. Do it now. Do it today and everyday. Worldly relations are ephemeral. Nobody is related to anybody. One who desires to be happy in this world and in the life after, should withdraw himself from his parents, family and other relations. He should love only God.

Royal majesty cannot be procured by a war with a king. Such a war gives no majesty, wealth or kingdom. One may die and sacrifice his life for a war, but nothing shall be yielded as reward. If such an aspirant is born as a son to the king, he will get the desired majesty, prosperity and kingdom as a descendant heir of the king. The Lord is the king of kings. The universe is his kingdom. God holds the infinite treasure of eternal wealth. Lord Shreeji Maharaj has said in his Vachanamrit. A king and his queen hold the power equally. A king and his queen hold equal territory of the kingdom. True saints are like a son of God. An obedient son receives full inheritance from his father. Thus the pleasures available to God shall be available in the same form to his sons – the saints. There is a condition for being a son of God though. Such a soul should belong absolutely to God. Total surrender - Absolute submission.

If one desired to buy a real diamond, such a precious stone cannot be purchased at a meager cost of few pennies. A real diamond costs a fortune. Similarly, if one desired to be a darling child of God – a son of his, then the soul would have to imbibe supreme values - the highest virtues. Forbearance, character, celibacy, penance, compassion and such others are the virtues needed in a son of God. He must hold firm faith, trust and devotional love for God. He should know and aspire to travel deep within himself. He should do devotion inwardly. Such penance, attributes and virtues together give greater spiritual pleasure in each following moment and such a son of God lives forever with his great father – God. His pleasures become divine and eternal. Every act of his becomes a kind of meditational concentration.

(“Son-like servants” indicates single-minded devotees of God. Nothing is unattainable for these sons of God. They have attained ultimate emancipation.)

God’s son - what are the attributes of a son of God? Gentility is the ornament of majesty, action is the ornament of bravery, calmness is the ornament of knowledge, donation is the ornament of wealth, angerlessness is

the ornament of penance, open heartedness is the ornament of religion and similarly celibacy is the ornament of the *vrata* of modesty. There are many *vratas* but celibacy is supreme amongst them. Celibacy cannot be attained in absolute without winning the mind and sense organs. Ultimate emancipation is attainable by absolute control of the sense organs.

(Nothing is better in the cosmos than devotion. The divine abode, which is beyond the reach of mind and intellect, has become attainable for Nishkulanand Swami.)

Devotion is the most suitable means to earn the pleasure of Shree Hari. When the fluid of devotion and devotional love flows in every vein and artery and percolates every atom and molecule of the body, then such love – blissful love, springs like a fountain from the depth of the heart and showers through one's eyesight. Repulsive attributes like 'I', 'mine', 'me' and other such phenomenons of ego would run away from the heart. The feel good factor prevails upon everything. Therefore, pull yourself together and do devotion.

A body is useless without a soul, a donation is useless without a proper recipient, a brother shall be insignificant without affection, a season shall be insignificant without seasonal fruits and a devotee shall be of no use without devotional favour.

(Devotion gives eternal pleasure. The human mind and intellect cannot measure such pleasure. Shukdevji and other great Rishis of ancient time have praised devotion of God in human form.)

The human mind or human intellect cannot measure the blissful pleasures of devotion. It is divine and sublime. It is infinite and eternal. The great saints like Shukdevji admire it. Bhaktinidhi should be studied and understood in the right spirit. It is profound in the knowledge of devotion. Remove the dirt of your mind; remove the dirt from your innermost. It is like bathing. To remove dirt from the mind is nothing but a kind of bathing. Bodily dirt can be removed by a body bath. Similarly the acts of devotion – the devotional ways – remove the dirt of the mind. Devotion is a mental bath. Meditational concentration (*Dhyana*) helps a devotee, in his darshan of divine human image of God. Penance means disciplined control and absolute hold on the mind and the sense organs. To donate means to make others free of fear. Yoga means to be well connected to God and devotion means unbound and infinite love with the knowledge of the majesty of God. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami sings:

(Kubja – a hunchback with crooked limbs and ugly shape - prepared with devotional love a bowl full of sandalwood paste and applied it tenderly on the person of Lord Shree Hari. Lord Shree Hari removed her ugliness and blessed her with the divine charms and eternal pleasures of the divine abode of God.)

Lord Shree Krishna came to the capital city of Mathura. An ugly and hunchback lady – Kubja – presented with devotional love a bowl full of sandalwood paste - cool and fragrant, to Lord Shree Krishna and applies it most delicately on the body of Shree Krishna.

When she came to him, Lord Shree Krishna asked, “Who are you?”

She said, “I am a servant maid at the palace of King Kamsa.”

“What is in your hand?” asked Krishna.

“It is sandalwood paste. I will happily apply it to your body.”

Lord Shree Krishna showered hearty pleasure when she applied the sandalwood paste on Shree Krishna’s forehead. Lord Shree Krishna blessed her a boon. She then prayed, “O Lord Shree Krishna! My Lord! People are insulting me for my ugliness. All my limbs are crooked. My skin is black, rough and wrinkled. All are mocking my appearance. O Lord! Please remove my ugliness and make me beautiful.”

Lord Shree Krishna showered his blessings and made her the most adorable maiden of her time. God blessed her, “O Kubja! You have made me adorable and handsome by applying this sandalwood paste on my forehead and arms. In return, you shall be the most beautiful maiden of your time!” As he pronounced the blessed words, she became a beautiful maiden.

(He took a little sandalwood paste and blessed Kubja with divine charms. Lord Shree Krishna never lives under any burden of borrowing. He repays and gives back with due interest. Wealthy people should learn from the ways of God.)

God had received happily the attires from the tailor and had received flowers from the poor gardener Sudama. God Shree Krishna had received happily the plain vegetables at the dwelling of Vidurji.

(To relieve his friend from poverty, Lord Shree Krishna consumed happily the three morsels of roasted cereal of Tandul from the bag of his friend Sudama. The impoverished Sudama

obtained a palace and wealth to enjoy pleasures and received majesty of noble lineage.)

To refresh and re-strengthen his childhood friendship, the poor Brahmin Sudama went to Dwarika. His wife gave him a small bag of roasted cereal (Tandul) to present it to his friend Shree Krishna. Sudama came to Dwarika. He took permission from the guards and came to the royal court of Lord Shree Krishna. It was all shining and golden. The palace, gates, walls, doors, ceiling and balconies were carved from pure gold and embedded with precious stones, gems and pearls. It was like Goloka – divine and majestic. The eternal charms and wealth of Dwarika Dhaam amazed Sudama.

With great excitement, Lord Shree Krishna ran to Sudama to hug him, when he knew about his arrival. He embraced and hugged him lovingly and took him to the inner palace and offered a seat beside him on a swing. Shree Krishna enquired about his well being and of his family. Sudama then presented shyly the small gift of roasted grains. Almighty omniscient Lord Shree Krishna knew everything about his impoverished friend Sudama. By receiving a gift from his dear friend, he removed his poverty and made him rich and majestic like him.

(In return for receiving minor cereals as a gift, he gifted to him enormous wealth, prosperity and majesty.)

God is the greatest donor. God is the ocean of kindness and compassion.

Lord Shree Krishna, with his eight principal queens, went on an excursion to a park. While having sugarcane, the Lord injured his palm. It bled profusely and the queens ran here and there in worry, anxious to get a piece of cloth to cover the wound. Draupadi was there also. She saw the injury and immediately tore her precious saree and tied the wound gently with the saree piece. While looking at the piece and thinking deeply about the devotional love of Draupadiji, Lord Shree Krishna counted casually the '999' threads woven into the piece of saree and gave to her the 999 lengths of saree in the later days to be free from his obligation - his debt. At the later time, the Pandavas lost Draupadi to the Kauravas in the game of dice and Dushasana, the evil minded brother of Duryodhana, dragged her in the royal court of Hastinapur and tried to uncover her modesty by pulling off her saree. Lord Shree Krishna found then the right occasion to save and protect his sister by providing 999 lengths of saree. Dushasan pulled her saree again and again, but it continued to come of non-stop one after another. Dushasana was exhausted and fainted by the labour of drawing the sarees and a mountain like heap was formed right in the center of palatial hall of the royal court.

God takes the minimum and gives back the maximum. Lamenting Draupadi thanked God for his generous help at the right moment. But Shree

Hari said politely, "My sister! At the right moment you had helped me by dressing my injury and wound. I have reciprocated to repay your obligation." God is most modest and polite. God has protected and helped, at the right time, thousands of his devotees. Those are the most fortunate souls, who have received God in human form.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 40

(Devotion is the best amongst the means to attain salvation. It holds a full capacity to act all alone in the best manner.)

The Vedas and the scriptures have mentioned the plentiful means and ways to attain self-emancipation. But none amongst them equal the capacity of devotion. Devotion is the supreme amongst the means of self-emancipation. Darkness cannot exist in the presence of the sun and coolness cannot stand fire. Similarly, Maya (eternal entity), covetousness, anger and other such drawbacks cannot survive in the presence of devotion. Deceased and wounded patients receive tranquil peace through sound sleep. It heals their wounds, injury and ailments. Similarly, the wounded and injured souls, from the last many births and deaths, tormented repeatedly by the pains and punishments of hell, receive peace and bliss by means of devotion.

(The burden of the past sins shall not be removed without devotion of God. Instead of earning some good, don't spoil your life by indulging in non-devotional activities.)

We are here on the sacred land of Bharat Khand to do business and earn-profit. We are here to earn the profit of Satsang. We have come here to do devotion and Satsang. Don't do any business resulting in loss. Don't go into loss. A jeweller asked his son to sell gems and jewellery. He explained to him the price of each jewel and jewellery piece. Some were of five hundred rupees some of 5000 rupees and some were even more expensive. He advised him repeatedly not to sell any item at a loss. He cautioned him in regard to thieves, robbers and cheaters – and told him to be extra alert. The jeweller's son visited the towns and villages to sell his gems, jewels and jewellery. He was not as wise or intelligent as his father was. In the enthusiasm to sell more and more, he sold the jewels and jewellery at a giveaway price by charging a tenth part of its' original price. The buyers knew him to be a big fool and bought all his precious stones. He sold his stock, collected the money and came back home within a fortnight.

The father was surprised when he saw him back home so early. He asked, "You got it all sold within a fortnight? That's amazing?"

"O Father! I got it sold. All in hard cash."

He further asked, "How much did you get? How much profit have you made?"

When they counted the money, it was a net loss of rupees five lakh. The jeweller was furious at his foolish son. He hit him with his shoes and threw him out of the house!

The greatest jeweller, Lord Purushottam Narayan has sent us on the earth to do business to earn profit. Do the business of devotion and make others do business like you. Just as the jeweller had warned to his son, our great God had warned us about the thieves like covetousness, anger, greed, affection, etc. They steal and rob us of our virtues. Therefore be alert and guard yourself against such pilferage. Earn devotional profits. If we earned any loss, God will convey the same to Dharmraja – the supreme judge. Dharmraja will also hit at us with a shoe to throw us into hell.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Fill a lofty tiffin of devotion to undertake the long journey of spiritual upliftment. It shall be most sorrowful if we missed this opportunity and not acted well. If we were to be lost in ephemeral relations like sons, family, wealth and pleasures, you shall be a loser and will not attain self-emancipation. If attached to wealth, the soul will have to become a snake to roam about your money and property when you are dead. Be careful, act consciously and do the profitable business of devotion.

PADA (SONG) : 10

(O saints! Don't make a loss. Don't act madly to commit a loss. If in business, make some profit and bring it back home carefully.)

A man went to some other state to do work and earn money for the self and the family. His mother and wife cooked a durable dry tiffin for him. His father arranged money and clothes for his travel. The man was lazy, careless and inefficient. Whenever he got a job, he did it for a short time and was fired in no time due to his carelessness and lethargy. He did nothing. He earned nothing. He ate and roamed. He spent his father's money and came back after one year. His father scolded him and threw him away from his house. His wife and children refused to go with him, as he was found incapable of sustaining his own family.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'We are here on this earth to earn something. We are here to earn the wealth of knowledge, detachment, Satsang and devotion. We have come here to earn all these things. God shall be pleased with us if we had earned wealth – the wealth of devotion. If failed to earn such wealth, the soul would have to go empty handed to the supreme abode of God. God will not receive us and his attendants will throw us back

from the abode of God. Therefore, earn virtuous wealth of devotion and live forever in the proximity of God.'

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to be like a good diver who dives deep in the sea and comes out with real pearls. If we went for a holy dip in the river Ganges, we would clean ourselves by washing off all our sins.

Once, it was the religious day of *Ganga Dashahara*. A man went for a sacred dip in the river Ganges and came to the Ghat at Haridwar. He found there hundreds of pilgrims having a sacred dip. There were saints, celibates and householders. All were devotees of God. All were bathing happily in the sacred river. This was absolutely intolerable for the man. He got angry with the crowd and scolded them for engaging the *ghat* for a long time. He threatened them of dire consequences and tried to hit at them. People were shocked at such rude behaviour of the man. Some of them tried to pacify him but it was in vain. A rude and angry man destroyed the sanctity and tranquility of the atmosphere. He spoiled the devotional zeal of the devotees. Our Satsang is like that holy river Ganges. It is the river of ultimate knowledge. Don't trouble others at no fault of their own. Don't scare or threaten them. Don't earn the curse of others. Don't give them pains. Act in a manner to please everybody.

(Be a true devotee and do devotion.
Concentrate your mind at the lotus feet of God.
Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that after
forsaking one's family, don't make your lives
shameful through your misdeeds.)

Concentrate at the lotus feet of God and do devotion. Don't spoil your life through undisciplined acts. We have chosen the path of detachment at the rise of asceticism in the heart. Once we have forsaken the family and relations, the desires of the sense objects should not rise in the heart. Saints are required to be extra careful.

(It is not a wise step if one fails to wash off
his dirt when water was available to him. It is like
that insect full of dirt, which went to the river
Ganges with his dirt filled nose.)

A bumblebee and an insect full of dirt were good friends. The bumblebee asked the insect once to do the pilgrimage of the river Ganges, to have a sacred dip in the holy river. Both went for pilgrimage. After many days of travelling, they came to the bank of the river Ganges. There were many flowers planted on the bank of the river and the place was quiet and tranquil. The air was filled with the fresh fragrance of the flowers. After the holy dip, both sat at the riverside looking at the flowers and the sunrise. The bumblebee said, "Dear friend! How fragrant the atmosphere is! I am so happy. It is so pleasant and peaceful."

“No. Not at all. I don’t smell any fragrance,” said the insect and added, “instead of fragrance, I smell dirt.”

The bumblebee was shocked by such response from the insect. There were hundreds of plants of roses and other flowers. The flowers were colourful and fragrant. But the insect could not smell it. The bumblebee looked at the insect when it was in deep sleep. When he looked at its nose, he found it blocked with dirt. The bumblebee now realised why the insect did not smell the fragrance. The bumblebee gave a sharp sting on the tip of his nose and threw him into the river Ganges. The dirt was removed thereafter by the sting and sneezing. Moreover, the deep plunge into the river cleansed thoroughly his mouth and nose. When the insect came out from the river and walked onto the bank, it admired the fresh and fragrant air in the tranquil atmosphere!

Inner dirt blocks the path of a clean and holy life. Remove your inner dirt of desires and enjoy devotional ways. Whenever on a religious tour or pilgrimage, be careful in regard to inner cleanliness. Inner dirt of any kind will spoil the pleasures and bliss of your religious tour - your pilgrimage – your devotional ways. Forsake your bad habits, anger and inherent nature of quarreling. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to forsake our inherent nature.

A man who has not forsaken his inherent nature shall be like a useless pebble. Have you seen a pebble? It is rock hard inwardly but smooth on its surface! Would it be possible to cook a tasteful dish of pebbles if we drop a handful of pebbles in a pan to boil? It is impossible. Our efforts shall be in vain. Similarly, if we do not remove anger and other such inner enemies despite our association with Satsang, then our life shall be like that of a pebble. Good for nothing! Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, ‘Preachings cannot touch a stone like heart.’

Only those who are in acute need of it will do devotion. A needy man will not consider day or night, or heat or cold, or hometown or upcountry, if he is in acute need of money. He will explore each and every chance and opportunity without any hesitation if he found in it the remotest possibility of getting some money. He is with the singular aim of earning wealth. He tries to get more and more money to fulfill his needs. Similarly, a man who is in need of divine pleasure, emanating from Lord Swaminarayan Bhagwan, would do everything to receive the pleasure of Shree Hari. Lord Shreeji Maharaj has said in his Vachanamrits - He would forsake worldly decorum. Man would leave woman and woman would leave her man. He would forsake personal relations, wealth, family etc. his everything. He would defeat all his inner enemies – i.e. affection, anger, greed etc. He would forsake the pleasures of the sense objects.

(A second without devotion becomes for him an eternity like millions of years. Sadguru

Nishkulanand Swami says that God dwells on the earth in all the ages for the sake of such single-minded devotees.)

These are peerless, who live and die for devotion. God, though omniscient, incarnates himself on the earth as a human being to favour those souls. God fulfills all their wishes. During the time of Lord Shreeji Maharaj, there lived a saint at Gadhada Dhaam. His name was Ramdas. He always did personal service of those who were physically weak and the ailing saints. He served them with due respect and love. Besides personal service he cooked meals for them, washed their clothes, read Vachanamrits and other scriptures for them and fulfilled the personal needs of such helpless saints.

The temple at Gadhada was being built up during those days. Saintly devotee Ramdas was not able to spare time for temple service. The whole day would pass in service of those saints. Therefore at late night, he would fetch stones from river Ghela by carrying it on his head. At midnight he placed a stone near Akshar Oradi, but it slipped from his hands and fell on the ground with little noise. Shreeji Maharaj was sleeping at Akshar Ordi. He heard the noise and woke up from deep sleep. Quickly he came out to inquire about the noise. As he stepped out, he saw Ramdas.

Shreeji Maharaj said "Bhai Ramdas! What are you doing at such odd time?"

Ramdas said "Maharaj! I am serving the ailing saints during the whole day, and missing my duties towards the construction work of the temple. Therefore, at present I am transporting the stones from Ghela to supplement my unfulfilled duty."

Shreeji Maharaj ran to him on hearing such faith filled words and hugged him with devotional love, "Ramdas! You are indeed great. I admire your spiritual wisdom. Saints like you are the jewels of this sect. Lord Shree Hari resides forever with such saints." Shreeji Maharaj placed both his hands on his head and blessed him heartily!

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 42

Now, here are the attributes of a true devotee of God. God resides forever with such devotees.

(I am narrating here the attributes of a true devotee of God. Such a devotee cannot live for a second without God. He and God are like fish and water. A fish cannot survive without water.)

A fish cannot survive without water. A true devotee cannot survive without God. Water is life for a fish. God is life for a devotee. Sadguru Brahmanand Swami says:

(How can I live alone without you O Lord!
A temple without you looks dull and pale. Who
will encourage me without you? Nothing is of any
use without you O God! The night without you
has become long like a year, O God! I am
tormented ruthlessly by your absence.)

A devotee does not like to live alone - without God. God too doesn't like to live without his devotee! Such oneness exists between God and his devotee.

The birds always live on a tree. When they are hungry, and want to have food, they come down on the earth to eat food. A devotee lives in the world of relations for his bare necessities. For the rest of the time he dwells in the divine abode of God and remembers God. In the case of a tree, the trunk is on the earth, the roots are deep in the earth but the branches and leaves are high up in the sky. In the case of a true devotee, the mind is like the root and stays fixed (in concentration) on God. He cannot live without God. Nectar-like meals become like poison for him, if those meals were not presented to God first. Food and meals presented to God become a *prasadi* of God. Things not related to God are of no value for a true devotee of God. If flower garlands are not presented to God, they are like snakes for a true devotee. A splendid villa without a seat of God looks like a crematorium for a true devotee. A true devotee is peerless – unique. Such a devotee never likes praises. Like Vasudevanand Brahmchari - he would be sorry to receive praises from others.

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami admires the single-minded devotion of a true devotee and says:

(God never leaves his true devotee even for
a fraction of a second.)

God resides forever with his true devotees.

(A true saint is my heart and I am the heart
and soul of a true saint. They know nobody except
me. For them nothing is dearer than I am. I never
live away from them.)

The saints are the true ambassadors of God. They enlighten the soul by preaching divine knowledge of God and consigning an aspirant soul to the lotus feet of God. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami salutes the saints.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 43

(God is never away from a true devotee.
God protects him day and night. God looks after
him like a mother and showers mercy and love.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami compares God to a good mother. A child is very dear to the mother. She is highly sensitive in regard to the well being of her child. Though attending various chores at her house, she attends fully to her child throughout the day. She looks at him frequently, takes care of his needs, she never leaves him alone and never allows him to visit unknown places or unknown children. She takes total care of her child. God is like a mother to his devotees. But for that, a devotee has to become innocent and sin-free like a child. God will look after us like a mother if we surrendered at his lap with the innocence of a child. God will worry for you when submitted absolutely at his lotus feet. He will take care of you, will support you will be a guide for you in your quest of knowledge.

(Bhagwan protects his devotees against the
attack from deities, human beings or demons. He
protects them from fear of ghosts and evil spirits.
He never allows inner enemies (anger, greed etc.)
to rise in the heart of his devotees. God helps the
soul at the right moment, because the soul is a
devotee of God and God knows this eternal truth.)

True devotion of a man disheartens his inner enemies. Anger and other enemies find it difficult to live within, when a soul surrenders to God with single-minded devotion. God protects his devotees against the inner enemies of the soul. This is an acute adverse time. The sins and negative thinking have polluted the atmosphere and the thinking of mankind. Addictions, ill habits and unethical means have become popular for acquiring quick money and sudden rise at the material plane. But our sants, Samkhya Yogis and Satsangis are not affected by this vicious circle. At a youthful age of 20 to 25 years, the youths are forsaking worldly attachments and walking ahead on the path of detachment and devotion. By breaking the shackles of household allurements, they surrender absolutely at the lotus feet of Shree Hari. God protects them from anger, desires, greed, affection, ego and other such inner enemies. These saintly devotees reside at the lotus feet of God by practicing absolute celibacy.

In such adverse time it is not possible for a man or woman to maintain celibacy without direct help from God. Since ancient times, great deities and Rishis have been tested very severely for their celibacy and many have lost it at the hand of destiny. Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva too were shaken by the evil power of carnal desires. Narada, who is greatest among the saints, was thrown off from his highest position by the power of carnal desires. Thus the inner enemies are most powerful and highly destructive. But these inner

enemies cannot harm those who have been favoured by God. Our devotees and saints are brave like a lion and never hesitated to challenge the inner enemies to uproot them from the inner most with the grace of God. They had uprooted the inner enemies. Lord Shreeji Maharaj protects his true devotees. He takes care of them. He sustains them. These brave 'Sahajanandi lions' have surrendered absolutely at the lotus feet of Shreeji Maharaj to do singleminded devotion of God.

Bhairav Japa is a unique method of self-sacrifice wherein a man jumps to death from the highest peak - 'Bhairav' of Mt. Girnar. It is believed that such a sacrifice fulfills the wishes of man. The Bhairava Japa and Bhakti (devotion) are two unique and distinct acts. None of these shall be possible in a state of two minds. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'I have preached to you with great objectivity. I have taught you the principles, which I was intending to teach. Stop chasing inferior deities and concentrate absolutely in devotion of God. Be firm and faithful. Surrender absolutely at the lotus feet of God and do devotion.

KADAVUN (STANZA) : 44

(The reader of this sacred book – *Bhakti Nidhi* - shall be able to learn about the finer aspect of devotion. He will grasp and understand the cardinal principles of devotion and shall be freed from the shackles of life and the world.)

The birth and death in millions of species are the formidable ties of the soul. We have got trapped and fixed the soul in the ropes of the eternal entity, Maya. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says, 'Whoever reads this scripture of *Bhakti Nidhi*, shall be able to know about the proper ways of doing devotion. He shall be able to discriminate judiciously between right and wrong, good and bad. He shall be able to strengthen his mind to do devotion of God. Devotion is non-plural and unique. Nothing can be compared on equal par to devotion. Old and very senior ladies are addressed as mother, but such 'mothers' cannot be substituted for the real mother. No other woman in the world can be our real mother except the one to whom we are born. Devotion is the real mother – she is the mother of the soul. A child holding a finger of his mother shall not be lost in the world. The majesty and greatness of devotion are beyond our narrating power, beyond our words.

(Set aside the liking of your mind and put into action whatever is liked by God. The pleasures and pains are the inherent attributes of

the body. As we are in this body we are supposed to bear it!)

There are many devotees in the world. The whole universe is full of devotees. They tie a *kanthi* around the neck, print a *tilak* and *chandlo* on the forehead. They do 'two-minute *pooja*' everyday and chant *Japa* with tightly closed eyes and fingers on the rosary beads. We can see lots of such devotees.

But how many amongst them shall be like Dada Khachar, King Janak, Parvatbhai and such others? We are required to be a true devotee like them. Janaka was a great king. He wielded the supreme power of the empire and prosperity, but he lived like a lotus in a pond – untouched by ego, wealth and majesty. No affection - No attachment. Though he discharged the royal duties most efficiently round the clock, he chanted mentally the names of God in each his breath and did unbroken Japa of God's names. We are required to be a devotee like him. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami instructs us to do so.

PADA (SONG) : 11

(The destructive disease of births and deaths cannot be cured without devotion. The soul reels under anxiety and constant pain. Such aimless roaming in various species would not end without sure remedy of devotion. Know this truth well. Devotion is absolute oneness with God. God is always pleased with his single-minded devotees. This is the eternal truth proclaimed repeatedly by the scriptures.)

Those who did devotion have swam successfully through the ocean of worldly ways. To do devotion is the supreme aim of this human life. That is the path and that is also the destination. Do devotion and God shall be present in front of you. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami admires the devotion of single-minded devotees.

(Those who did devotion are devotees of God. That shall be their only caste. All are the same and belong to the common caste of devotees – Satsangis. Devotion is their lifetime attainment. Such people have attained self-emancipation.)

Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami says that there is no caste difference amongst the devotees of Lord Ghansyam Maharaj. Lord Shree Hari says that all devotees are equal for him. He loves them equally and receives service from them without any discrimination. Mankind holds equal rights of doing devotion of Lord Shreeji Maharaj. Muslims, the lower caste, nomadics and Sikhs shall be received by him in his benign fold of emancipation.

DHOL (WELCOME SONG)

(God descends from Akshardhaam to give darshan and emancipation to his devotees. God is drowned by the thread of devotion. This is one hundred percent truth.)

God descends on the earth to destroy sins and to give devotional bliss to his devotees. God manifests himself in the human form to dwell in Bharat Khanda with his single-minded devotees.

Devotion attracts ethical duties, bliss and eternal prosperity and fulfills the life of a devotee. The scripture 'Bhakti Nidhi' is supreme amongst the scriptures for devotion. Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami asks us to keep at heart the scripture and its teachings. Whoever reads and listens to this scripture would be illuminated by devotional favour.

Lord Shreeji Maharaj resides forever at the heart of such a devotee and the devotee attains ultimate emancipation at the end of his life.

Ultimate emancipation is not possible without devotion and Satsang. The 'Greats' like Shukdevji have attained proximity of God by their single-minded devotion of the Supreme Lord. Shukdevji has said:

Just as Sadguru Nishkulanand Swami has said, 'God is attainable in human form by single-minded devotion to God. Do devotion! Do Satsang!