

LIFE OF SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRA

His full name was Shri Raichandbhai Ravjibhai Mehta. He was born in 1867 A.D. at Vavania in Saurashtra. His family belonged to a well-known merchant community. His father's name was Ravjibhai and mother's name was Devabai. His mother was brought up in Jain religious traditions. His grand father was a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna.

In Samucchaya Vayacharya Shrimadji writes: "I was born on Sunday, Kartik Sud Purnima (15th day of Kartik), Vikram Samvat 1924. Therefore today, I have completed 22 years. In this apparently short span of life, I have experienced much about the soul, the nature and mutations of mind, the integrity of speech, the physical body, the wealth, various impressions of the variegated or multicolored wonderful world formations of various orders, many worldly ups and downs and the causes of interminable misery and unhappiness. All these have been experienced by me in many ways.

In my short life I have entertained all the thought-forms which were thought over by all the powerful saints and philosophers and by the formidable skeptics. I have thought of the universe of desires and aspirations which were discussed by the great rulers. I have also thought of the disinterestedness par excellence, an attitude of serene indifference. I have much meditated on the acquisition of immortality and of minute temporariness or transitoriness. Many similar great thoughts I have traversed in very few years of my life.

I look at all of them as a seer, and I realize the unfathomable gap between my present state of knowledge and experience and the state of my being when I cherished or entertained these great and multifarious thought-systems.

All these minute and big differences and gradual development of my Self have been only recorded in my memory. I have never made any effort to publicize these thoughts. I felt that giving these thoughts to a wider public or sharing my experiences with them might bring good spiritual dividends but my memory refused to do so and I was helpless. By cooperative understanding if my memory could be persuaded to open its treasures to the world by putting them in writing, I shall surely do it in future. I give below a very brief recollection of my early years:

For the first seven years I played alone. I still remember to have cherished a wonderful imagination in my mind. Even in play I had strong desire to be victorious and to be the lord of everything. I aspired to be a great man of a resigned nature. I had no attachment to wearing clean clothes, selection of good food, good bed, etc. Still my heart was extremely soft. I still recollect that side of my nature at an early age. Had I had, at that time, the discriminative knowledge which I now possess, I would not have cared more for liberation. It was a life of such spotless innocence that I love to recollect it very often.

For four years, from seven to eleven, I devoted myself to study. At that time I remembered all what I once saw or read. My recollection was faultless, as my mind was sinless. As a child, I had no idea of fame, hence the bugbear of publicity never bothered me. I had unique retentive memory which I find very few men even today possess.

Still, I was indifferent to my studies. I was given much to talking, play and merrymaking. Because of good memory, my teacher was pleased with me as I used to recite all what I once read

in front of the teacher. At that time I was full of affection and natural sympathy towards all around me. I learnt that a spirit of affectionate brotherhood was the key to family and social happiness. If I found a separatist feeling or behavior in anybody, it used to pain me very much and my heart used to cry. In my eighth year I composed poems which at a later age I found to be very well done.

I studied so well that I could explain the book to my teacher who started teaching it to me. I cultivated very wide reading.

I had much faith in man kind and I loved the natural world order.

My great grand father was a Vaishnava, a staunch devotee of Lord Krishna. I heard from him many devotional songs about Radha and Krishna, also the mysterious stories of the wonder-works of Lord Krishna and other incarnations of God.

I took religious initiation at the hand of a Sadhu named Ramadasji. I daily went for the Darshana of Lord Krishna and attended lectures and devotional congregations. I believed the incarnation of God as real God and I cherished a strong desire to see His residence. I dreamt to be a great spiritual follower of Lord Krishna and a powerful preacher of His faith. I considered it to be the pride of my life if I could become a great Sanyasi performing Hari Kirtana in the public and leading an upright ascetic life.

I was so much saturated with such thoughts that I hated the Jains who did not accept God as the creator of the world. I believed that nothing could be created without a creator that the world was a masterful creation and such a uniquely supreme creation could only be the work of God and none else.

The Jain Banias in my native place praised me as the most intelligent student of the village. But they ridiculed my initiation in Vaishnavism and they argued with me to dislodge me from my faith. I did not succumb but I gradually read the Jain sacred books such as Pratikramana Sutra. The fundamental idea of the Jain works was the advocacy of non-violence and love to all high and low in the world. I liked this idea of universal love and non-violence very much.

Occasionally I visited the residence of the ruler of Kutch as a writer since my hand-writings were praised as best.

After the age of thirteen, I started attending to my father's shop. While sitting in the shop I have composed many poems on the heroic and spiritual life of Rama and Krishna. But in my dealings with the customers of the shop I have never weighed less or more."

JATI SMARANA GNAN

Shrimad Rajchandra possessed the knowledge of his previous births. It is called Jati Smarana Gnan.

In reply to a question from Padamshibhai, his friend in Bombay as to, whether Shrimadji possessed the mysterious knowledge of his past lives, he replied: "Yes" and then he explained as to when and how he obtained it. It is a picturesque description. Shrimadji said:

"When I was seven years old, an elderly man named Amichand, well-built, stout and sturdy, a

neighbor in my village, suddenly expired of a serpent bite.

I did not know what was death. I asked my grandfather as to what was the meaning of death. He tried to evade the reply and advised me to finish my meals. I insisted on a reply. At last he said: "To die means the separation of the soul from the body. A dead body has no movement, it contaminates and decays. Such a dead body will be burnt to ashes near a river-bank as it has ceased to function."

Thereupon I went stealthily to the cremation ground and climbing a Babul tree I saw the whole process of burning of the dead man's body and I felt that those who burnt him were cruel.

A train of thoughts started on the nature of the death and as a result I could recollect my previous lives."

Such knowledge of one's previous lives is called Jati Smarana Gnan.

It is but natural that death and disease are the great humanizing forces in individual and social life of thinking men. It is by being conscious of them that we develop modesty and humility in our behavior and we reduce our attachment to worldly life.

By meditation on death we realize the supreme and sole importance of knowing and experiencing the Atma. Therefore Jati Smarana Gnan is very helpful in developing detachment from the world, and a spiritual affection for eternal imperishable ever-living soul.

Shrimadji obtained this exceptional knowledge of his previous lives at very young age of seven, a rare phenomenon. In 1897 A.D. at the age of 30 years, he wrote his famous poem in which he thanked the day when he realized unique peace. He has described in the poem the order of his spiritual development as under:

"In 1874 A.D. I obtained the Jati Smarana Gnan. In 1875 A.D. I began to advance on the spiritual path from the point I had already reached in my previous life. In 1886 A.D. I developed a spirit of complete resignation and detachment to the mortal body and the rest of the world."

In 1889 A.D. at the age of 22 years, he wrote in a poem that the only friend of unqualified happiness is lonely indifference which in turn is the mother of spirituality.

He also says therein: "In my very young age I knew the nature of the final reality and this suggested to me that henceforth I had no future birth nor will I have to fall back from what I had already gained in spiritual life. I easily reached the state of the soul which would require long study and spiritual practice for others."

In a letter he says: "I realized that when in infinite stretch of time in the series of my past lives I felt that I could not live without my dearest and nearest; but I could live without them in those lives too. This proves that my affections and attachments were based on ignorance."

He pithily declares that without the right insight, the scriptures are of no help; that without the true spiritual contact, even meditation degenerates into wild imagination; without the active guidance of a Self-realized Guru, the final truth cannot be realized; that by following the normal path of the worldly people, one cannot be their leader and savior; that without resigning the world and its myopic calculations, a life of extreme non-attachment is very difficult to be obtained.

He salutes the great Tirthankara who realized his soul and described it for the benefit of the world. It is only by the teachings of the Tirthankaras that one can easily know his soul.

HIS CHILDHOOD: MANIFESTATION AND DEMONSTRATION OF HIS EXCEPTIONAL INTELLECTUAL AND SPIRITUAL ACQUISITIONS (POWERS)

The knowledge of past lives proves the height of spirituality he had already reached in his previous lives. He was apparently young in his present life but from the point of view of his achievements of previous lives, he cannot but be regarded as a highly advanced Soul.

From his early childhood modesty, perfection in speech and conversation, exceptional reasoning power and a sharp spirit of non-attachment or disinterestedness and such other qualities made him a pet student of his school as well as of his village. He possessed a sharp and unfailing memory, unusually powerful retentiveness and faculty of recollection. He grasped all that he read or heard only once.

He entered the school at his age of seven and a half years. In about a month after his joining the school he completely mastered the preliminaries in calculation and within two years he finished the study of seven standards.

The monitor of his class, who had initiated him in the study of the first standard book, had to take his help in completing the book. On account of his exceptional performance in study he became the favorite of his teachers and normally he conducted the classes while his teachers used to witness with admiration the work of this gifted Soul. All his colleagues loved him.

Once his teacher scolded him and the next day he did not go to the school. Thereupon all other boys of the class followed him to a field where they ate berries. His teacher was surprised at the absence of all his students, inquired about it and went to the field where Shrimadji was sitting with his friends. Upon knowing the reason of absence of the students in his class, the teacher assured Shrimadji that he would never scold him again and brought them back to the class.

He started composing poems at the age of eight and he supposed to have written five thousand stanzas in the first year. In his ninth year he composed Ramayana and Mahabharata in verse and at ten he was mature in his thinking and reasoning. At this age he had unique curiosity to know new things, a passion to hear new facts, to think new thoughts and to perform fine orations.

While he was eleven he started contributing articles to the newspapers and he won many prizes for writing competitive essays. One of his essays was on the need for women-education. At the age of twelve he composed three hundred stanzas on 'a watch'. At thirteen he went to Rajkot to study English but about his English education very little is known.

Before his age of fifteen he studied and mastered many subjects. He became famous as a young poet of astounding memory and with brilliant prospects.

Once Shrimadji, at the age of ten, accompanied Shri Dharshibhai, a judge of Morbi state, from Morbi to Rajkot. During the journey Dharshibhai was much impressed by the unusual talents of Raichand, a boy of ten, and by way of admiration Dharshibhai suggested that Raichand should stay with him in Rajkot. But Shrimadji preferred staying at his maternal uncles' house but he promised to meet Dharshibhai often during his stay in Rajkot.

His maternal uncles came to know from him about the arrival of Dharshibhai in Rajkot; and

while Shrimadji was taking lunch there they were loudly planning to kill Dharshibhai. Shrimadji heard this and lost no time to warn Dharshibhai about the criminal intentions of his maternal uncles. This is how this boy of ten, returned the obligation to Dharshibhai.

Shrimadji by his mystic powers of clairvoyance and telepathy, mind reading, etc. learnt that two persons from Kutch were on their way to Rajkot to meet him. So he requested Dharshibhai to allow these two guests to stay with him and Dharshibhai readily agreed to do so.

Thereupon Shrimadji went to receive the two guests and welcomed them by their names. When the guests asked him as to how he knew their names and about their coming to meet him, he replied that all this was possible by the infinite powers of the soul.

These two guests, named Hemrajibhai and Malsibhai, having heard of the exceptional talents of Raichandbhai, had come to persuade the latter to go to Kashi for higher education but when they came to know of the wonderful spiritual powers possessed by Raichandbhai, they dropped their idea. Dharshibhai was much impressed by this incident and gradually he began to respect Shrimadji.

For his return journey to Vavania he had no money, so he sold the sweets he was given by his maternal uncles and with the proceeds thereof he returned to Vavania. This shows his firm determination not to beg of anyone for his personal benefit.

STRI NITI BODHAKA AND OTHER ETHICAL WRITINGS

In his book Stri Niti Bodhaka Part 1 on 'The nature of ideal moral life for women', he has advocated the cause of women's education as essential to national freedom. He advised his brethren to spread education in women, to remove internal quarrels and crippling social customs and thereby expedite the recovery of national independence.

This book was the first of his writings before he was sixteen and it was published in Vikram Samvat 1940 or 1884 A.D.

In this book of 50 pages he has analyzed the causes of backwardness in women, such as child-marriage, forced marriage of the unequals in health, age and intelligence and lastly, endless superstitions and ignorance. The matter of the book is divided into four sections:

The first section deals with prayer to God, devotion, transitoriness of the living body, advice given by a mother to her daughter, avoidance of waste of time, diligence in work and the excellent results obtained by diligence.

The second section deals with learning, advantages of education, select reading of good books and acceptance of good and useful lessons.

The third section deals with self-improvement, adoption of virtues, spread of moral and healthy atmosphere, nature of truth and avoidance of profligacy and debauchery.

The fourth and the last section deals with the description of the wise and virtuous people and it includes a composition of hundred verses on words of wisdom for all.

Shrimadji, from his childhood had a fine command of language and diction, so his style is simple, natural and elegant. In his writings, words follow the sense.

In the Sad-bodh-shatak he has discussed subjects like unity, morality, patience, courage, truthfulness, innocence, devotion, patriotism, social reforms, diligence, avoidance of bad company, learning, avoidance of pride, devotion to own husband, avoidance of skepticism or nihilism, sympathy, love of religion, writing good books, thriftiness, reduction of the household expenditure, forgiveness, merit, humility, modesty, keeping good and virtuous company, avoidance of the company of foolish women, avoidance of betting etc., thinking of death, search for the path of knowledge, doing charity to the deserving persons, love for doing good to others, increased reading etc.

Anticipating the question why should Shrimadji have written on ethical topics, he writes: "Persons desirous of Self-realization, living in worldly life, should try to find the root of all ethical life in their soul and they should be just and honest in earning their living and collection of wealth. This is good moral life for them and it should be observed by them at all cost.

In its strict observance, renunciation and non-attachment and such other qualities develop in them and by that they begin to appreciate the effectiveness of the teachings of the same by the Gurus and of the obedience to the same. They rightly interpret their teachings and they easily follow the path to Self-realization."

Shrimadji wrote a rosary of 108 golden advice for the benefit of the seekers of Self-realization in Vikram Samvat 1940 or 1884 A.D.

There he advises the people to think of the Self, not to repent for the life already led but to make the best of the life yet to come. A man should repent for his immoral acts and should determine to be thoroughly moral in his future dealings.

A person should allot his time of the day in the following manner: 3 hours to devotion, 3 hours to doing religious rites, 3 hours to food and bodily nourishment, 3 hours to education and learning, 6 hours to sleep and 6 hours to take care of his family and social life, if he is a householder. One who has renounced the world should be absorbed in thoughts of Self-realization and should control his mind from passions and prejudices.

The only path to Self-realization or soul's liberation consists in realizing the Self as completely different from the body and the worldly attachments. The soul is free and pure, enlightened and immortal.

Man should keep his eye on death and utilize every moment of life in realizing his goal of liberation. One may be a prince or a pauper, but all should know for certain that they are guests of death.

The adoption of the path of non-violence in thought, word and deed; the intense desire for Self-liberation and for acquisition of right knowledge and experience for the same; the searching out of an enlightened Guru and the undaunted obedience to his advice; Self-control in food, talk and other behavior; keeping clear of all sins; purity all around; observing honesty and justice in worldly life; curtailment of worldly activities in order to lead a really happy and Self-meditative life; keeping in mind the principles of health, purity, magnanimity and duty; keeping company of the good and wise as a powerful method of maintaining purity of mind and body - are some of the invaluable advice given by Shrimad Rajchandra to men, women, and children in all walks of life, the advice which all should think over before their daily round of duties.

MOKSHAMALA AND BHAVANABODH

Shrimad Rajchandra had composed Mokshamala at the age of sixteen years and five months and it was completed within three days in Vikram Samvat 1943 or 1887 A.D.

He wrote this book in an easy style understandable to young boys and girls with a view to turn their minds from trash readings to reading of good books by which they can obtain the invaluable results of Self-liberation.

In the opening lesson he requests the reader to read the book with due care and consideration which it deserves as its goal is very high. While other books deal with worldly life, this book deals with Self-liberation. All religious readers have agreed in liberation as the goal of life and discrimination of the different natures of the soul and the body as the means to its realization. Hence, as a sound educationist interested in the lasting benefit of young minds he has offered this book to his readers.

He suggests his reader to think of the inequalities of life and thereby to reflect all the good and bad deeds as causes of these inequalities.

Human birth is the only stage opportune for a soul to think of and work for its salvation. If it is misused in doing other things, a golden opportunity is lost. Hence, with the intense desire to work for the spiritual salvation of all living beings, this book and such others are written by Shrimad Rajchandra. Those who write such books are called men of unqualified sympathy and compassion and they live for the benefit of other souls.

The soul gets human birth as a result of many good deeds done in previous births and therefore it is very precious.

If a man controls his mind he can attain Godhood.

Shrimadji says, every word of Mokshamala has been properly considered and after much thought it has been composed.

He holds that his readers should not be guided by his writings simply because they flow from his pen. Every reader should weigh the thoughts expressed and should develop the habit of discriminative thinking. The writer should stimulate the reader's thinking but not substitute it.

These expressions indicate the high maturity and balanced views on education on the part of Shrimad Rajchandra and that too at a very early age.

Though Mokshamala was composed in three days Shrimad Rajchandra found that it would take a long time to publish it. So, he composed a small book of 50 pages called Bhavana Bodh or the instructions to cultivate twelve sentiments necessary for leading the life of non-attachment to the world; and gave this book to his readers in anticipation of the delay in publication of Mokshamala.

The twelve sentiments to be cultivated are briefly as follows:

1. Everything in the world except the soul is transitory and subject to destruction. The soul alone, is, in its nature, eternal.
2. In the world none can protect a living being from death. Therefore the only shelter one should

seek in life is true religion. Religion alone can be man's savior.

3. The soul has been passing through a chain of births and deaths and it is high time for it to think of its freedom from Sansara - a cycle of births and deaths. One should consciously realize that the soul's nature is freedom and so it is but natural to think of its salvation from Sansara.

4. This my soul, has always been and, is alone. It will suffer the fruits of its deeds and it is the lone pilgrim.

5. All souls are independent and none is really related to the other.

6. This body is unholy, it gives out and absorbs many unholy and impure substances. I, as a soul, am quite independent of my body which is subject to disease and death.

7. Attachment, avarice, ignorance, sense of futility, etc. are binding the soul.

8. One should devote his time to acquiring knowledge and meditation and thereby save oneself from the bondage of fresh actions.

9. To act with full knowledge of the nature of the Self is the way to cut the knot of binding actions.

10. To think of the fourteen worlds in which the soul wanders in bondage.

11. To determine that a man cannot attain the right knowledge of the nature of the Self while living the worldly life. Even if such knowledge may be had, conscious abidance in the true nature of the Self will become difficult. Hence, one should feel intense obligation of the enlightened Guru who explains the true nature of the Self.

12. Therefore one should appreciate the rare possibility of obtaining the right preceptor of religion and one should lose no time in following his advice, should he be available.

Shrimadji writes about the Mokshamala that a reader, on deep thinking and reflection on the subjects discussed in it, will find his way to salvation.

The book is an impartial composition on philosophy and ethics. Its aim is to retrace young minds from acquiring wrong information of truth and reality and to put them on the path of right knowledge and action leading to liberation.

Shrimadji himself stated that his spirit of non-attachment, at the time he composed Mokshamala, could only be compared with the spirit of non-attachment that was found in Shri Ramchandrajai as described in Yoga Vashishta. He said that he studied all Jain scriptures in fifteen months and during the study the index of his non-attachment was extremely high to such an extent that he would not be aware whether he ate or not.

In Mokshamala Shrimadji explains:

* The nature of true God, true preceptor and true religion. He protests against the description of Jainism as a skeptical religion. To him Jainism is the true appreciation of God, man and the world. It does not deny Godhood, it only denies God as the creator of the world.

- * That the man's true greatness lies in the practice of truth-telling, universal sympathy towards all living beings, celibacy, benevolence and equanimity of mind. Vanity and self-pride block man's progress. Man can be great by removing these elements from his nature. Keeping to truth is essential to the maintenance of the world. Hence truth-telling is the first of the great religious observances.
- * Company of the good and the great is the source of all happiness. It purifies man. It brings him nearer to the knowledge of the Self and the final liberation.
- * Reading and reflecting on the teachings of the religious scriptures also serves the same purpose namely soul's salvation.
- * Solitude does not necessarily mean keeping aloof from all company. Keeping company of persons of similar aims (liberation) and practice is also known as solitude. Company of the Saints is a powerful purifying force. As you can't swim on earth, you cannot sink in good company. Hence, it is the sure medicine for the ailing soul.
- * Covetousness and greed, oppressive acquisitiveness, result in the performance of sinful deeds.
- * The Shastras should be read, understood and practiced. Parrotlike cramming of scriptural texts leads one nowhere.
- * In the lesson on Kapilmuni, Shrimadji shows the desire as the root cause of endless miseries. Desire grows on what it feeds. There is no end to the mind's desires. The world-tree grows on the seed of desire. Desire is ever young. True happiness springs from the abandonment of all desires. Real peace lies in contentment. By contentment the soul obtains equanimity, discrimination and lasting joy.
- * The soul has lost much by infatuation and sloth due to ignorance of its true nature. It is advised to wake up from killing slumber and lose no time in expediting its salvation. Wisemen do not wait for future opportunities, they strive for liberation in the present by all possible religious ways and leave the future to its own future. Their sense of the value of time is admirable.
- * Discrimination is the light to recognize the soul in darkness. By discrimination religion is sustained and maintained. Religion without discrimination is meaningless. To understand truth and untruth as they are, is known as discrimination.
- * Non-attachment is the only guide to the soul to its lasting happiness. To aspire for lasting happiness in the pursuit of the pleasures of the world is to live in a fool's paradise.
- * In the lessons on differences of opinion and beliefs of different religions of the world, Shrimadji argues that while all other religions are incomplete or imperfect paths to Self-realization, Jain religion is complete and perfect as it has elaborately described the nature of reality and the sure method of soul's salvation. The founders of Jain religion were omniscient. Their description of sympathy, celibacy, chastity, discrimination and non-attachment is unique. Besides, it contains minute descriptions of pure knowledge of the Self, its hierarchical gradations and the mutations of the soul's states in Sansara.
- * In the lesson on celibacy he states nine prohibitions conducive to the observance of celibacy.

- * The lessons on Jain philosophical doctrines are lucid and simple expositions useful for every student of Jain philosophy and religion.
- * He has also enumerated the eighteen obstacles to the control of mental modifications which a seeker of the Self-realization should remove from his life.
- * He has also described fourteen mental states which make gradual development of the highest virtues.

AVADHANA OR POWERS OF ATTENTION AND RECOLLECTION

In about Vikram Samvat 1940 or 1884 A.D. Shrimadji came from Vavania to Morbi. In Morbi, Shastri Shankarlal M. Bhatt was performing the feat of attending to eight objects or eight activities at a time. At the same time in Bombay, Gattulalji Maharaj was performing similar feats. These were the only two well-known persons for their exceptional memory and attention feats. Shrimadji saw the performance of these feats in Morbi and quickly picked them up.

Within two days after he saw the memory feats, he started performing similar feats before his friends and then for the open public. He was already known as a learned man but when he performed a memory feat of attending to twelve activities at a time before a public of 2,000 persons he became famous as a prodigy with exceptional powers. Some admirers used to address him as the precious diamond of India.

In an exhibition at Wadhwan he performed his memory feat of attending to sixteen activities at a time before an audience of rulers and highly educated public, and all were extremely pleased. The dailies published articles in his praise.

In Botad, before his millionaire friend Sheth Harilal Shaivalal, he performed the memory feat of attending to 52 activities at a time. They included:

- * Playing Chopat with three other players;
- * Playing cards with three others and at the end to call out all thirteen cards he had;
- * At the same time playing chess and at the end of the memory feat to declare all the pieces which were removed from the chess board;
- * To count grains which were dropped on his back while he was engaged in the memory feat;
- * To perform addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and to keep the results in mind and to declare them at the end of the memory feat;
- * To tell as to how many beads, a man sitting opposite him, had turned from a garland till the time he stopped turning them;
- * To hear words of 16 sentences in 16 different languages in a random fashion and later on to speak out all the 16 sentences in the 16 languages;
- * To supply individual letters in a random way in a chart to be completed and at the end to compose a verse;

* To prepare problem poems;

* To compose complete verses on being supplied only with one line or half lines,

* To compose 16 poems in 16 different poetical forms starting with one line of each of the recollected complete poems at the end.

Later on Shrimadji easily performed memory feats of attending to 100 things and activities at a time. Even then he used to say that his powers were merely a drop in the ocean, that the powers of the Self were infinite.

Shri Chatrabhujbhai, the brother-in-law of Shrimadji, said that Shrimadji used to tell whether a person uses his right hand or left hand to fix a Paghadi (a head dress - turban) just by looking at the shape of the Paghadi on the wearer's head.

In Vikram Samvat 1943 or 1887 A.D. Shrimadji went to Bombay and there, in Faramji Kavasji Institute and at other places he performed various memory feats and all the newspapers in Bombay gave wide publicity and praise to these performances. He was awarded gold medals by the public and institutions, for his excellent, unheard of and amazing memory feats.

In one of the memory feats he was shown twelve books of different sizes and told their names too. Then he was blind-folded and he used to touch a book he had seen before and immediately call out its name. Dr. Peterson who presided over the performance had nothing but admiration and praise for this outstanding feat.

On another occasion he was shown different food dishes and just by looking at them he told in which there was less salt, without touching the dishes or tasting the food in them.

Some of his admirers suggested Shrimadji to tour the foreign countries and show his ability and powers to the outside world. But he refused the suggestion on the ground that he could not observe religious discipline in foreign countries.

Shrimadji thought the wide publicity of his exceptional powers may hinder his march towards the Self-realization and so before he reached twenty he gradually discouraged it and after twenty we hear next to nothing about his performances of memory feats.

OTHER ARTICLES WRITTEN BY HIM UPTO THE AGE OF TWENTY

Shri Vinaychand Popatlal Daftari, a friend of Shrimadji, declares in a booklet 'Sakshat Saraswati' published in 1887 A.D., as follows:

"In accordance with the rules of epic poetry, Shrimadji composed 'Namiraja' a work of five thousand verses wherein he has explained the nature of the four Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. This book was composed by him in six days. His spotless divinity and a very high order of thoughts are evident throughout the book.

One religious head requested Shrimadji to prepare a book in verse, of the fundamental tenets of his religion and offered to pay Rupees One Thousand to him for such composition. But Shrimadji turned down the offer.

Shrimadji also edited a newspaper named Vairagya Vilas or the enjoyment of non-attachment."

To our grief nothing of the above is available.

In some of the advisory compositions prepared by him at the age of eighteen years he enunciates a doctrine and then illustrates it.

He says: "The gift of all scriptures can be summed up in two words - devotion to God and adoption of a life of benevolence in the world."

In 1885 A.D. his composition on 'Shurvir Smarana' (in memory of the brave) he has given in verse a picturesque description of the brave warriors of the past, who victoriously fought the battles in India; and he compares those glorious moments with the present times when he does not find any one of that caliber to free India from foreign domination. The poem gives us sharp contrasts between the brave of the past and the cowards that inherit them in his days.

Had Shrimadji lived a long life, his aspirations of Indian freedom would have been amply rewarded. He would have been happy to see his friend Mohandas Gandhi, the harbinger of Indian freedom and of the betterment of the peoples of the world, liberating India from British yoke by the Jain method of truth and non-violence.

In all forms of literature Shrimadji has made his mark and had he turned all his energy to literature, he would have given us a vast literature which would have been a milestone in Gujarati literature.

But literature to him was a means of expression and not a method of liberation. He was interested in teaching the people the art of Self-liberation, the foundation and the climax of all arts.

Shrimadji used to say that telling truth about one's own Self is neither Self-praise nor Self-abuse; telling otherwise than truth is a vice.

"One who possesses wider intelligence and outlook, equanimity of mind, straightforwardness and complete sense-control is a properly qualified person for truth-realization. From ages immemorial attachment, avarice and infatuation have clouded the soul's strength and so it has not been able to think of itself. Human birth and that too in Arya Desha or India, and in a noble family and a sound healthy body are the proper means for the soul to think of itself and of its liberation.

If all this is there, then one has only to grow a strong desire in his mind to liberate oneself. If these qualifications are fulfilled one would automatically follow the path of the wise and liberated souls. No doubt will distract him.

As compared with other systems of philosophy and religion, Jain religion is preached by the most pure and holy, by those who have been completely free from all attachments, avarice and infatuations, hence, it is unqualifiedly a path of personal purification and Self-realization by Self-improvement. Therefore, all what the liberated have said and advised is thoroughly believable and should be easily acceptable.

The eternal path preached by the liberated souls is mixed with many undesirable offshoots and developments in course of time. One should distinguish between the path of the liberated and the

path of the initiate and erring."

Shrimadji has been very strong in his criticism of these various creeds that have developed in the name of the religion of the liberated Jinas. He has shown in his Atmasiddhi Shastra that the founders of the various creeds have measured their own level and substituted their imperfect beliefs for the true religion.

The wrangling of the Jain religious heads in support of their self-chosen paths of liberation and ethical discipline flows from ignorance and leads to the sharpening of prejudices. Sometimes the highly advanced religious souls are misguided by the rise of infatuating (Mohaniya) Karmas in them and in such circumstances they offer sham religion for the real one, to their followers.

It also happens that finding the difficulty of attaining to the path of the liberated souls, one decides for himself and his followers that the path is not worth following and that what he has achieved for himself is the last limit of achievement for all. Besides, one may not have enough intelligence and discrimination to grasp the reasonableness of the path of the liberated Jinas.

Unfavorable times, selection of wrong persons as the religious teachers, general ignorance of the Shastras and the reluctance to study them for oneself are also some of the causes why various religious castes and sub-creeds develop in the body of the old established religions.

Shrimadji says that the present times are such that the educated are bankrupt in the fund of faith needed for religious discipline. Very few have faith in religion. Those who have faith do not study the religion for themselves nor do they seek proper Guru who can explain them the truths of religion. In case a few try to understand religion there are many who will obstruct their path rather than help them. This is the plight of the educated people of the time and they keep away from religion.

The uneducated in the present times, on the other hand, are so inert and orthodox that they fear to go a step beyond the beliefs of their forefathers and they go the easy way of following blindly the religion of their ancestors. Hence, they believe that the religious teachers, accepted by the elders in age, know everything and that they should be followed wholeheartedly. Neither worshipped nor the uneducated worshiper cares to obtain knowledge and both are rocked in the cradle of a few accepted slogans and pet forms of prayer.

One can rarely find in the present religious folds of Jain religion, one who has intense desire for knowing and following the eternal path of the liberated Jinas.

Normally the Jain Sadhus are initiated by force of adverse circumstances or by an accidental rise of the spirit of intense non-attachment by distressing events.

One who really wants to follow the eternal path of the Jinas gets suffocated in the clumsy practices of the Jain creeds and he runs out of these clutches to a wider atmosphere and freedom wherein he can make real progress.

Shrimadji says that there are very few souls interested in spiritual religious research. Those, who would heartily desire to be free and would actively work for it, are still few. Even for such souls the proper guides by way of an enlightened Guru, proper religious contacts and the supply of adequate religious scriptures are difficult to obtain.

Every one who is given a hearing by them, blows his own trumpet and never inquires whether what he says is true, half-true or untrue. Besides, even these few souls starving for

Self-liberation are compelled to waste their precious time in many worldly activities that they find it difficult to maintain the continuity of their spiritual progress.

Shrimadji admits that there are a few souls following the eternal religion propagated by Lord Mahavir but the rest of the Jain religious public present a sorry debacle.

"What pains me," he says, "is not that the Jains lose anything but that only a few are ready to take the advantage of the magnanimous achievements of the great realized souls to the credit of the Jain philosophy and religion. Any well thinking mind will appreciate the truth of what I say."

Two fundamental divisions of Jainism are on the importance of the idols of the great Tirthankaras in the practice of Jain religion.

One side believes that these idols of the Jinas and their worship are authorized by the Jain religious scriptures and they are direct means for Self-realization. The other side believes that the idols need not be worshipped at all.

Shrimadji holds to the first view and declares that the worship of the idols of the Jinas is necessary, desirable, and always helpful in the path of spiritual progress.

By an improper use of reasoning all the tenets of Jainism may be shown contradictory but that is not what a man of spiritual experience does. None will benefit by the way of logical wranglings. Truth which is tested by the touchstone of religious experience is the religious truth and no amount of denying it, can serve any useful purpose.

"I did once believe that idol worship is unmeaning, but now I am convinced of the need and authenticity of it by my own spiritual experience and so I endorse the religion which accepts the worship of the idols of the great Tirthankaras."

In these fearless statements, Shrimadji advises all seekers of truth to keep truth alone and part with prejudices wherever they are found.

Shrimadji says that the Jain religion would have been easy of approach and benefit to seekers of Self-liberation, had it not divided itself into two powerful sects on the ground of idol-worship.

A truly religious man does not pamper this or that opinion, he is ready to accept truth and sacrifice everything on the alter of truth and the experience of the Tirthankaras or the great liberated souls.

Shrimadji declares his complete faith in the sayings and experiences of Lord Mahavir. He says: "The author of Jain scriptures does not mean to say that all those who accept the Jain religion will obtain liberation. One has to work for what he believes. One, whose soul will practice religion, will gain by it. Worship of the idols of the Tirthankaras whose obligation on us is unreturnable is a great purificatory agent and an effective means to Self-liberation. It is meant for us to realize the objective for which worship of the idols is enjoined by the scriptures."

SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRA AS A HOUSEHOLDER

In a letter to his friend in his twentieth year he writes: "Having no intrinsic love of money and yet to use it for the benefit of the distressed and the needy, I tried to earn some money for the future.

On other side, wealth, even if acquired for benevolent works, may breed in the person possessing it, blindness, deafness and dumbness. Hence, I do not care for wealth at all."

Shrimadji married Zabakben, daughter of Popatlalbhair, the elder brother of Jagjivandas Mehta on the 12th day of the bright half of the month of Maha in Vikram Samvat 1944. He was twenty at that time.

One year after his marriage, he writes to a friend, under the caption 'My thoughts on woman', that unqualified and unrestricted happiness lies in pure knowledge of the Self and never in the worldly enjoyments of married life. Bodily happiness is only a shadow of the real happiness. Besides enjoyments of the body are only short-lived and the sources of consequent misery, disease and death. It is painfully surprising to find the human mind enjoying in worldly and physical pleasures. One should pray for the complete freedom from all desires concerning the bodily and sense-pleasures.

Regarding one's wife, Shrimadji writes: "My desire is for liberation but forced by the fruits of my previous actions, I lead a married life. But here too I normally maintain equanimity, neither attachment nor non-attachment. I feel pained to find sometimes my behavior contrary to my intense desire for liberation."

To a friend, he writes in Vikram Samvat 1946 or 1890 A.D.: "I have married earlier than you by a little over two years. Within these two years I have come to know my wife's mind and I can say that none of us is dissatisfied with the other. Nor can I say that it is absolutely satisfactory. Our relations are common and normal. And this is more due to my indifference. While thinking of high metaphysical thoughts I get strong suggestions for renouncing the householder's order. I had similar thoughts even before my marriage but I had to pacify them as I found that following them would make the very continuance of my life impossible."

In Mokshamala, in lesson No. 12 'Best Householder', lesson No. 45 'Common Aspiration', lesson No. 55 'Rules of daily observance by the Householder' and in six lessons Nos. 61 to 66 under the title 'Thoughts on Happiness' he gives his views on the ideal householder's life.

He writes: "Though I am happy as householder as compared with others, but the worldly happiness is to be suffered and not to be enjoyed. It is not true happiness. Normally people in the world are unhappy and so the people who are happy in worldly life are called fortunate and favored souls. I have decided to utilize my life in the practice of religion. I normally read and think of the revealed scriptures, keep contacts with the enlightened souls, observe prohibitions and injunctions, observe celibacy for twelve days in a month, give in charity without declaring my name.

I have renounced much of my burden of worldly life. I want to be a forest recluse after entrusting the care of my family to my sons no sooner they come of age. At present I have deliberately chosen to remain as a householder in order that I can guide the householders in the path of religious practice better than the Sanyasis or Yatis can do. The householder's order requires much improvement and I want to expedite it. A householder can easily advise another householder and guide his behavior by his example and practice."

Shrimadji declares that as a principle complete renunciation from the householder's order is necessary for lasting happiness.

SHRIMADJI AS A BUSINESSMAN

Shrimad Rajchandra was also an accomplished businessman in jewelry and pearls. Of all the jewelry merchants he was known as one of the most reliable and honest.

Once a younger brother of a pearls merchant sold his pearls to Shrimadji at a certain price. When his elder brother came to know this he scolded the younger brother for selling the pearls at a much lower price than expected. Thereon the younger brother returned to Shrimadji and narrated to him what his brother thought about the transaction. Shrimadji immediately returned the pearls and canceled the deal as it was a mistake by the younger brother. This shows his honesty and sympathy.

Shri Maneklal Ghelabhai, while appreciating Shrimadji's business acumen, writes that even foreign customers used to praise the excellent business organization and exactness of Shrimadji.

Shrimadji wrote in his diary certain rules of discipline which he decided to observe after he joined a partnership business in Bombay in Vikram Samvat 1946 or 1890 A.D. These rules are in brief as under:

1. Do not see anybody's fault. Believe that whatever difficulties come your way, are due to your own shortcomings.
2. Never indulge in self-praise as in self-praise one only lowers himself.
3. Behave in such a way as it may win affection of others. It may not be so easy to start with but gradually by strong self-determination and resolute effort, you will be able to mold your behavior.
4. Declare your line of thought and action to one with whom you wish to join in business or in any worldly matter.

Also win his confidence by your word and deed and assure him that you shall never think or do anything to harm his interests. Should any of your thought or deed prove harmful to your partner or colleague, repent for it and tell him that it will never recur.

Tell him that you shall do the work entrusted to you with care and diligence but without pride or egotism.

Tell your partner that on no account you are prepared to sacrifice your discipline for Self-realization, that he should not use you as a means to secure his unethical motives, that when assured of a possible conflict on the above conditions, you will clear out of the joint partnership with no harm to your partner.

In case your partner doubts your bonafides, request him to declare them freely and explain to him that there is no ground for such doubt. Should he not accept your explanation, respectfully terminate partnership.

SHRIMADJI AND GANDHIJI

Gandhiji regarded Shrimadji as his friend, philosopher and guide. He acknowledges the debt he owes to Shrimadji in his recollections of his friendship with Shrimadji. From 1891 to 1901 A.D.

for a period of ten years they were best friends.

Gandhiji says that most of his lessons for self-improvement and on truth and non-violence, he has learnt from Shri Raichandbhai. Raichandbhai is one of the three personalities that have much impressed his mind, the other two being the writings of Tolstoy and Ruskin's 'Unto this last'.

To love the murderer is one of the maxims of non-violence and Gandhiji had well learnt it from Shrimadji, who was full of sympathy, forgiveness and piety for all living beings.

Gandhiji says: "I have drunk to my heart's content the nectar of religion that was offered to me by Shri Raichandbhai. Raichandbhai hated the spread of irreligion in the name of religion and he condemned lies, hypocrisy and such other vices which were getting a free hand in his time. He considered the whole world as his relative and his sympathy extended to all living beings of all ages.

Shrimadji was an embodiment of non-attachment and renunciation. He has written only that which he has experienced. He has never allowed his poetic imagination to get ahead of truth and experience. There is therefore no artificiality in his writings. They come from the heart and appeal to the very heart of the reader. He used to keep diary and a pen with him in all his daily routine and he immediately wrote down important thoughts that occurred to him. I never remember any occasion when Shri Raichandbhai got lost or infatuated in any worldly matter."

GANDHIJI'S PEN-PICTURE OF SHRIMAD RAJCHANDRA

"His living was simple. He was satisfied with whatever food was offered to him. He put on simple but clean clothes. He used to wear Dhoti, Peharan, Khesa and a turban. He used to sit on a Gadi on the floor in his shop or at home.

He was slow in his walk and he used to think while walking. There was a spark in his eyes, they were full of luster and steadiness. They declared the single-mindedness of his purpose. His face was round, his lips thin, nose not pointed nor flat, body single, height average, color darkish white and general appearance that of an idol in peace.

His tone was so sweet that one would love to hear him more and more. His face was smiling and in full bloom and joy. It clearly declared the internal joy and peace.

His language was so effective and measured that he was never found to be searching for words. Language was his maidservant. He was described by some as an incarnation of the Goddess of Learning, Saraswati. He never changed a word while writing a letter. He expressed his thoughts and meditations in fine and appropriate language.

This description befits only a self-controlled person. By renunciation the external forms one cannot be self-controlled. The real self-control is not an imposition, it is an inspiration and an internal illumination.

Complete non-attachment and renunciation is the gift of the soul. It should be spontaneous and from within and not sporadic or externally imposed. Very rare souls by virtue of their high spiritual attainments in their previous births possess these qualities in them. Only those, who actively try to keep away from all attachments from them, know how difficult it is to attain. Such a difficult achievement was easily found in Shri Raichandbhai. The first step to Self-realization is a cultivation of a spirit of complete non-attachment and it was natural in Raichandbhai.

People normally believe that truth-telling and successful business never go together. Shri Raichandbhai on the other hand firmly believed and advised that truth and honesty were not only useful but essential to all good business. Morality is not packed within a prayer book, it is to be practiced and lived in all stations of life. Religion and morality sustain both good life and good business. Though Raichandbhai never played tricks with others, he used to find them out quite easily when they were played by others. And he used to snub the persons using the tricks and force them to leave them.

While we are worldly souls, Shrimadji was quite other worldly or liberated from the worldly life.

While we may have to take many further births, for Raichandbhai his present life may be the last. While we perhaps are running away from liberation, Raichandbhai was heading towards liberation with a tremendous speed. This speaks volume of Raichandbhai's self-effort.

Whoever will read his teachings and follow them may speed up his march to Self-liberation. From this is evident that Raichandbhai has written for the advanced and the initiate in religion and not for all and sundry.

While many Christian Missionary friends considered their religious duty to convert me to Christianity on the ground of its wonderful vows of charity, chastity, faith and hope, I made up my mind that I should first find out whether the religion of my birth namely Hinduism, gave me the message that I needed.

And I asked a few fundamental questions on Hinduism to Shri Raichandbhai by post and his replies were so logical, so appealing and convincing that I regained my faith in Hinduism and I was saved from conversion of religion. From that moment onwards, my respect and admiration for Raichandbhai increased with leaps and bounds and I considered him to be my religious guide till he lived."

THE NATURE OF RELIGION AS DESCRIBED BY SHRIMADJI

"Religion does not mean religious differences and set beliefs. Religion does not mean cramming or reading of all religious texts or believing all what is said in them as gospel truth.

Religion is the spiritual quality of the soul. It is embedded in human nature in visible or invisible form. By religion we are able to know the duty of man, by it we are able to know our relations (or kinship) with other living beings. But all this requires the capacity to know one's self. If we do not know ourselves we cannot know others rightly. By religion one can know himself. Such a religion can be selected from wherever it is found. All students of comparative religion will testify to what is said about religion here. No religious scripture advises people to tell a lie or to practice falsehood. Nor does any religion advise violence.

Shankaracharya expressed the quintessence of all scriptures in the formula "Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya" that Brahma is the only reality, all else called the world and its differences are unreal or mixtures of truth and falsehood.

Koran Sharif declared that God is only one and He is the only real, and there is nothing else.

In Bible, Christ said: "I and my father are one. All the rest are only manifestations of the one God."

In the expression of the same perennial truth that Reality is only one without a second, many religious and philosophical brains have offered their perspectives and unfortunately their verbal differences have been the cause of much doubt, disbelief and despair for the laymen.

Those who are in earnest about their salvation should leave these differences and follow advice of the experienced Guru rather than be lost in the interpretations of the various religious texts.

We, as stepped in the world by consciousness, are already imperfect and we are trying to take the help of the imperfect scriptures thinking that they are less imperfect than ourselves. We are led by them to a certain limit but beyond it they leave us in the lurch and there we are to rely on spiritual experience alone and none else.

Our spiritual experience becomes our guide, illuminates our future path, assures our march and pushes us to the goal."

Shrimadji says in one of his poems i.e. Apurva Avasara, "The stage of experience which the All-seeing Mahavir saw in spiritual knowledge, He could not himself describe in full. I meditated on that very stage of spiritual experience but I found that I was also incompetent to describe it. I have a desire to describe it in full but for the present it has remained only as my cherished desire."

It is clear from the above that Atma or Self alone is to liberate itself. This truth is repeatedly declared by Shrimadji in many of his writings.

He had studied many religious books. He followed Sanskrit and Magadhi languages very well. He studied Vedanta, Bhagavata and Gita. He read the Jain scriptures as many as he could obtain. He had a fine style of reading and a method of quick grasping. He read Koran and Zand Avesta in translations.

But he used to tell me that he had a soft corner for Jain philosophy and religion, for he strongly believed that soul-saving knowledge had reached its highest possible watermark in Jain philosophy and religion.

Nonetheless, Shri Raichandbhai was never disrespectful to any other religion. He had also a partiality for Vedanta. To a Vedanti he might appear a thorough going Vedanti.

In his talks with me he never said that I should follow a particular religion for my salvation. He always advised me to purify my thoughts and behavior.

Looking to my habit and training of my childhood he encouraged me in my reading of the Bhagavata Gita, and he advised me to read among other books Panchikaran, Mani-ratna-mala, non-attachment chapter of Yoga Vashistha, first part of Kavya Dohana and his own composition of Mokshamala.

He repeatedly told me that the various religions are prisons in which men are prisoners. Whoever wants liberation should jump out of them and should not bear any religious mark on his body.

His simple advice is 'live easily and in such a way that you can attain the Lord.' Akha Bhagat gave the same advice. Shri Raichandbhai never bothered with religious differences. They used to choke him."

SOME ANECDOTES OF SHRIMADJI'S LIFE

1. Once he had gone out with a friend for a walk in Bombay and on his way he came near a cemetery. He asked his friend as to what was the place they came by. His friend replied: "Cemetery". Shrimadji said that he viewed the whole Bombay city as a cemetery.
2. Once Shrimadji's neighbor knowing his superhuman powers told him that he must be knowing the market rates of all commodities and such knowledge could be used to his financial benefit in his dealings in shares. To this Shrimadji replied that he was not a fool to use his spiritual powers for such petty selfish benefits.
3. Once Padamshibhai, a resident of Kutch, sought from him the remedy for removing his fear of death. Shrimadji advised that till life is fully led according to fixed destiny there is no death. Why then should we not live well until death visits us ? By the fear of death one cannot be free from death. Be fearless, lead a chaste life and embrace death when it comes.
4. His servant Lallu, a resident of Morbi, who had stayed with his family for a number of years caught a deadly disease in Bombay. He used daily to nurse him personally till Lallu breathed his last.
5. Once Shrimadji went to see Tokarshibhai, who had Pneumonia and whose sickness was growing fatal. In his presence Tokarshibhai became quiet and experienced peace and joy. After some time Shrimadji receded from him and said to other relatives of Tokarshibhai that the latter was gradually sinking. When he was asked as to how did he know it and as to what did he do by which Tokarshibhai got a relief from his pain and enjoyed peace, Shrimadji replied that he could see Tokarshibhai's death and he therefore tried to change his mind and last desires so as to improve his spiritual prospects for the future birth.
6. Once Shrimadji asked his three years old daughter her name, to which she replied that her name was Kashi. Shrimadji lovingly said: "No you are the Self." But Kashiben refused to agree to it. Shrimadji laughed at the child's ignorance.

HIS PERCEPTION OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

On Kartik Sud 14th, Samvat 1947, Shrimadji writes in a letter as follows: "That my soul has attained complete knowledge of its nature is an indubitable fact, that my knots of the heart and head have been removed, is a truth of all times and all Self-realized souls will easily recognize and endorse my experience."

At other place he writes: "O you Self-knowledge, the source of all heights of joy and bliss, to you I bow down with all devotion and humility. Innumerable souls without you suffer from ignorance. It is solely by your grace that I could know you and I could reach the goal of my soul's pilgrimage. As a result, I enjoyed unprecedented peace. I felt freedom from all worries and burdens, mental and physical."

"In Vikram Samvat 1947 I could realize the full stature of my spiritual being, and from then onwards I am enjoying increasing peace and bliss."

"In a wink the knowledge which drew me to the worldly life, changed its course and has led me to my proper goal i.e. Self-realization."

In a couplet he says: "One gets a spiritual insight by his spiritual eye and without it he cannot obtain soul-saving knowledge at all. This is not a matter of physical perception and it is foolish to try that way. Only by unqualified, concentrated devotion to a spiritual Guru or guide, one can obtain the soul-saving knowledge. Only a Guru can give this spiritual eye to see the spiritual reality."

In Vikram Samvat 1948, in the month of Magh, Shrimadji writes: "The system which contains a clear description of the right positions of bondage and freedom is the only guide to Self-liberation and such a system is that of the great Mahavir - the Jain system. If in my humble opinion, there is any living man available, in whom the heart of the great Tirthankara is residing, he is no other than the author of these lines. The result of the soul-saving knowledge is the experience of complete renunciation from all worldly considerations and this is what I experience in my own being. Hence, I consider myself to be the perfect disciple of the great Tirthankara. One who gains the soul's knowledge in accordance with the enlightened Guru's opinion, has obtained correct insight and experience, and none else. When the goal and the path are clearly seen there is no difficulty for a sincere disciple to follow the path and reach the goal."

In his talks with Muni Mohanlalji, Shrimadji said: "I do not forget the Self even for a second." Once Shrimadji said to Shri Devkaranji Muni, an associate of Shri Lalluji Maharaj, that he lived in his body as a separate pulp would be felt in a dried coconut shell."

At Kheda one day Shrimadji in a soliloquy says: "In Samvat 1948, you the great soul of infinite peace and calmness visited Ralaj, in these days you visited Vaso and there you were a great Yogi absorbed in deep meditation and now you are the same Yogindra enjoying bliss and peace here at Kheda." This is Shrimadji's description of himself as a disembodied soul.

In a letter Shrimadji writes: "I think in my mind that I have all qualifications to re-establish and propagate the Vedic religion, but in order to settle and propagate the Jain religion I do require some more qualifications than I actually possess, though of all the available person I am better qualified for the purpose."

LETTER OF SIX FUNDAMENTAL TRUTHS

Shri Lalluji Maharaj being sick in Surat requested Shrimadji for Samadhi Maran. In reply, Shrimadji wrote the famous letter of six fundamental truths, and inspired Lalluji Maharaj not to fear death.

This letter is the theme, of which "Atmasiddhi" is the development. Shri Lalluji Maharaj appreciates this letter as follows:

"This letter has helped us to remove all our stray ideas and wandering thoughts, it has removed our doubts, confirmed our faith in the fundamentals of Jainism and those of all religions in general, namely the nature and development of soul.

It has taken us out of our prejudicial attachments to the Jain sects; it has kept us clear of fixing our faith in the Vedanta; it has, in brief, re-established our pursuits in the nature of the Self and its knowledge.

Thus, this letter is uniquely wonderful in many ways. If the disciple is deserving, the constant meditation on this letter, on the truths contained in it, would put him to the path of Self-realization."

ATMASIDDHI SHASTRA - ITS COMPOSITION

At Nadiad in Kaira District, Shrimadji wrote out his famous Atmasiddhi in the form of a poetic dialogue in 142 verses, at the suggestion and request of Shri Sobhagyabhai, in the gathering darkness of the night when Shri Ambalalbhai stood with a lantern in his hand while the composition was on. The prose version by the name "A letter about six fundamental truths" could not be easily memorized by the aspirants and hence, Shri Sobhagyabhai requested Shrimadji to put the matter in verse.

This succinct and accurate composition is a masterpiece in philosophical literature. The author has, in a simple form of question and answer, explained the gist of Jainism and of all true religion namely the six fundamental truths, that the soul exists, that it is eternal, that it is the author of its activities, that therefore is responsible for the results of its activities, that it aspires for liberation and that this is achieved by following a right kind of religion.

Shrimadji instructed Shri Ambalalbhai to make out four copies of the manuscript and give one copy each, to his close and deserving disciples namely, Shri Sobhagyabhai, Shri Ambalalbhai himself, Shri Lalluji Maharaj and lastly to Shri Zaveri Maneklal Ghelabhai. He instructed to Shri Lalluji to study and reflect upon the Atmasiddhi in solitude and not to make it a subject of collective reading or public discourse.

A SHORT SUMMARY OF ATMASIDDHI SHASTRA

In the first 44 verses the subject is introduced - The truth that without Self-knowledge, the worldly pains cannot be completely removed is clearly demonstrated, the mechanical attachment to the path of sacrificial activities and the theoretical parrotlike dry as bone repetition of the different natures of the soul and the body as found in the theoretical academicians of the Vedanta system are declared as two major obstacles in the path of the aspirant for Self-realization.

The special characteristics of the persons who belong to the above two lines of thinking are described and all this is done to remove these drawbacks from all aspirants for soul-saving knowledge and experience.

Then, the way to remove these defects or to keep them miles away from the spiritual pilgrim, the resort to the advice of an enlightened Self-realized Guru is advised and advocated. All the authentic scriptures helpful to the spiritual pilgrim should be studied and followed under the guidance of such a Guru. Then only truth can be grasped and right experience of reality can be obtained.

The importance and impelling need of a living enlightened Guru is repeatedly emphasized in order to keep clear of the pride, conceit and ignorance. Humility is declared as the root of true religion and therefore a disciple is advised to serve his Master without any reservation. On the other hand, one should not pose to be a Guru without developing proper qualities in himself. An

unmerited Guru degenerates into a bad type of a worldly person, and he leads his followers to deep darkness and bondage.

According to Shrimadji, only a truly enlightened Guru deserves to be a spiritual guide. To follow others is a sheer waste of time.

Later on, the doubts of the aspirant regarding the six fundamental truths, are posed and considered and conclusively replied so as to dispel them for ever and to help the disciple to see the truth in its purity.

Regarding the nature of the soul it is said that as it is quite different from the body, no bodily sense organ can perceive the soul. The unreasonable obduracy to try to see the soul by any or all of the physical sense organs results from the attachment of the soul to the living body. Philosophically the soul and the body are two absolutely separate entities like the sword and its scabbard. The soul is neither a body nor its senses, nor breath.

The soul is the source of organic unity of a living being. The soul is the all-knower, always the subject and co-ordinator of the information collected through the senses. The soul is conscious, knowing and blissful in nature. The conscious and unconscious differ in kind and not in degree. Hence the unconscious cannot probe the conscious. But the conscious is a quite powerful light to understand the unconscious. Hence, the superiority of the conscious over the unconscious.

Such a soul eternally exists, it has no beginning and no end. The body which is composed, has an end but the unique soul is neither composed nor decomposed.

Though the soul and body are two different realities both are found to be cooperating in a living organism. One helps or hinders the other. All creation and dissolution can be understood by the conscious soul but the conscious soul can be known only by itself and by no other physical or visible means. Hence, the talk of the source and decay of the soul is unmeaning.

Shrimadji confirms the belief in births and rebirths.

An unconscious body cannot act by itself. If an animal moves, it can only do so as directed by the conscious soul living in it. Hence, the soul is the author of all activities. It is not the nature of the soul always to act, though no activity without it, it can cease to act also. Metaphysically the soul has no reason to act and so it is unattached to the body, but in worldly practical life we see the soul propelling the living body to various activities to suit its motives formed by its association with and attachment to the body.

Further Shrimadji has elaborated the Jain doctrine of Karma and its various categories, and has shown that no principle of God is needed to explain animal and human activities. Activities naturally being the fruits enjoined with them and no divine force is needed for this arrangement.

He uses a fine logic to show that, as doing good or bad actions results in enjoying good or bad rewards, not doing them is the way to be free from their results. The first path leads to bondage, the second to liberation. To say that only a conscious soul can initiate activity, does not mean that it must always act and as doing something brings some result, not doing it should bring the opposite result. If activity, good or bad, will lead one to bondage, keeping away from it should lead one to its opposite namely release.

The great Tirthankaras have reached the state of non-attachment to all bodily forms, hence, they are eternally free. Release is the fruit of retirement from action. In the Siddha state, the soul is

absolutely separated from all Karmas and so this is the state of complete release. In this state the real nature of the soul is experienced for ever.

The soul's long standing infatuation to bodily forms is removed by the enlightening knowledge and guidance of the true Guru just like dispelling a long standing enveloping darkness by a ray of light. By attachment, avarice and ignorance, the soul binds itself, removing them with the help of his Guru and the scriptures it obtains release. Wrong perception of truth is removed by right understanding of the scriptures under the guidance of an enlightened Guru.

The wrong habits of behavior can be removed by a spirit of non-attachment to worldly life. This is the correct remedy of the soul's ills.

By anger one binds actions and by forgiveness he loosens the knots of actions and becomes free himself. Hence, forgiveness is declared by Shrimad Rajchandra as the gateway to liberation. Forgiveness destroys bondage to actions. Whoever, high or low, follows this path of liberation will certainly attain the goal.

This path, in brief, consists in quelling down the excitements of anger, honor or pride, delusion and greed, in harboring the desire for liberation and none else, in feeling uneasiness in worldly activities, in developing compassion towards all living beings and in feeling sympathy for all aspirants for liberation and in praying and working for their release.

Whoever possesses these qualities is on the correct path and he will certainly be liberated. By following this path one sharpens his spiritual insight, purifies his being, loosens his attachment with the body and burns his actions in the fire of his spiritual consciousness, gains power and light and in the end releases himself and becomes a guide to others for similar work. At this stage the released soul is neither acting nor it is bothered with the fruits of action. This is the essence of every good religion and this is the only accepted path soul's liberation.

Towards the end, in nine verses Shrimadji has described the effect of this soul-saving knowledge on the disciple and the disciple pays his grateful homage to his Guru for his help and advice.

In the final fifteen verses, the whole subject is brought to its natural close. It is shown that this work contains the fundamentals of all six systems of Indian philosophy too. Thus Atmasiddhi is the quintessence of the truths of all scriptures.

TRANSLATIONS AND COMMENTARIES

* He has written 51 sayings about the religion of a Sanyasi and a Muni (Samyati Dharma) as described in "Dasha Vaikalika Siddhanta". This is a fine exact Gujarati rendering of the original Magadhi text prepared in Vikram Samvat 1945.

* In Vikram Samvat 1953 he wrote on "The doctrine of liberation" or Moksha Siddhanta.

* He had started the Gujarati translation of "Swarodaya" by Shri Chidanandji. His writings are marked by his simple attractive style.

* He had also started writing a commentary on the 24 prayers for 24 Tirthankaras written by Shri Anandghanji. His reflections on the first two of these 24 prayers are worthy of deep study and emulation for any one who wants to complete the commentary. He has brought out in his reflections all the spiritual associations of Shri Anandghanji, in a lucid and inimitable style.

* On one of the couplets of the sixth out of the eight perspectives composed by Shri Yashovijayji, Shrimadji has commented so beautifully well in his three letters Nos. 393, 394 and 395 printed in "Shrimad Rajchandra".

* He prepared a Gujarati equivalent translation of the first one hundred verses of "Atmanushasan".

* Besides, he wrote on the Anitya and Asharan Bhavana and a little on Sansara Bhavana out of the twelve Bhavanas or spiritual sentiments from Shri Ratna-karand Shrivakha-achar.

* Shrimadji is the only author who has prepared a complete translation of the Panchastikaya, a work of the celebrated Shri Kundkundacharya. In appreciation of this great work, the Panchastikaya, Shrimadji writes to Shri Dharshibhai: "It is rare and subtle to obtain the contact with the spiritual Self. The aim of the discourse is to obtain this difficult objective. The study of this work will develop in a person pure meditation which will lead to absolute knowledge of the absolute reality, the Self, the Atma. The contact with this Self results from the reduction and destruction of perceptual delusions, from the indifference to the sense-pleasures, from a single minded devotion to the Self-realized Guru. As, by these means, the Self-control gets ascendant, the Self begins to manifest its nature in its entirety. A right insight develops and in result, the Self-knowledge."

* He had prepared an index on the Pragnavabodh in Vikram Samvat 1956 which was lately written by the late Shri Brahmachariji of Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, Agas.

HIS LAST SPIRITUAL STATURE

In Vikram Samvat 1957, Shrimad Rajchandra with his mother and wife stayed at Agakhan's Bungalow in Ahmedabad. One day Shri Devkarani Muni asked the reason for reduction of his body to which he replied: "I am on a war with my body as it took unwholesome food during my stay in Dharampur."

One day prior to going to Wadhwan Camp he called Shri Lalluji and Shri Devkarani to his residence in Agakhan's Bungalow at Ahmedabad and advised them to see no difference in him and in Shri Mahavirswami.

On the day prior to his death at Rajkot, Shrimadji said to Shri Mansukhbhai, Shri Revashankarbhai, Shri Narbherambhai and others around him: "Be sure this soul is eternal, it is reaching increasingly higher stages, it has a very bright future. You remain quiet and behave with calmness and peace. I may not in future tell you with my tongue nor there is now the time for it. I only advise you to continue your efforts towards Self-realization."

At 8:45 a.m. on Chaitra Vad 5th Vikram Samvat 1957 he said to Shri Mansukhbhai: "Mansukh, do not be afflicted, take care of mother, I retire to my soul's true nature." From 8:45 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. he lay on his death bed quiet as a machine, in deep meditation, and he left his body for ever.

Shri Lalluji Maharaj heard in Kavitha the sad news of his Guru's expiry and he retired to the fields in solitude and passed his day in dedication to the departed Guru.

According to English calendar Shrimadji left his body for good on 9th April 1901 at Rajkot after

a little over one year's sickness.

In brief, Shrimadji lived and died as a Self-realized soul, though in body, completely independent of it.

He had in his mind an aspiration to re-establish the pure religion of Shri Mahavirswami which had been distorted in the institutional sectarianism which cut at the very root of Jainism. To some extent this purpose has been fulfilled by his great disciples in recent years.

Shrimad Rajchandra was a universal man practicing the universal religion of Atma, the only reality and he defined a person as Jain if he followed an enlightened Guru's advice and practiced the religion of Atma.

Infinite salutations to the great Shrimad Rajchandra.