



Shrimad Rajchandra &
Mahatma Gandhi

Dr Kumarpal Desai



Shrimad Rajchandra
&
Mahatma Gandhi

Author
Dr Kumarpal Desai

English Translation
Raj Saubhag Mumukshus

Shrimad & Gandhi



—SHREE—

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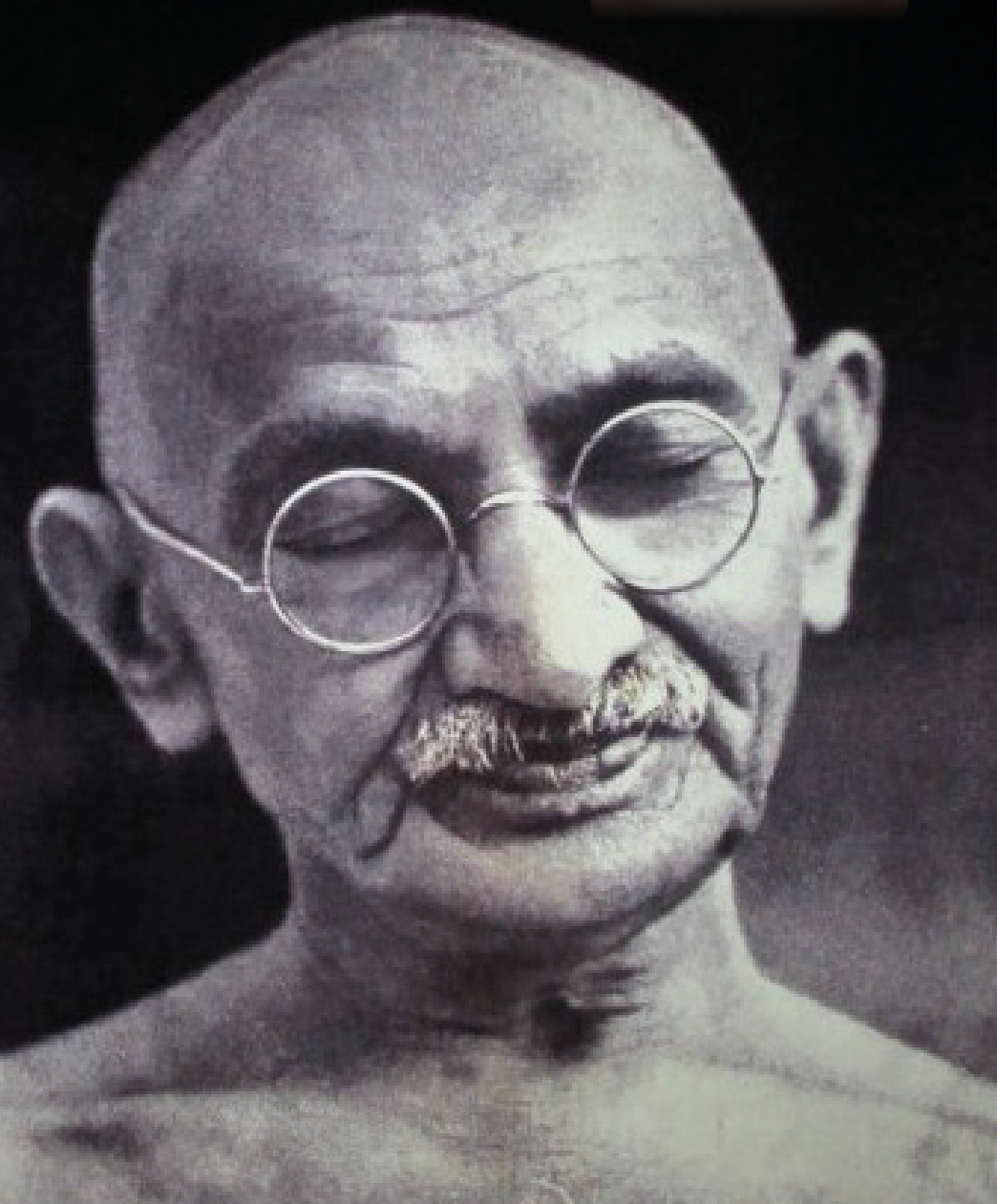
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Preface

The first meeting between Shrimad Rajchandra and Mahatma Gandhi was an event that will be noted in world history. Gandhi met Shrimad Rajchandra on the very first day of his return from England as a barrister. A very close bond was established between the two during that meeting. A bond that continued to grow stronger when Gandhi began his legal practice in Mumbai during which Gandhi visited Rajchandra's shop frequently as his own practice was not busy. The two discussed spiritual matters. Gandhiji was profoundly impressed by Shrimad's simplicity, spirituality and intellectual brilliance. The inner and outer personalities of Rajchandra in particular impressed him as he saw no difference between the two. Gandhi's innate perception was drawn to Shrimad's sublime inner qualities.

Gandhiji at that time was in search of a true spiritual teacher and he found one in Rajchandra. He said, 'Among Europe's philosophers I rank Tolstoy as number one and Ruskin at number two, but find Rajchandra superior to both.'

There was extensive correspondence between the two, however of the 200 or so letters exchanged only three have survived. Gandhi asked Shrimad numerous questions during his 'spiritual crisis.' We are fortunate that Rajchandra's letter answering 27 questions Gandhi had asked has survived. These 27 questions relate to God, salvation, rebirth, animals, Jesus Christ and much more. Rajchandra's answers demonstrate his sharp intellect and the experience of his inner self. These answers were so logical and convincing that Gandhi's faith in Hinduism was fully affirmed.

Excerpts from the chapter on 'Shrimad Rajchandra' from Gandhi's Autobiography and his impressions about Shrimad have been included in the present volume.

- Kumarpal Desai

Publisher's Note

A lamp can only be lit by one that is already alight, it is the lit flame that can kindle such numerous lamps. The nation's father, Mahatma Gandhi life glowed with luster of *ahimsa* and truth as he developed his association with Param Krupaludev Shrimad Rajchandra.

Shrimadji had made a substantial contribution in sculpting Mahatma Gandhi's character. There is much to gain from the enriched lifestyles of these superhumans of the last century.

Shrimad's language is simply divine, Gandhi's language has a unique kind of earnestness and depth. Shrimadji's speech reveals his intense focus on his inner self, Gandhiji's appearance manifests his innocence. Shrimadji's detached, free from worldly attachments and undeluded state creates astonishing wonderment and Gandhiji's unceasing determination is an inspiration.

Both of these travelers, capable of guiding on the path to liberation with their exemplary lifestyles, had climbed to the pinnacle of greatness. This universe has been graced with their presence. Their devotion to truth and *ahimsa* strengthens our lives with determination to follow them. Their wisdom helps to dispel the darkness that our lives are enveloped in.

The father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi is a well known personality across the world because of his achievements primarily through the practise of *ahimsa* or non-violence. However, very little is known publicly about Shrimad Rajchandra or the spiritual insights he shared that shaped Mahatma Gandhi.

It is difficult to fathom the depth of an ocean, and similarly it is difficult to gauge the depth of the wisdom of these two pre-eminent personalities. Only an articulate and accomplished author like Dr Kumarpal Desai can paint a vivid picture of their relationship in words.

The first edition of the Gujarati book written by Dr Desai

was published in August 2003. This was the first publication devoted exclusively to describing the relationship of these two great Indian personalities of the last century. The sixth edition of the book was published in February 2017. This Gujarati publication has been instrumental in creating an awareness of this divine relationship within the community of Gujarati scholars and those interested in Gujarati literature.

The Indian Prime Minister Rt Hon Shree Narendra Modi boosted this awareness nationally when he spoke about Shrimad's 150th birth anniversary from the ramparts of Red Fort, Delhi during the 2016 independence celebration. He said: *"This year is Shrimad Rajchandraji's 150th anniversary. Mahatma Gandhi used to treat Shrimad Rajchandraji as his guru. When he was in South Africa, Gandhiji maintained contact with Rajchandraji through correspondence. In one of the letters, Shrimad Rajchandraji said that " due to the existence of violence, the concept of non-violence (ahimsa) came into being."* The Prime Minister expressed similar sentiments when he launched commemorative coins and stamps celebrating Shrimad Rajchandra's 150th birth anniversary at Sabarmati Ashram in June 2017.

The English reading community is also familiar with Mahatma Gandhi. However there are few publications in English that research his primary inspiration for *ahimsa* and adherence to Truth, Shrimad Rajchandra.

Bhaishree Nalinbhai Kothari, the spiritual head and leader of Shree Raj Saubhag Satsang Mandal noted this void and inspired the translation of the Gujarati work into English, which was completed jointly by Raj Saubhag Mumukshus and Dr Kumarpal Desai.

It is with the desire that the lives of these two divine personalities inspire us to follow the path of truth and *ahimsa* that this book has been published..

- Publication Committee

Shree Raj Saubhag Satsang Mandal, Sayla



સર્વથી સર્વ પ્રકારે હું ભિન્ન છું, એક કેવળ શુદ્ધ ચૈતન્યસ્વરૂપ, પરમોત્કૃષ્ટ, અચિંત્ય સ્વરૂપ માત્ર એકાંત શુદ્ધ અનુભવરૂપ હું છું, ત્યાં વિક્ષેપ શો? વિકલ્પ શો? ભય શો? ખેદ શો? અવસ્થા શી? હું માત્ર નિર્વિકલ્પ શુદ્ધ શુદ્ધ, પ્રકૃષ્ટ શુદ્ધ પરમશાંત ચૈતન્ય છું. હું માત્ર નિર્વિકલ્પ હું નિજસ્વરૂપમય ઉપયોગ કરું છું. તન્મય થાઉં છું. શાંતિ: શાંતિ: શાંતિ:

-શ્રીમદ્ રાજ
પત્રક

I am separate in every respect from everything else. I am simply pure consciousness, supreme, inconceivably filled with bliss, with only singularly pure self-experience. So what perplexity? What doubt? What fear? What remorse? What other state can there be? I am abiding stillness, engrossed in my own nature, pure, pure, supremely pure, supremely calm consciousness. I am enduringly still, I am focused entirely on my own nature. I am immersing into my own true nature.

Shrimad Rajchandra
Letter 833
Vavaniya VS 1954

Gandhi's Inspirer

During his spiritual crisis Gandhi, after studying one of Shrimad Rajchandra's letter, concluded that Hinduism recognises the need to serve not only humans but all living beings.

If this principle is not recognised in modern time by those born as Hindus, it does not mean that the principle should be ignored. However, one should put it into practice and research the Hindu religion to verify it.

This is one of the reasons why Gandhiji always considered himself to be a universal Hindu. To understand the true Gandhiji, you would need to bear in mind the thinking of Shrimad Rajchandra.

Shree Santbalji

A Jain monk and Gandhinian
Birth Centennial Issue V S 2024

Chapter 1

Shrimad Rajchandra's Life Sketch

Shrimad Rajchandra holds a prominent position amongst the great personalities of the Twentieth century. He possessed a spirit of great spiritual endeavor and was responsible for promoting and strengthening Mahatma Gandhi's faith in religion.

He was born on 9th November 1867 (the day of the full moon) in the Kartik month, in the year Vikram Samvat (VS) 1924 and in the village of Vavaniya, located in the Saurashtra district of Gujarat, India. This auspicious day is traditionally celebrated as Dev Diwali or the festival of Gods. This day has seen the birth of many divine souls in India, including one of the greatest of the Jain Acharyas of the past millennia, Shri Hemchandracharya. It is also on this day that the pilgrimage to the holy Mount of Shatrunjay (Palitana) commences.

His father, Ravjibhai, and mother, Devba, were a devoted couple, who led sanctified lives, adorned with the faith of religion. At his birth, Shrimad was named Lakshminandan, however, he was renamed at the age of four as Raichand or Rajchandra. For the remainder of this book, we shall refer to him with the name Shrimad as he came to be known in his later life.

Shrimad had a great fondness for reading. At a startlingly young age he read the Pratikraman sutra from the Jain canon, an unparalleled treatise on compassion and forgiveness towards all living beings. These concepts formed an abiding impression on young Shrimad's heart and remained so throughout his life. His innocent, tender mind was drawn firmly toward the Jain scriptures and the Jain concept of renunciation.

He started composing poetry at the age of eight and, within a year he had composed poems on the great Indian epics, Mahabharata and Ramayana (that consisted of five thousand verses). His memory was so powerful that he was able to recall whatever his teacher taught him by listening to it only once. He completed a five-year Gujarati syllabus within two years. His ability to compose poems and his memory retention at such a young age astounded everyone around him.

In the year 1931 VS, an elderly family friend, Amichandbhai, who was fond of Shrimad, died of a snake bite. Shrimad was confused by the concept of death and asked his grandfather to explain what 'death' meant. Unsatisfied with his grandfather's response, he covertly made his way to the crematorium and climbed up high onto a thorn tree on the edge of the crematorium grounds. From his high perch, watched what was being done to the body during the funeral process. He saw the funeral pyre with Amichandbhai's dead body being lit up by his close family members. He could not comprehend these actions and his mind fell into an unprecedented turmoil. Engrossed in deep thought, at these actions and trying to understand what death truly meant, he began to recall his previous incarnations. Without being aware, he had attained *Jatismaran Gnan*; knowledge of his past lives! This experience of seeing his past lives inspired in him the desire for detachment from worldly attractions and bonds.

A few years later, when visiting the fort at Junagadh, he had a similar experience. This repeated experience reinforced his belief in reincarnation and thus, the eternity of the soul, which contrasted with the transient nature of worldly life.

The awareness of his past lives spurred his spiritual progress. When only thirteen, he started looking after his father's provision shop. He was scrupulously honest in all his dealings. Free time in the shop gave him an opportunity to read and contemplate books in Hindi, Gujarati, Sanskrit and Prakrit languages. When sixteen, he gave a public performance of a mystical act of engaging in twelve tasks simultaneously, in Morbi. This act, termed *avdhan* demands superhuman intellect, concentration and memory. It involves performing several mental tasks such as playing chess, composing poetry, answering questions, translating texts into various languages, counting drumbeats, solving complicated mathematical problems or puzzles and so on, all at the same time. He gave public performances in Jamnagar, initially with twelve *avdhans* and then sixteen. This feat won him the title of the 'Jewel of India'.

At Botad, he performed fifty two *avadhans*. Finally, at the age of nineteen, on 22nd January 1887, he performed the monumental *avadhan* of one hundred tasks at the Cowasjee Faramjee Auditorium in Mumbai in front of various national and international dignitaries. His fame reached new heights as various editorial and news teams wrote about this extraordinary feat in all of the leading newspapers of the day. The Chief Justice of the Mumbai High Court, Sir Charles Sargent invited him to travel to Europe where he would gain fame and earn large sums of money but Shrimad declined the invitation.

Along with the incredible power of memory, Shrimad also had a mystical sense of touch. He would be shown a dozen or so books of different thicknesses. He would then be blindfolded and

he would be able to identify each of those books presented to him in turn merely by feeling the thickness. He was able to say whether a cooked item had any salt or even excessive salt without tasting or touching it.

Shrimad realised that whilst these amazing faculties and powers could bring him great wealth and fame, they would only impede his spiritual progress. Thus, when only twenty, he brushed aside the opportunities of earning this wealth by stopping the *avdhan* performances and concentrated solely on developing his spirituality.

Shrimad entered the diamond and precious stones trade after having mastered the art of assaying the stones in a very short time. His business acumen soon led to his new company dealing with international customers in countries such as Burma (now Myanmar), parts of the Middle East, England, and France.

He continued composing both essays and poetry to bring about the awareness of the social ills that prevailed in society at the time. However, in the midst of all this, his main focus remained steadfast on realising his soul.

At work, immediately after completing any business transaction or negotiation, he would immerse himself in reading spiritual books or in making notes in his diary that was always kept by his side. Often, he would pen his thoughts into a beautiful verse. Shrimad had not a grain of materialistic desire in him, and his sense of detachment would reflect in each and every task he carried out.

At every available opportunity he would seek retreat into places of solitude in the nearby forests or hills. He had spent many days in solitary contemplation in places such as Charotar, Nadiad and Idar. Worthy souls such as Prabhushri Luluji Maharaj and Munishri Devkaranji had benefitted from Shrimad's sermons during such retreats of solitude. Gradually, as the time went by, several

seekers of truth, monks and householders, were drawn towards him.

It was at about this time, that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, later to be known as the father of the nation or as Mahatma Gandhi, qualified as a barrister in England and returned to India. He too turned to Shrimad for spiritual guidance.

Shrimad's inner and external renunciation, by this time, were beginning to reflect through his behavior. He would sleep on the floor without a mattress, wear just one piece of clothing and would eat only once a day. He would not use any footwear. He sought solitude so that he could maintain silence and meditate. Mosquito bites and extreme temperatures did not bother him when he was meditating outdoors. He gave up his business activities and pleaded for his mother's consent to let him renounce materialistic pursuits and adopt monkhood. Citing his ill health, she persuaded him to postpone his plans until he was fully fit.

However, destiny had other plans. Shrimad's health continued to deteriorate. Much to the dismay of all those who had recognised his spiritual state, Shrimad's soul left its mortal body at the peak of his youth, at the age of thirty-three years and five months in the year VS 1957 in Rajkot.

Thanks to the influence of Shrimad, souls like Shri Saubhagbhai, Shri Laghuraj Swami, Shri Ambalalbhai, and Shri Mansukhbhai Kiratchand Mehta to name just a few, experienced a radical transformation in their lives.

The essence of Shrimad's exalted inner state can be found in his poems, writings, letters, articles and notes. His words hold an extremely important place in the annals of Jain philosophy. He composed philosophical treatises like 'Mokshmala' and 'Bhavanabodh'. In a short span of just ninety minutes, he composed the formidable 'Atmasiddhi Shastra', a classical poem consisting

of 142 verses that elucidates the entire path to self-realisation and liberation for an aspirant. He has to his credit, numerous other scriptural compositions such as 'Apurva Avasar' and 'Mula Marg Jinano'. The compilation of his letters to those close to him is considered as a treasure trove of spiritual knowledge and a legacy that would serve the current and future seekers of truth.

Thus, this divine light who was born on Kartik poonam in VS 1924, left its body on the fifth day of the dark half of the Chaitra in VS 1957. However, that divine immortal light continues to shine and offers a refuge of tranquility to many souls in these dark times. Shrimad's divine light spreads right across from the souls of seekers of liberation to a level of universal benevolence.

If Shrimad had not fulfilled Mahatma Gandhi's thirst for spirituality, then Gandhi may have followed another religious path. If that happened, mankind would have been bereft of Gandhiji's teachings of *ahimsa*, non-violence. A world torn apart by war, greed and a wanton desire for power would be a worse place without the everlasting message of *ahimsa*. The world would not have known such great messengers of peace as Martin Luther King Jr., and Nelson Mandela had it not been for Gandhiji's principles.

Shrimad's influence extended not simply to the external world as we can see but more so, to the depths of individual truth seekers, whose lives have been transformed by his teachings.

Shrimad had the courage and insight to once again open the true path of spirituality as preached by the *Tirthankaras*, opposing the mundane ritualistic practise that religion had become. His intention was not to establish a new faith or sect but to cast light in an appropriate manner on the true path defined by the liberated lords of the past. Most of all, he wanted all Jain sects to respect and understand each other's canonical texts, leaving their differences

aside and unite as a spiritual community that would serve to benefit each and every one of its members.

From a young age, Shrimad had a great desire to revive the true nature of spirituality. This was the driving force behind his endeavors to focus on the true path to liberation and to contemplate on the supreme canons. He was therefore able to bring back the nectar of immortality to people of the world. He composed several texts that contained the entire essence of the ancient Jain philosophy.

So great was the emergence of philosophical thought, expressed through engaging and rhythmic poetry, that his wondrous compositions continually reverberate in the hearts of true seekers.

Shrimad's life was itself a great message, a living example of that which he preached. It was a calming and soothing influence for those souls around him who were tormented by daily troubles and worries of a mundane existence. Though himself a lay person, he pointed out the path for the soul's aspirants to scale the heights of spirituality. His words had the latent power to bring about a revolution in countless seekers' hearts. His deep soul-searching contemplations had the potency to inspire a similar inner search among those souls who were lost and wandering in the materialistic world.

Shrimad would often say, 'No one has attained liberation by being a sectarian'. His aim was to inspire people to let go of their dogmatic beliefs and preconceived notions and instead focus only on their own spiritual development. Discouraging both scriptural knowledge without wisdom and blind ritualistic faith, Shrimad was a proponent of selfless dedication as the ideal path to reach one's goals. In order to stress the importance and the absolute necessity of a True *Guru*, Shrimad said, "Forget all else, just find a true enlightened Master". He emphasised that a master who has not realised his soul is surely not a True Master. Shrimad's revolutionary thoughts and

ideals drew a lot of criticism from traditionalists. However, he remained unperturbed by such criticism.

Shrimad's very personality inspired detachment and his abilities were extraordinary. He preferred to stay away from the company of people and would instead seek solitude in forests and hills where he would spend time meditating or deep in contemplation and introspection. His austere conduct, detachment from material pleasures and comforts, consuming basic meals and his complete lack of desires, touched all who came into contact with him.

In all his numerous works, starting with 'Mokshmala', Shrimad stressed that the ultimate path to liberation is the one preached by completely detached and enlightened souls, the *veetrags*; those without likes or dislikes. Throughout his life, he remained firm in this conviction. Stemming from this faith, he wrote:

“There is no sacred chant, mechanism, or medicine that can alleviate the sins; Apart from the words of the *veetrags*, there is certainly no other path.” “The nectar-filled words of the *veetrags*, are the roots of bliss of eternal peace; These words are indeed the antidote to end the wretched cycle of birth and death, the words that cowards cannot follow.”

Through every word of Shrimad, one can realise that he upheld the beliefs of Jainism without ever belittling any other faith or religion. *Atmasiddhi Shastra* is a great example of this. Shrimad had put aside all his mystical abilities such as recollection of his previous incarnations (*Jatismaran Gnan*), an extraordinary memory (*Smruti Gnan*), knowledge of astrology (*Jyotish Gnan*) etc., and only advocated treading the path of self-realisation.

Shrimad became a temple of solace for people of this world troubled by the trinity of sorrows of mental worries, bodily ills and

worries about earning a living and material possessions (*aadhi, vyadhi & upadhi*). For the modern-day man or woman, sinking deeper and deeper into the quagmire of worldly issues, Shrimad became messenger for inner peace. Those for whom, religion had become means for ostentatious display of wealth and celebrating festivals Shrimad drew their attention towards reality. To sectarian preachers he became a beacon for the true path. To those seeking to conquer lands based on merciless violence and wars, he showed the path of non-violence. To those wallowing in a grossly materialistic lifestyle he became a poet highlighting the importance of the unprecedented spiritual opportunity to liberate oneself.

The divine glow of Shrimadji's life has spread far and wide around the globe and it will continue to enlighten the path for spiritual development for all. It is no wonder then, that so many have spoken out to express this:

“Like a boundless ocean of compassion, you have showered infinite grace upon us, what else can we offer you except our obeisance in return for showing us the distinction between matter and consciousness? May we stay at your lotus feet and cultivate the devotion to serve and thereby experience the uninterrupted bliss of the soul that you have shown us. We offer countless reverences at the feet of an enlightened soul like you who has completely lost the awareness of the body despite having one, and lived a life immersed in divine awareness.”

- Shrimad's disciple

Today, the fundamental path to liberation as shown by Shrimad has indeed become the imperial royal route to eternal happiness.



The radiance of Truth.

All great souls have focused only on the eternal truth through whichever form or name. Only that is worthy of knowing. Only that is worthy of faith. Only that is worthy of experience. Only that is worthy of total devotion.

It is only for that eternal truth that we desire uninterrupted devotion with unique love.

One may call that ‘eternal truth’ the ‘ultimate wisdom, or if you like the ultimate love, or call it ‘Sat-Chit-Anand’ (Truth-Consciousness -Blissful), call it the ‘soul’, call it the ‘universal consciousness’, you may call it as one or as multiple, as you may call it an individual consciousness or as a universal consciousness, but that eternal truth is the one and only eternal truth. These are just some of the many of its names by which its glory is sung. Everything is a manifestation of that eternal truth, and nothing but that.

This eternal element has been called the ultimate entity, God, the liberated soul, Lord, the perfect soul, unfathomable, the creator, the universal consciousness etc. and by countless such other names.

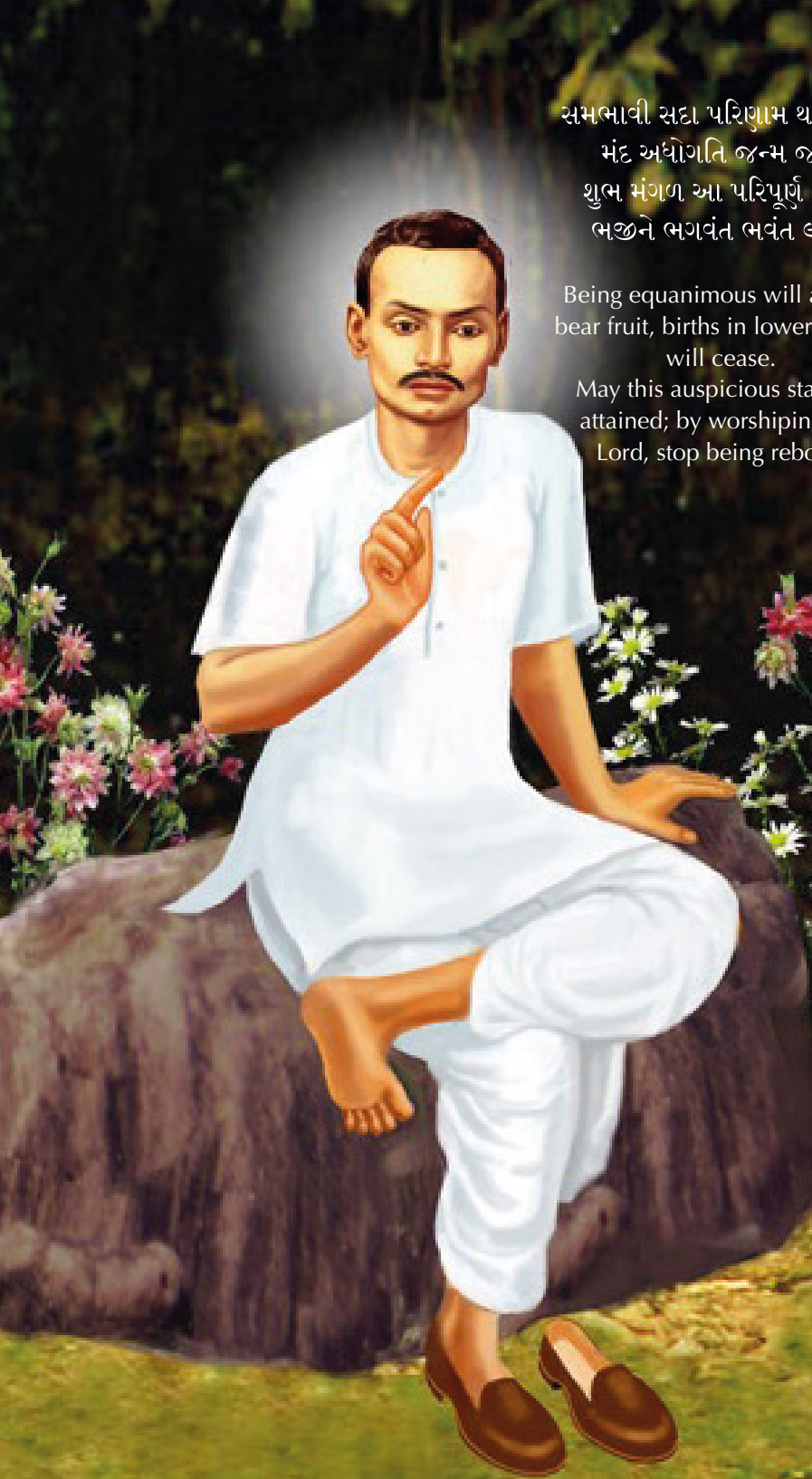
Whenever we refer to the eternal truth, no matter what word or name is used, we are referring to that one single entity and nothing else.

- Shrimad Rajchandra, Letter 209

સમભાવી સદા પરિણામ થયે
મંદ અધોગતિ જન્મ જાય
શુભ મંગળ આ પરિપૂર્ણ મળે
ભજીને ભગવંત ભવંત લાયક

Being equanimous will a
bear fruit, births in lower
will cease.

May this auspicious sta
attained; by worshipping
Lord, stop being reborn



“The path to liberation, as shown by the enlightened ones, is straightforward for those walking with valour and no qualms. When arisen sensual desires and passions scar their deep impact, the wise seekers feel deep remorse for their weakness, they repeatedly curse their souls, and look inwards with great contempt. They contemplate the life stories and wise words of the enlightened souls, they summon great strength from within their souls and attack their own flaws with courage and strength. They do not rest until these have been overcome; thus, they do not stop at just remorse but actively endeavour to remove these flaws. This is the thought process that seekers of self-realisation have focused on, and it is through this path that they have ultimately attained victory. This process should be taken to heart and implemented by all aspirants.”

- Shrimad Rajchandra,
Letter 819

Chapter 2

Shrimad Rajchandra's Message

How does the modern person draw wisdom and direction from the spiritual writings of Shrimad Rajchandra? The answer is simple: through inspiration from the various incidents that occurred in Shrimad's life along with his divine sermons. Both have the potency to impart a new direction in the lives of such seekers. Shrimad's messages touch upon both spiritual as well as personal development. One gets a glimpse into his divine stature through his words. His state of being 'engrossed in awareness of consciousness despite having a body' is reflected in his discourses shedding light upon his elevated existence.

Some topics that are very relevant to today's generation are discussed here. Topics such as fearlessness, spiritual companionship, desire to attain liberation, compassion, happiness, eternality and spirituality are based on events in Shrimad's life and his writings. Today's generations can take spiritual inspiration relevant to the modern times from these examples.

FEARLESSNESS

On a dark new-moon night, a thief armed with a gun broke into a large mansion with the intention to steal. Though he had a gun in his hand, he was fraught with fear. Scanning all four directions he approached the house. Trembling he turned the door knob but was astounded to find it was unlocked. Surprised at seeing the unlocked door, he wondered whether a trap had been laid for him.

As he opened the door he saw a person standing in front of him with a loaded gun just like his own! His face was haunting and fearful. The thief was perplexed. Each passing instant was more terrifying than the previous. He had to make a quick decision. He concluded that this person standing in front of him was either a security guard or a spy who had been following him around. Fleeing would certainly lead to his death. There was no time to think, if the other person fired his gun, it would be the end of him. With this in mind, he fired his gun. It was the moment of truth. The silence was shattered and the thief saw to his dismay that a thousand pieces of shattered glass lay in front of him. He had shot nothing but his own reflection in a mirror on the wall!

The modern person is a victim of needless and unfounded fears. Wherever they are, whether in a town or in the midst of nature, they never feel secure. The insecurity in their heart makes them feel surrounded by fear. Their subsequent search for security has made them even more insecure and anxious. Numerous irrelevant fears torment their mind; sometimes it is the memory of past events, at other times it is the worry of the future such as old age or poverty. An inability to live in the present moment makes one vulnerable to being constantly overwhelmed by the scars of the past or worries of the future.

For instance, when a person travels they worry about an accident that may take place. When starting a new project, they fear failure. To people living under such fear and anxiety, Shrimad demonstrates a message of fearlessness. A fearlessness that emerges from spirituality. This fearlessness conquers and destroys all fears around it.

From his childhood days, Shrimad displayed great valour. A man called Popatbhai Manjibhai Desai from Vavaniya had a close association with Shrimad during his younger years. He had witnessed several incidents relating to Shrimad at school and made a note of one particular event. Young Shrimad would often be found fearlessly strolling on the outskirts of the village, even late in the night. He would also wander alone in the neighboring forests. Once Shrimad and Muljibhai Bhatiya had gone to the outskirts of the village for a stroll. They saw a person in the distance carrying a torch and walking towards the cemetery. In the dark, all they could see was the beam of the torch. After a few moments, they saw a few more men walking towards the cemetery with torches in their hands, and eventually the number grew to almost fifty. Seeing this fearsome sight, Muljibhai Bhatiya was beginning to panic; he was frightened at seeing so many torches.

Shrimad said “Why don’t we go closer and see what they are doing. Your agitated mind will then be calmed.” Filled with panic, Muljibhai said “No, I shall not come. I am afraid to go closer.” Shrimad replied, “Come along, no harm shall come your way. I can assure you that nothing will happen to you.”

The words of the young Shrimad reflected his courage and his innate ability to overcome fear. Shrimad took Muljibhai towards the cemetery however Muljibhai insisted on waiting at a distance. Shrimad stopped one of the people carrying a torch and asked him

why so many people were going to cemetery late at night. The person replied that a fellow Muslim brother had passed away and they were performing his final rites at the cemetery. People were carrying torches as it was dark and the cemetery keeper had been delayed, therefore people were seen leaving the cemetery as they went to fetch him. This was why people holding torches were seen walking towards one another from different directions.

Shrimad remarked to Muljibhai, “You have now seen the truth! Had you not come with me your mind would have remained flustered and fearful. Now that you have seen the reality of the situation, your fear has vanished.”

Shrimad, from a very young age, never experienced fear or apprehension. It was an in-built characteristic trait. Only those who are fearless themselves, are able to worship the fearless lord.

Once, while Shrimad was in Mumbai, a man from Kutch named Padmashibhai Thakarshibhai asked him: “Sir, I seem always inclined towards fear, what can I do about it?” Shrimad asked him, “What is it that frightens you the most?” Padmashibhai replied, “Fear of death” Shrimad responded, “The time of your death is dictated by the karma that determines your life-span and death cannot occur until that karma comes to fruition. So why be afraid of death now, especially as fear will not change anything? Reinforce your mind with this thought.”

Shrimad demonstrated that no purpose is served by fear of one's own death. If lifespan is pre-destined and death comes at the end, then why should one die numerous deaths in imagined fear of an impending death whilst still alive? Many people constantly experience death through its fear instead of the real death. The fear of death tortures them throughout their life. And thus, they experience the pain, distress and torment of death a thousand times

before real death ever comes.

Shrimad further added, “Why indulge in such terrible emotional death every moment of your life? Why do you let the delusion influence you in making you surrender your own eternal qualities of knowledge, perception, conduct, and consciousness and experience terrible death every moment?”

Here Shrimad highlighted a new concept; that even an instant of being deluded is no less than momentary death itself. How many times does our consciousness suffer this emotional death due to passions such as anger, greed, deceit and ego? To save these souls from such emotional deaths, Shrimad urged them to live a life replete with the inner treasures of knowledge, perception, conduct, renunciation and awareness of consciousness, and thereby experience death only once at the end of one's lifespan. The message Shrimad conveyed was: ‘overcome the fear of death and stop the suffering of emotional death every moment of your life’.

The great preceptors of the past have all spoken about victory over death, while Shrimad adding to that encouraged living a life of knowledge, perception, conduct, renunciation and awareness of consciousness to win over the fear of death, instead of a puerile life filled with passion, delusion and dying an emotional death every living moment

To develop fearlessness, one has to start with overcoming anxiety about one's possessions. A person's possessions are the major cause for mental worries and fear. Firstly, one strives hard to augment materialistic possessions. Once acquired, the protection and care of these possessions gives rise to insecurity, worries and fear, leading to sleepless nights. When acquiring wealth or authority, the ordinary man or woman puts aside all morals and

ethics and worries about how his or her condition would be they were to lose all wealth or authority. One sows weeds and expects to reap mangoes.

Hoarding possessions is the root cause of all evil and the breeding ground for all kinds of fear. It has been rightfully said in the great Jain canon, 'Sutrakrutang', that:

नत्थि एरिसो पासो पडिबंधो अत्थि ।
सव्व जीवाणं सव्वलोए ॥

*There is no bigger trap or cause for bondage
for the souls of this universe than the hoarding
of possessions.*

A very heart touching and insightful incident in Shrimad's life emphasises the idea of how fear for material possessions can carve a place in one's own consciousness. Motilal Bhavsar, an aspirant from Nadiad, had been asked to locate a secluded place on the outskirts of Nadiad for a spiritual retreat. He found a bungalow in the village of Uttarsanda, close to Nadiad. Motilal also had the responsibility of attending to Shrimad's needs during the retreat.

Motilal would bring Shrimad's meal from Nadiad. Shrimad ate a very simple meal of flat bread and cooked vegetables, occasionally a little rice. He ate just once a day and there was to be no water or oil in his food. His roti was prepared using milk.

Once, when Motilal was about to leave, Shrimad asked him "Are you concerned about the ring and bracelet you wear on your journey to and from Nadiad?" Shrimad had already read Motilal's mind before Motilal answered. He replied, "Yes, I am concerned for these; I am afraid of being attacked by thieves." Shrimad

responded, “If these objects cause you such distress, then why do you wear them?” Without a second thought, the true spiritual aspirant, Motilal took off his ring and bracelet. The reality of how materialistic possessions can give birth to fear is evident.

Firstly, one takes great pains to accumulate possessions, and then these very possessions become a source of pain and worries. Thus, the desire for possessions and their ownership are like a double edged sword. It has been said in the Acharang Sutra –

जेण सिया तेण णो सिया ।

*Those objects from which you seek happiness,
are incapable of giving happiness.*

Retreats gave Shrimad the opportunity to immerse in his reading and contemplation. He would go alone into the dense forests and would either be lost in deep meditation or singing his favourite hymns aloud. He would arouse the worthy souls of this world from their slumber. Being alone and isolated, neither aroused fear for him. Such fearlessness stems from the awareness of the eternal character of one's true conscious nature, and the ephemeral nature of one's body and its possessions.

The first and foremost condition for the seekers of fearlessness is to overcome the attachment to one's body. Only when the attachment to the body is cast away can one begin the spiritual journey. Similarly, without realising the transitory nature of the body, one can never attain fearlessness. The fear is the root cause of all weaknesses. The ultimate manifestation of spirituality is the attainment of fearlessness. As an aspirant sheds his corporeal attachment, his spiritual endeavours shine through, leading to the development of inner qualities such as compassion,

universal love, tranquility and detachment. Pain affects the body. External physical and mental troubles torment the body. The desire for external happiness tortures the body. Disharmony spreads in the body and negative emotions of enmity and violence take root inside. However, once the attachment to the body vanishes, all external troubles dissipate.

Mahatma Gandhi sent twenty-seven questions on various aspects of spirituality to Shrimad from Durban, South Africa. These questions were drafted logically and with a clarity that only a barrister could muster. In his twenty-seventh question, Gandhi asked: "If a snake tries to attack me and I do not possess the means to scare it away, then should I wait to be bitten or should I attempt to kill it?"

Shrimad's response was balanced between the mortality of the human body and the importance of the interest of one's soul. He replied, "If I tell you that you should let the snake bite you, then it may cause you concern. But if you have realised within you, the momentary nature of the human body and that it is not eternal, then for the protection of that temporary body, would it be right to kill the snake that loves its life? The one who has the best interest of his soul, should surely let his body pass away in such a case. But what if one does not care about the spiritual progress of his soul, then what should one do? For such a person, killing the snake would certainly lead to great suffering in hell, so how can they be advised to kill the snake? Where unworthiness exists, there, killing the snake can be considered. But for you and me, all we wish is that such a heinous act may not occur even in a dream."

A total detachment to the body is of utmost importance for the progress of the soul. One can see such tranquility and equanimity through Bhagwan Mahavir's life as well, such as his

meeting with the cobra, Chandakaushik, or the severe tortures inflicted upon Him for over six months by the heavenly being, Sangam Dev, while he was meditating.

During Shrimad's periods of secluded retreats, Motilal Bhavsar felt that he could feel Shrimad's fearlessness in the atmosphere. Where Shrimad would wander there was always a fear of wild animals, however the aura of a fearless soul influences the environment around in a powerful manner. The shining sun of equanimity in a great soul creates an atmosphere of non-violence around them.

While Swami Ramtirth would be meditating, ferocious animals like lions would come and be seated next to him. In the very midst of great communal violence and terror at Noakhali, Mahatma Gandhi had established peace. Similarly, once when Shrimad was traveling with a few companions from Dharmaj to Veersad, two raging bulls started charging towards them. Shrimad stood still and the bulls calmed as soon as they came close to him. Shri Saubhagbhai and Shri Dungershibhai who were both present had a first-hand experience of Shrimad's fearlessness. The lesson to learn is that as long as one feels secure and protected in this fragile body, one cannot tread on the path of spirituality. Only those who walk the spiritual path can ever consider themselves to be truly secure. They do not need any external security. Their union with the divine and detachment from all else is their biggest guardian.

In the month of Chaitra in the year VS 1956, Shrimad visited Dharampur for a retreat. Being a hill station, many political dignitaries resided there. During British rule, British political agents held very esteemed positions. They would come with much pomp and splendor and the kings of the land would welcome them

with great honour. Often hunting parties would be organised to celebrate their visit. Such a hunting expedition had been arranged, whilst Shrimad was in Dharampur. Despite an extended search for game to hunt, not a single animal could be found by the hunting party. The reason was Shrimad's presence in the vicinity; where the soothing stream of compassion and kindness flow ceaselessly, how can violence and cruelty exist? Whilst Shrimad was resident in the area, not a single animal was hunted despite daily expeditions. Several days after Shrimad left, the English dignitaries managed to find some game. In the presence of an spiritually elevated soul like Shrimad, even wild animals can roam fearlessly.



Earlier, in VS 1954, when Shrimad was residing at the bungalow of Ravbahadur Narsiram in Kheda, Pandit Pujabhai Someshwar Bhatt visited him. When the Pandit arrived, Shrimad was reading a scriptural text and he showed Pujabhai one couplet. The couplet can be summarised as, “May my mind and its inclinations become

so calm that even a deer which approaches would watch my body and not run away with fear!”

In this context, Shrimad had written in a letter: “May my mind become so calm that an old deer wanting to itch its head may see my body as an inanimate object and use it to rub its head to relieve the itching!” (*Vachanamrut Letter 850*)

What an incredible message we get from Shrimad's life on fearlessness! Valour only arises when fearlessness has seeped into every pore of one's existence. Fearlessness can only emerge when one has overcome the fear of death. True victory over death only arises when an aspirant can win over the continuous emotional deaths that one experiences in the course of one's life, and thereby manifest the three jewels of right knowledge, right perception and right conduct within himself. The true aspirant of this three-fold path is one who's soul has attained a high degree of equanimity towards the transient nature of this materialistic existence and who can remain calm and composed even in the midst of being tortured. Shrimad had elucidated the path to attaining fearlessness to the world.

SATSANG

Association with self realised souls and virtuous seekers

In the Indian schools of philosophy, all great souls have laid strong emphasis on the importance of *satsang*, associating with virtuous seekers of liberation, regularly. Shrimad Rajchandra further developed the concept of *satsang*, that it is not only for acquiring religious knowledge or about devotional practise, but that it is meant to encourage the transformation of lifestyle by implementing the acquired knowledge into practise and making

that knowledge alive in one's own conscience. *Satsang* is an important element of the path to liberation.

All great revolutionary spiritual leaders have interpreted and analysed the path for spiritual ascent in their own way and expressed it accordingly for the benefit of the world at large. Similarly, Shrimad described *satsang* as the holy river that is the source of true happiness and an integral part of spiritual development.

In this respect, Shrimad first explained the difference between *satsang* and *kusang* - worthy and unworthy company. Our mind creates various forms of associations to suit the occupations it wants to pursue. At times, it seeks pleasure in music and other forms of entertainment and at other times, it seeks pleasure in delicious food and so on. The mind's demands tend to be uncontrolled fantasies. Shrimad states that such materialistic pleasures are clearly nothing but *kusang* and definitely not *satsang*. To attain *satsang*, an aspirant must have a keen desire for liberation and experiencing the soul and not merely a curiosity or a desire for religious knowledge. Souls absorbed in materialistic pleasures may find that *satsang* which is devoid of true devotion is enjoyable, pleasant and joyous. However, Shrimad warns that this is not *satsang* but *kusang* despite its appearances. Such *kusang* will arouse passions and negative emotions in a person, leading one down the path of sectarianism and eventually to deep sorrow.

Pre-conceived notions, dogmatism, hubris, laziness and sensual desires are the major obstacles to *satsang*. Shrimad Rajchandra described how his detachment from material life grew as he progressed in his spiritual development. He noted, "The true happiness in life is not in attachments, but in detachment". A person's behavior should be driven by such detachment. If one

leads his life with this principle, he will then remain internally equanimous even in the midst of external agitations. While describing the great significance of *satsang*, Shrimad has stated, “Through the medium of *satsang* an aspirant can achieve the success he desires. *Satsang* is the utmost tool for attaining purity in one's life.”

In the 24th chapter of his book ‘Mokshamala’, Shrimad has gone to the extent of saying that, “The benefit that one can get from a moment's *satsang* cannot be obtained by tens of millions of years of *kusang*. In fact, such *kusang* will only lead to sufferings in the lower realms of existence and vilification of one's soul.” Therefore, a person can live his life in the midst of household activities yet his inclination should always be towards the attainment of liberation from this wretched cycle of birth and death. One's life should always be led whilst upholding the principles of renunciation and detachment. The first Jain canon ‘*Acharang Sutra*’ states:

“The person who attains victory over materialistic desires, is certainly a liberated person.”

One may complain that life is hard to make ends meet, that there is no time for *satsang*. One may say that the first priority is to provide for the family, only then can one think about higher pursuits like *satsang*. First one needs to worry about immediate functional needs only then can one think about the divine. How can one be devoted to the divine on an empty stomach? Shrimad recognised and understood man's ignorant and procrastinating nature and one incident from his life clearly highlights this.

Once, at the residence of Zaverchandbhai Sheth, Shrimad was giving a discourse to inspire detachment. One listener, Pragjibhai Jethabhai remarked, “ Sir! I have a great desire to

indulge my time in spiritual devotion, but what shall I do about this God given stomach that keeps demanding food?"

In this manner, Pragjibhai tried to express the idea that one first needs to attend to his needs of obtaining a livelihood. The first consideration must be given to household activities, only then can one talk about spiritual progress. If that isn't so, then all spiritual talks are futile.

Shrimad replied to Pragjibhai in a very cryptic manner saying, "What if I answer directly to your stomach?" He then turned to Zaverchandbhai Sheth and said, "Please give Pragjibhai the same meals as you have every day. He shall reside upstairs in the upashray and shall engage himself in nothing but spiritual devotion all day long. The only condition is that he is not to be allowed to leave the upashray for any reason, whether there is a wedding procession or women dancing and singing. He is not allowed to speak about mundane worldly matters at all. If someone joins him in devotion then that is permissible, but otherwise he is not allowed to listen to or talk to anyone."

Listening to these words from Shrimad, Pragjibhai said, "Oh! That is impossible, that is not the way to live."

Shrimad, in an insightful manner, had torn apart the delusional veil of deceit that Pragjibhai was wearing, pretending to be a keen spiritual aspirant. He said, "This soul does not really want to engage in spirituality and so it creates excuses like feeding the stomach. Do you know anyone who has died of hunger whilst being engaged in spirituality? The soul only deceives itself by such excuses."

Shrimad had seen the web of deceit and false logic that had spread in society. He was aware of the ignorance and ego that lay behind these and thus had laid great emphasis on *satsang*.

Through this *satsang*, he spoke of attaining not ordinary happiness but the eternal bliss of the soul. To him, *satsang* meant bringing detachment in one's life and absolute faith in one's soul.

In the context of *satsang* he spoke of the soul's malaise, its welfare and eventually of its experience. The soul's malaise is nothing but absence of *satsang*. The soul's welfare meant the benefit to the soul through *satsang*. And this would eventually lead to the experience of one's soul. Thus through *satsang*, one can rid the soul of its malaise and progress towards its own experience, thereby firmly establishing oneself on the path to liberation.

What if one does not get to participate at all in *satsang*? In this context, Shrimad wrote about his own experience during his childhood in Vavaniya, "Without any participation in *satsang*, this poor soul does not acquire the ability to discriminate and thus remains deluded."

What if a hypocrite joins a *satsang*? What if he does not have an innate desire for *satsang* but just to prove that he is spiritual, he starts attending *satsang*? Shrimad comments that one needn't worry much about such a person. His true nature will be revealed in a very short time. If such a deluded person were to enter *satsang*, what selfish motive would he seek to fulfil? In a true *satsang*, there is no talk about livelihood, material pleasures, dogmatism or apathy towards devotion. Such a person may attend *satsang* once out of curiosity, but there will be no attraction for him to attend the second time. Indeed, if an unworthy person participates in *satsang*, it does not affect the *satsang*, but in reality his true nature will be recognised by all.

Some may say that just as seekers get together for *satsang*, so evildoers gather together for their own objectives. Similarly, even those seeking sensual pleasures may gather together to think

about their pleasures.

Such iniquitous people form their own groups' meeting from time to time, maintaining regular contacts to actively seek the fulfilment of their personal desires. Can such activities as well be called *satsang*? Shrimad Rajchandra made an informed comment that "Such gatherings arise from mutually selfish intentions and delusional desires." Their only objectives are promoting self-interest and to satisfy their immoral pleasures or to gain wealth or power. If their objectives are not being fulfilled, they would start quarreling amongst themselves and may go to the extent of committing murder. This is bound to happen where people have come together with their own selfish motives and sinful purposes. As against that, saintly people come together to seek each others' company and their objectives are devoid of selfish motive or design. Such selfless association of like-minded souls occur through the grace of great monks. Even spiritually minded souls with few materialistic activities or possessions in this world, seek the divine company of like-minded seekers. There is a wide difference between those who come together for pure and selfless desires and those who congregate to achieve their ulterior motives. Shrimad unequivocally says in chapter 24 of Mokshamala, "wherever there is selfishness and deceit there can be no similarity or meeting of minds and hence such an association cannot be deemed a *satsang*."

If an association is meant only to deceive the world or achieve material gains, then it will not be fruitful in the long term. Why? The most important reason being that where deceit and delusion exist in the name of *satsang*, one can never attain '*ekant*' or inner spiritual solitude in one's life. Shrimad's explanation for the concept of spiritual solitude is very unique. Ordinarily, solitude is understood as a person detaching himself from the rest of the

society. However, Shrimad describes solitude as the development of spirituality within one's inner-self while being in the midst of *satsang*. True *satsang* is the coming together of noble souls who possess similar conduct and ideals. There is a commonality in their ideologies and beliefs. They are all united by the single desire to attain liberation. Hence, the company of such souls inspires a divine solitude in each and every one of them. Despite being in the midst of such a group, each individual seeker will uniquely experience the divinity within him or herself. Such solitude in a group arises when the group comes in contact with a saintly person.

It is in such solitude that the flower of spiritual development blossoms. How Shrimad himself led his life is noteworthy. When he was on a spiritual retreat, he would spend the first three hours of the day in the forest meditating. The next three hours would be spent in contemplation or involved in the study of scriptures. The following three hours would be spent in basic bodily activities such as eating meals etc., and the last three hours would again be spent meditating in the forest. During the late hours of the evening, he would engage in self-study and continuous chanting. In this manner, his day would pass totally immersed in spirituality. He noted in the 24th chapter of Mokshamala, "The paramount message of the enlightened masters is to adopt monkhood; discard all associations and material possessions as well as inner desires for material pleasures; and lead a life of solitude. The greatness of *satsang* is contained in these words."

Today whilst men and women are burdened with material pressures of life, those who engage in *satsang* blissfully enjoy the silent solitude that they develop within themselves.

The great self-realised souls interpret and analyse each of their inner inclinations with the help of their divine eyes. Those

at the foot of the hill can only see their immediate surroundings however those who have ascended the peak can see the entire world from their vantage point. Such a universal spiritual vision could be seen in Shrimad Rajchandra. Every word he spoke emerged from his deep self-realisation and inner experience. Even in solitude, a true spiritual aspirant is in the midst of *satsang*.

Shrimad has given a unique interpretation to the concept of *satsang*. Some consider *satsang* to be an assembly of people reciting devotional songs and chanting prayers together. Others consider *satsang* as an activity where a large gathering of people sit together and listen to religious stories. There are some who consider *satsang* where participants exchange pious ideas with each other. But the interpretation given by Shrimad is very different.

Shrimad defines *satsang* in a very profound manner. He states, 'That which colours the soul with the shade of truth is *satsang*.' The great personalities of this world have worshipped truth. Socrates courageously and with a smile on his face swallowed a glass of poison for the cause of truth. Mahatma Gandhi devoted his life totally to the cause of truth, applying it to all his actions. He even called his autobiography 'My Experiments with Truth', thereby suggesting that the prime aim of his life was to serve the truth. There is a verse in the Jain canon, '*Prashnavyakaran*': 'Truth is the only reality in this universe, and it is more profound than the great ocean itself.' Shrimad commented elsewhere that, "My focus is only on the eternal truth."

The ultimate objective of the human life is to seek the truth. In general, people perceive reality as what they see around them. However, they do not have the ability to fathom the ultimate truth, which in reality lies beyond what they can see and perceive. How does an ordinary person perceive a crematorium? He does not find

anything new or novel in it. At the most, he may feel a momentary detachment with the worldly affairs when he attends a funeral ceremony. On the other hand, Shrimad expressed unique feelings when he visited a crematorium. This is where he began to see the distinction between the worldly and other-worldly perspective.

Once, Shrimad was passing a crematorium in Mumbai whilst walking with another person. Shrimad asked what the place was. His companion simply answered, "Oh, it is a cremation ground." In response, Shrimad made a cryptic comment saying, "To me, the whole city of Mumbai seems like a cremation ground."

This demonstrates that the detached Shrimad had not even an ounce of attraction towards the materialistic world around him. Ordinary people generally find Mumbai to be a city of pleasure and merriment, but not so for Shrimad, for him it held no attraction.

Shrimad viewed *satsang* as being a critical aspect to attain self-realisation. According to him, there was no liberation without *satsang*. *Satsang* could be with a spiritual scripture or with a self-realised person. Shrimad, by making self-realisation as the focal point of *satsang*, had given an altogether unusual and different emphasis to the concept of *satsang*. Shrimad says just as a dirty cloth is cleansed of its dirt by the use of soap and water, so the mind and the soul are cleansed of their impurities by the practise of *satsang*.

A common Gujarati saying with a profoundly deep meaning says: 'it is the company a person keeps that defines his personality'. Certain company can be very enchanting to one's mind. Some company can lead a person to engage in fraudulent thoughts and acts, making one believe that he may benefit by such means. Invariably, such actions result in the suffering by none other than the wrongdoer himself. The greater the attraction

toward external temptations, the greater the attachment towards the physical world. With this, the greater the desire for material possessions, and greater are the chances of falling prey to unworthy company. Such individuals tend to spend most of their lives in trivialities, delusional pursuits and acrimonious behavior. That is why the '*Prashnavyakaran*' scripture clearly states that a person devoted to worldly desires destroys the benefits of human life not only in this lifetime but in future lifetimes too.

It is only when one attains *satsang* that he can discriminate between that which is true and that which is false. In the absence of *satsang* he cannot comprehend the truth. Only when a person attains *satsang* does he realise that his attractions for the materialistic world are futile. As understanding grows with spiritual progress, attachment to worldly affairs will weaken, and eventually one realises that everything in this universe apart from the soul is transient, that everything but the soul is bound to be destroyed with time. That is why Shrimad teaches us that even a single statement obtained from *satsang* offers an invaluable benefit to the soul.

There are two types of *satsang*. The first is where one constantly focuses on scriptural books and learns lessons of virtuous living. The second type is when one constantly seeks the company of virtuous people with a view to emulate them. One of the reasons why a seeker engages in *satsang* is to acquire a noble and virtuous way to life. Very often a person turns to religion in his life, but he does not turn to scriptures. Whilst he practises a particular faith, his knowledge and understanding of the scriptures of that faith is very limited. He may be calling himself a Hindu and yet he might not have studied the Upanishads or Bhagwat Gita. An ardent Jain may be indulging in rituals with devotion, but his world of religion is restricted to those religious practises and rites, remaining devoid

of understanding of the essence in the Jain canonical texts or books on Jain philosophy.

In his own life, Shrimad had laid great emphasis on the necessity of knowledge of the scriptures. He often exhorted people not to practise any rituals without understanding the meaning and significance behind them. He called such persons the mechanical ritual practitioners. He stressed upon understanding the tenets and principles of religion and made that concept an important part of the letters and poems he composed.



As a person delves deeper into the religious scriptures and attempts to improve his understanding, he starts to discover new esoteric meanings and interpretations within them. This enlightenment leads the seeker to a new perspective of spirituality and religious philosophy. This has been the experience of sages through the ages whether it be with the Bhagwat Gita or the Agamsutras. Thus the reading and contemplation of scriptures transcends into *satsang*.

Shrimad Rajchandra says, “*Satsang* that is rare and most difficult to attain is one where scriptures are deeply studied and discussed, where there is true knowledge and practise of meditation, where the lives and works of saints and sages are contemplated deeply, where showers of philosophy and spirituality are experienced, and where spiritual principles are discussed and examined in depth.”

In such rare *satsang*, questions arise to clear doubts by providing deeper understanding. Wisdom of utmost significance is shared. Wisdom is at the forefront of Jain philosophy and that is why in his last sermon, Tirthankar Bhagwan Mahavir says in ‘Shri Uttaradhyan Sutra’: “First, true wisdom and then compassion.” A person who does not possess true knowledge cannot practise true compassion. (This statement does not imply wait for wisdom to arise before practising compassion. General compassion in the life of a Jain is of paramount importance. However, when he attains self-realisation he will then appreciate True Compassion.)

Shrimad Rajchandra has also commented that, “It is through true wisdom that a living being can know and understand the nature of all matter.” Thus true wisdom is absolutely essential to comprehend the true nature of all fundamental substances that this universe is comprised of. It is only in such *satsang* that the concepts behind meditation are brought to light. A person who has freed himself from *aartadhyan* (thoughts of worldly desires) and *raudradhyan* (thoughts about vengeance and remorse) can attain *dharmadhyan* (spiritual contemplation) and *shukladhyan* (pure blissful meditation of the soul).”

It is in such *satsang* that one comes to learn and understand the lives and characters of saints and sages of the past and it is this knowledge that shapes the character of a seeker of truth. Awareness

of the difficulties suffered by the saints and sages in their pursuit of truth, and understanding their devotion for the cause of religion and the sacrifices they have made for upholding these values becomes a source of great inspiration to the seekers who study their lives. Similarly, it is only in *satsang* that philosophical thoughts are discussed and principles are examined with a pure heart and soul. When an aspirant comes across such *satsang*, where the factors that can lead a soul to liberation are fully expounded, then his life is indeed blessed. At the age of 22, Shrimad Rajchandra made a note of what kept his mind occupied: “Day and night, my mind constantly contemplates on the eternal truth. This contemplation is my food, it is my rest and it is also my sleep.”



Satsang implies the company of the virtuous persons. But here Shrimad talks not of *satsang* alone but of *Param Satsang*; the supreme and the noblest form of *satsang* that will result in liberation. Elaborating further on that *satsang*, Shrimad in his

letter number 449 in Vachnamrut says, “Among all paths that lead to the eternal truth, the foremost is *Param Satsang*, it implies being in the close company of a self-realised soul after having accepted their sanctuary unconditionally and totally.

Satsang is the noblest path for inspiring a desire to seek the eternal truth, and for elimination of ignorance that the soul has been deluded with from time immemorial. In today's world, we see deterioration and disorder in all directions. Material cravings and passions dominate all walks of life. Advertisements in the newspapers, magazines and television reflect these very cravings. What is going on in the world today is an assiduous attempt made by lust and passion to dislodge our life from the purity of conduct beneficial to both the individual and to society as a whole. Shrimad considers *satsang* to be the best means for eliminating the desires and passions. The reason for this is that the seeker's close observation of and proximity to the self-realised master. His calm and equanimous behavior, radiating bliss, wisdom and detachment, exalts great awe and admiration within the seeker and effects a change to the seeker's attitude to life.

Before having met his master, the female form would attract him. But having spent time at the blessed feet of his master his attraction slowly but steadily vanishes. What he now observes is her soul and not her physique. The master has taught him through various sermons to understand the difference between the soul and the body not only in the case of others but also in his own soul and body. Now when he sees a female body, he considers it as a mere combination of flesh and bones. His attention is now focused on her soul and not on her body or her mere physical existence, and is therefore no longer attracted by the body. Teachings of a saint lead to understanding not only the nature of the self, but also of other

souls and matter. This understanding leads to a steady decline in physical attachments and attractions.

Indic philosophy states four worthy and essential pursuits in one's life: *dharma* (religion or duty), *artha* (means of livelihood), *kaama* (material and sensual desires) and *moksha* (release from the cycle of birth and death). *Satsang* becomes the essential means to destroy material and sensual desires and leads to moksha. Thus, Shrimad states, "Just as one cannot swim on the earth, one cannot be drowned by *satsang*." One cannot swim on the land, one can swim only if there is water. Similarly *satsang* is such a means that it would never lead to anyone's spiritual downfall, meaning it is the protector of a man's existence on this earth. *Satsang* is one's savior from passions and will lead one to glorious spiritual heights. This is the miracle of *satsang*."

Satsang is such a unique entity that it would never harm or destroy anyone. Finally, Shrimad describes *satsang* as the supreme remedy for the soul's liberation. Thus, *satsang* leads the soul to the highest and noblest of heights. How is this attained? The answer is that constant and close contact with the true *guru*, the master that will inspire the characteristics of a true seeker in one. That close contact facilitates the building of firm faith and a strong desire to know the soul. It is very difficult to attain such *satsang* in our life but if one is fortunate enough to attain they will certainly achieve liberation and rid themselves from the vicious cycle of birth and death. Shrimad Rajchandra remarked, "even a moment of *satsang* with a noble soul can become like a boat, which can help a soul across the vast ocean of worldly existence. These words of the great Shankaracharya seem to be completely true."

MOKSHA

Liberation from the cycle of birth and death

Bhagwan Mahavir, at the age of seventy-two, forty-two years after adopting monkhood and twelve years after attaining omniscience came to spend his last monsoon at Pavapuri. The celestial angels created a grand podium for his discourse. Bhagwan's nectar-filled discourse which was to be his last, continued uninterrupted for 48 hours. This discourse became the 'Uttaradhyayan Sutra', one of the Jain scriptural canons. This canon with its 36 chapters covers 36 subjects. The first chapter starts with the code of conduct, the foundation of spirituality and ends in the last chapter with the attainment of moksha. This Sutra shows the path of spirituality to seekers. In the first verse of the third chapter, Bhagwan Mahavir says -

चत्तारि परमंगाणि दुल्लहाणीह जंतुणी ।
माणुसत्तं सुई सुद्धा संजमम्मि य वीरियं ॥

*The four things most difficult to attain in this world are
a human life with qualities that can lead to moksha
(manushyatwa);*

*the opportunity to listen to true religion (shravan) complete faith
in the religion (shradhha) and the ability and desire to strive for
spiritual development (purushartha).*

Jainism places great emphasis on three fundamentals, these are: attainment of a human form, striving for the fulfilment of this human birth and progress on the path to liberation. Shrimad

Rajchandra also emphasised these three fundamentals to awaken one and all, from the common individual to the seeker of the highest order. He urged them to come out of spiritual lethargy and make a concerted effort to progress on the spiritual path.

Human form is the rarest of all life forms, and it is attained only after many eons of transmigration by the soul through this universe amidst a myriad of life forms. This soul has taken birth as fine bodies in fire, water, earth and air an infinite number of times. It has spent infinite time as both hellish and heavenly beings as well as flora and fauna in the universe. Starting with single-sense bodies, it progressively moves into life forms with two senses, three senses, four senses and then five senses before finally attaining the very rare human form. Human form is the only form that allows for spiritual development and ascent to *moksha*. Therefore, the attainment of the human birth has been deemed the ultimate life form for spiritual development. Shrimad repeatedly stressed the importance and the rarity of human birth and urged all to strive with maximum effort to ascend the spiritual ladder and make the human birth successful.

There is a fundamental difference between the ideology and approach of the Indic and Western philosophies toward the human body. The Indic philosophy views the body as a temple with the soul as God residing in it. The traditional architecture of an Indian temple is a mystical depiction of a human body. Just as the human body has a head, a neck etc., a temple also has similar sections. Indian philosophy regards the body as an abode of the soul, in which the soul has the potential to achieve the highest spiritual liberation. The human form unlocks the opportunity for harnessing the latent energies within. The Western approach on the other hand, is that a human body is merely a means to satisfy

its physical needs and desires, ignoring the potential for spiritual development of the soul. While eulogising the existence of human body, Shrimad Rajchandra says: "There is no other form of existence in which there is the inherent capacity to discriminate between that which is true and that which is false. This makes the human form the only form from which one can enter the royal path to final liberation."

Even the heavenly beings in the lower echelons of the celestial abode have a keen desire to seek their next life in a human form. Celestial beings may possess greater prosperity in terms of wealth, superior physical features and strength, but that superiority is no match to the spiritual wealth and inner strength that a human possesses. The superiority of humans over these celestial beings was clearly established when Sangam, in the story of Mahavir's life, could not frighten Bhagwan Mahavir despite having inflicted severe calamities on the latter. What accounts for this superiority? In the heavens, the abode of celestial beings, there is a greater scope and wide opportunities for satisfying one's physical appetites and pleasures, but there is complete absence of spiritual and religious development. Whatever positive karma one has accumulated in past lives is wasted in the heavens in satisfying materialistic desires. There are no means to accumulate new positive karma in the lower heavenly abodes, thus once the previously accumulated positive karmas have been depleted, these beings will be destined to enter the lower realms of existence.

What can we say about those distraught souls burning in the fires of hell! They are forever in agony and pain. In such an existence, how can they even think of religious activities and spirituality? The entire lives of hellish beings is surrounded by the suffering from ignorance and dependence, how can they even

see a ray of spirituality? Their existence is dictated solely by the basic desires of hunger, thirst, fear. How can they even think about adopting and observing any religious conduct? It is thus self-evident only in the human form that one can devote himself to the highest observance of spirituality.

How can one understand and grasp the significance of human life unless one understands the rarity of the process through which a human birth is attained? If a person possesses a diamond, but does not recognise it as such, thinking they are holding a piece of coal, how can they be expected to experience the radiance of the diamond in their hand?

The great poet, Rabindranath Tagore whilst highlighting the significance of human life, states: “the fish in the water observe silence, the animals on land create tumultuous noise and the birds are chanting sweet notes in the sky but a human has all, the silence of the ocean, the tumultuous noise of the land and the melodies of the sky.” “it is human life that is superior to all”.

Therefore, one who has attained a human form must make that attainment worthwhile. Mahavir Swami in the ‘Uttaradhyan Sutra’ has said, “The heavenly beings may be great, their abode may be splendid, yet there is none superior to man. When a man demonstrates real human values, even the heavenly beings bow at his feet”.

While an ordinary human life (*manushya*) is like a precious stone, a human life with qualities that can lead to moksha (*manushyatwa*) is like a *chintamani* jewel (wish-yielding jewel). A human life with the qualities to attain moksha can achieve anything that is desired, but if one limits oneself to a mundane existence, it would mean that this human existence is wasted. Shrimad writes, “even a single moment of human existence is many times more

precious and valuable than the very *chintamani* gem stone which is the most precious jewel in the universe.”

Every single moment of human existence is uniquely important and beyond measure. While addressing his *gandher* (chief disciple), Shri Gautam Swami, Bhagwan Mahavir repeated thirty-six times, “Samayam Gaoyam ma pamaye” meaning “O Gautam, waste not a single moment”. In Mokshmala, Shrimad Rajchandra has said in one of his famous poems -

બહુ પુણ્યકેરા પુંજથી શુભ દેહ માનવનો મળ્યો,
તોયે અરે ! ભવચક્રનો આંટો નહિ એકકે ટાળ્યો

*By the fruition of a colossal reservoir of past good deeds,
having being incarnated as a Human Being,
Yet alas! Not a single round of the infinite cycle of transmigration
could you overcome.*

The reason this soul has not escaped this cycle of life and death is that it has not realised the importance and rarity of this precious human birth. It has not recognised the urgency with which it should engage with spiritual pursuits. No one can predict when their current life will end, thus one who has realised their inner truth before death comes is the only truly awakened soul.

The world we live in is full of grief and sufferings. Many a poet has said ‘there is little happiness, and sufferings fill the world’. A human has both the ability and capacity to be rid of all sufferings and experience infinite bliss by attaining liberation. This liberation is achievable only through a human body and no other. Appreciating the importance and rarity of a human life and the uncertainty of its lifespan, once having attained the human life,

one must walk the royal path to liberation as fast as possible. This is the only path to release oneself from the cycle of birth and death. The alternative is to continue moving from one life form to another. Shrimad said, "As long as one keeps unworthy company, indulges in materialistic desires and does not eliminate delusion, liberation is not possible. To achieve this one must always keep the company of spiritual aspirants, adopt with full faith and zest the commandments of the self-realised saints and strive for the eternal truth - his very true nature".

Karuna

Infinite Compassion

Just as water flows constantly in mountain streams, so compassion flows from the hearts of great saints in an abundant never-ending stream. Compassion is not a virtue that is acquired by learning or by practice, it is a quality ingrained deep within one's heart and reflected naturally in every action of a person.

Jain philosophy has shown spirituality as an Everest-like majestic peak of that must be scaled. The peak is the attainment and manifestation of qualities such as non-violence, truth, patience, forbearance, and compassion.

Bhagwan Mahavir displayed this constant flow of compassion in the calamities he suffered during his lifetime. This compassion flowed to the demon Shoolpani when he turned a town into a crematorium to harass Bhagwan. After inflicting a whole night of severe torture on Bhagwan, Shoolpani saw that Bhagwan's equanimity was unmoved throughout the ordeal. Shoolpani had a change of heart and begged Bhagwan for forgiveness. Bhagwan responded saying, "An enemy needs forgiving! You are a friend

who is testing me". Shoolpani astounded asked, "Me! A friend of yours?". Bhagwan's reply was remarkable. He said, "Not only mine, you can be a friend to the entire universe."

Bhagwan Mahavir who viewed the whole universe as his friend, was being tortured continuously by a celestial being, Sangamdev, for almost six months and yet Bhagwan did not bear any enmity towards him, even for a moment. On the contrary, he was concerned about how much suffering Sangam would have to endure due to his heinous acts. Such profound compassion defined by the Jain tradition is not limited to just human beings or other living species. Its vast sky-like expanse encompasses everything in the universe, be it material or sentient, the microscopic or large.

We can witness such constant flows of compassion in the life of Shrimad Rajchandra. The seeds of this compassion were sown during his childhood in the precinct of the Ramji Mandir in his village, Vavaniya. There, a saintly woman Rambai tended to orphan children and those inflicted with leprosy, with motherly love. Shrimad's mother, along with young Shrimad would visit the temple every day to offer her respects to the saintly Rambai, a lady full of kindness, charity, and spirituality, and to help her with her work. Shrimad had the good fortune of being influenced by these noble experiences at a very early age. This selfless desire to compassionately serve others was reflected in all facets of his later life.

The flow of compassion in Shrimad's heart encompassed everything without exception, it was not restricted merely to those he knew personally, but to anyone and everyone. Shrimad never discriminated between young and old, rich and poor, or between servants and masters. Genuine compassion has no limits, boundaries or confinements. A hallmark feature of his compassion

was that it transcended the visible living organisms and extended to those that were unseen to the human eye.

One comes across examples of his compassion in many of his human relationships. When Shrimad lived in Mumbai, his long-serving servant called Lallu developed a tumour in his body and became seriously ill. Shrimad immediately started tending to his needs to make him feel comfortable. Everyone was surprised to see Shrimad taking care of his servant in this manner. Shrimad made no distinction between himself and his servant, he always felt that all souls, including his and those of others were equal. How encompassing was his vision to have even considered his servant to be no different from himself? He was the true embodiment of sheer compassion.



Shrimad's spiritual attainments ran in parallel with the deepening of his compassion. He often referred to compassion as a part of spirituality in his letters to his followers. In one of his letters, written in the Aso month of VS 1955, he referred to the famine in Mumbai and Marwad (now part of Rajasthan). The

agony and the torment he felt at seeing the prevailing conditions are vividly evident from this letter.

Shrimad, whilst aware of the human suffering, was also concerned with the suffering of the livestock. Animals were dying in their hundreds. At that time, both cotton seed and hay were available in Rangoon (Myanmar) at affordable prices. He immediately drew up plans to relieve the suffering of these animals by arranging shiploads of both hay and cotton seeds to be shipped to ports in Mumbai and Saurashtra. Not only did he arrange the orders for these by shiploads, but he also arranged for the shipments to be executed with utmost speed to alleviate the suffering of animals. He ordered 500 tonnes of hay with specific instructions for unloading at specific ports. Shrimad worked out plans as to how to distribute the hay and the charges he would apply: “abandoned cattle were to be fed free of cost, cattle belonging to the poor would be fed at cost price or at a concessional rate, whilst the well-to-do cattle owners were to be supplied at the prevailing market price. In this way, the purchase cost could be recovered and at the same time a large number of cattle would be properly fed.” Initially, only two or three shiploads of hay were planned but the enormity of the disaster dawned upon the planners. At least twenty shiploads would be required. Rs. 7,000 had been raised from the public, and Shrimad offered to make up for the likely shortfall. He also suggested that the services of one person would be retained to ensure distribution was made as planned and carried out efficiently. He finished the letter: “Re-emphasising the need for urgency, the plan should be executed as early and as fast as possible. If any clarification is required, or if there is any doubt about the execution of the plan, instructions or clarifications should be sought via telegrams, as a large number of cattle are dying every day”. He

had already confirmed that the Burmese hay and cotton seeds were suitable for the local cattle.

Rather than simply lamenting the acute tragedy of famine with hands folded and blaming nature for its cruelty, Shrimad acted swiftly to create a plan of action for combating it. Shrimad was a lighthouse of love and compassion for the mute and distressed animals.

Referring to Shrimad Rajchandra's compassion, Mahatma Gandhi wrote, "For Rajchandra, the agony and the pain of suffering in the world were unbearable. For him, the whole world was like his own family. He used to suffer as much agony and pain at seeing death and devastation suffered by others in the world as one would when someone in the family meets death or similar tragedy." (*From the biography of Shrimad Rajchandra, edited by Shri Gopaldas Patel, page 98*)

Shrimad Rajchandra's deep and unflinching compassion for animals was so pervasive that in his presence any kind of cruelty in the surroundings would naturally subside.

Shrimad visited the hills of Dharampur for a change of climate in VS 1956. At the same time, British officers happened to be visiting their political agent there. The agent had arranged a hunting expedition as a part of the entertainment for the officers. The expedition entered the forest with a very large contingent of helpers to search and direct the wild animals towards the gun bearing hunters. However, despite great efforts, no prey could be found. This state of affairs continued whilst Shrimad was present in that area. When he finally left the area, the hunters finally found their prey. Whenever Shrimad heard of the activities of slaughterhouses, his heart would scream with pain as he would undertake all kinds of efforts to prevent the massacre of innocent animals.

The price of tears is infinite, and cannot be measured in physical terms. It cannot be qualified! We often come across people who are in the habit of regularly shedding tears. Some shed tears simply recollecting the past. At times, it is a deep anger leading them to shed tears. But in reality, tears are the divine language of the soul. One can understand this from the lives of great personalities. Great people never shed tears because of their failure in seeking their own ends. The tears of such eminent people are like pearls emerging from their eyes out of compassion for the suffering of the people around the world. Their tears are a manifestation of their feelings of compassion and represent their divinity. If we analyse the situations where such great souls shed tears, we will realise that they have opened a new horizon of compassion for all of mankind through their divine tears.

Lord Mahavir was subjected to all kinds of torture at the hands of a celestial being named Sangamdev, when he meditated for six months in the land of barbarians. Lord Mahavir was made to go without food and water for six months and at the same time underwent severe torture to his body. He was swung about on a trunk of an elephant, distracted by beautiful ladies when he was meditating, inflicted by frightening thunderstorms, roars of wild beasts and horrifying looking devils. When Sangmdev realised that Lord Mahavir would not give in, he sought the latter's forgiveness for all his misdeeds. Mahavir was so filled with compassion for him that his eyes swelled up! Bhagwan's tears were not for his personal suffering but were out of concern for the amount of karma that Sangamdev had bound because of his atrocious acts.

At the age of seven, the young Shrimad learnt to read and take lessons from his mother on scriptures like the Pratikraman Sutra and the Samayik Sutra. These scriptures included lessons

on seeking forgiveness from the minutest and invisible living organisms for the harm done to them. These lessons touched him deeply and were immediately inscribed in his heart. Whilst he was still learning these scriptures, his mother Devma asked him to help chop some vegetables. He was always keen to give a helping hand to his mother in her domestic work, but while he was cutting the vegetables he started shedding tears. Seeing him in such a state, his mother asked him what was making him cry. How could he answer his doting mother? His heart was filled with profuse compassion for the souls in the vegetables he was cutting, and this resulted in an unending stream of tears flowing from his eyes. Who can understand the agony of a great soul who has attained complete unification with every living being on this earth? Only one whose heart is filled with ever-flowing compassion as wide as the sky can feel it.

Shrimad Rajchandra has given to this world the unique gift



of compassion for every living species, both seen and unseen. That stands as the highest and the noblest measure of love for all. The

Jain sages have recognised life in trees and plants thousands of years ago when most of the world was ignorant about it. Shrimad Rajchandra experienced their suffering and expressed compassion for them. The world had never witnessed or experienced such compassion and love as expressed by Shrimad Rajchandra.

When Shrimad was in Mumbai, he learnt that on every Vijaya Dashmi (Dassera day), 108 buffalo bulls are sacrificed in Dharampur. Shrimad Rajchandra was absolutely shocked and distraught with this information. How can one who has unflinching faith in non-violence tolerate this? At once he set out trying to prevent this barbaric act. He requested the religious scholars in Mumbai to find references in Vedic scriptures and religious books against this barbaric practise. He soon found sufficient evidence to prove that tenets of Vedas were misinterpreted to promote such activities and raised his voice loudly against it. A public meeting was organised in Dharampur to prevent this massacre and it was arranged for Shri Maneklal Ghelabhai to attend. He urged people to think rationally about the massacre and was able to create enough of a stir to raise public protests and outcries against such practises. Shrimad Rajchandra worked tirelessly day and night to prevent the massacre and eventually succeeded. This highlights a unique feature of Shrimad's personality: his view that all living beings have souls which are identical to his own. Hence, everyone could experience the deep compassion and love Shrimad held in his gentle loving heart for every living being.

Those who used to stay with Shrimad had noted that whenever he had to use a horse-drawn carriage for transportation, he would only do so with a specific condition that the horse was not to be whipped by the driver.

Those whose hearts are filled with compassion are deeply

affected by the flames of violence around them. Seeing this selfish, scheming, cunning and merciless world, Shrimad Rajchandra felt deep pain and hurt within his core. Mahatma Gandhi had seen and felt this pain in Shrimad, who never distinguished between his family and others unrelated to him. Of what good is such a world where so much cruelty exists?

Shrimad felt extremely hurt when he came across the various types of deceptions practised in the name of religion, society, and human relationships. Mahatma Gandhi delivered a lecture titled 'Religion of Compassion' in Ahmedabad on Shrimad's birth anniversary, in the year VS 1978. He said, "Raichandbhai died so prematurely probably on account of the fact that he could not bear the agony of witnessing a world full of fraud, deceit, and violence. It is true that he did suffer from a disease, but the pangs he suffered due to the heinous practises became more unbearable to him than the disease he was suffering from. Physical pain he could easily have endured, but he must have wondered, 'how can one attain the blissful experience of the soul in such a cruel era?' This symbolises the religion of compassion."

Mahatma Gandhi had called Shrimad Rajchandra the epitome of religion and compassion in a speech that was delivered over eighty-five years ago. He said, "Shrimad had cultivated this religion in his heart and was practising it every moment and in every aspect of his life. Our struggle for freedom in India today reflects the same compassion. We are careful about avoiding any sort of animosity in it." Gandhiji emphasised that "The basis of non-cooperation was the same compassion and love as this religion of compassion that I have learnt from Shrimad's life."

Shrimad and Mahatma Gandhi, once when discussing this religion of compassion, talked about whether leather goods

should be used or not. Both agreed that one cannot do away with the use of leather totally, for instance, goods made from leather were essential for farming. Nevertheless, both concurred that one should not use leather for personal apparel. Gandhiji pointed out to Shrimad that leather had been used in the making of the cap which Shrimad was wearing at the time. Shrimad immediately tore off the leather lining in his cap.

Gandhiji notes in the weekly magazine, *Modern Review*, issue of June 1930, "The foundation of Shrimad's principles on which he had based his lifestyle was undoubtedly ahimsa - non-violence. His beliefs in ahimsa encompassed all living beings from the tiniest of micro-organisms to the entire human race.

It was from Shrimad Rajchandra that Gandhiji acquired the cultural seeds of *ahimsa* which he unflinchingly taught to humanity throughout his life. Gandhiji presented to the world the noble principle of *ahimsa* as a weapon against the practise of crude violence used for enslavement. He presented *ahimsa* as the royal path to save oneself from self-destruction. This principle of *ahimsa* has since been adopted in many countries to fight injustice and throw out the yoke of slavery. How great was the inspiration that Gandhiji had reaped from the life and teachings of Shrimad Rajchandra!

SUKH

Illusory Happiness vs Real Happiness

As an introduction to the right path for those seeking liberation, Shrimad drew a distinction between illusory happiness and true happiness. What is happiness in reality? A stone has no capacity to experience pain or pleasure. Nature does have such an ability

but to a much lesser degree, however, it does not have the capacity to express it. Animals do have the ability to express their feelings to a limited degree but have no ability to understand the feelings of other living beings. It is only humans that possess the ability to experience and express their own feelings as well as comprehend the feelings of others and respond to them.

This comprehensive capacity to feel, recognise and express feelings that humans possess is a very valuable asset. But how do humans utilise this asset? There are four types of humans born on this earth: (1) those who are completely ignorant about the purpose of this life and its ultimate objective. (2) Those who have an objective, but their objective is vile and materialistic and therefore keeps them moving in the wrong direction. (3) Those whose objective is noble but they do not act accordingly. (4) Those who organise their thoughts, their lives and their activities in accordance with the worthy objectives they have set for themselves.

The first type of the above four are ignorant about the purpose of life and are not aware that one has to strive hard for self-development in order to achieve something. Such people follow others blindly and consequently, their entire life is spent like that of animals, merely breathing, eating, indulging in sensual pleasures and such other mundane activities.

Considering the second category, such human beings possess some kind of objective in their life, but it is externally directed to the materialistic world. They are attracted towards achieving external gratification. They merely pursue sensual pleasures and passions such as anger, deceit, greed, materialistic hoarding and fulfilment of their ego. Some desires take root in their mind, their mind treats these as the source of happiness and pursues them. Such people who are driven by passions like anger, lust, and

pride, can never be at peace with themselves. Their minds are in constant turmoil. Lust and sensuality keeps them restless most of the time. Delusion keeps them motivated towards the attainment of these desires. The sum total of their efforts is that they do not achieve true happiness in their lives, but only the illusion of happiness. They are swallowed by pride and greed. They strive day and night to seek gratification for their sensual appetites. Greed drives every second of their lives, forcing them to be constantly concerned about increasing their possessions.

In Ayodhya, the night before Rama's planned coronation, the palace was lit up with thousands of lamps and this made Manthra's heart burn with hate and jealousy. A cocktail of passions rising out of Manthra's hate, Kaikei's anger and a desire for King Dashrath led to the great epic of Ramayana. Thus, to alert humans to such risks, the Jain scriptural work 'Dash Vaikalik Sutra' in its thirty-fourth verse of the eighth chapter states:

अधुवं जीवियं नच्चा सिद्धिमगं वियाणिया ।
विणियट्टेज भोगेसु आउं परिमियमप्पणो ॥

*Knowing that life is momentary,
our lifespan is limited;
understand the path to liberation
and rid yourself of sensual desires.*

As if echoing this very sentiment, Shrimad says, "One cannot attain liberation without giving up one's delusion-filled desires and when that is the case, why not give them up from the time one becomes aware of this fact."

Those wallowing in illusory happiness consider this transient happiness to be the ultimate goal of their life. When

circumstances are conducive and favour them, their joy knows no bounds. However, when circumstances reverse they become very unhappy. What a person believes to be the source of his happiness is, in reality, a potential source of agony. A person who relishes delicious food feels happy when he eats that food; however, that same food can bring discomfort or pain through over-consumption. A person is constantly in pursuit of objects that fulfil his worldly desires, but these desires are insatiable and eventually lead to disappointment and sorrow. One's very quest for seeking happiness in materialistic objects becomes the greatest source of sorrow. Taking this into consideration, Shrimad Rajchandra has said mystically, "If only the world understood what is true happiness, moksha, as defined by the wise people, would not be located beyond the highest heavens but would exist on the earth itself."

The third type of happiness that people seek in this world is from increasing their possessions. A child will cry if someone takes away its favourite toy. It is from one's very childhood that one develops attachment and love for material wealth. It is a common pursuit among ordinary people to focus on increasing their material wealth. Although their realistic requirements are limited their appetite to accumulate more is never fulfilled therefore keeping them occupied for most of their lives. A person with an insatiable appetite to accumulate material wealth tends to develop selfish tendencies. Such a person does not hesitate or have qualms in committing fraud or crime in order to accumulate more wealth. The more one's wealth increases, the greater becomes one's greed to amass even more. As possessions increase, inner strength to practise austerities and renunciation begins to weaken.

Many find happiness in fulfilment and or gratification of their ego. Ego in a very subtle way sometimes evolves in those

practising penances and austerities as part of their religious rituals. This ego manifests itself through some of their expressions and behaviour. Those that are egoistic about their possessions never miss an opportunity to show these off to others.

Once Shrimad had been invited for lunch when Maneklal Ghelabhai, Tribhuvanbhai and a few others accompanied him. The meal started with a serving of cooked green vegetables. Manekbhai declined those vegetables, saying he was observing *tithi* (a special lunar date), a day on which Jains do not consume green vegetables. This was followed by a yoghurt salad. Manekbhai declined that too as Jains consider the mixing of yoghurt and pulses as inappropriate. Other food preparations followed of various types. Manekbhai accepted a few of them and rejected the rest. Finally, when a dessert pudding was being served to Maneklalbhai, Shrimad exclaimed, "Do not serve that sweet dish to him. Maneklal has attempted to increase his importance by rejecting several side dishes but has not abstained from tasty and delicious items and so it would not be right to serve him the dessert." Shrimad was not one to tolerate a deceitful display of austerity when in reality there was none. It was nothing but a manifestation of Maneklalbhai's personal ego and thus Shrimad stopped the dessert being served to him.

This material world, considered to be the source of happiness, is in actuality a source of fear, remorse and sorrow. This makes life treacherous and unbearable. That is why Shrimad says, "The happiness derived from material possessions is illusory, and indeed is not happiness at all." His words, "not happiness at all" indicate the futility of seeking worldly pleasure in the physical world. He was amazed at the reasons why people are attracted by happiness that is ephemeral, unreliable and without substance.

Illusory happiness is based on one's senses and though it

does give pleasure to one's senses, it eventually leads to unhappiness and sorrow. A person's concept of happiness is sense-based, and is happy when the senses are comfortable, but unhappy when not so. True happiness is beyond our senses. That is why with reference to Bharatruhari's preaching, Shrimad says, "despite being endowed with great wealth, power and all material pleasures of a king, he walked away from it all when he attained true wisdom. Enjoying the supreme bliss of truth, he had rightfully said that in sensual pleasures lies the fear of disease, in great lineage lies the fear of its destruction, in wealth lies the fear of the king's taxes, in ego lies the fear of being humbled, therefore everything in this world is a source of fear of one kind or another. Only total detachment and freedom from passion leads to a fearless life."

This implies that the very factors like objects, people or events that arouse attachment and a feeling of happiness fail to bring about the seekers' true eternal happiness. Motilal Bhavsar who normally looked after Shrimad during the latter's solitary retreats would often wonder how deep the connection between food and the human body was. Shrimad would only eat once during the day and he would consume merely one or two portions of flatbread. Alongside would be a very small portion of rice. He would never ask for food or indicate what he would like to eat. He would simply consume what was served to him.

Shrimad drew the attention of the world towards the fact that true happiness could only be found within and not by any outward conquests. External stimuli for seeking sensual pleasures would often distract the fickle human mind, but those seeking this true inner happiness need to cultivate their minds to remain firmly established in equanimity and attain the ultimate joy of life.

ATMADHARMA

The religion of the soul

When the magnificent rainbow, composed of the essence of spirituality from all religions, shines in the clear vast sky of the soul, the seeker's mind derives immense pleasure from each of its beautiful colours. Shrimad Rajchandra's primary objective in life was to attain the supreme spiritual state, devoid of the cycle of life and death. Dogmatism and sectarianism never influenced his mind nor affected his thinking, and he always kept himself above such petty conflicts. He never allowed himself any spiritual lapses and his constant contemplation on the attainment of the supreme soul enabled him to derive the true essence of all faiths.

Shrimad from his early childhood had been introduced to devotion towards Krishna. His grandfather, Panchanbhai took him regularly to the local Vaishnav temple where he would listen to the various mystical experiences of Krishna as told in 'Shrimad Bhagwat'. These stories about the different incarnations of Lord Krishna and his miraculous powers deeply enchanted Shrimad and



had a profound impact on his young mind.

Shrimad developed a deep devotion to Lord Krishna and the Vaishnav religious sect. The traditional emotional attachment between grandfather and grandson was so closely knit that the grandfather's thoughts and practises influenced Shrimad who found himself attracted to Lord Krishna. Although Panchanbhai's family belonged to the Jain Sthanakawasi sect, he was devotionally attached to Lord Krishna. Ramdasji, a mendicant visiting the temple tied the Vaishnav ceremonial thread (*janoi*) to young Shrimad.

Whilst his grandfather inspired devotion towards the Vaishnav faith, Shrimad was fascinated by the Jain faith through the influence of his mother, Devma and his father, Ravajibhai. Both were committed devotees of the Jain religion. His mother, Devma, was steadfast in her observance of Jain religious rituals. Her practise aroused curiosity in young Shrimad's mind to learn more about the Jain traditions and scriptures. The seeds of spirituality planted during past lives began to sprout in his heart and along with the religious environment within the family, his spiritual development began to take shape.



In those days, it was quite common to observe the Vaishnav and Jain faiths being followed by members of the same family. The religions were the reason for uniting people rather than dividing them. The practise of *Pratikraman* (prayers of repentance for earlier deeds) in particular, cast a deep influence on the tender mind. He found that the Jain religion preached compassion and feelings of oneness for all living creatures, while at the same time preaching devotion and conduct that would cleanse the dirt of worldly existence from the soul.

During his teen and early youth years, Shrimad was already recognised as a bright and intelligent young man. His unique abilities, easy-to-approach attitude and willingness to help gained his admiration of local communities of Vavaniya.

Shrimad had expressed his inner thoughts about his early years in his diary titled 'Sammuchayvaycharya': "For seven years, I spent my time in fun and frolic; I vividly remember that I used to experience strange imaginations in my soul (without even knowing the nature or objective of the same). I had the inner desire to seek victory in games and to attain the stature of an emperor. I used to remain detached from routine matters like personal clothing, cleanliness, eating, drinking and resting etc. I had a soft heart - I distinctly remember that condition. If I had the discriminative prowess then as I do now, I probably might not have needed the intense desire for salvation. I remember those innocent days frequently even today."

His subsequent association with Sant Shri Rambaima of Vavaniya's Ram Temple was significant in inspiring Shrimad's detachment from worldly pleasures. Shri Rambaima, from the village of Vantavadar, as per local tradition had been married at a very young age. When she came of age, her husband's family came

to take her to their home. During that period, there was a severe famine in the district affecting a large number of people including children. Many were left starving whilst others had taken refuge in Vantavadar. Instead of showing compassion and sympathy towards these refugees, the villagers would harshly brush them away. Rambaima's compassionate heart could not tolerate this merciless behaviour and had adopted many of the refugee children, she refused to go to her husband's village. She subsequently left her village and went to Vavaniya taking all of her adopted children with her. She found accommodations in the local Ram temple's precinct. She spent her time looking after the children she had brought with her, as well as passing mendicants, and offering prayers to the Almighty in her spare time. The local residents were genuinely impressed by Rambaima's sense of service and devotion to God. It gave them peace and tranquillity. She became a role model for Devma, Shrimad's mother. Rambaima had once hinted to Devma that she would be blessed with a virtuous son.

Devma would often take young Shrimad along when visiting Rambaima. Though young in age, Shrimad was profoundly impressed and influenced by Rambaima's compassionate nature and the manner in which she tended to the lepers in the village. He asked Rambaima, out of sheer curiosity and inquisitiveness, "Mother, do you not feel nauseous when you touch these lepers?" Compassionate Rambaima responded to the young child's question, saying, "Shrimad! You are still a child, albeit an intelligent and a wise child and thus it would be simple to explain a few things to you. This entire world is false, it is unreal. Hence what appears to our eyes as an object of beauty or ugliness is also false and unreal. There is no pleasure or nausea in my perception of any of them." Rambaima continued: "Secondly, it is the existence of desires in

one's mind that leads to such inclinations in our lives. Hence, when there are no desires, all feelings of like and hate also dissipate by themselves. Thirdly, the soul that is within the body of these lepers is not diseased. The disease arises in the body not in the soul. The soul exists as a trinity of eternality, conscious awareness and pure bliss. As long as one possesses ego, there will exist attachment towards the body and its possessions." "One who has acquired wisdom, will always be free from ego. Such a person only sees the pure soul at all times and for him the physical condition is immaterial." These words of Rambaima impacted the detached soul of the child and inspired him to further cultivate his spiritual awareness.

There is one further interesting event in the writings of the head priest of the Ramji Mandir, Lakhiramji Dayaramji, about Rambaima's life involving Shrimad. At the age of 98, Rambaima, realising her end was near invited the village elders and a few individuals like Ravji Sheth, Devma and particularly Shrimad to talk. When they had all gathered, Rambaima mentioned that her end was near and that noone was to express any sorrow or anguish on her demise. She proceeded to call young Shrimad closer to her: "You are a Vaishnav but the initiation string you are wearing around your neck will stay there only until you are thirteen - then it will drop off. Thereafter your mind shall be drawn strongly towards spiritual progress and attainment of the soul. As your attachment to material possessions will diminish, your desires will begin to fade. Your ability to preach and write will evolve. Your thought power will grow and you will resolve many mysteries that have so far remained unresolved. Your fame will spread far and wide amongst the most learned persons in this world; however, I shall not be present to witness all this. Though I have no greater satisfaction

than to know that my dear Shrimad shall dwell in the supreme soul someday. Like iron fetters, even the chains of gold also create attachments and therefore I must control my own affection for you.” This episode with Rambaima has been described in a book called ‘Shri Rambaima’.

Shrimad's family celebrated his thirteenth birthday. On his birthday, he visited the temple and Ramdasji Maharaj was elated at seeing the glow of knowledge shining brightly on Shrimad's young face. As Shrimad came closer to Ramdasji, he bowed down in obeisance and touched his feet to express his profound respect for Ramdasji Maharaj. Ramdasji welcomed him and seeing a ceremonial tilak on Shrimad's forehead, he enquired the reason behind it.

Shrimad Rajchandra replied, “My family and well-wishers have celebrated the birthday of this body today. However, there is nothing unique about it, one grows in age as a matter of natural course, and so also one's body is gradually decaying with time. But, Gurudev, a more important thing happened today. When I was getting up from my bed, the ceremonial thread around my neck broke accidentally. Whenever it broke in the past, I used to replace it with a new one however today I do not feel like tying a new thread. A thread around the neck, a mark of vermilion on the forehead and other such sectarian symbols are mere external representations of one's faith in a particular religious sect. Does one need such symbols once one has ascended the path of spirituality?”

Ramdasji replied, “I wouldn't say that myself, however, your soul has already attained a higher level of spirituality. Hence, external signs or marks may not be of any significance to you. You have attained such a high level of spirituality through striving in your previous lives. I am aware that your mind is moving towards

the Jain faith. Do as your soul guides you. Your physical existence is different to your spiritual existence.”

Shrimad started learning the alphabet at the age of seven and, at the age of eight, was composing poems and referring to scriptures like Ramayana and Mahabharat in their epic format, a phenomenal achievement.

Once, Shrimad had gone with a few members of the Khoja - Memon (an Islamic sect) community to a mosque. There, he explained the essence of Islam to them and pointed out that their daily behavior was inappropriate. Shrimad also explained to the gathering the real meaning of Namaz, a ritual practised in the mosque. This clearly demonstrated that Shrimad grasped the true essence of all religions during his childhood. It is in this context that he says the following words.

ભિન્ન ભિન્ન મત દેખીએ, ભેદ દ્રષ્ટિનો એહ;
એક તત્વના મૂળમાં, વ્યાખ્યા માનો તેહ.
તેહ તત્વરૂપ વૃક્ષનું, આત્મધર્મ છે મૂળ;
સ્વભાવની સિદ્ધિ કરે, ધર્મ તે જ અનુકૂળ

“Numerous religious faiths and sects are seen in the world,
but know that they arise only because of different viewpoints;
All of them in reality are just like branches of a tree rising from
the same roots.

That tree of spirituality has the religion of the soul as it's root;
The one that can lead a seeker to find his true self is the only
acceptable religion.”

ELIMINATION OF DOGMATISM

Sacrifice of blind dogmas and sectarianism

Shrimad Rajchandra had imbibed the Vaishnav faith from the teachings of his grandfather, Panchanbhai, and learnt the tenets of Jain faith from his mother Devma. At the same time, he had gained the respect of people of all faiths in his village of Vavaniya.

Those who seek salvation are unaffected by differences in various religions and sects. They view all religious differences as merely the difference in perception and not variations in the fundamental truth. Shrimad says, “You may have faith in any religion, that does not concern me. However, the essence of what I say is to remember to follow only that faith, that path and that conduct which leads to the destruction of the influences of the materialist world.”

This approach of Shrimad is aptly reflected in an event in his life. A very close and intimate relationship had developed between Shrimad and Saubhagbhai of Sayla. This intimate relationship greatly benefited Saubhagbhai in ascending the ladder of spirituality. On one occasion when Shrimad was staying at Saubhagbhai's home, Saubhagbhai's wife, Ratanba, was on her way to the temple to perform her routine religious rites. Shrimad called out to her and asked where she was going. Ratanba replied, “I am going to the temple to performing *puja* (a daily ritual).” Shrimad asked, “Why not perform those in a mosque?” Hearing this from Shrimad, Ratanba replied in a trademark Saurashtrian tone, “Only Raichand (his childhood name) Mehta is capable to jest like this in such matters.” Shrimad was giving Ratanba a lesson in giving up her dogmatic approach to religious practises. He was trying to

convey to Ratanba that religion lies in the eradication of the four passions of anger, ego, deceit, and greed. Shrimad was explaining the true essence of religion to Ratanba.

There are four essential aspects for acquiring the true essence of religion: (1) removal of sectarianism, (2) search for the ultimate truth, (3) efforts for self-realisation and (4) liberation.

The first aspect here concerns dogmatic blindness caused by sectarianism. Such a person lives with the singular belief that their point of view is the only correct one and all other points of views are false. Such an approach results in a person having a blinkered vision, to the extent that their dogmatism and beliefs lead to a state where the ego dominates the real truth. The person is so immersed in their own fixed ideas and opinions of their faith that instead of practising the true religion, he only practises the religion of his ego. In modern times, we find numerous religious sects which are the result of such narrow-minded hubris.

The second aspect pertains to differences of opinions between sects. When one sect considers itself superior to another or tries to illustrate the deficiencies of another sect or religion, differences of opinion arise. These differences often gain such importance that followers are distracted by them. The primary reason for the emergence of sectarianism is that people are not willing to reconcile their differing viewpoints. A real seeker will ignore such differences, simply because getting involved in these divisions is a distraction from the ultimate goal. When we do not understand the differing viewpoints, we can get entangled in them. Shrimad explained these aspects in detail. (Ref. Rajprashna, Question 118, Page 64) where he says, “no one has been able to attain salvation or liberation by indulging in differences of opinions, but those who consciously and deliberately ignore such

unnecessary differences and look within have gradually moved towards liberation in the past, are attaining liberation now and will continue to do so in future.”

The rise of sectarianism deeply pained Shrimad. He notes, “When I ask you to read the Jain scriptures, I do not wish to convert you to Jainism; when I recommend Vedic scriptures, I do not expect you to convert to Vedanta. My recommendations are not for conversion but for you to learn something. You should rid yourself of thoughts on differences between Jainism and Vedanta. The soul is above all that.”

This is how Shrimad highlighted that those engaging in dogmatism and sectarianism miss the true essence and purpose of religion. Such differences have existed since time immemorial and through the passage of time have evolved into different forms. Some of these dogmatic people are similar to one another, while others differ in their practises. Some talk of Vedanta, some of Jainism, some talk of the Sankhya philosophy, while others practise Buddhism, Islam or Christianity. All these different practitioners claim that following them would lead the seeker to the ultimate salvation. In reality, one should not state that one religion is true whilst another is untrue.

Shrimad says, “For us, brahmins, vaishnavas and those who follow other religions are all equal. Those who claim to be Jains and are sectarian in approach are not desirable, those who ignore divisions are desirable.”

It would be inappropriate to say that one particular school of thought is the ultimate truth because by saying so one is implying that all other schools of thought are false. Every religion has been developed and stated according to differing circumstances, environments and preferences. Some religions emphasise devotion;

others emphasise practising of rituals, while others emphasise morality and humility. Some consider maintaining the physical body as their religion.

Shrimad studied these varying aspects minutely with their different underlying philosophies and thoughts. He observed that various spiritual leaders seemed to be holding similar objectives and ideals. Indeed, all of them preached 'peace' as the ultimate goal. This 'peace' meant rising above all external indulgences and residing within one's true self.

Shrimad had studied a great volume of religious books and recalling this, Mahatma Gandhi said, "He had no difficulty in understanding Sanskrit or Magadhi texts. He had studied Vedanta scriptures, Shrimad Bhagavata as well as the Gita. He had studied the Quran and also the Zand-Avast through their translations. He would make it a point to study whatever Jain scriptural books he could lay his hands on. Shrimad's power of comprehension was so incredible that he would need to read a book only once to understand it fully."

Shrimad's writings include reverential and devotional references of Jain saints like Shri Anandghanji, Upadhyayashri Yashovjijayji and Mahatma Banarasidasji. Along with these, he also referred with deep appreciation and respect to the great Hindu saint poets, Kabir and Narsinh Mehta. In Shrimad Rajchandra Vachanamrut, Letter 231, he writes "The devotion and divine love of Kabir and Narsinh Mehta were extraordinary, unparalleled, enthralling and without a trace of any desire. Despite their abject poverty and hardships, they did not desire or wish for anything from the Lord. They managed to make ends meet in the face of all adversity and this is what demonstrates their greatness. The Lord did fulfil their needs in times of their utmost perils however this

was only through over-riding the wishes of his disciples. The true devotee never desires anything from God, and if they have even the slightest desire, then they can never attain the supreme love.”

Shrimad often spoke about dogmatism and sectarianism. Just because one is born in a particular religion or that one has managed to master some of the major scriptures of a particular faith, does not automatically lead to attaining the spiritual goal. Though he had firm faith in the path of absolute detachment and the fact that the Jain faith was a leading religion that helped rid one of likes, dislikes and delusion, and attain self-realisation, he did not believe that being born in the religion was enough. One had to cultivate the right qualities and virtues to be called a true Jain!

In this context, Shri Tribhuvandas Bhanjibhai asked Shrimad, “What is the extent to which a Jain should be honest and upright in his life?” In reply, Shrimad pointed to the dome of the Mumbai High Court that was some distance away and said, “A Jain’s honesty and forthrightness should be no less than that of a high court judge.”

What Shrimad meant was that a Jain should be so honest and ethical that no one dares doubt his character and uprightness. A Jain’s honesty and integrity should be so widely known that in the event of anyone making even a cursory remark about Jains being dishonest, the listener should be able to ignore the remark.

Thus the first step towards the attainment of liberation and the first move forward towards the practise of true religion is to shed dogmatic beliefs and preconceived notions.

THAT WHICH IS

A seeker can ascend the first step of spirituality only after he has discarded his dogmatic beliefs and sectarianism along with the narrow-minded viewpoints of his sect or faction. Most sects constantly endeavour to prove the supremacy of their own path. They put it forward as the only one that is the complete and eternal path and cling blindly to their own sectarian viewpoints.

Shrimad had seen the unyielding walls of sectarianism being erected creating divisions within the society. He had tried hard to demolish such walls through his discourses but without much success. He had found that the sectarians would normally attempt to fence in their followers with dogmas. They achieved this by trapping their followers into narrow-minded viewpoints and by impressing on their minds the idea that their sect was the best amongst all other sects.

Sectarianism does not allow a seeker to reach towards the ultimate truth. One stuck in the quagmire of intransigence, continues to sink deeper into ignorance and becomes a victim of petty, trifling matters. They then strongly influence others into believing that their path alone is the right one and the only way to salvation, while all other paths are sure to lead them to hell.

Shrimad was of the firm opinion that seekers must rid themselves off their sectarian dogmas and it is only after that will they be able to seek the truth. Such sectarianism has existed since time immemorial and people with such rigid views have always tried to establish the supremacy of their faiths. Such sectarianism and dogmatism have evolved over a long period for a variety of reasons. It is the prevailing conditions at the time that have

influenced the formation of such groups and opinions. These are the very reasons why some people stress upon certain aspects of religion while others stress upon other aspects. Some people have adapted religion to suit their comforts and conveniences whilst some have taken to rituals. Others take to penance as the primary tool, some take the path of wisdom while some adopt the path of devotion.

The objective of every seeker is to search for the eternal truth that is embedded in the school of thought he believes in and then follow that path to attain self-realisation. Such an objective cannot be accomplished if one sticks to their own rigid beliefs. Shrimad says, “There is no benefit in factionalism, factionalism is for the disillusioned. Factionalism is like a piece of iron which can neither float nor save one who is drowning.”

The one who is disillusioned tends to be trapped in dogmas while the one who is endowed with true wisdom will always seek the ultimate eternal truth. In a sense, such wise people are always concerned with seeking the very essence that underpins the various schools of thought. It is in this specific context that Shrimad talks of the essence of the teachings of great sages and seers such as Vyas, Valmiki, Patanjali, Kapil, and Prince Shudhodan, stating, “O Brother! The ocean of materialistic existence is very vast indeed, one has to persevere hard and relentlessly to swim across it.”

While advising true seekers on the kinds of scriptural books that they should refer to, Shrimad says, “Read about the life and times of self-realised saints, the words of worthy seekers (Sundardas, Preetam, etc.) and scriptures that focus predominantly on the soul (books like those by Vicharsagar and Sundardas and the poems by Anandghanji, Banarasidas, Kabir, Akha, etc.). However, always remember that the ultimate tool, amongst all tools for

salvation, is the association with a self-realised saint.”

Shrimad Rajchandra studied scriptural works such as the Vedas, the Upanishads, Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, as well as Swaminarayan sect's revered scriptural work 'Shikshapatri'. He says that if any doubt or query arises on its contents, one should contemplate upon it or seek advice for better understanding. He states that Shikshapatri emphasises the importance of devotion to God and it highlights virtues such as judicious wisdom (the ability to distinguish between true and false), courage, and the sanctuary of a self-realised saint. Out of these three, the two qualities the Shikshapatri stresses the most are the qualities of courage and devotional sanctuary which every seeker must contemplate upon and imbibe.”

Shrimad also demonstrated his respect for all religions and philosophies and advised people to seek the true essence from all sources. This approach of Shrimad shows his unique characteristic that he would evaluate and synthesise the good and desirable aspects from each religion rather than emphasising the superiority of one religion over another. If we adopt this practise of synthesis, it will certainly give rise to spirituality within us. In brief, one should develop compassion, attempt to follow the truth, follow those who are virtuous and at the same time eliminate divisive ideas. By adopting these simple concepts, one will be worthy to attain one's true self.

One does not attain spirituality by merely reading the scriptures. Spirituality is achieved through contemplation and implementation of lessons from these scriptures into one's life. Shrimad goes further to say, an egoist may claim that the Jain religion contains the universal truth and that by having read the Jain scriptures in his possession, he has attained the same. However

in reality, if such a person has not actually implemented what the scriptures teach, he cannot be called spiritual.

Shrimad asks, “What is religion?” And he answers, “True religion is like an ocean. It is nobody’s personal property. One who follows it is the true spiritually minded person.”

In the 9th chapter of the ‘Dash Vaikalik Sutra’ one comes across the following verse:

गुणेहिं साहू अगुणेहिं ऽ साहू गेण्हाहि साहूगुण मुंच ऽ साहू ।
वियाणिया अप्पगमप्पणं जो रागदोसेहिं समो स पुज्जो ॥

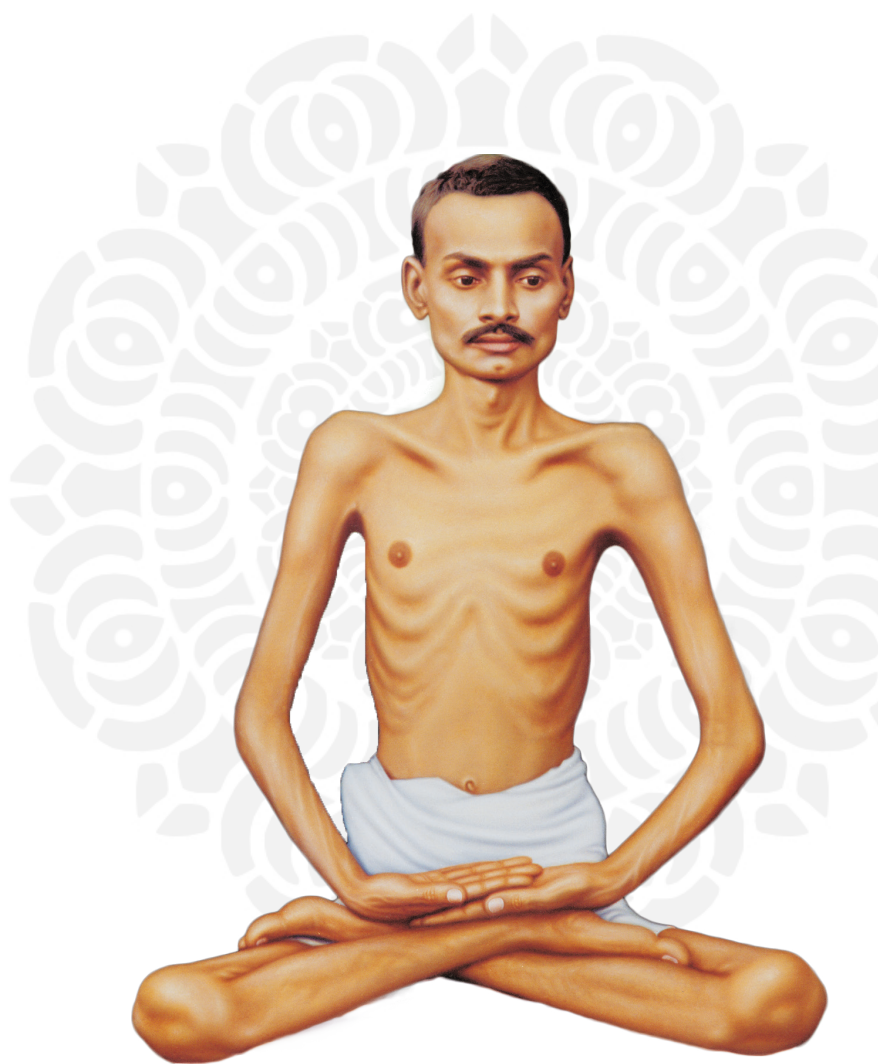
A person can be considered to be a sage only based on virtues he possesses, the presence of even the minutest vice makes him a sinner. Thus, one should cultivate virtues in one’s own life and work to remove each and every vice. One who has realised his true self through his own consciousness, has overcome all duality and remains immersed in equanimity is worthy of veneration.

This became evident from an incident involving Shrimad and Munishri Lalluji Maharaj, (Munishri Lalluji was a monk and yet had become a disciple of Shrimad – a lay person. This is unprecedented in Jain history). Once, Munishri Lalluji had travelled to Mumbai to spend the four months of monsoon near Shrimad. The monk once boasted in the presence of Shrimad of the numerous sacrifices he had made to become an ascetic. He said he had sacrificed his family including his old mother, two wives and son as well as his property and wealth and much more. In order to dissolve his ego, Shrimad asked in a tone showing annoyance, “What sacrifice are you talking about? By leaving one house, have you not gained ownership over so many others (of your followers)?

You may have sacrificed two wives, but do your eyes not gaze at other women present in the assembly? You may have sacrificed one son, but how many more boys and young men do you adore now?" Shrimad's harsh words made Munishri realise his folly. His pride over having given up external attachments evaporated and he conceded with humility, that the sacrifices he was claiming, were in fact an illusion. "In truth, I have renounced nothing", he admitted. At once, Shrimad responded, "Muni, now you are truly detached."

What Shrimad wanted to impress on everyone was that reading of the scriptures in a particular faith did not mean that you should adopt that faith. The objective of reading any scripture should be to learn from those texts what could be implemented in one's life to improve it. The words of a true saint should not be viewed with a singular viewpoint or with a negative perspective. The words of such a person are always aimed at the benefit of all living beings. The fundamental tenets of all faiths are similar with common objectives and little to distinguish between them. It is merely our perspectives that differs. That is why Shrimad says, "It matters not which faith you follow or subscribe to. What is important is that you adopt that devotion, that path and that conduct in your life which will lead to the removal of the attachments to materialistic existence from your life."





An Enlightening Chapter in History

An important chapter in the religious, spiritual, and cultural history of India was the creation of a strong spiritual bond between Shrimad Rajchandra and Mahatma Gandhi. Shrimad was about two years older than Gandhiji, who considered Shrimad to be his spiritual guide. This is sufficient to express not only the greatness of Shrimad's spiritual stature but also the sincerity in Gandhiji's quest for the truth.

Gandhiji had commenced the observance of celibacy from the year VS 1956, and in VS 1962 he along with his wife, Kasturba, took vows of complete and lifelong celibacy. In his autobiography 'My Experiments with Truth', Gandhiji writes about this decision:

“Whilst in South Africa, it occurred to me that I should observe complete celibacy, even with my wife. I cannot recollect any incident or a book that gave rise to this idea. But I do recall that Rajchandra had played an important and influencing role in this decision.”

Chapter 3

Shrimad Rajchandra & Mahatma Gandhi

As long as humanity exists, the life and message of Mahatma Gandhi will continue to inspire one and all. His experiments with truth were on Indian soil, yet his thoughts and ideologies have influenced the entire human race. The world has been witness to the erosion of values, rank materialism, escalation of unhindered violence, unmitigated possessiveness, the proliferation of terrorist activities, recourse to falsehoods and unethical practises and it is at this perilous period in human history that Gandhiji's philosophy and worldview hold a ray of light to the world. Albert Einstein said that the world would hardly believe, generations later, that such a man in flesh and blood strode this world.

Gandhi has been an extraordinary phenomenon of the modern age. The path he chose to tread upon and the values he espoused and exemplified were influenced by the Jain school of thought. We shall explore several incidents in his life in the next few chapters to highlight the influence of the Jain philosophy on his life.

When Gandhi's was just nineteen years of age he sought his mother Putalibai's permission to travel to England for further studies. Gandhi would have never thought of leaving for foreign shores without her consent. Some people mentioned to his mother that those going abroad would fall prey to eating meat, carnal desires, and drinking alcohol. His mother, Putalibai, was confused and didn't know what to do. Nineteen year old Gandhi told her, "Have trust in me. I will not betray your trust. I will take an oath that I shall abstain from all such things." Putalibai responded, "I trust you, but I am not sure how will sustain it when you are so far away."

Putalibai decided to see a Jain monk, Becharadasji Swami, and seek his advice. Putalibai had great faith in him. Becharadasji told her that he would make Gandhi take a vow and then there would be no problem. Gandhi took the oath before the Jain monk Becharadasji to abstain from meat eating, drinking, and association with women. It was only after this she granted her permission for him to go abroad. Gandhiji maintained the highest ethical lifestyle standards after he took an oath in front of a Jain sage.

Another event in the young barrister's life proved to be an important factor in turning this ordinary mortal into a *Mahatma* (a great soul). Gandhi returned to India from England on 5th July 1891 and stayed with Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, younger brother of Revashankar Mehta. Revashankarbai was a close relative of Shrimad as well as his business partner. Shrimad also returned to Mumbai on the same day and had gone to Dr. Pranjivan's residence. This was Shrimad and Gandhi's first meeting which later turned into an enduring bond, lasting until Shrimad's death.

Gandhi's mother, had passed away while he was in London. His love and attachment for her was so great that his elder brother

had not dared to write to young Gandhi about the loss lest he could not bear the shock while being so far away. It was the tradition that a family elder or a person of importance conveys the news of bereavement and Shrimad had been allocated that task. Gandhi was eagerly waiting to see his mother on his arrival, and Shrimad had to break the news of her demise. Gandhi had later noted, “The news of her death gave me a greater shock than the one I felt when my father had passed away.”



At the time, Shrimad Rajchandra's fame as a *Shatavadhani* (one who could perform a hundred mental tasks simultaneously) had spread far and wide. In 1887, on January 12th, nineteen-year-old Shrimad Rajchandra had demonstrated this incredible power at an event in Mumbai's Faramji Cawasji Institute.

Dr. Pranjivan Mehta introduced Gandhi to Shrimad, who was barely twenty-five years old at the time and only two years older than Gandhi. Even in his early youth, Gandhi was a good reader of a person's character. Their first meeting left a profound and lasting impression on Gandhi; Shrimad was highly intelligent, with a very spiritual and virtuous character. Dr. Pranjivandas talked about Shrimad's performance of *Shatavadhan* and requested Shrimad to demonstrate this amazing feat to Gandhi. Gandhi was a fully-fledged barrister, qualified in England while Shrimad only studied up to 7th grade in a village school. He had no knowledge of English but a powerful retentive memory. He was able to repeat a whole series of words in the same order as they were spoken, in any language. He would do additions, subtractions, multiplications,

and divisions, all mentally. He could compose poems instantly on any subject. He could recite about four hundred words from sixteen languages, including Greek, Arabic, Latin, Sanskrit, Urdu, Marathi, etc which were mixed up. He would attend to different tasks such as playing the traditional Indian board game of Chaupat, cards, and chess all at the same time.

To test Shrimad further, Gandhi prepared a list of words almost exhausting his vocabulary in languages that Shrimad had never heard of. Gandhi had to write these down so that he could remember the order himself. He then read them out to Shrimad who recited them faultlessly. Gandhi, full of pride at being an English qualified barrister, was awestruck at this spectacle of incredible mental faculties and memory power, he noted: “All pride in my knowledge of languages simply melted away. This was a humbling experience for me, and it vaporised the ego I had built up about my western education”.



Shrimad Rajchandra Performing the Shatavdhan Experiments

This incident played a very critical role in the development of his character. It was due to this incredible experience that his ego slowly dissipated and was replaced by a humility which eventually became his hallmark that led him to the path of greatness.

Gandhi writes in his autobiography (My Experiments with Truth, page 83), “I envied his gift without, however, coming under its spell. The thing that did cast its spell over me I came to learn afterwards. This was his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character, and his burning passion for self realisation.”

Beyond this, there were several other experiences Gandhi shared with Shrimad that left a deep and lasting impression. Gandhi set up a new law practice in Mumbai and in a strange way, it was fortuitous for him that only a few cases came his way. He had plenty of spare time to meet with Shrimad. Whenever they met, he listened carefully and attentively to whatever Shrimad had to say. Shrimad’s straightforwardness and deep knowledge drew Gandhi closer to him. It was a rare occurrence that these two souls met and Bhagwan Mahavir’s philosophy, ingrained into Shrimad’s psyche through spiritual striving over several lifetimes, was absorbed by Gandhi. This philosophy inspired Gandhi to commence his experiments with truth of *ahimsa* (non-violence), truth, celibacy, and non-possessiveness. These values would guide him throughout his life. A new dawn of change was ushered in.

Gandhi had seen Shrimad engaged in the buying and selling of precious stones and pearls to earn a living. Gandhi, however, felt very clearly that Shrimad’s main focus was attaining self-realisation. Gandhi observed that no matter what else Shrimad had at his table; he always had a scriptural book and his personal diary. As soon as he had finished dealing with a customer or a task on hand, Shrimad would either start reading the book or writing in

his diary. Having observed this, Gandhi noted in his autobiography (page 84): “The man who, immediately on finishing his talk about substantial business transactions, began to write about the inner essence of the spirit, could evidently not be a businessman at all, but a real seeker of Truth.”

Gandhi stated that during this period, he was not particularly spiritually inclined, however he found spiritual discussions with Shrimad of great interest. He observed the spirituality in Shrimad when he was conducting business and wrote: “Each and every action of a religious person should reflect their spirituality.” This reflection is what we observe in the lives of both. Gandhi had made a further note: “Shrimad could not be cheated by anybody simply because he was deeply religious. Shrimad had to join his family business from the age of thirteen to support the family which was in dire financial condition. He would become immediately aware if someone was trying to cheat him. He always maintained that it was impossible to cheat one who was truly realised.”

Gandhiji was to write in later life: “Shrimad has made such a deep and enduring impression on my life that I just cannot describe it. I have been in search for a truly spiritual person in India for a long time, however, I haven’t come across anyone like him. Amongst the European philosophers, Leo Tolstoy is the greatest, followed by Ruskin; but Raichandbhai’s influence upon me was much deeper.”

In examining Gandhi’s life, we find that he met Shrimad in 1891, he first read Ruskin’s thoughts in 1904 and entered into correspondence with Tolstoy in 1910. Thus from 1891 to 1904, it was Shrimad’s influence that was paramount in Gandhi’s life. In 1904, while travelling from Johannesburg to Durban by train, Gandhi met a person named Henry Pollack, who handed him John

Ruskin's "Unto This Last" which he read during that train journey. Having read the book, he was inspired to form the concept of *Sarvodaya* – compassion unto all.

Gandhi began correspondence with Tolstoy in early 1910 and wrote three letters to him. Tolstoy passed away in November 1910. Gandhi, did not have the good fortune to meet these two great philosophers personally. However, he had the good fortune to meet Shrimad and maintain contact with him for over ten years. Their meeting and continued contact proved to be the turning point in his life and had a lasting impact.

The inspiring force in Gandhi's life was his spirituality and it was Shrimad Rajchandra who formed and strengthened his faith. Gandhi had said that if he were in any spiritual crisis, he would seek Shrimad's advice.

In October 1893, a man named Mr. Baker took Gandhi to Wellington's Christian convention held in Tober, South Africa. He thought that the inspiring spiritual atmosphere at the convention and the deeply religious attitude of the assembled people would create such a powerful impact on Gandhi that he would certainly convert to Christianity. The convention lasted three days but it did not have the desired effect on Gandhi.

On the other hand, Abdulla Sheth, who had brought Gandhi to South Africa, was persuading him to study Islam. He discussed the features of Islam at length. Gandhi commenced reading the English translation of Quran by Sale. He also read Mohammad's biography by Washington Irving and Carlyle's eulogy of



Mohammad. He made a collection of various books on Islam.

Gandhi was also studying the Parsi religion of Zoroastrianism by reading ‘Zarathustra Quotations’

He entered into correspondence on Christianity with his Christian friends in England, in particular with Edward Maitland, which continued for a long time. At this time, Gandhi was aware of what, in his opinion, were the shortcomings of the Hindu philosophy.

In order to resolve his mental conflicts, he sought clarification and guidance from Shrimad outlining the doubts that he could not resolve. He asked several questions – What is meant by soul? What is meant by God? Is God the Creator of the universe? What is *moksha*? Is it possible to attain *moksha*? What is *Aryadharma* (the conduct of the worthy)? What is the relevance of Bhagwad Gita? He also raised questions about Christianity, the Bible, the Old Testament, the incarnations of Krishna and Ram, and of the Holy Trinity in the Hindu pantheon of Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.

Shrimad responded with a series of letters. In his second letter, he explained the characteristics of the soul and encouraged Gandhi to contemplate on those. In his third letter, he talked about the conduct of the worthy. Gandhi’s letters showed the mental turmoil he was experiencing about the different faiths he had studied. Shrimad’s answers were based on both his insight and his own experience, along with logic supporting each answer.

Gandhi also wrote to other religious scholars in India but it was from Shrimad’s letters he gained comfort and peace. Shrimad counselled him to be patient and asked him to study Hinduism more deeply. He gave him a copy of Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, which, later, Gandhiji described as his spiritual panacea. He also gave him

Panchikaran, Maniratnamala, a chapter from Yogvashishtha and Shaddarshan Samuchchaya by Haribhadrasuri to read. Gandhi read all these, along with Shrimad's own writings in Vachanamrut and Mokshamala.



After reading these books with an open mind, he came to realise that Hindu philosophy had no shortcomings as he had initially thought, but offered very subtle and deep thought processes, cognition of the soul and a very high degree of compassion which other philosophies did not. He began to understand the salient features of Hinduism, and his reverence for it increased multifold. He noted, “It was Raichandbhai who helped me resolve my doubts about Hinduism.”

According to the passionate Gandhian thinker, Muni Shri Santbalji, “Gandhi continued to believe himself to be a traditional Hindu. However, to understand the real Gandhi, one must bear in mind the thoughts of Rajchandra”. (Parichay-Prabhav, page 28).

It is believed that Shrimad wrote about two hundred letters to Gandhi. Gandhi referred to this in one of his lectures. If these letters were to become available today, they would help in solving many basic spiritual and practical problems.

An question often asked is; what would have happened if Gandhi's doubts about Hinduism had not been resolved and he had converted to Christianity? Who would have then thought of *Satyagraha* (non-violent adherence to the truth) and *Swarajya* (self-rule)? Gandhiji would perhaps become a Michael or a Mohammad but the fact that he remained Mohandas K. Gandhi is due to the impact of his spiritual guide, Shrimad Rajchandra.

Gandhi writes, “I have not come across a self realised soul comparable to him and he was the ‘best Indian’ of his time.” Gandhi says, “Shrimad Rajchandra’s life itself is the greatest service rendered. I remain deeply obligated to him.”



Gandhiji read many of Shrimad’s writings and in a talk delivered after the Shrimad’s death he said, “I have read his writings and they gave me the utmost peace. I am confident that one who wants to alleviate mental agony and wants to know the purpose of his life will surely find the answers in Shrimad’s writings, be he a Hindu or not.”

Gandhi, at one time, was living in Tolstoy Farm, twenty-one miles from Johannesburg. The farm was heavily infested with snakes and Gandhi had a deep fear of snakes from his early childhood. He asked Rajchandra, “If a snake were to attack me, should I allow it to bite me or should I kill it?” Rajchandra replied, “It is not proper to say that one should allow it to bite oneself but at the same time is it appropriate that one who desires to attain salvation should kill the snake in order to protect his own perishable body? One who lacks the culture of Aryan character may be told to kill the snake, but we should wish that neither you nor I will even dream of being such a person.” Gandhi used to ask Shrimad a variety of questions, ranging from the spiritual to the most ordinary and he received satisfying answers to all of them.

While in South Africa, Gandhi understood the effect of practising celibacy with one’s wife. Gandhi attributed this ideology to Shrimad’s abiding influence over him. He also learnt about the subtleness and depth of forgiveness in the Jain religion from

Shrimad. He appreciated that one should not bear animosity, even towards one's enemy. In February 1908, a Pathan called Mir Alam attacked Gandhi with the intention of maiming him, yet Gandhi did not harbour even slightest ill-will towards him. He wrote in the Indian Opinion that he did not want the police to take any action against Alam or for people to bear a grudge against him. With the passage of time, Mir Alam realised his folly.

In the same vein, Gandhiji forgave General Smuts, Home Minister of the Transvaal State, who had been his main persecutor in South Africa. He forgave him for all his past actions. When leaving South Africa, Gandhi presented the General with a pair of sandals, which he made himself. Smuts said that he would cherish the gift. It is rumored that after Mir Alam's attack and Gandhi's act of forgiving him, that Gandhi came to be known as "Mahatma Gandhi".

Gandhiji's life epitomises qualities such as non-violence, fearlessness, love of truth, forgiveness, celibacy, non-possessiveness, all-encompassing tolerance and vegetarianism and one can discern through them the profound influence Jain thinking had on him. It was from Shrimad that he came to know the true nature of *ahimsa*.

What is *ahimsa*? Is it merely a word devoid of deeper meaning? Is it simply a concept of mind? It is none of these – it is a lotus like concept that transforms one into a wholesome living being. Since the time of Bhagwan Rushabhdev, the word has acquired an endless number of interpretations. Many have exemplified this quality by sacrificing their own lives or by practising severe penance or by suffering. It was Bhagwan Mahavir, over 2600 years ago, who permeated the concept of *ahimsa* throughout the aryan world. This concept evolved in Shrimad's mind and became the

basis of Gandhi's ideology during his lifetime, forming the core of his entire existence. Seen from this point of view, there appears to be an 'invisible communication' between Bhagwan Mahavir and Gandhi. Bhagwan Mahavir had drawn up an infallible guide to ideal living. What conduct one must observe and what one must not; what one must consume for nourishment and what one must not. How must one conduct one's affairs, what to say and how to say it? Following this guidance eventually leads to a life of *ahimsa*.

Both Bhagwan Mahavir and Mahatma Gandhi faced severe ordeals testing the strength of their belief in *ahimsa*. Both faced extremely violent people; Bhagwan Mahavir went to the Ladh region inhabited by savages. He faced them with equanimity and refused to keep even a stick to ward off wild ferocious dogs. *Ahimsa's* weapon is the faith in the soul. Similarly, in August 1946, Gandhi stood amidst a hostile and violent crowd in Kolkata where communal violence was at its peak. People were baying for blood, wanting revenge for the loss of their own. He was unarmed and his only protection was his mantra of *Ahimsa*. In the face of such a situation, there are only two possibilities – surrender or sacrifice. Bhagwan Mahavir had shown love and compassion to Sangamdev, Yaksha Shulpani and the snake, Chandakaushik. 2600 years later, Gandhiji stood there with the same power of love and compassion and faced the violent crowd thirsting for blood. His gallant offer of love and compassion quelled the fire of violence. Viceroy Lord Mountbatten commented that evening, "Gandhi has achieved something single-handedly which even a whole brigade could not have done, and in the process, saved the eastern wing of India from complete catastrophe."

Ahimsa is not only a philosophical concept as we have seen, but it is also something that can be practised in real life. If love is

centered on the “self”, and the purpose is selfish, then it proves fatal and ends in violence. If, to achieve my goals, I injure others, through speech and deeds, then it is utterly selfish. However, when this love is practised without centering it on the self, will embrace the universe. Gandhiji developed and practised this universal love, and behind that love one can feel Shrimad’s influence.

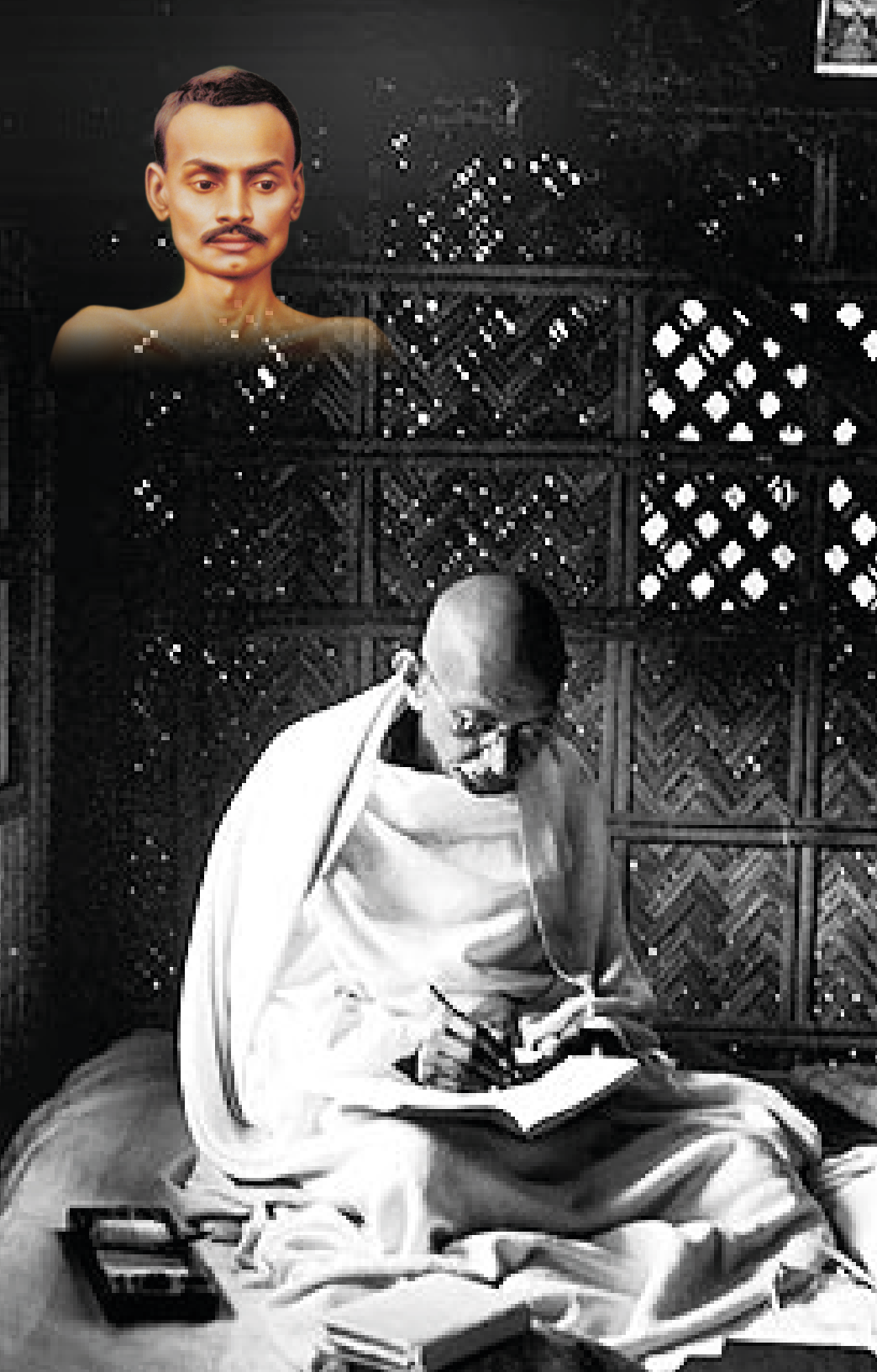
Gandhiji noted, “This person (Rajchandra) has won over my heart in matters of religion... *Ahimsa* was central to his very existence. His concept of *Ahimsa* encompassed all living things from tiniest micro-organisms to the entire human race.”

Gandhi observed fearlessness in Shrimad and imbibed that quality from him. In a memorial lecture in Mandvi, Kutch, twenty-five years after Shrimad’s death, Gandhi said, “Let us today gain strength from his memory to learn to be able to assert truth fearlessly. Be mindful of your conscience at all times and treat it as your watchdog, taking care that no action of ours will hurt it.”

Casting a glance over Gandhi’s life, it is clear that he feared nothing but God during his life. He said, “In modern times, despite being human, we are no better than the quadrupeds. The strong suppress the weak, and rich the poor.”

In modern times, Bertrand Russell, the great thinker said, “Ban the bomb.” However, it raises a very significant question: “How do you ban the bomb?” The answer is not simple as tying a bell around a cat’s neck, it is more akin to tying, but as difficult as trying to tie a bell around the neck of a tiger. The true answer is ‘Ahimsa’. This is not merely a thought put into words, but this has been implemented in action in the midst of dangerous circumstances. In the midst of the fire of violence, he displayed calmness and unparalleled fearlessness.

The second virtue that Gandhiji acquired from Shrimad



Rajchandra was truthfulness. According to him Shrimad practised what he preached and invariably spoke the truth. Truth, central to the Jain philosophy, is reflected in Gandhiji's life and deeds. A question arises as to where these two qualities, the love of truth and non-violence, led Gandhi.

In his own weekly publication "Young India", in the March 1925 issue, Gandhi wrote, "His (Shrimad's) *Anekantvad* (multifaceted view) is based on two principles - truth and non-violence." Gandhi explained how he was impressed by the philosophy of *Anekantvad* - "I had believed that my view or opinion was always right, and that my genuine critics were wrong. Now I have realised that both of us were right from our own individual perspectives. I stopped accusing my critics or opponents of being wrong. I learnt that we must see what Muslims had to say from their point of view and what Sikhs say from theirs."

In 1938, Gandhiji visited Rajkot for the first time after Shrimad's death. He had an extremely tight schedule of meetings of national importance, however, after alighting from the train, he went straight to the shrine of his spiritual guide and his source of inspiration demonstrating his reverence towards Shrimad.

Gandhiji also made a point to attend prayer meetings held to celebrate Shrimad's birth anniversary whenever possible. At such meetings, he would talk about Shrimad's qualities and what he had personally learnt and gained from his life.

He once said that we can learn four qualities from Shrimad's life: (1) to be absorbed in the eternal truth (2) straightforwardness in life and a sense of equality towards all living beings (3) adherence to truth and (4) a life based on *Ahimsa* (non-violence).

Jain religion lays great stress on fasting and for Gandhiji it became a most powerful weapon. In the severe austerities

practised by Shrimad, Gandhiji had seen the quest for the soul. Fasting purifies the soul, makes one non-violent and helps one attain salvation. The realisation of the soul that resides within us makes us fearless and is the ultimate achievement of this human life.

A striking incident, reflecting the impact of Jain philosophy in Gandhiji's life, took place in Phoenix, South Africa. A student, from the school where Gandhiji's son Devdas was studying, found a shilling on his way to the station. Their local teacher Dhaivatben and students decided to spend that shilling on buying savouries which all students could share. Since everyone would be party to the conspiracy, they were confident that no report would reach Gandhiji; but he somehow came to know of it. Gandhiji discussed the matter with the teacher and others and then called his son Devdas who was also party to eating the savoury. He slapped him a few times in anger. The fact that his son had cheated on him caused him a great deal of anguish. He fasted on that day and said that he would eat the next day. Ten days later, he fasted again for seven days to atone for the sin.

The people there benefitted from a heart-touching discourse by Gandhiji, every evening, for those seven days. For those seven days, they sang the spiritual poem '*Apurva avasar aevo kyaare aavshe*' by Shrimad Rajchandra. Manilal, an ashram resident, played the organ and sang somberly and Gandhi went on giving the discourse. These discourses embodied the message of Rajchandra. He said, "I am fasting not to punish anyone but to overcome my weaknesses. Our *rishis* practised severe penance and as a result a tiger and a cow would play together in front of them. Unless we develop such a state of spirituality, salvation will not come our way."

Another important tenet of Jainism is *Aparigraha*, non-possessiveness. Bhagwan Mahavir preached that one should not even keep a toothpick if it was not required. Gandhiji was profoundly influenced by this principle and practised it comprehensively. “Whatever is surplus to your needs is for others. You have to look after not only your own needs but, more importantly, the needs of other people. Learn to distribute, to share” he said.

The same is true of vegetarianism, an essential component of the Jain principle of *Ahimsa*. Virchand Raghavji Gandhi was the first to explain the Jain philosophy in the western world. Twenty-nine-year-old Virchand Raghavji gave a talk on September 11, 1893, on Jainism, in the Columbus Hall of Arts Institute, Chicago. A barrister by profession, he was the first shravak, a Jain householder, to visit the USA. He was well versed in Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu scriptures. Gandhiji was in close contact with him. Virchand Gandhi set up the Jain Literary Society in England and went on to promote vegetarianism. This is when he came into contact with Mahatma Gandhi, and they experimented with the concepts of a healthy diet.

Jain tradition places great importance on the status of women in society and this is reflected in the breaking of the shackles of Bhagwan Mahavir’s disciple, Chandanbala and her subsequent leadership of all female disciples of Bhagwan Mahavir. Similarly, Gandhiji fought for women’s liberation wanting to break the shackles of women’s bondage. He practised Bhagwan Mahavir’s preaching on a social scale in India.

Gandhiji also practised other elements of a Jain lifestyle. He had given up taking meals after sunset for the last thirty-six years of his life (Nemchand M. Gala, Shrimad Rajchandra and Gandhiji). He drank boiled water and ate only five items in a meal,

including salt. This is the Jain concept of *Vriti Sankshep* (control of the senses) that specifies that only a fixed number of items could be consumed in a meal.

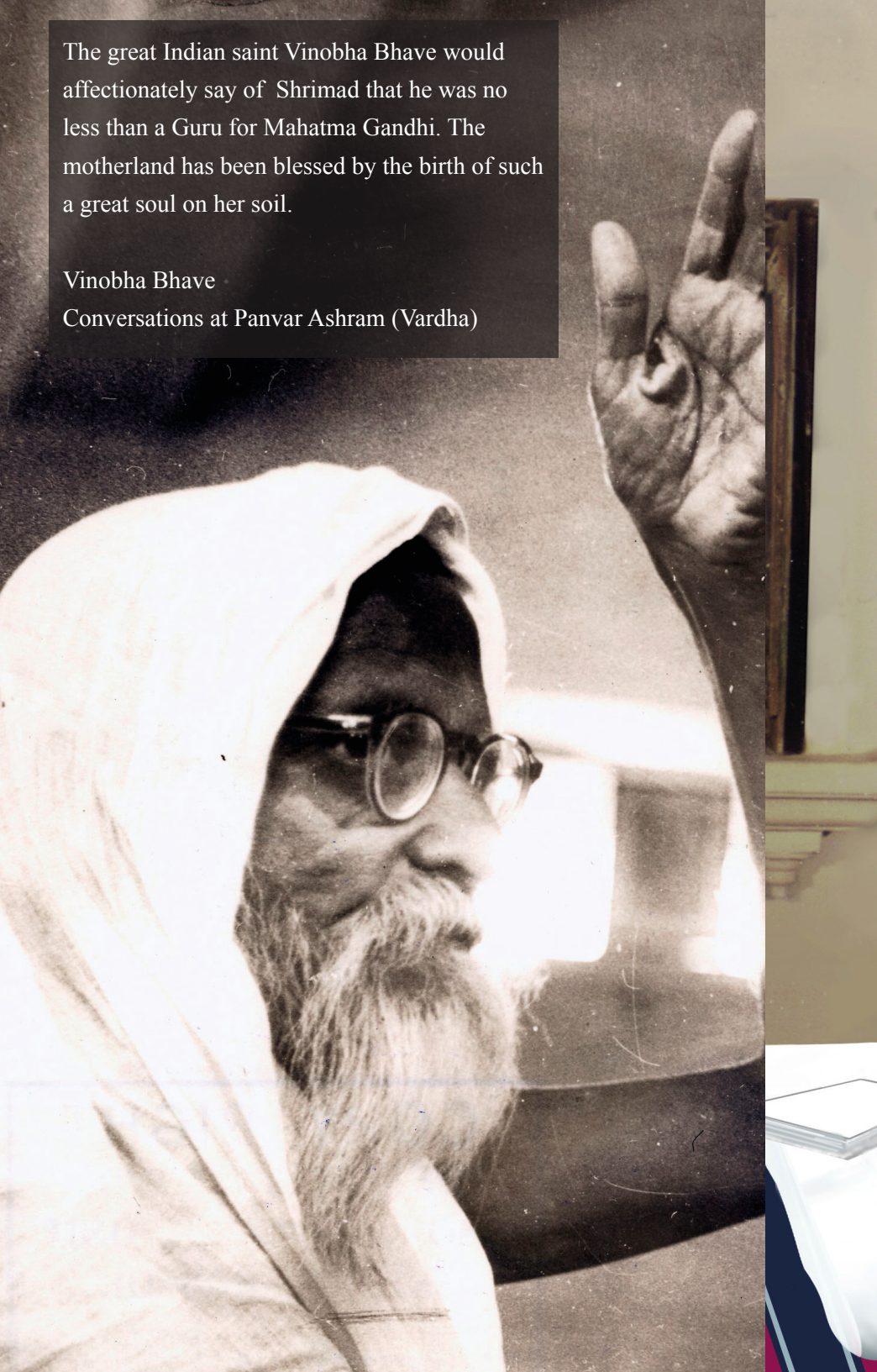
The Jain philosophy not only prescribes a religion but is also the art of living. The lifestyle is moulded by developing knowledge (of self), faith and conduct. Non-violence, truth, non-possessiveness, forgiveness, *anekant*, celibacy, fearlessness and vegetarianism are the core values for this development, and these are reflected in all spheres of Gandhiji's life. Jain philosophy played an integral role in shaping the character of one of the greatest personalities of the century, Mahatma Gandhi.



The great Indian saint Vinobha Bhave would affectionately say of Shrimad that he was no less than a Guru for Mahatma Gandhi. The motherland has been blessed by the birth of such a great soul on her soil.

Vinobha Bhave

Conversations at Panvar Ashram (Vardha)





Chapter 4

Three Letters

Mahatma Gandhi and Shrimad Rajchandra had engaged in a prolific exchange of correspondence. However, only three of the letters written between these great souls are available to us now. In the first of these letters Gandhiji asks twenty-seven key questions along with secondary questions, making thirty-five questions in all.

Gandhiji wrote in the true style of a barrister, deeply searching and with absolute clarity. Shrimad responded from the very depths of his knowledge, experience, and balanced view. These letters and the spiritual books Shrimad sent to Gandhiji quenched his spiritual thirst. Shrimad's all-encompassing universal adherence to the eternal truth, devoid of any sectarianism truly touched Gandhiji.

Gandhiji received news of Shrimad's death prior to his return to India in VS 1957. On his arrival in India, Gandhiji met Shrimad's family members and developed a friendship with Shrimad's younger brother, Mansukhbhai. When he returned to South Africa in VS 1958, Gandhiji took with him the Atmasiddhi Shastra and other spiritual compositions written by Shrimad.

The responses to the 35 questions given by Shrimad to Gandhiji have been published in the book "Shrimad Rajchandra" (Publisher: Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram – Agas 5th Edition 1988) as letter numbers 530, 570 and 717. (Aso vad VS1950, Fagun vad 5th VS 1951 and Aso sud 3rd VS 1952). These are also appended in this publication.



Letter 530

Mumbai, Aso Vad 6, Saturday 1950



Obeisance to the enlightened souls.

To the soul seeker, one always embracing the virtues, worthy of spiritual association, brother Mohanlal, Durban.

From Mumbai, I, Raichand, seeker of liberation, offer the appropriate salutations to you with the soul in mind.

All is well here. I have received your letter addressed to me. For a variety of reasons, there was a delay in replying to you. Then I heard that you were due to come this way, so I postponed my response; however, I have now received the news that it will almost be a year before your return, and so I am writing to you.

The questions in your letter about the soul and associated matters and your eagerness for my response to them, are both commendable. However, when I received your letter, I was not in a state of mind to respond to you mainly because of the deep sense of detachment I was feeling towards all worldly matters at the time. I had thought that after a while, I will take a short break from my worldly detachment and write to you, but even that did not happen. I did not even acknowledge the receipt of your letter; such was the lapse on my part that I felt a sense of regret in my mind.

At that point, I heard that you were due to come to this country shortly and hence I felt that my delay in replying became more favorable as we would have the opportunity to discuss your questions face to face as some of them were complex and difficult to explain in writing. Also, I was aware of your eagerness for the



answers and had I written to you then, the letter would have taken longer to reach you.

However, I now write my responses to your queries in brief, with the hope that when we next meet, we will be able to discuss them in more depth and detail. These responses will need deep thought and contemplation for proper understanding. My responses are generally brief, and so perhaps may not resolve all your doubts, but given the strong faith you have towards me and my words, I am confident that you will be patient and wait for full resolution.

Your letter had twenty-seven questions which I have answered as follows:

Question 1

- (1) What is the soul?
- (2) Is it active?
- (3) Is it affected by karma?

Answer:

(1) Just as the pot and a piece of cloth are material objects, so also the soul is a cognisant object. The pot and cloth are ephemeral objects; they cannot retain their form forever. The soul can retain its form forever and thus remains unchanged eternally. An object that cannot be produced by any combination of substances is an eternal object. The soul cannot be created by the association of any other substances. That is because one may try thousands of combinations of inanimate substances, but none of those can give rise to consciousness. If a particular substance does not possess a certain quality, the combination of many such substances lacking that quality cannot give rise to a substance that possesses that quality.

Material objects such as a pot and a piece of cloth do not appear to possess cognisance. All possible associations and combinations of such substances shall always remain inanimate, under no circumstances can they give rise to consciousness. Thus, through the association of such substances how can the soul, which has been described by the enlightened masters as being pure consciousness be produced? Knowledge and awareness are the distinguishing characteristics of the soul, and the lack of those characteristics is that of matter. Both the soul and matter possess their own individual qualities which have been fundamental to their existence since infinite time. Through this and other such doctrines, the soul can be proved to be eternal. Similarly, through deep contemplation on these postulates, one can attain the state of self-realisation. That which can experience happiness and sorrow, that which can think, can inspire, that in whose presence alone all such feelings and emotions can be experienced, truly that is the soul whose essential quality is consciousness; and by virtue of that quality, it can be ascribed. There is certainly no objection or hindrance in this belief, and, in fact, in its acceptance, lies the acceptance of the truth.

This and other questions of yours are such that much explanation and writing is needed to elaborate properly upon them. At this point in time it has not been possible to write such an elaborate response to you, and so please refer to the book, ‘Shaddarshana Sammuchay’ (Compendium of the Six Faiths) that I sent to you earlier. By reading and contemplating upon it and by this letter, I am certain that you shall attain the answers to your queries to some extent. It is natural that several further questions shall arise in your mind, but by deep and repeated contemplation upon them, you shall find the answers you seek, for such is your inner state.

(2) In the state of self-realisation, the soul having attained through true teaching, true knowledge, becomes the doer of its own perception, knowledge, and effortless equanimity. While the soul is in a state of ignorance, it becomes the doer of emotions such as anger, greed, ego, and deceit, and thus becomes the bearer of the fruits of its own actions, and at the same time a creator of the objects we see in the world such as a pot or a piece of cloth. However, in reality, it is not the creator of the fundamental substances making up these objects, but merely a causal factor in the manifestation of these fundamental substances in the form of a pot or a cloth. This state of ignorance that leads to the quality of “doing” is defined as karma in Jain philosophy, in Vedanta it is called delusion. By deep contemplation, one realises that the soul cannot be the doer of passions such as anger, neither that of objects in the material world, it can only ever be the doer of its own true nature which is consciousness.

(3) Karma that is incurred by the soul in a state of ignorance is like a seed which at the appropriate time bears fruit, and the soul must then bear the consequences of that karma. Just as the action of touching fire, leads to the sensation of burning in one’s fingers, so also the karma that is incurred by the soul’s acts of anger, deceit etc. lead to the consequences of birth, old age, disease, death, etc. I urge you to deeply contemplate upon this concept and should any question arise in your mind, then let me know. For liberation can only be attained by preventing all those acts that lead to bondage.

Question 2

(1) What is God?

(2) Is He really the creator of this universe?

Answer:

(1) You and I are souls living in the midst of karmic bondage. The pure soul, unblemished by karma, whose true nature is consciousness, is God. That in which the glory of conscious awareness resides, that is God, and that Godliness is the soul's very nature. While bonded by karma, the soul cannot recognise its true nature; but when it recognises itself to be distinct from karma and karma's influence, then it has attained self-realisation. That state is unparalleled in its glory and perfection, and nothing in the materialistic world can come even remotely close to it. God is a name used to refer to the purest manifestation of the soul and I have a firm conviction that there is no other element superior to this pure soul that can be called God.

(2) He is not the creator of this universe, for the fundamental substances that make up this universe such as space, ether, atomic subparticles, etc. are eternal; they cannot be created out of anything. If one assumes, for the sake of argument, that these fundamental substances were created by God, then there is an inconsistency, for how could God whose nature is that of consciousness alone, have created material objects such as atomic subparticles, ether, etc.? Never can insentient matter be created out of a sentient being. If God is considered insentient with a physical existence, then all his glory is lost, and similarly, no sentient being could be created by him either. If God is considered to be both as sentient and insentient, then this very universe which consists of sentient beings and insentient objects shall have to be called God and accept the explanation of God being the creator, but I feel it is more appropriate to address the universe as the universe. Perhaps one could consider the fundamental substances as eternal, and God as a superior being that imparts justice to living beings according to their actions, but this logic is

inconsistent as well. Numerous arguments against this have been expounded upon in the scripture titled ‘Shaddarshana Sammuchay’ (Compendium of the Six Faiths).

Question 3

What is Moksh (liberation)?

Answer:

It is the eternal freedom of the soul from the bondage of false identification with the body and from passions such as anger, which it experiences in the state of ignorance. That is true Moksh (liberation) as stated by the enlightened ones. This concept becomes acceptable upon contemplation.

Question 4

Can one realise whether or not he shall certainly attain liberation in this very human form?

Answer:

Imagine a person’s hands have been tied by several turns of a rope. As the rope is unwound one turn at a time, the person experiences freedom from the rope, step by step. When the rope is finally unwound completely, the person experiences complete freedom. Similarly, while in a state of ignorance, the soul is bound by knots of delusion. As and when these knots are undone, the soul experiences glimpses of its freedom. When this unwinding of delusion reaches a very high degree, the soul spontaneously experiences its true nature, which is that of consciousness, bliss, and eternal existence. This is a very clear and distinct experience. As this experience grows, the soul can reach a level where it has completely shed all its delusion, and

even though it is still within this body, it can experience complete freedom and can witness itself as completely distinct from the body. Thus, a soul can definitely attain liberation while still associated with the body.

Question 5

I have read that when a soul departs from this human form, its reincarnation could even be as an animal, a stone, a tree, etc. according to its karma. Is this true?

Answer:

When the soul departs this body, it reincarnates in accordance with its karma, and this could be as an animal, a plant or even a stone. In this state of earthen form, devoid of four of the five senses, it must bear the fruits of its actions. But just because it is reincarnated as a stone does not mean it is not a sentient being or that it has become inanimate. Even as a stone, the soul remains as a conscious entity. Because it is devoid of the four senses, it is considered to be a stone. At the end of its destined lifespan, after it has depleted the karma that caused it to be reincarnated as a stone, the soul departs from that body, and the stone remains behind as an inanimate object, just in the same way that a dead body lies rotting after the soul has departed from it. By the fruition of karma that causes a soul to be devoid of four senses and survive with just the one sense of touch, a soul is led to being reincarnated as a one-sensed life form, such as a stone. But at no point does it lose its sentience and become an inanimate object. Similarly, when a soul is reincarnated as an animal, it does not become an animal in totality. The external form is merely like donning a new piece of clothing, internally its fundamental nature remains unaffected.

Questions 6 and 7

Answer:

The answer to the sixth and seventh questions is also contained above. The external form of the soul such as a stone etc. is not the doer of its karma. The soul, which has been reincarnated into a particular physical form, is the doer of its karma. Just as milk and water when mixed together appear to have become one inseparable solution, each has retained its own properties. Similarly, the soul may appear to be indistinct from its physical form, but in reality, it is always separate. When the soul is reincarnated as a one-sensed being, like a stone for instance, although it may appear to be insentient, it is still the same sentient being and still possesses its natural qualities, but those are in a latent state.

Question 8

- (1) What is the Arya (noble) religion?
- (2) Have all religions arisen from the Vedas?

Answer:

(1) While addressing the question of which religion is considered as noble, everyone naturally promotes their own as the noblest of all. The Jains consider it to be Jainism; the Hindus proclaim Hinduism, and the Buddhists stand by Buddhism. But the enlightened souls consider the religion which leads the soul to attain realisation of its true nature to be the noblest of all.

It does not seem logical that all religions arose from the Vedas. It has been my own experience that the knowledge expounded by the Tirthankars is by far deeper than that by the Vedas. Naturally, a part of the whole cannot give birth to the whole, and therefore one can conclude that it would be a fallacy to think that all religions

sprung from the Vedas. It does seem reasonable to conclude that various Vaishnava and related sects arose from the Vedas. The last great leaders of Jainism and Buddhism such as Mahavir, etc., were most certainly born after the Vedas had been created; and it is also true that the Vedas are extremely ancient texts. But just because something is ancient does not mean it is complete and true, and vice versa just because something is newer does not mean it is incomplete or untrue. The concepts expressed in the Vedas and Jain texts have existed since infinite time. All spirituality is eternal, it is never created nor does it cease to exist. It merely changes form from time to time. The ideas behind the Vedas, Jainism and of other religions are eternal, so what is there to debate about? That said, it is important for all of us to analyse which of these faiths has expressed the strongest and most powerful version of the truth.

Question 9

- (1) Who created the Vedas? Are they eternal?
- (2) If they are indeed eternal, then what does eternal truly mean?

Answer:

- (1) The Vedas were created a very long time ago.
- (2) No scripture in the form of a book can be considered eternal, but in terms of the content of the book, all of them can be considered eternal; because the truth that is expressed in them has been expounded by numerous souls at different points in time in a variety of ways. Feelings, such as anger, have existed for all eternity, and so have other feelings such as forgiveness. Violence has existed since eternity, and so has compassion. It is worthwhile to think about what is beneficial to the soul. Both are eternal, but at times it is one, while at other times it is the other that exerts its force.

Question 10

Who wrote the Gita? Is it God's creation? If it indeed is created by God, then is there some proof?

Answer:

The previous answers will shed some light on this question too. If you consider a self-realised (enlightened) person to be God, then indeed one can consider that Gita to have been created by God. But if you imagine it to have been created by a kind of divine heavenly entity then it is not possible, as the creation of a book is an ordinary task with a beginning to it at a given point in time is not something that is eternal and needs divine intervention. The Gita is considered to have been created by Shree Vedvyas, and it contains the words of wisdom as preached by Lord Krishna to Arjun on the battlefield. Thus, its main creator can be said to be Lord Krishna. Gita is an excellent text, and the essence of its teachings can be considered eternal, but the verses as composed within it cannot be considered so. Similarly, its creation by a divine entity is not possible. Such an act of creation can only have been undertaken by an embodied soul. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider an enlightened soul to be God, and the scriptures written by him as to have been created by God himself.

Question 11

Can sacrificing animals ever lead to meritorious fruits?

Answer:

Killing or sacrificing animals or even hurting them is a sin, whether that heinous act is committed in a ceremonial sacrifice or in the kingdom of God. The acts of charity that are carried out during the

sacrifice ceremony could be benevolent, however because they are amidst such great violence, they are not worthy of appreciation.

Question 12

Can validation be demanded for the religion that is considered to be the best?

Answer:

If a faith is stated to be the best without any justification, then indeed all faiths, points of views, arguments, etc. can equally be treated to be the best. Only by comparing the vastness and magnanimity of a religion can one determine its greatness. The religion that provides the best path to end worldly existence and that which is the most potent in helping a soul realise its true nature, can be viewed as the best amongst all.

Question 13

Are you conversant with the Christian faith? If yes, then please share some of your thoughts on it.

Answer:

I have a general awareness of the Christian faith. Even with a brief study, one would conclude that the religions that have been professed by the great saints of India are unparalleled by those preached by saints of any other nation. Even among those, the Christian faith has professed an eternal dependence of the soul on a higher entity, something that is retained even in the state of liberation. The religion that does not describe or explain the eternal nature of the soul, nor does it describe the nature of bondage or path to freedom from it, could not, in my opinion, be the best religion. The Christian faith

does not appear to have addressed the above points in a suitably. Please do not interpret these statements as dogmatic but simply as an observation. If you have further questions on this matter, then please feel free to ask, and I should be able to explain.

Question 14

Christianity states that the Bible is a creation of God; and that Christ is a personification of God, a son of God, and will continue to be so.

Answer:

One can accept such a statement by faith, but not logically. What I have said above with regards to the Gita and the Vedas also applies to the Bible. The Godly soul that has rid itself of birth and death has no reason to reincarnate, for reincarnation is but the fruit of passions; it seems inconsistent that a divine soul that has overcome such lowly passions would undergo reincarnation. The existence of a son of God can be accepted in an allegorical sense, but to consider it literally seems unacceptable. How can it be said that the liberated Lord has a son? And if we do accept it, then how can we explain its creation? If both are considered eternal, then how can their relationship as father and son be explained? It is worth pondering upon these points. With due diligence, I am sure you shall realise the veracity of these statements.

Question 15

All the predictions contained in the Old Testament about Christ have been proved to be right.

Answer:

Even if that were true, it is worth thinking about both these scriptures.

Even the astrological sciences can predict the birth of a divine soul, so it would be incorrect to consider the Christ to be an incarnation of God just because such a prediction had been made earlier. Even if a great soul, with the capabilities of a seer, did accurately predict such an occurrence, it remains to be verified whether that soul possessed an innate knowledge of the inner path to spiritual freedom. Until then, their acceptance can only be based on faith. Thus, it cannot be fully established if this is true.

Question 16

You wrote about the “miracles of Christ”.

Answer:

Once a soul has departed from a body, someone’s claim to have reinstated either that or another soul within that body seems implausible; for if it were true, then the whole mechanism of karma would fail. As such, several miraculous powers can arise in a spiritually adept soul, and for Christ to have possessed such powers seems plausible; but these powers are nothing compared to the greatness of the soul. The glory of the soul is infinitely greater than any miraculous power. This matter can be discussed in detail when we meet in person.

Question 17

Is it possible to know one’s next incarnation while still in this present birth? Is it possible to know one’s previous lives?

Answer:

That is indeed possible. One whose knowledge has achieved a high level of purity can know such matters. Just as one can predict the

weather based on certain factors such as cloud formations in the sky, so also one can make a conjecture about one's actions in previous lives based on certain behavioral traits. Similarly, based on one's characteristics in this birth, the soul's future incarnation can be predicted.

Question 18

Who can see the past and future lives?

Answer:

Refer to the last answer (17).

Question 19

On what basis do you claim certain souls to have attained liberation?

Answer:

If this question has been specifically addressed to me, then I would reply by saying that it is based on the words of these great souls and their behavioral traits, that one can experience to some extent within one's self. Based on these I can verify their attainment of liberation, and the scriptures offer evidence to this too.

Question 20

On what basis do you say that even Buddha has not attained liberation?

Answer:

That is based on the postulates in Buddha's scriptures. If his own opinions were indeed like those that have been stipulated in his scriptures, then they appear to contain a contradiction; and that is

certainly not a sign of an enlightened soul.

If one does not possess complete knowledge, then one cannot be completely rid of lowly passions such as likes and dislikes. Where these exist, worldly existence could not have been completely eradicated. Therefore, it cannot be said that such a soul has attained complete liberation. One may argue that his actual opinion differed from what was written in their scriptures, but then it would be difficult for you and me to understand. However, stating that his opinion differed would not give conclusive proof.

Question 21

What will the end of the world be like?

Answer:

It appears implausible to me that all the souls in this world shall ever attain liberation and that the world will simply cease to exist. The continuity of its existence will flow unabated. Some things are created anew, while other undergo transformation and reach their end; such is the state of the world. But after much contemplation upon this, I can tell you that it is improbable that the world can ever cease to exist in totality. Note that by the world I do not mean just the earth.

Question 22

Will an ethical order ever become a reality from the current inequities?

Answer:

If on seeing the response to this question, any unethical person tries to indulge in his passions, he should be discouraged from doing

so. Both ethical and non-ethical qualities are ever present. However, you and I can adhere to ethical qualities and give up the unethical qualities. This action is essential for one's spiritual progress. It is inconceivable that all living beings will give up their unethical qualities in favour of those that are ethical. It is utopian to think that such a state of affairs will ever happen.

Question 23:

Will the world face complete annihilation?

Answer:

If by annihilation you mean the complete destruction of the universe, then that seems implausible for the fundamental substances can never be obliterated in totality. If by annihilation you mean the merging of all the individual souls into the supreme universal consciousness, then that may be considered to be possible by some schools of thought. But I find that to be implausible too, for in order to have such an occurrence all the souls would have to attain perfect equanimity, and how that could ever happen seems inexplicable to me. Further, if all souls were to ever attain such perfect equanimity, then it would be impossible to fall back into the materialistic world of dualistic existence. If by annihilation you mean that souls remain in dualistic existence from an external perspective while being perfectly equanimous internally, then the question arises as to how dualistic existence can ever come about without the association with the body, which in turn cannot come about without a lack of internal equanimity. By several such inconsistencies, it seems impossible that the universe would ever be completely obliterated.

Question 24

Can the illiterate attain liberation by the path of devotion?

Answer:

Devotion leads to knowledge. Knowledge leads to liberation. Just because someone is illiterate in terms of academic studies does not mean they cannot attain the path of devotion. Every soul's fundamental nature is consciousness. By the strength of devotion, knowledge becomes sublime. Such sublime knowledge becomes the cause for liberation. Without the attainment of complete knowledge, I do not believe one can attain complete liberation. There does not seem to be any rule which says that those who are not literate cannot attain liberation or that literacy is a cause for liberation.

Question 25

- (1) Can the incarnations of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama be considered as true? If so, then what were they? Were they indeed incarnations of The Almighty or perhaps a small part of Him?
- (2) Can one attain liberation by worshipping them?

Answer:

- (1) Both were great souls indeed, of that I have no doubt. As they were both souls, they can be considered to be God himself. If they had indeed destroyed all their bondages, then there is no harm in believing that they attained liberation.

That someone can be a part of the Almighty seems implausible to me. There are several reasons for refuting this possibility. By considering an individual soul to be a part of God, then it implies that bondage and liberation are all irrelevant and God himself is the cause of ignorance. He loses his glory and becomes ordinary soul.

In other words, such an assumption leads to the downgrading of God. If one were to consider a soul to be a part of God then why would one ever strive to be like him or to worship such an entity? For the soul itself would no longer be the doer. Based on numerous such arguments I find it difficult to accept the idea that a soul can be a part of God; then how can I consider Lord Krishna or Lord Rama to be so? That they were both manifestations of God may seem plausible. But it is worthwhile to consider whether they had both attained complete glory.

(2) Can one attain liberation by worshipping them? The answer to this question is clear. The complete riddance of all likes and dislikes within a soul leads to the attainment of liberation. When a seeker partakes the sermon from a master, and contemplates upon those words and the inner achievement of the master, he attains the state of that very master; this is the path to liberation. All other forms of worship are not the cause of liberation but simply lead to the means for liberation. Hence, it would be inappropriate to say the above.

Question 26

Who are Brahma, Vishnu, and Maheshwara?

Answer:

The trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara can be understood by various allegorical analogies such as the three fundamental qualities of this universe, i.e. creation, sustenance or existence, and destruction. However, the way these three have been described in the Puranas does not concur with my thinking. Several of those descriptions are symbolic in nature. I find it appropriate for us to try and fathom the spiritual gist contained in such scriptures rather than

debate the existence of Brahma and others.

Question 27

If a snake were to attempt to bite me, should I let it do so or should I kill it? Let us assume that there is no way to shove it away.

Answer:

If I were to tell you that you should let the snake bite you, you would then wonder what am I saying. If you have ascertained with surety that your body is transient, then how would it be appropriate to snatch away the snake's life which is indeed very dear to it? One who seeks to uplift his soul should cast away his own body in such a predicament. But what if someone does not desire to be uplifted? Then such a person should be ready to commit to the suffering of hell. Thus, how can anyone ever be advised to kill the snake? Those who possess ignoble tendencies may advocate killing the snake. For you and I could never even dream of doing such a thing.

I now conclude my letter, having answered all your questions in brief. Please make a sincere effort to understand the scripture 'Shaddarshana' in depth. If you come across any difficulties in understanding my responses to your questions then contemplate upon them deeply, do not hesitate to ask if you need any further clarification. I shall certainly endeavor to respond to you. I find it appropriate that further clarification shall come by discussing these matters in person.

Constantly contemplating upon those thoughts that lead to the continuous dwelling in the soul,

Raichand's respects.



Letter 570

Mumbai, Fagan Vad 5, Saturday. 1951

To the respected brother, Mohanlal, Durban

I acknowledge the receipt of your letter. As the involvement with external tribulations diminishes, inner equanimity rises, and it diminishes when external involvement increases. Contemplation upon this concept will make one realise that it is so. If one were to think deeply about the true ephemeral nature of worldly objects, a sense of detachment towards them would certainly arise from within; for it is merely the lack of such thought that delusion and attachment have gripped the soul.

“The soul exists,” “The soul is eternal,” “The soul is the doer of its actions,” “The soul suffers the fruits of its actions,” “Liberation from the material world exists,” and “There are means to attain liberation.” The soul which has contemplated upon these six fundamental affirmations, and has thereby experienced and ascertained them to be true is considered to have attained the judicious wisdom of the enlightened souls; that is, he or she is said to have attained the right faith or ‘samyak darshan’. The Lord Jineshwaras have professed this. All seekers of liberation should study and contemplate these affirmations in much depth.

The soul’s past spiritual endeavours or an association with an enlightened person leads to the desire to contemplate upon these six fundamental truths.

The soul’s deluded attachment to transient objects such as its body, etc., means it remains oblivious to its own eternal nature

and of its exalted state of blissful equanimity. The soul has endured this delusion for so long and with such concentrated fervor, that when one takes the first step towards overcoming this delusion, one can end up in a state of confusion and revert back to one's delusion. The soul has reached the point of untangling the knots of its delusion several times in the past, but it ends up letting go of its discriminative prowess and retreats. For that which the soul has been associated with since time immemorial, can naturally not be shed in a short period of time. Hence the soul must repeatedly engage in *satsang*, the reading of scriptures and engage itself tirelessly in contemplation upon the reality of its nature. With such striving, the soul shall surely awaken to the realisation of its true nature of eternal bliss. Several doubts are bound to arise within a seeker on this path, but with patience and contemplation, they will all subside. Impatience and self-fulfilling assumptions will only hinder the progress of the soul. Further, due to its attachment towards the impermanent materialistic objects of this universe, time and again the soul shall fall back into the cycle of birth and rebirth.

I am genuinely pleased to learn that you hold a keen desire to ponder upon the true nature of the soul. This pleasure is not due to selfishness. It is simply because your zeal to rise into the state of equanimity shall lead to the severance of the turmoil of materialistic existence. Seeing this outcome, I am filled with a sense of joy. This is my only request.

My soulful reverence.



Letter 717

Anand, Friday, 3rd Aso sud, 1952

To the soul seeker Mohanlal, Durban.

I have received a letter written by you. I am replying to you in brief. I realise that by living in Natal (South Africa), several good qualities have flowered within you; mainly thanks to your keen desire to nurture them.

Admittedly Natal seems to be a better place than Rajkot for you to develop such qualities as straightforwardness, etc., for the factors that would force you into behaving against these virtues are far and few in Natal. Yet those who are feeble in resolve, when living independently in foreign countries like England, could easily get swayed into vices such as eating forbidden substances, like meat etc. No doubt the solitude that you enjoy in Natal living in the absence of family and friends has helped you in nurturing numerous qualities; however, it remains true that satsang with enlightened souls in a holy land would facilitate your inner development in a much better manner. Knowing your character, I am certain that the negative influences in a place like Natal would never affect you; yet I remain of the firm opinion that the lack of *satsang* is certainly an obstacle to your spiritual progress.

I had written to you about “protecting the noble conduct and thought” with the following meanings: by “noble conduct” I meant virtues such as compassion, honesty, forgiveness, etc. and by “noble thoughts” I meant thoughts about the soul’s existence, its eternality, its ignorance about its true nature, the reasons behind the ignorance,

delusion, and the path to awakening from this delusion and thereby residing in the soul's true blissful nature. This is the brief meaning of those words.

Living one's life in accordance with the '*Varna*' system (fourfold categorisation of society into the scholar, warrior, businessmen, and worker classes) is conducive to noble conduct. It appeals to a general thought process that someone who is not deeply inclined to spiritual progress may do well to lead their life in accordance with the *varna* system; there is no doubt that the system has lost its relevance in these modern times, yet whilst we are householders, and far from renouncing the materialistic world, it does bode well to follow the rules of conduct described by the system. Vices such as consumption of the forbidden substances, etc. are strictly prohibited by it. It is justifiable for you to raise the query, "What is the harm in consuming food and water at the home of a Lohana for even they follow these rules of conduct?". In reply, all that can be said is that one must refrain from altering certain basic rules without reason, for then we run the risk of people changing rules at whim for various such communities. The conduct mentioned in the *Varna* system is not violated by consuming food and water at the home of a Lohana, but it certainly is violated by doing the same at the home of a Muslim, and one ends up committing the sin of transgressing the code of the *Varna* system. Admittedly, we may genuinely be behaving in this manner solely for someone's benefit, and not out of our passion for delicious food, yet some may end up following our actions for the latter reason and eventually may be drawn to consuming forbidden substances too, for which we would end up being responsible. Hence it would be advisable to refrain from consuming food and water at the home of a Muslim. I have complete faith in your character, yet for those of feeble resolve, it would be

easy to get attracted to consumption of forbidden substances. Hence it is recommended to abstain from such a situation.

For someone that deeply adores the feeling of compassion, it is advisable to abstain from those places where violence and cruelty prevail, for in such places it becomes difficult for such a feeling of compassion to be sustained. Similarly, one must abstain from associating with people who consume forbidden substances to sustain the resolve to remain compassionate.

From the perspective of divine knowledge, one may not have realised the intricacies of the observer and the observed, but even then, one can realise the importance of consuming pure, cruelty-free meals while abstaining from forbidden substances. Therefore, one must always be steadfast in this practise. There are several actions that may not be directly considered sinful, yet in their presence, there remains a possibility of several more such actions that are certainly sinful, and hence it has been advised to all thoughtful seekers to abstain from all such acts. That you are behaving in such a manner solely for the benefit of many people in Natal, does not appear to me as totally correct; only if there were to be no transgressions in such behavior could it be considered as benevolent to them. Also, your desire to behave in a manner that is beneficial to them all seems to have stemmed from some misunderstanding to me. Because I have complete faith in your character, I shall abstain from writing any further. It is advisable to conduct oneself in a manner that inculcates noble thoughts and noble deeds.

If someone from a different caste or a Muslim were to invite you to an occasion where they serve only cruelty free substances such as fruits, and if you see it as an opportunity to positively influence several people, then you should certainly feel free to attend such an event. That is my only request.



Elevated self-realised soul

In the land of Bharat, among those great souls that attained self-realisation, Shrimad Rajchandra holds the foremost position; from a young age he was so passionate about the soul, that he considered everything else other than the attainment of one's soul as futile. His spiritual striving was so intense that he had reached the state of sages such as Ramana Maharshi at a very young age. I bow down to him and pray to get the strength to walk the path shown by him.

P. Ravishankar Maharaj
Shrimad's Birth anniversary V.S 2034

The vision to see oneself

When Gandhiji was going through a phase of confusion and turmoil with regards to his religious views, it was the young Shrimad Rajchandra and his spiritual advice that served as a formidable recourse for Gandhiji.

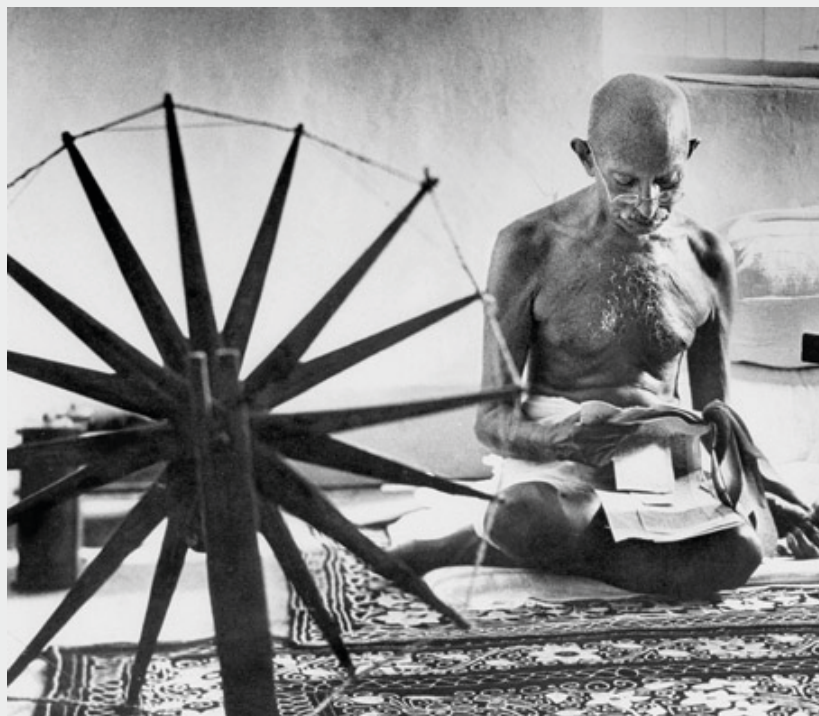
There is no doubt that Gandhiji saw and felt an assured purity of conduct in Shrimad who was of the same age as him, and this drew him towards Shrimad, as his role model. In his friendship with Shrimad, Gandhiji came to realise within himself the quality of unflinching adherence to honesty which had, so far, been latent

Young Gandhi had certainly met with a true exponent of truth in Shrimad Rajchandra, and this resulted in the laying of the foundation for the fundamental principles of Jainism (such as truth, *ahimsa*, acceptance of multi-faceted perspectives, etc.) in Gandhi's thought process. Gandhi's own words recorded in a book titled 'Gandhiji's Truth'¹ clearly demonstrate the deep impact of Shrimad's explanation of the Jain principle of acceptance of multi-faceted perspectives or 'Anekantvaad':

“I have truly liked the concept of Anekantvaad. It has freed me from trying to impose my views on my critics. Today I am able to love them all for I am able to see myself through the eyes of others because of this concept.”

1. The book, 'Gandhiji's Truth', written by E. H. Ericsson, an international author of repute, was published in 1970 by Inland Publishers.

From 1922 to 1924, Mahatma Gandhi was imprisoned at Yerwada Jail in Pune, his first ever confinement. During that time, he jotted down a few reminiscences of Shrimad Rajchandra. These reminiscences were meant to be published in the new edition of “Shrimad Rajchandra” which were the notes and entries Shrimad regularly made in his diary. However due to the differing opinions amongst the publishers it wasn’t included and subsequently published in the quarterly magazine titled “Jain Sahitya Sanshodhan”. A few of these memoirs are reproduced here below.



Chapter 5

Some Memoirs about Shrimad Rajchandra by Gandhiji

I could not decline the request placed before me by Shri Revashankar Jagjivan, whom I respected as my elder brother, to write a foreword to the new edition of the publication of a few letters and other writings of Shrimad Rajchandra. As I was exploring what I should write in the preface, I thought it appropriate to include a few chapters of the reminiscences of Shrimad Rajchandra that I noted whilst in the Yerwada Jail. This would serve two purposes, that it would prove beneficial to other seekers such as myself, as the notes were written during the solitude of my internment without any ulterior motive, and that they would also be helpful to those who did not know of Shrimad Rajchandra to learn a little more about him and to understand his writings.

The chapters given below are incomplete and I do not feel I would ever be able to complete them. It is so, because even if I find time to do so, I do not wish to proceed further than what I have already written about him. Hence, I have decided to summarise a

few things in the last chapter, which was left incomplete by me.

While most of us lead a worldly life, Shrimad Rajchandra had risen above it. While we may have to undergo several more incarnations, for Shrimad achieving such great heights of spirituality in this one lifetime would limit the number of his future incarnations. While our present lifestyle leads us further and further away from salvation, Shrimad Rajchandra was heading towards it at a great speed. This is no mean achievement. In spite of all this, I have to concede that even Shrimad Rajchandra could not attain the height he had set as his ultimate goal. He himself wrote that his journey has been interrupted by a ‘Sahara Desert’, which had yet to be crossed.*

(*A month before his death, Shrimad wrote in his ‘final words’:

I wanted to finish the journey with utmost haste, but came across the ‘Sahara desert’. There was a heavy burden (past karma) on me. My intention was to suffer the karmas as fast as possible with all the energies of my soul but my legs got tired with the fruition of the most intense karma.)

Rajchandra was an exceptionally gifted man. His writings have evolved out of his experiences. The one who reads them and contemplates deeply upon them would find that the roadmap to liberation has been marked out for one to walk with great ease. One’s passions would automatically subside, they would gradually lose interest in worldly affairs and eventually lose all desire for materialistic existence, becoming solely dedicated to the soul and its realisation.

From what has been said above, the reader will realise that the writings of Rajchandra are meant not for all, but the few

who are worthy. Not everyone will be interested in his writings, although a critic will find enough scope in it for criticism. Those with faith in these writings will get completely engrossed in them. What I have always felt while going through his writings is that they contain purity and truth. Not a single word is written merely to prove his knowledge. His objective was to make the reader participative in the soulful joy contained in it. I have a firm belief that one who desires to discard self-agony, one who is eager to realise the ultimate goal will find enough in his writings, irrespective of whether he is a Hindu or of any other faith. I am confident that some of the reminiscences based on my memories would help the worthy souls towards their goal.

[1]

Today happens to be the birth anniversary of the late Shrimad Rajchandra whose memoirs I am attempting to capture. His birth anniversary falls on the full moon day of the Kartik month (VS 1979).

It is not my objective to write the biography of Shrimad Rajchandra. It is beyond my capacity, and I do not have enough material for doing so. If I were to write his biography, I would need to visit his birthplace, Vavaniya, and spend a few days there; examining his residence and seeing the places where he played and roamed during his childhood; meeting a few of his childhood friends; visiting the school where he studied, and meeting his relatives and acquaintances. After collecting adequate information about him, I might be able to venture into writing his biography. But for the present, I possess none of this information.

I also have doubts about my ability and worthiness to write

his biography. I recall that I have often said in the past that I would write some memoirs about him, as and when I find time to do so. One of his disciples, for whom I have great respect in my mind, had heard me saying so and when I do finally write it, it will be mainly for his satisfaction. I would very much like to share some reminiscences about Shrimad Rajchandra whom I fondly called Raichandbhai or Kavi and I would place my writings before those who are desirous to seek liberation in their life. For now, I merely wish to satisfy a friend.

To consider myself worthy to be able to write about him, I believe it would be also necessary to possess adequate knowledge of the Jain religion and that knowledge I do not possess. Consequently, I propose to keep the scope of my writings very limited. I shall be able to satisfy myself by narrating only those incidents which have influenced the course of my life and have enlightened me. Perhaps this writing shall benefit me or other such seekers of liberation from all karmic bondage.

I am deliberately using the phrase ‘seekers of liberation’ (*mumukshu*) here because what I am writing is not meant for general readers.

I have been greatly influenced by three persons in my life, namely, Leo Tolstoy, Ruskin and Raichandbhai. The influence of Tolstoy is through his writings and through the limited correspondence that we have had with each other; Ruskin’s influence on me percolated through just one book that was authored by him, ‘Unto this last’, which I have named in Gujarati as Sarvodaya, while the influence of Raichandbhai on me is a result of my close contact and association with him.

When I developed some doubts in my mind about certain aspects of the Hindu religion whilst in South Africa, it was

Raichandbhai who helped me dispel them.

In the year 1893, I came into close contact with a few Christians. Their lifestyle and character were of the highest order. They had deep faith in their religion. Their main activity was to convert people and make them accept Christianity as a faith. Of course, my association with them was only through my work, yet they started showing a lot of concern for my spiritual welfare.

I was duty bound to have an allegiance towards the religion into which I was born. I was determined that as long as I did not grasp the essence of the Hindu religion fully and as long as my soul didn't feel dissatisfied with it, I should not consider changing the religion into which I was born.

I started reading books written on Hinduism and other religions; I read about Christianity and Islam. I entered into correspondence with people with whom I had developed friendships in London. I placed my doubts and suspicions before them. Similarly, I initiated correspondence with persons who lived in India, and in whom I had full faith. Raichandbhai was the main person among them. I had developed a close intimacy with him and was confident of having my doubts and suspicions resolved mainly by him. The result of all these efforts was peace of mind. I was convinced that the Hindu religion would provide me with what I craved.

Raichandbhai was mainly responsible for the state of mind that I developed. Those reading this would easily understand how much esteem I must have developed for him in my mind. In spite of all this, I did not accept him as my Guru. I still continue to pursue my search for a spiritual master. Until now, my conscience has said "not this one", of whoever I have met. A perfect Guru must be a very elevated being, where would I find one?

[2]

I was introduced to Raichandbhai on the very day I returned to Mumbai from England in July 1891.

July was the season for rough seas and the ship was late in reaching Mumbai. It was already dark when we reached Mumbai. I was to stay with Barrister Pranjivandas Mehta who was a leading diamond merchant in Rangoon. Raichandbhai was the son-in-law of his elder brother, Popatbhai. Pranjivandas introduced me to both his elder brother and Raichandbhai on my arrival. Pranjivandas introduced Raichandbhai to me as a 'Kavi' (poet). He said that apart from being a poet, he was their business partner as well. He also happened to be an enlightened soul with miraculous talents such as 'Shatavadhan' (the ability to perform a hundred tasks



simultaneously).

During the course of the evening, someone suggested that I should say a list of words in different languages which Raichandbhai would then repeat accurately in the same chronological order, irrespective of the language from which the words were chosen.

I was astounded to hear this about Raichandbhai. I was a young man with airs about me having returned from England. I was proud of my command of English and a smattering of other languages. Anyone returning from England had an air of superiority about him and I was no exception.

Using my knowledge and ability to the full, I selected a few words from different languages along with English words and wrote them down on a piece of paper lest I myself forgot them or their order. I read them out to Raichandbhai. He repeated them in the same chronological order without error. I was amazed at this feat and my esteem for him went up. It was also a good experience to deflate all my pride about my foreign education.

Raichandbhai had no knowledge of the English language, nor any other from which I had drawn the words. He was no more than twenty-five years old and had received only elementary education at a Gujarati school. Despite these limitations, his phenomenal memory, his knowledge, along with the esteem with which he was looked upon by all, impressed me greatly. One cannot acquire a powerful memory like his through school education, and such knowledge can only be gained if one has the eagerness and the desire to acquire it. One does not have to visit England or any other foreign country to earn any honour or felicitation, those who are virtuous will gain that anywhere. I learnt this lesson on the very first day I returned from England.

My relationship with Raichandbhai began to develop,

Many possess powerful memory but that should not be a reason to be dazzled. One comes across many persons who possess profound knowledge too, but if such people are devoid of virtuousness then their knowledge and memory are worthless. However, these qualities assume significance only when a virtuous person possesses them. Raichandbhai was both learned and virtuous.

[3]

અપૂર્વ અવસર એવો ક્યારે આવશે,
 ક્યારે થઈશું બાહ્યાન્તર નિરગ્રંથ જો;
 સર્વ સંબંધનું બુંધન તીક્ષ્ણ છેદીને,
 વિચરશું કવ મહત્પુરુષને પંથ જો ?
 સર્વ ભાવથી ઔદાસીન્ય વૃત્તિ કરી,
 માત્ર દેહ તે સંયમ હેતુ હોય જો;
 અન્ય કારણે અન્ય કશું કલ્પે નહીં,
 દેહે પણ કિંચિત મૂર્છા નવ હોય જો. અપૂર્વ *

*“When shall that unprecedented opportunity arise,
 When shall I be free of all inner and outer bondages,
 When having absolutely severed the bondages of all associations,
 shall I follow in the footsteps of the great souls?*

*Having risen above all worldly inclinations,
 This body remains solely for the purpose of practising austerity,
 Not a single thought about anything else at all arises within,
 Not a single desire remains for this body.*

When shall that unprecedented opportunity arrive?

**This poem was written in VS 1953 in Vavaniya, when Shrimad Rajchandra was twenty-nine years old.*

The yearning for detachment from the worldly affairs that shines through these verses were witnessed by me during every moment of my two years of close association with Raichandbhai.

The unique feature of his writings is that he wrote only about things that he had truly experienced in life. There is not a hint of artificiality. I am not aware of even a word that Raichandbhai wrote with the intention of making a favourable impression on others. He always kept a scriptural book with him along with a notebook in which he used to note down the thoughts that came to his mind. Such writings were either in prose or in verse. That was probably how he wrote the above poem.

Renunciation from worldly affairs was paramount in his thoughts and in almost every moment of his life. I am not aware of any moment when he must have craved economic or financial prosperity; I have with great awe, minutely observed his lifestyle. He was always content with whatever food was offered to him for lunch and dinner. His dress was always simple, a simple shirt, a long coat, sandals, a long scarf adorning his shoulders, a cotton turban, and a dhoti. I don't recollect them being very clean or properly ironed. For him, it hardly mattered whether he sat on the floor or on a chair. In his shop, he used to sit on a mattress spread on the floor.





He always walked slowly and anyone watching him would realise that he was deeply engrossed in his thoughts. His eyes shone brightly; calm and collected, reflecting concentration and single-mindedness. He had a roundish face, thin lips, nose, neither sharp nor flat. The frame of his body was slim, with a medium height, skin slightly dark and appearance calm and composed. His voice was so sweet and melodious that one would want to keep listening to it for hours. He had a smiling and peaceful face, reflecting his inner bliss. His command of language was so perfect that he never faltered to choose the appropriate words to express himself. His writings were so perfect that he hardly ever had to change the words once written. The reader too would never feel that the chain of his thoughts were incomplete, or the construction of sentences disjointed, or that his choice of words were in any way deficient.

Such a description fits that of an ascetic. A person cannot become saintly by an external show of rigid religious practises. Freedom from passion is indeed a great quality of the soul. It can only be acquired through efforts spread over many lives. Only one who has attempted to get rid of his passions can realise how difficult it is to be free from them. For Raichandbhai, such a passion-free state was natural. That is what I felt about him.

The first step towards liberation is to attempt to free oneself from passions and to reach a state of equanimity. Whilst there is an attraction towards even the smallest worldly thing, how can the talk of liberation attract one? Even if there exists a desire for liberation, it would be merely for pleasing one's ears – just

as someone is drawn to music without understanding the meaning behind what is being sung. Such a person would have to wait a very long time before they can experience any inner transformation. Without the feeling of detachment within, one can never be drawn towards liberation. The poet Raichandbhai, had reached that stage of inner renunciation.

[4]

વણિક તેડનું નામ, જેહ જૂઠું નવ બોલે,
વણિક તેડનું નામ, તોલ ઓછું નવ તોલે;
વણિક તેડનું નામ, બાપે બોલ્યું તે પાળે,
વણિક તેડનું નામ, વ્યાજ સહીત ધન વાળે.

વિવેક તોલ એ વણિકનું, સુલતાન તોલ એ શાખ છે;
વેપાર ચુકે જો વણિયો, દુઃખ દાવાનળ થાય છે.

- શામળભટ્ટ

*Only he can be called a businessman, who never speaks a lie,
Only he can be called a businessman, who never cheats his customers,
Only he can be called a businessman, who obeys his father's word,
Only he can be called a businessman, who repays back his debts with
interest.*

*The knowledge between right and wrong is the businessman's scale,
indeed this sect of businessmen is equal to the kings;*

If a businessman acts inappropriately, he shall burn in much misery.

-Shamalbhattach

It is commonly believed that trade and commerce on the one hand and charity, philosophy or religion on the other are two distinct spheres of activity, unrelated to each other. It would be considered sheer madness if one were to implement religion or philanthropy in one's profession because of the belief that doing so would adversely affect both. If such beliefs are to be accepted, then we will suffer nothing else but disappointment. There is not a single activity or sphere from which religion can be excluded.

Raichandbhai proved through his own lifestyle and thinking that the spirituality of a religious person must be reflected in each and every activity that is undertaken. There is no rule that religion is to be practised only on the eleventh day of the lunar month or during the Paryushan days or on certain auspicious days or on a Sunday. There is also no rule that religion can be practised only in the precincts of a temple or a mosque or a church and that it cannot be practised in one's profession, trade or commerce. Not only that but Raichandbhai used to say that one who believes this has not understood religion at all.

He was a partner in the firm of Revashankar Jagjivan Jhaveri which traded in diamonds, pearls, and other such precious stones. In addition, he also had a shop dealing in fabrics. His honesty and integrity in his trade deals had greatly impressed me. I happened to be present a few times while he was negotiating trade matters. He would be very clear and specific in his proposals – and he never tried to be clever or do anything underhand. Everything was straight-forward in his dealings. All the same, he was astute enough to immediately recognise any attempt to trick or cheat him. He found this unbearable. On such occasions, his eyebrows would become raised and one could see his eyes turning reddish.

Raichandbhai had proved that one who is religious-minded

and God-fearing, can also be a competent and practical person at the same time. His care and astuteness in business were self-evident. He had developed the skill to examine the quality of diamonds, pearls and other precious stones minutely. Although he did not know English, he could understand immediately the gist of letters and telegrams he received from his agents in Paris and other foreign places. His conclusions and decisions were generally correct.

Though he demonstrated a high level of care and acumen in his business, he was not personally interested or attached to it. He would turn to reading scriptural books or writing personal notes in his diary immediately after he completed his business transactions



or negotiations which might have involved hundreds of thousands of rupees. He often had enquiring seekers like me present, with whom he never hesitated to start religious dialogues or spiritual discourses.

He did not follow the rule that only one thing should be done at one time, business at business time and religion at its time. Only someone like Shrimad, who had tremendous mental prowess could afford to break this rule. If an average person tried to imitate Shrimad, he was bound to fail in the same manner as someone attempting to ride two horses at the same time. Any individual who is perfectly religious minded and free from all worldly attachments should focus on one and only one thing at a time. Such a conduct on his part is a proof of his being a true seeker of union with the divine. There is religion in it. In all other worthwhile matters too, such as trade or profession, he must be fully focused on performing the same with sincerity. Nevertheless, while performing one's external duties, he must also ensure that the process of contemplation upon the soul must continue unabated just like breathing. It should not be halted or broken even for a moment. A person who is engaged in such deep contemplation can at the same time remain focused on his external duties.

I am not implying that the Kavi was not behaving in the manner described above. I have already said that he would manage the business very intelligently. However, I got the impression that he had overexerted himself physically. Could this perhaps signify his spiritual deficiency? While performing one's duties, one should not neglect one's physical health. That would be most inappropriate. To ignore one's physical capacity while performing a duty is most noble. But to take on tasks beyond one's capacity and to call it as one's duty indicates attachment and passion. I kept

feeling that Shrimad Rajchandra did possess such an attachment and passion.

Very often, a person accepts socially oriented responsibilities beyond his capacity to accomplish them and then overstretches himself. We inadvertently consider such action as a virtue and appreciate it. But when viewed from a spiritual angle, we find that such appropriation of work has a strong possibility of passion being involved in the background.

If our existence in this world is merely causal, then the body we have is only temporary, then our primary duty should be to attain immediate liberation from materialistic existence on this earth. We must make every effort to remove the obstacles that hinder us from achieving this goal. That should be the spiritual focus.

Raichandbhai had referred to the same points as I have listed above to me in his own unique style. In spite of that, how did he manage to entangle himself in such worldly affairs in his own life and consequently suffered serious illness?

If it is true that Raichandbhai too had been inadvertently engulfed by attachments with the aim of benefitting others, then the gist of the following Sanskrit verse becomes most appropriate in this context:

"प्रकृतिं यान्ति तूतानि निग्र- : किं करिष्यति"

Even a wise man acts according to his own nature. All beings follow their own nature. What can restraint do?

If one were to use this verse to justify all his doings, then it is its misuse. Raichandbhai's benevolent nature had dragged him into the unpleasant situation of accepting certain responsibilities, which were beyond his capacity. Ordinary people like us can

accomplish benevolent responsibilities only when we devote ourselves completely to the task, almost to the extent of madness. Let us conclude this matter here only.

It has been a general belief that persons who are religious are usually very simple and can be easily deceived. They have little understanding of the worldly affairs. If that were true, Lord Krishna and Lord Rama should be included amongst the ordinary people. Raichandbhai used to say that it would be impossible to deceive those who possess divine knowledge.

It is quite possible that a religious minded, God-fearing person who practises highest morals in his life may not necessarily be a self-realised person, but the one who seeks liberation, must possess in him a combination of both self-realisation and morality. One who is self-realised would never tolerate hypocrisy or false pretensions. Falsehood cannot be part of truth. Similarly, violence would disappear in presence of non-violence, whenever there is frankness and simplicity, darkness or deceit are eliminated. Those who are enlightened and spiritual would at once recognise the deceit in a fraudulent person and compassion would arise in their hearts. One who has experienced the soul, can certainly recognise the true nature of people.

I cannot say that such was always the case with Shrimad Rajchandra. Some persons did deceive him in the name of religion. Such instances do not prove the inadequacy of the spiritual rule. It only proves how difficult it is to possess full and perfect knowledge.

Thus, in spite of these exceptions, I have not come across any person other than Shrimad Rajchandra in whom one would find a complete and perfect combination of social awareness and religious sentiments of the highest order.

[5]

Before we evaluate the religion of Raichandbhai, it is important for us to understand his ideas of religion.

Religion does not mean dogmas. Religion does not also mean that one should have read all the scriptures and mastered them or that one should believe in everything that the texts prescribe.

Religion is a quality of the soul. Through religion, we can understand what the responsibilities of a human being on this earth are. Through that, we can try to understand what should be our true and sacred relationship with other living beings on this earth. We cannot fathom this until we fully understand ourselves. Thus, the religion is the means through which we can recognise ourselves. We should accept these means to understand ourselves from whatever source it is available, whether from India, from Europe or Arabia or any other country in the world. The general characteristics of these means are common to all religious scriptures. One who has studied the scriptures of different religions can vouch safely what has been said therein. No scripture recommends any acts of indulging in falsehood; none recommend acts of violence. After churning all the religious texts, Shankaracharya talks of “*Brahma Satyam Jagat Mithya*” (Only the all-pervading pure consciousness is true, the materialistic world is a delusion). The Quran says the same thing, though in different words, that God is one and one alone. Nothing else is true. The Bible states that there is unison between my father and me. Hence, they all represent the same but through different forms.

However, people who had not been able to achieve perfection in their own lives have presented this very truth in their different viewpoints, thereby creating a veil of delusion for

us from which we must extricate ourselves. While we are still far from perfection, we seek guidance to progress from those who have not even achieved that level of perfection. We probably progress a little but end up believing there is no further road ahead.

In reality, it is not so. After a certain point, our scriptures will not help us to progress, only the experience of a self-realised person will help. That is why Raichandbhai says,

જે પદ શ્રી સર્વજ્ઞે દીદું જ્ઞાનમાં,
કહી શક્યા નહિ તે પદ શ્રી ભગવંત જો;
એહ પરમ પદ પ્રાપ્તિનું કર્યું ધ્યાન મેં,
ગજ વગર પણ હાલ મનોરથ રૂપ જો -

*That exalted state was experienced by the omniscient soul
in the light of his knowledge,
Even the Lord was unable to describe it in words;
I meditated upon that state to attain it,
Though it is beyond my capacity for now, it is my firm resolve to
attain it.*

Eventually, it is the soul itself that liberates the soul. Raichandbhai expressed this pure truth in a variety of ways in his writings. He had undertaken the study of several religious scriptures in depth. He had no difficulty in understanding literature written in Sanskrit and Magadhi despite never having learnt either of the languages. He studied the Vedas, the Bhagwat and the Gita. He studied every Jain scriptural book that he could lay his hands on. He had an incredible capacity and power to understand and grasp whatever he read. One reading of any book was enough for him to understand the essence contained in it. He had also read scriptures like the Holy Quran and the Zend Avesta through their translations.

He often expressed that he was biased towards the Jain religion. He strongly believed that it is the Jain religion and philosophy that gets one to the apex of the ultimate truth. I have to mention this opinion of his to you. I am totally incompetent to express my opinion in this matter.

Nevertheless, he had no disrespect for any other religion. He held a certain bias in favour of the Vedas and the Upanishads. A follower of the Vedanta would easily consider Raichandbhai to be a *Vedanti*.

During our discussion, he did not suggest even once that I should follow a particular religion to attain liberation. He always reminded me to be thoughtful of my conduct. When discussing the books I should read, having observed my behaviour and conduct and the type of childhood I had, he encouraged me to continue the study of Bhagwat Gita. Other books he recommended were Panchikaran, Maniratnamala, the chapter on detachment from Yogvashist, volume one of Kavyadohan and Mokshamala written by him.

He would often express the opinion that different religions are merely man-made pens and people are trapped within them. One who seeks freedom as the ultimate goal of life should not identify himself with a particular religion.

સુતર આવે ત્યમ તું રહે,
જ્યમ ત્યમ કરીને હરિને લહે.

*The true seeker lives in a simple straightforward manner,
By whatever means he can, he seeks out God.*

Like Akha Bhagat (the composer of the above verse), Raichandbhai adopted this verse as the motto of his life. He always

kept away from the bickering that went on between different religions. He would study the essence of each religion and present the highlights to its follower. He emphasised the same principle in his correspondence with me during my stay in South Africa.

I have always believed that every religion is perfect from the viewpoint of its disciples but all religions have their perfections and imperfections. However, after a point, religious scriptures appear to be a bondage of some kind or the other.

Raichandbhai always believed that there is no reason to renounce the religion into which one is born. Freedom from bondage is possible in any religion. Attaining the freedom means being free of all likes and dislikes and living in perfect equanimity.

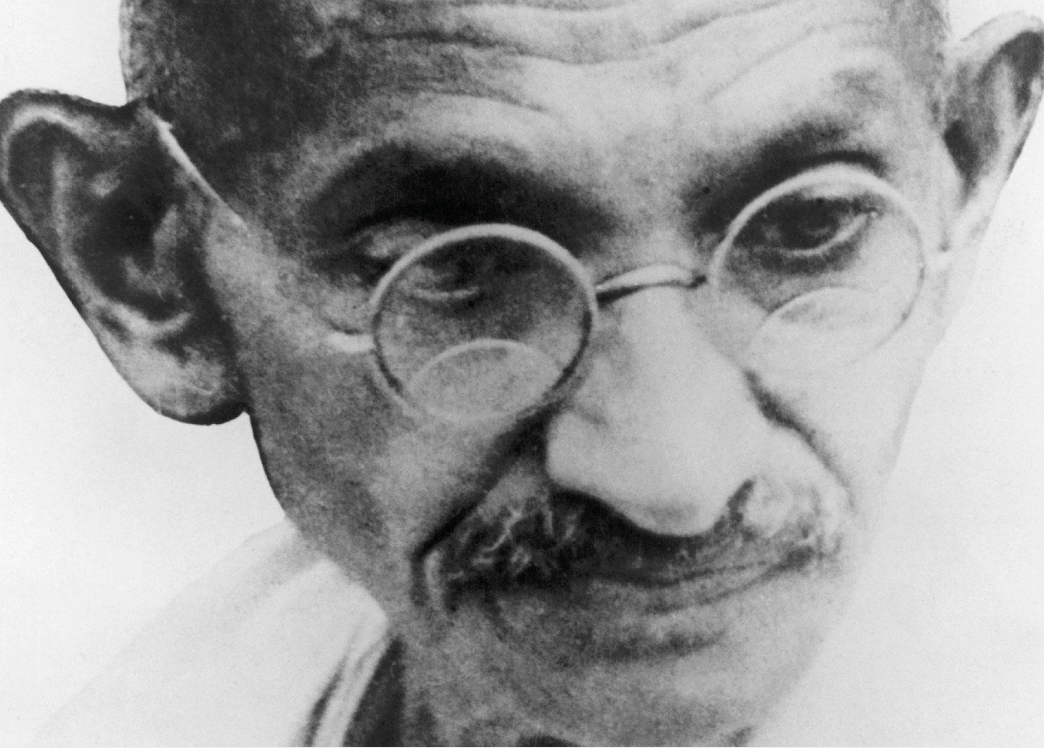


Life is a constant endeavour and its culmination is attained not merely by materialistic achievements to impress society, but by attainment of one's soul that lies beyond this ephemeral world. This, according to me, was the greatest message of his life. In this modern age of communal and religious societies, we rightly tend to lay more emphasis on worldly attainments. However, if that emphasis becomes the sole objective of one's life then its negative effects will certainly be felt. That effect has become self-evident. If wealth, fame, sensual pleasures and possessions become the driving goals of our lives, then the evils of jealousy, deceit, quarrels etc. shall definitely overcome us, and there shall be no room left for the ultimate quest for the truth in our lives. Where there is an infinite desire for objects that are finite, what else could be the outcome except quarrels? The current belief that there is nothing else worthwhile beyond the social and material attainment is a fallacy. Shrimad's ideology that the progress of mankind lies only in the progress of society as a whole is extremely relevant in these times and is worth remembering on this day.

Shri Maganbhai Prabhudas Desai

From a speech delivered on the full moon day of the Kartik V.S.

1991



In one of the most outstanding autobiographies of our times, 'My experiments with Truth', Mahatma Gandhi has mentioned Shrimad Rajchandra in three different places. He mentions Shrimad in the first, fifteenth and twenty-second chapters of the first section of the book, and then in the seventh and eighth chapters of the third section. Here, we have reproduced Gandhiji's words about Shrimad from his autobiography.

Chapter 6

From My Experiments with Truth

Gandhiji returned to India after qualifying as a barrister in 1891. The details given here, following his landing in Mumbai have been taken from his autobiography Part-II, Chapter No. 1

Raichandbhai

I had mentioned in the last chapter that the sea was rough on approach to Bombay harbour, not an unusual thing in the Arabian Sea in the months of June and July every year. It had been choppy all the way from Aden. Almost every passenger fell sick; I alone was in perfect form, staying on the deck to see the stormy surge and enjoying the splash of the waves. At breakfast, there would be just one or two people beside myself, eating their oatmeal porridge from plates carefully held in their laps, lest the porridge itself find its place in the seawaters.

The outer storm was to me a reflection of the inner one. Though the former left me unperturbed, I cannot say the same

about the latter. There was the trouble with the caste system that was to confront me. I have already averted to my helplessness in starting on my profession. And then, as I was a reformer, I was taxing myself as to how best to begin certain reforms. But there was even more in store for me than I knew.

My elder brother had come to meet me at the dock. He had already made the acquaintance of Dr. Mehta and his elder brother. As Dr. Mehta insisted on putting me up at his house, we went there. The acquaintance we made in England continued in India and ripened into a permanent friendship between our two families.

I was pining to see my mother unaware that she was no more in the flesh to receive me into her bosom. The sad news was now given me, and I underwent the usual ablution. My brother had kept the news of her death from me whilst I was still in England. He wanted to spare me that blow in a foreign land. The news, however, was nonetheless a severe shock to me. My grief was even greater than that over my father's death. Most of my cherished hopes were shattered. However, I must not dwell upon it. I remember that I did not give in to any wild expression of grief. I could even check the tears, and took to life just as though nothing had happened.

Dr. Mehta introduced me to several people, one of them being his brother Shri Revashankar Jagjivan, with whom I began a lifelong friendship. But the introduction that I particularly need to take a note of was the one to the poet, Raichand or Rajchandra, the son-in-law of an elder brother of Dr. Mehta, and partner of the firm of jewelers run in the name of Revashankar Jagjivan.

He was not above twenty-five then, and it was our first meeting which convinced me that: he was a man of great character and learning. He was also known as a Shatavadhani (one having

the faculty of attending to a hundred tasks simultaneously).

Dr. Mehta recommended that I should see some of his memory feats. I exhausted my vocabulary of all the European languages I knew, and asked the poet to repeat the words. He did so in the precise order in which I had given them. I envied his gift without, however, coming under its spell. The thing that did cast its spell over me I came to know afterwards. It was his wide knowledge of the scriptures, his spotless character, and his burning passion for self-realisation.

હસતા રમતાં પ્રગટ હરિ દેખું રે,
મારું જીવ્યું સફળ તવ લેખું રે;
મુક્તાનંદનો નાથ વિહારી રે,
ઓધા, જીવનદોરી અમારી રે.

*Even when laughing and playing, I experience the Lord,
Only then, shall I consider this human birth successful;
Poet Muktanand says my Lord is omnipresent,
Self-realised saints are our lifeline to him*

I saw later that this last was the only objective for which he lived. The above lines of the Saint poet Muktanand were always on his lips and but were also engraved in his heart.

Raichandbhai's commercial transactions covered hundreds of thousands. He would assay pearls and diamonds. No knotty business problem was too difficult for him. But all these matters were not the focus around which his life revolved. That focus was the passion to see God face to face. Amongst the items on his business table to be found invariably, were some religious books and his diary. No sooner he finished a business transaction, he would open

the religious book or the diary. Much of his published writings is a reproduction from this diary. The man who, immediately on finishing his talk about weighty business transactions, begins to write about the latent essence of the soul could evidently not be a businessman at all, but a real seeker of the Truth. And I saw him thus absorbed in godly pursuits in the midst of business, not once or twice, but very often. I never saw him lose his state of equanimity. There was no business or other selfish motive that bound him to me, and yet, I enjoyed the closest association with him.

I was, but a barrister without a brief, and yet, whenever I visited him at his shop, he would engage me in conversation spiritual nature and nothing else. Though I was struggling at the time to set a direction for my life and I could not say I was generally interested in spiritual matters, I found Raichandbhai's talks of absorbing interest.

I have since met many religious leaders from different religions but I must say that no one else has ever impressed me as much as that Raichandbhai did. His words went straight home to me. His intellect compelled as great a regard from me as his moral earnestness, and deep down in me was the conviction that he would never willingly lead me astray and would always tell me what was really in his mind. In my moments of spiritual crisis, therefore, he was my refuge.

And yet, notwithstanding this high regard for him - I could not enthrone him in my heart as my Guru. The throne remained vacant and my search is still on.

I believe in the Hindu theory of Guru and his importance in spiritual realisation. I think there is a great deal of truth in the doctrine that true knowledge is impossible without a Guru. An imperfect teacher may be tolerable in mundane matters, but

not in spiritual matters. Only an enlightened saint deserves to be enthroned as a Guru. There must, therefore, be ceaseless striving after perfection. For one gets the Guru that one deserves. Infinite striving after perfection is one's right. It is its own reward. The rest is in the hands of God.

Thus, though I could not place Raichandbhai on the throne of my heart as Guru, we shall see how he was, on many occasions, my guide and helper. However, it suffices to say here that, three modern thinkers have made a deep impression on me during my life, and captivated me: Raichandbhai by his living contact; Tolstoy by his book, 'The Kingdom of God Is Within You'; and Ruskin by his 'Unto This Last'. More of this in appropriate place.

From the Autobiography of Mahatma Gandhiji, (Part II, Chapter 15 & 22). Christian friends in South Africa were trying to convince Gandhi to convert to Christianity. The following excerpts are from the chapters that describe the inner spiritual deliberations that went on in Gandhiji's mind.

I was quite happy to accept Jesus as a saintly person with many divine qualities but I could not accept that he was a unique person. His death had set a great example to the world but within my heart I could not accept that his death was mystic in anyway. I could not find anything in the clean, living lifestyle of Christians that was any different from followers of any other religion. From doctrinal point of view, I did not find any mysticism in Christian doctrines. In terms of detachment from the worldly matters, I had found Hinduism superior. I could not accept Christianity as a complete religion or as a religion above all others.

I had expressed the results of my inner deliberations to my Christian friends when opportunities arose. They were not able to respond satisfactorily.

Just as I did not accept Christianity either as a perfect or as a superior religion, neither was I then convinced of Hinduism being such. Hindu defects were pressingly visible to me. If untouchability could be a part of Hinduism, it could but be a rotten part or an outgrowth. I could not understand the reason for a multitude of sects and castes. What was the meaning of saying that the Vedas were the only inspired Word of God? If they were inspired, why not also the Bible and the Koran?

As Christian friends were influencing me to convert, so were Muslim friends. Abdulla Sheth had kept on tempting me to study Islam, and of course he would keep talking about its mysteries.

I expressed my difficulties in a letter to Raichandbhai. I also exchanged correspondence with other religious scholars in India. Raichandbhai's response gave me some mental peace. He asked me first to be patient and then to study Hinduism in depth. One of his sentences was to this effect: 'taking a nonpartisan view, I am convinced that no other religion has the subtle and profound thought of Hinduism, its vision of the soul, or its charity.' He had sent me a set of books including Panchikaran, Maniratnamala, Mumukshu Prakaran of Yogavasishtha, Haribhadra Suri's Shaddarshana Sammuchay and others.

My Christian friends had really awakened a strong desire within to know more about the various religions and there was no way I could suppress that desire. Every moment I could spare was used in reading about the religions.

I purchased Sale's translation of the Koran and began

reading it. I had also obtained other books on Islam to make a deeper study of that religion.

I communicated with Christian friends in England. One of them introduced me to Edward Maitland, with whom I opened correspondence. He sent me ‘The Perfect Way’, a book he had written in collaboration with Anna Kingsford. The book was a repudiation of the current Christian belief. He also sent me another book, ‘The New Interpretation of the Bible’. I liked both. They seemed to support Hinduism.

Tolstoy’s “The Kingdom of God Is Within You” overwhelmed me. It left a lasting impression on me. The independent thinking, profound morality, and the truthfulness of this book paled all the books given to me by Mr. Coates into insignificance.

My correspondence with Edward Maitland was quite prolonged, and that with Raichandbhai continued until his death. My reverence for Hinduism was rising and I was beginning to understand its mysticism.

Gandhiji returned to South Africa for the second time in 1897. He had taken a vow of celibacy at that time. The extract below is from his autobiography (Part III, Chapter 7 – 8).

We now reach the stage in this story when I began seriously to think of taking the vow of celibacy. I had been wedded to a monogamous ideal ever since my marriage, faithfulness to my wife being part of the love of truth. But it was in South Africa that I came to realise the importance of observing celibacy even with respect to my wife. I cannot say with certainty which circumstance or which book it was that set my thoughts in that direction, but I

have a recollection that the predominant factor was the influence of Raichandbhai.

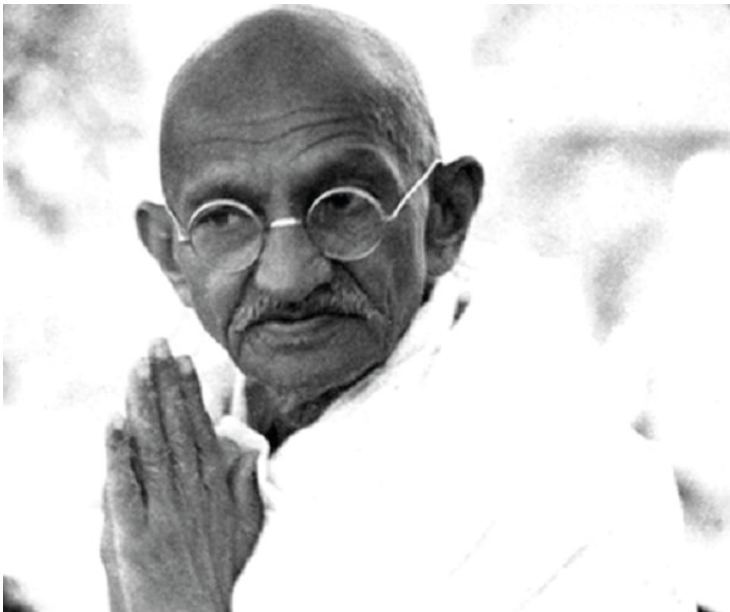
I still recall a particular conversation that I had with him. On one occasion, I spoke to him about Mrs. Gladstone praising her devotion to her husband. I had read somewhere that Mrs. Gladstone insisted on preparing tea herself for Mr. Gladstone even in the House of Commons, and that this had become a rule in particularly orderly lives of this couple dedicated to each other. At that time, I also praised conjugal love.

‘Which of the two do you prize more?’, asked Raichandbhai, ‘Mrs. Gladstone’s love for her husband, or her nature to serve? What would you have said if she was his sister, or a devoted servant, and served him with the same love? Do we not find instances of such devoted sisters or servants today? Supposing you had found the same loving devotion in a male servant, would you not have been pleased in the same way as in Mrs. Gladstone’s case? Dwell the viewpoint suggested by me.’

Raichandbhai was himself married. I have an impression that at that moment his words sounded harsh, but they gripped me irresistibly. The devotion of a male servant was, I felt, a thousand times more praiseworthy than that of a wife to her husband. There was nothing surprising in the wife’s devotion to her husband, as there was an enduring bond between them. That devotion was perfectly natural. But it required a special effort to cultivate similar devotion between a master and his servant. The poet’s point of view began gradually to grow upon me.

What then, I asked myself, should be my relationship with my wife? Did my faithfulness consist of making my wife the instrument of my lust? So long as I was the slave of lust, my faithfulness was worth nothing.

It was not until considerable discussions and mature deliberations, I took the vow of celibacy in 1906. I had not the necessary mental strength. How will I suppress my desires? It was strange to think of restraining carnal relationship with one's own wife. However, that was my obligation and I understood it clearly. My intentions were pure. So, I launched forth with faith in the sustaining power of God. As I look back upon the twenty years of the vow, I am filled with pleasure and wonderment. The partly successful practise of self-control had been going on since 1901. But the freedom and joy that came to me after taking the vow I do not recall being experienced before 1906. Prior to taking the vow, I was driven by the desire and likely to be overcome by temptation at any moment. Now the temptation was no longer able to control me.



A great spiritual incident

The meeting of Shrimad Rajchandra and Mahatma Gandhi could be considered as the greatest spiritual incident of the 19th century, the benefits of which were felt throughout the world.

“If it weren’t for Shrimad’s influence upon Gandhiji during his stay in South Africa, his extremely keen desire to adopt another religion would have ensured that he returned to India either as a Michael or as a Mohammed, but certainly not as Mohandas! Gandhiji’s faith in the noble religion of India would never have become so firm without the influence of Shrimad.”

-Shri Nemchand M. Gala
(From ‘Shrimad Rajchandra and Gandhiji’)

Chapter 7

Discourses on Shrimad Rajchandra by Mahatma Gandhi

Basis of Religion: Good Conduct

The following is an extract from the talk that was delivered by Gandhiji on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Shrimad Rajchandra V.S. 1973 at Wadhwan Camp. The gathering was presided over by Shri Anandshanker Dhruv.

I have come across a very real illustration of the late Shrimad Rajchandra's teaching which I wish to share with you. An accident that happened today that emphasises very clearly the importance of renunciation and the futility of worldly affairs which Shrimad exhorted repeatedly.

The sad news of the disappearance of the P & O Company's steamer 'Arabia' in the high seas was reported in the newspapers. There were some very eminent Indians like Mr Ratan Tata, the Jewel of India, and Mr Jeevaraj Mehta were on board the ship. There has been no news about them. The entire country is concerned with feelings of sorrow and sadness. One cannot grasp the shock

and sorrow that their families must be feeling with this sudden disappearance.

Shrimad Rajchandra spent all his life in complete renunciation of worldly affairs, and that true approach towards human life as has been exemplified by today's sad accident.

I can see the presence of two types of people in this gathering today. First are those who hold Shrimad in deep and abiding regard and respect, while the other type are those who have come here merely for the show. I must be blunt and state that the success of this celebration depends primarily on the first type. Those who have assembled here due to their veneration for Shrimad must translate his thoughts and lifestyle into their own conduct. Merely thinking about medicines cannot cure disease.

My life has been greatly influenced by Shrimad Rajchandra's life and thoughts. His influence on me is substantially deeper than the influence of the great philosophers Tolstoy and Ruskin.

I wish to emphasise on the minds of the disciples of Shrimad that they should actually implement in their life what Shrimad has taught us through his life and thoughts. If it were not done, such anniversary celebrations would turn out to be merely pretentious shows. Please try to keep away from the pretense as far as possible. If you are sincere about your reverence for him, even those who have come here only for the show may be encouraged to develop a true appreciation for him.

The success of the anniversary celebrations solely depends on the sincere devotion for Shrimad Rajchandra, which should be reflected in the character and conduct of his disciples. This is my sincere appeal to you on this occasion.

*(From the notes prepared by the Anniversary Committee
of Shrimad Rajchandra)*

Compassion

The following are the extracts of the speech delivered by Gandhiji in Ahmedabad on the Kartiki Poornima day of V.S. 1978.

We are the devotees of the person for whom we have assembled here to eulogise and fondly remember. I am a confirmed devotee of his. Those who are his critics cannot be devotees – therefore this is not an occasion for those who wish to criticise. Those who want to clear their doubts are welcome. If someone is here to feed their doubts, then the etiquette suggests that they should not be here today. Everyone should have the freedom to express themselves. Even the critics should have a place for themselves and similarly, the devotees should also have a place where they can conduct their desires without criticism. Therefore, I will take it that in today's gathering only those who have love and respect for Kavishri have come here. To such devotees, I wish to tell them that today's event should be doubly welcome.

The person we have come here to remember lovingly was indeed a symbol of compassion. He had fully understood what compassion was and he had fully inculcated it in his practical life. The work that we are doing at present in India also represents the spirit of compassion. We are not doing this work with any enmity in our mind. The reality that we are facing at present gives us sufficient cause to express our anger. We have been greatly hurt. And yet we have to constantly bear in our mind that we should not retaliate with anger against those who have caused us all that anger. Instead, we should consider in our mind how best could we do well for them. The basis of non-cooperation lies in compassion, not in vengeance. This is the crux of the matter, which we should never

ignore, nor should we run away from the spirit of non-cooperation, lest we, too, fall into the trap of retaliation.

Running away from the spirit of non-cooperation would certainly result in a dangerous situation. At the same time, it is also true that those against whom we are using the weapon of non-cooperation would certainly feel hurt by it. Nevertheless, compassion does not necessarily mean that nobody will be hurt and the compassion I learnt from Shrimad did not say that. Even if our piousness and the sacred activities that we are undertaking result in hurting anyone, we should not leave the path that we have chosen, merely because it hurts some people.

I have repeatedly said in the past, “I have learnt many things from many people so far. But the most that I have learnt from any single person is from Shrimad Rajchandra. I have learnt compassion from his life.”

There cannot be any act on the part of anyone that does not hurt someone or the other, but that hurt should also be the result of compassion. It implies two conditions:

1. We should feel more hurt than the hurt that we cause to others. It is only under such a condition that we should continue to engage in such an act.
2. Our objective should be the purest of the pure, and we should aim for the good of others.

Assume that my son is a drunkard, that he smokes and he is a debaucherous person. He would ask me for money. Until now I continued to give him money, simply because I happened to be a father - a blind father. What I have learnt from brother Rajchandra is that not only should I keep myself away from such evil addictions,

but I should also prevent others from indulging in them. It is my duty not to give money to my son. If I see him drinking wine, I should take away the glass from his hand. If I come to know that he keeps the bottles of wine in a particular case, it becomes my duty to destroy the case of wine. This kind of behaviour on my part is going to shock my son. He would consider me to be a cruel father. But a father who is conscious of his duty should not be afraid of the shock that he would inflict on his son. The father should not be afraid even if the son curses him. Compassion teaches me that it is my duty to snatch the bottle of wine from his hands. Even if I do not enforce my will on him, I should destroy the bottles of wine wherever he keeps them in the house.

We may not hurt a person in our routine affairs. We should not goad or reprimand others for small things in the name of compassion. Raichandbhai taught us the best measure for compassion. If we understand this measure, then we would do things even though we may not understand them or their significance, but simply because those in my culture or society undertake them. Even if I do not understand why I should adopt khadi (handspun cotton). especially as I like fine muslin, I should adopt khadi because others in the society that I am a part of commonly wear khadi. There is nothing wrong in wearing khadi. Such an act on my part does not violate any norm. This is a simple truth that Raichandbhai has taught me.

Once, when in Mumbai we were discussing compassion. We were considering whether we should use leather goods. We both finally concluded that we cannot do without leather goods. Farming where leather is used has to be continued as a matter of necessity. However, we must avoid the use of leather at least in one's headwear. I had been a little harsh right from the beginning.

As such, I asked him bluntly what materials had been used to make the cap he was wearing. Raichandbhai was always engrossed in inner contemplation. He never bothered about mundane matters like what he was wearing. He, therefore, did not realise that leather had been used to make the cap he was wearing. But once I brought that to his notice, he at once pulled out the leather from his cap.

I do not believe that my argument against the use of leather in caps was that strong but he accepted it immediately. He presented no arguments for or against it. He found that my intention in mentioning it was well meant, and without ulterior motive, especially as he was aware of the esteem in which I held him. He simply removed the leather from his cap and concluded the matter. I believe he would have never since then used any headgear that had leather in it. Though it would not upset me should someone mention that he had seen Raichandbhai wearing headwear with leather in it. If I were to see him with similar cap, I am sure, he would again remove the leather from his headgear. Such an error would only ever occur due to an oversight.

Herein lies the greatness of such elevated souls. They do not possess any false sense of pride. They are willing to learn things even from small children. Great souls do not uphold differences in trivial matters. Those that foster differences in minor matters, and yet talk of the unstrung, divine melody of the soul, to them I say – there is no such divine melody in them, indeed their souls are dormant like those of animals. The main difference between humans and animals is that the soul of a man can be awakened. If we behave in accordance with how the world behaves on ninety-nine occasions, then it is fine to stand up and say that something is wrong on the one odd occasion. However, how can one who has borne animosity towards the world right from birth ever

demonstrate love towards it?

On occasions, it is best for us to behave as if we were inanimate objects, that is, untouched and unmoved. In pure inanimateness and equanimous awareness there is hardly any difference. The world always appears as inanimate; rarely does the soul enlighten it. Such is the conduct of the great souls. This is how I had known Raichandbhai to carry himself in society.

If he were alive today, he would have certainly blessed the present activities. There is religion reflected in this matter. Those whose souls are full of compassion cannot but participate in this. Such (an) approach will certainly bring better results in political and economic fields, but the best result would be that such people would rise above the ordinary ones and achieve liberation. If I do not get this kind of experience at the end of the year, I shall find it difficult to live in this world.

He would often say that he can easily bear the pangs inflicted by spears struck from all sides, but cannot bear the pangs inflicted through falsehood, hypocrisy, injustice and cruelty in the name of religion. I had often seen him outraged by such injustices. For him, the whole world was like his own family. He felt a deep sense of sorrow whenever he saw someone suffering, in agony or dying as if he was seeing his own sister or brother suffering. Some may say that such people suffer because of their own sins, but why are they driven to commit such sins in the first place? When the path of righteousness is not easily accessible, one must cross difficult barriers to achieving that path, that is precisely what we call the dark times or '*kalikaal*'. One does not come across piety in the world at such times. What one comes across is sin everywhere. Sins are committed universally in the name of piety. If we wish to practise compassion in such situations, our soul should

overflow with pain and agony. We should feel that, and instead of living in such a world, it is better that our body collapses, that it falls dead.

In my opinion, Raichandbhai died at such a young age only because of the agony he was suffering from within. It is true that he was suffering from some physical illness, but more serious than that disease was the unbearable agony he suffered by seeing the sins that were being committed by people all over the world. If it was only the physical disease that he suffered - he had the capacity to bear the bodily pain and overcome it, but he questioned how he could attain total freedom in such dark times. It was a sign of the deep compassion that he felt.

The extreme boundary of compassion does not lie in not killing small organisms. It is quite true that one should not kill such organisms or for that matter any other creature, but we should ensure that these organisms are not born at all. There is more cruelty in allowing the organisms to be born than the cruelty involved in killing them. We all are responsible for the spread of these organisms in the world. They are created by the Jain householders, and even by myself, a Vaishnav. We are not well versed in practising or observing sanitation. When we accumulate materialistic possessions, we do not realise how many such minute lifeforms we end up creating in the process.

It is compassionate to abstain from killing small organisms, mosquitoes and other such insects, but there is greater compassion in not killing a human being. If there was a choice between killing a human being or an insect, what should be the choice? It is possible that one may have to spare an insect by killing a man, or vice versa. My choice would be to spare both, the man and the insect. That is true compassion.

On this day as we commemorate the memory of Raichandbhai we should adopt the widest and broadest meaning of compassion by sacrificing its narrow interpretations. It is a sin to hurt any soul or to consider it an enemy. Those who wish to see General Dyer hanged to death or to throw Sir Michael O'Dwyer into a burning fire, they are neither a true Jain, nor a true Vaishnav, nor a Hindu. They are nothing. The secret of *Ahimsa* is to prevent one's anger, to cleanse one's soul. Who am I to judge General Dyer? I know that I am full of rage within myself, I must be murdering hundreds of people mentally in my thoughts. Who am I to judge General Dyer? I have, therefore, come to a firm decision that the real compassion is not to harm or kill even the one who hurts me with a sword. This is the secret of non-cooperation.

When I speak, I have not used the word compassion. But today being the anniversary of Raichandbhai I am talking about compassion. I realise that this will result in spreading an understanding of compassion among several people.

It is a greater sin to kill a snake or a tiger in the form of a man than to kill a real snake. When we kill a wild animal like a tiger, we do so out of fear, not out of wrath or anger. If there were a divine judge of our actions on this earth, and if they were to judge our sins and good deeds, they may forgive us for the act of killing the tiger.

The greatest thing that I noted in the life of Raichandbhai is that once a businessman, always a businessman. But no longer can this be considered true in present times. If one were to become a true businessman, one does not have to become a very learned person. One who is not susceptible to vices, one who remains aloof from committing sins and falsehood, one who does not even think of indulging in immoral acts, one whose heart is full of compassion

can verily attain omniscience; enlightenment is not difficult for him to attain. It is because of this that I never insist upon anyone to learn Sanskrit or to read the Bhagwati Sutra. I am indifferent to whether one reads such texts or not.

It was resolved to establish the Rajchandra Library in Wadhwan when his anniversary was celebrated there. It was also decided that a building would be constructed for it. I did not show much enthusiasm about it then. I had remarked that a building may be built but if there was no soul in it, it would merely be a pile of bricks. Today that resolve has come to fruition. All favourable conditions have come together. A great man like Jinvijayji has given his blessings personally for the project. The library run by the Puratatva Temple has also joined hands with it. Anyone who cares to go there can freely take its advantage.

Please do carry all good things you have heard today and implement them in your life. Discard those things that you disliked, but those words that you considered worthy of implementing or those words that have touched your heart – inculcate them in your life from this very day.

‘Navjeevan’ dated 24th Nov. 1961

Raichandbhai - The Ascetic

Speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi on Kartik Sud 15, VS 1982 at Mandvi during his visit to Kutch.

Transcending the boundaries of religion, he had attained oneness with all souls; he had reached the shores of final freedom; being a businessman and having the capacity to earn wealth yet, he focused

solely on attaining God; in these days and times he remains a divine beacon of spirituality for all of us – such was Raichandbhai. What a tremendous honour it is to have the opportunity to eulogise about him on this day!

Who indulges in acts of courage? And for what purpose and with what objectives does one take to courage? Courage has multifarious connotations. It can be practised in taking recourse to adultery, for securing women, for acquiring wealth and so on. But such acts are no different from jumping into a well. Real courage is needed for self-realisation. Business ethics should be such that there is not even the slightest hint of deceit, where there is no desire to take even an extra penny. The other day I was talking to a multi-millionaire whose fortunes have taken a turn for the worse. It reminded me of the proverbial “emperors whose relatives were found begging on the streets”. Why run after something that is only momentary? Why such deceitful behaviour for it?

Courage should be practised in experiencing the divinity of the Lord Almighty and for singing devotional songs in his praise. Real courage lies in observing the various acts of God. Courage should be practised in finding out whose lustre and splendour the stars in the skies are radiating. A lifetime spent in this quest is well justified.

Shrimad Rajchandra suffered immensely while he was on his death-bed, but he was unaffected by it remaining engrossed in the bliss of his soul. Today, I have to listen to bitter truths of life with humility. At such times in my life, I feel very fortunate in devoting myself to his praise and eulogise his practise of *ahimsa*.

What is obvious to our eye should be said boldly without fear or enmity, and we can do so only by deriving strength from remembering such great souls. The only fear we should have is not

to hurt our conscience which keeps a watch on us every moment.

We must contemplate upon the supreme austerities observed by Shrimad Rajchandra in his life, and the elevated position his soul reached due to these austerities. Our lives shall be considered worthwhile only when we awaken the dormant lion-like consciousness that lies in each of our hearts.

'Navjeevan' dated 9th Nov. 1925

In the Company of Raichandbhai

The text of the speech delivered by Mahatma Gandhi at Wardha during the course of one of his evening prayers on Kartik Poornima, VS. 1992 as a part of the birth anniversary celebration of Shrimad Rajchandra.

I cannot remember to celebrate the anniversaries of our great seers nor am I particularly enthusiastic about the same. But that does not mean that I do not adore them. I constantly and sincerely try to practise that adoration in my conduct and behaviour, which gives me satisfaction. Maganbhai reminded me that today is the birth anniversary of Raichandbhai. On this occasion, it would be inappropriate for me to decline to say a few words.

I had known Raichandbhai for a long time. I was introduced to him in the year 1891 on the very day I returned home from England. He happens to be the brother-in-law of Dr Mehta* who had become my friend in England. It was Dr Mehta who introduced him to me, and the relationship that developed since that day lasted

**It appears to be an oversight of Gandhiji here. Shrimad Rajchandra was the son-in-law of Shri Popatlal Jagjivandas who was the elder brother of Dr. Mehta*

till his sad demise. With every passing day, my relationship with him grew stronger. It resulted in my deep adoration for him. He created such an impression on me that I once thought of making him my spiritual guide, my *Guru*.

But *Guru* status cannot be designated merely by possessing a desire to have one! A True *Guru* can be had only when one performs true austerities for it, along with a very keen desire to acquire one.

When we first met, my spiritual status was that of an inquisitive person and no more. I had several doubts about religion at that time. Today the position has changed so that it cannot be said that I have any doubts. At that time, my knowledge about religion and in particular about Hinduism, Gita etc was limited (although I had read Gita's English translation while in England). I will avoid talking about what I had obtained from my parents. It is not that I had learnt much through my own efforts. All the same, I was very eager to learn more. I, therefore, enjoyed the company of Raichandbhai and his words influenced me greatly. It is true that I was also influenced by Leo Tolstoy, but that influence was through his writings. In the case of Raichandbhai, the introduction with him was in flesh and blood and better still it was in the circumstances described above.

That was the time when his Mokshamala was published. In addition, his disciples used to collect the letters he wrote to them to which I had free access. There was nothing in his life that I was not aware of and he did not keep anything secret from me. What can ordinary persons like us learn and imbibe from great souls like Raichandbhai? If ordinary persons like us want to study his life – how should we proceed to do so? Today I shall tell you briefly how this can be done.

There is something I need to tell you first before we start. If we attempt to evaluate him by the modern yardstick, we might wonder what was so special about him? What I am referring to is his external personality. In India, the one who adorns saffron clothes and applies a ceremonial tilak on his forehead is thought to be saintly. Such a person is considered a pious person because of his external appearance. There was really nothing like this in Raichandbhai. He was a simple trader and that too in foreign clothes, foreign pearls and diamonds etc. His trading activities were mostly with foreign countries such as Paris. We may not appreciate the kind of life he led. We may strongly feel, why not conduct trade within the country and that too in indigenous goods? Raichandbhai never thought along these lines. We need not be shocked by this.

If we try to evaluate the life of those who have already passed away by present-day standards, in all probability, we are likely to be disappointed. To get a true measure of their life standards, we should use the ethics of those days as our measure. For instance, we often say that the evils or virtues of the era of Ramayana and Mahabharata are not comparable with the present-day evils or virtues. Hence at the time of evaluation, we should take into consideration the constantly changing circumstances.

Raichandbhai used to have pleasant dialogues with all. His simplicity and frankness used to impress the listeners, so much so that he could transform their hearts. He was endowed with very deep knowledge. It could not be said that he was a learned or highly educated person. He had dropped out of formal education as a child. Nevertheless, he had a unique capacity to absorb knowledge. He could perform a hundred tasks at a time. His memory was so sharp that he would remember whatever he had read once. Whenever he was at his shop, where he used to conduct trading activities,

he would certainly have account books, ledgers etc., but more importantly, he would always have more scriptural and religious books. As soon as his professional concluded, he would switch over to the spiritual books. He would have his diary with him. He would probably not record his day-to-day transactions in it, but he was very keen to record his spiritual thoughts. He would also make note of any religious dialogue that he might have been engaged in during the course of the day. Sometimes he also composed poems. Quite often alongside writing his notes, he would conduct business deals involving lakhs of rupees. At times he may have committed errors in the transaction and possibly made a loss, but that did not concern him much. He considered such things momentary. He was more deeply involved in religious contemplations which he considered much more important.

Such matters were not trivial. One might have thought, what use would it be to enter into a trading transaction involving lakhs of rupees with a person who cared more for religious matters than matters of trade and commerce? But I have seen him conducting such transactions with my own eyes. While I am saying this to you I can visualise the scene in front of me even now. It is easy for me to talk about such matters but to accomplish them is not easy. While remaining deeply engrossed in religious thoughts, his professional competence was not compromised. Whatever he did, there was a touch of excellence and perfection in it.

Their First Meeting After Gandhiji's Return from England

The flow of his speech was constant: but he never indulged in frivolous or fallacious arguments. He was not interested in

defeating anyone by arguing. Whenever someone ordinary went to meet him, he would never adopt an attitude of being very clever or being an egoist of his knowledge, nor would he treat anyone with disrespect. He would treat everyone he met with equal respect. I must add that sometimes deceitful people would also meet him and often get away with cheating him in the name of religion.

What we should learn from his life is that one should neither flatter anyone who is considered high socially nor should we disrespect the lowly. He never conducted himself that way. He would treat everyone with frankness, without discrimination. I never saw him passing his time in frivolous banter or criticising anyone. Anyone who went to meet him could not discuss anything other than trade or religion. This was natural for him to do. We should learn what was natural to him and adopt it in our own lives.

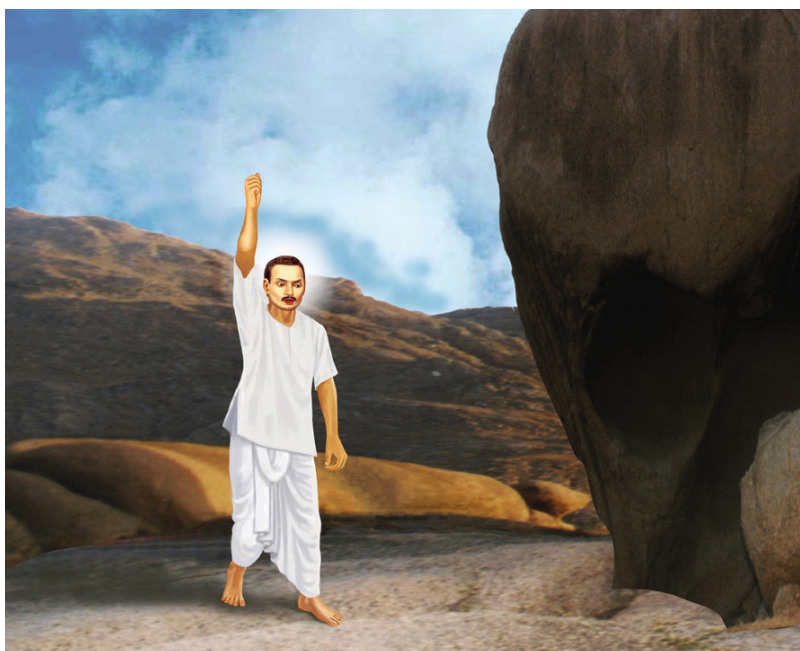
The other two significant aspects of his life that one should learn from were his qualities of truth and non-violence. He always said and practised what he considered true. He practised *ahimsa* not only because he was a Jain but also because it was naturally woven into his life. His non-violence was not limited to not killing small insects, which is a part of the life-style that Jains follow. He always felt pain whenever anyone suffered. This attitude resulted in him rising above mundane existence.

The signs of renunciation were obvious in him since his early life. He passed away at a very young age of 33. The signs of renunciation are noticeable in compositions he wrote between the ages of seventeen and eighteen. He had aimed at complete renunciation at that tender age. Although family life and commercial activity remained a part of his life almost until the very end, nevertheless by nature he was an ascetic.

We can learn the following four things from his life:

- (1) remain absorbed in the eternal truth
- (2) simplicity of life in living, treat everyone in all dealings equally
- (3) steadfast adherence to the truth,
- (4) non-violence, a cruelty-free lifestyle.

I have gone through some of the letters he wrote just before his demise. I have observed the above-mentioned qualities and traits in those letters. We should remember these qualities and implement them in our own life. Then alone would there be some meaning in observing the anniversary of his death.



Attainment of self-realisation

If there was one aspect of Shrimad's life that touched my life the most, it would have to be his intense and innate spiritual striving.

Even in the early stages of his spiritual development to attain self- realisation, one could witness the intensity and sincerity of his efforts.

While conversing with a customer in Mumbai's diamond market, he would be completely focused upon the transaction; but as soon as it was completed he would be engrossed within himself. Such dedication and steadfast focus upon his goal were the reasons for his high spiritual attainments in a short life span.

Apart from the nature of the soul, all other matters were unnecessary bondage to him. This could be seen clearly in him. It was because of this striving that he attained self-realisation.

Babaldas Mehta

Chapter 8

The Divine Touch of a Pre-eminent Personality

In a short lifespan of only thirty-three years, Shrimad Rajchandra had reached the pinnacle of spirituality and in him, one can glimpse numerous virtues worthy of an enlightened soul such as detachment, renunciation, forgiveness, equanimity, freedom from desires etc. He kept himself away from sectarianism and dogmatism. He had unflinching faith in the tenets of the Jain religion. Nevertheless, he had undertaken a rigorous study of the Vedanta religion and its fundamental tenets as well as the Bhagwat faith.

From his qualities such as deep knowledge of the religious scriptures, his thought-provoking writings, his conduct full of detachment from worldly affairs, his compassion for all living species, it becomes evident that he attained an unusually high level of self-realisation which is needed to experience liberation while still embodied. Many of his contemporaries and followers have eulogised his numerous qualities and inner achievements. Let us take note of the opinions that have been expressed by eminent people from different spheres of life about Shrimad Rajchandra.

A Formidable Victor

Shrimad Rajchandra was a great philosopher, a unique spiritualist and an eminent saint. He had studied in depth all shades of Indian philosophy and religion. He had deep feelings of respect towards all religions and from each one of them he inculcated the best of their teachings.

While performing one's duties as a householder, while living in the lap of all sorts of sensual distractions and materialistic attractions, while being continuously assaulted by the inner enemies and yet guarding his inner renunciation and detachment demonstrated his divine greatness. He managed to conquer them. He destroyed them completely. This is a feat that only an exceptional mystic personality like him could have attained, no ordinary man would be capable of achieving that.

- Munishri Punyavijayaji Maharaj

*A seeker of spirituality and a great
researcher*

A Universal Preacher

The number of people wishing to adopt spirituality in their lives is on the rise, and if the thirst of such inquisitive people is being quenched – it is largely due to the books and such other writings of the poet Raichandbhai (Shrimad Rajchandra).

I have come across several people who had been in close contact with Raichandbhai and also those that had influenced his

books and other writings. I found these people frank, relatively free from passions and willing to adopt good virtues. Based on this observation, I can confidently say that Shrimad Rajchandra's teachings were universal.

- Shri Charitravijayaji Maharaj

The Birth Centenary of Shrimad Rajchandra, V.S. 1966, Mumbai

Unparalleled Devotion and an Equanimous Vision

The divine person who managed to reignite the passion for the eternal religion in this dark time cycle and the one who attained such a high state of spirituality that he managed to reduce the cycle of infinite birth and rebirth to just one, is surely worthy of repeated reverence.

I can say with conviction that in Gujarat the one soul who has been of utmost benefit to seekers is that of Shrimad Rajchandra. By writing the 'Atmasiddhi' scripture in the Gujarati language, he has extended the grace of Jainism. I have not come across any soul as great as him in recent times. In each of his words, there lies a deep-rooted esoteric essence.

If one desires to understand fully the greatness and sublimity of the life of Shrimad Rajchandra one has to rise above dogmas and sectarianism and then one should evaluate his life objectively. Deep spiritual devotion is embedded in his writings.

- Shri Kanji Swami

An eminent Jain monk

Obeisance to Shrimad Rajchandra

Among the regional languages like Bengali, Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati in which spiritual writings have been undertaken by learned Jain scholars and thinkers, if one were to exclude the writings of the very learned Atmaramji whose writings were in Hindi, I have not come across a single book written in the 20th century which can be compared even remotely to the writings of Shrimad Rajchandra in its sheer depth of thought, independence of approach and in its originality.

When I think of the depth of the knowledge and learning which Shrimad Rajchandraji has woven into the text of ‘Atmasiddhi’ scripture, at such a very young age and in a short space of time, my head bows with devotion to him. Not only that but I also sincerely feel that the sacred gift of the ‘Atmasiddhi’ scripture that he has given to the seekers is far more significant and valuable than all that has been given by a large number of literary writers and thinkers.

One has to simply bow down one’s head in obeisance not only before the Jain religion but also for the culture of Gujarat for giving birth to such a great personality like Shrimad Rajchandra.

- Scholarly Pandit Sukhalalji

An eminent thinker and a philosopher

(Based on an article in a publication in V.S. 2024 and on a speech delivered at the birth centenary celebrations in 1922 at

Ahmedabad)

A Stunning Example of Victory Over Greed

In my humble opinion, the very revered Raichandbhai had, perfectly and fully, implemented in his life all the teachings of Lord Mahavir. I am tempted to go to the extent of saying that there may have been quite a few followers of Jainism who might have built temples of Lord Mahavir, or those who might have taken a lead in resurrecting sacred pilgrimage places, those who might have organised large-scale pilgrimages and those who might have even undertaken the most difficult of penances; nevertheless, it is only this great sage who could set an example of complete victory over greed. Religious leaders have all along been proclaiming repeatedly with a loud voice that whenever wealth is to be used for any religious purpose, that wealth must have been acquired by the purest of means and also by judicious methods. Taking this into consideration, one may say that the voice of the soul and not the law of the land should ultimately prevail in respect of morality, justice, truth and honesty and our saints have repeated this time and again.

- Bechardas Doshi

A Prakrit scholar and a researcher

To Live is the Greatest Service

When doubts about Hinduism arose in Gandhiji's mind, it was Shrimad's influence upon him that helped him sustain his faith in Hinduism. This could be considered Shrimad Rajchandra's

greatest service.

If Gandhiji's doubts had remained unresolved and if he had indeed adopted Christianity, then who would have given India the ideologies of 'satyagraha' and 'swarajya' (self-rule)?

The life of the person (Shrimad Rajchandra) whose heart throbs with the quest for self-realisation, is his greatest service. I am indebted to him for many things.

- Shri Balkoba Bhawe

Pavnar Ashram, Birth Centenary V.S. 2034

One Who Has Shown the Path to Salvation

I have reached an age of almost seventy-five years, and at long last, I am able to see the essence of the true path to salvation as explained by Shrimad now bearing fruit. Having attained the pinnacle of loving dedication, the greatness of the enlightened master and his sanctuary and his worthiness are now completely evident.

“શું પ્રભુ ચારણ કને ધારું, આત્માથી સૌ હીન,
તે તો પ્રભુએ આપિયો, વર્તુ ચરણધીન.”

*“Lord, what can I offer at your lotus feet;
anything I offer is paltry compared to the soul;
That soul too, you have helped me attain;
I shall forever serve your feet.”*

One who has full faith and get immerse in the words of Supremely Majestic True Guru Shrimad, or one who will do so, should consider

himself extremely fortunate. Such a fortunate individual is suitable for attaining salvation in the shortest possible time. The letters that he wrote to others and the poems that he composed, though written in seemingly simple language, are filled with the rich and deepest spiritual essence and therefore deserve to be contemplated upon, memorised, reflected upon and finally to be experienced.

- Shri Laghuraj Swami

*A saint and a disciple of Shrimad Rajchandra,
Shrimad Rajchandra Ashram, Agas*

Enlightener of The Path of Truth

O Lord! to enlighten the true religion,
To rise above body consciousness,
To rid the bane of ignorance,
Without ever caring for the body,
Your heart is always excited ...

You seek the eternal truth always,
Holding true selfless compassion,
You rid the path of all the thorns,
You elevate us mortals.

-Shri Bhramachariji

A great saint

An Exemplary Personality

In the context of whatever small position I hold in the public life of Gujarat, I am tempted to say that if the book entitled ‘Shrimad Rajchandra’ is regarded and accepted as an ideal one, its student would certainly be greatly benefitted in the course of his life. It represents a flowing stream of philosophy and spirituality. It does not criticize or condemn any religion because it contains great depths of spirituality in it. I recommended that everyone should read it and contemplate its contents.

- Acharya Shri Anandshankar Bapubhai Dhruv

*An eminent religious thinker of the Pandit age and a
former Principal of Kashi Vishwanath Vidyapeeth, Varanasi
Chairperson - Shrimad Rajchandra's Birth Anniversary V.S. 1973,
Wadhwan Camp*

A Born Ascetic

I have the courage and conviction to believe that Shrimad Rajchandra was a born ascetic.

- Prof. Balvantrai K. Thakore

*An eminent Poet and a prominent critic
Kartik Purnima, V.S. 1966, Mumbai*

An Extraordinary Experimenter

The scriptures contain the fundamental tenets. There are a few people who insist on experimenting on these tenets and implementing them in their lives – these people are in fact the ones that can be considered alive in the matters of religion.

Shrimad Rajchandra can be considered as one such person – the champion of the experimenters. It is such a person's code of conduct that becomes the foundations for spiritual scriptures. Finally, the awareness of religion rests upon the inner achievements of such great souls.

The poet Shrimad Rajchandra was a person rich in experience, he was a victor in life, and he was a person who had found all the answers for a revolutionary, enlightened life, his apt title of *Kavi* (Poet) encompasses the vastness of all these qualities

- Shri Kakasaheb Kalelkar

An eminent Gujarati Litterateur

Birth Anniversary of Shrimad Rajchandra V.S. 1988, Ahmedabad

An Author Par Excellence

The Gujarati language is very fortunate that it became the mode of communication for the spiritual sentiments of three of the greatest souls spanning the past one hundred and fifty years - Shri Swaminarayan, Shrimad Rajchandra and Mahatma Gandhi.

The writings of Shrimad Rajchandra included both prose and poetry. Shrimad's subtle experiences of his inner self are expressed accurately demonstrating the immense power of the

Gujarati language. Shrimad's writings have found their way into the rich and vast treasury of Gujarati prose history becoming its benchmark.

When one goes through his writings, one experiences the rumblings of a great and composed soul and at the same time, one also experiences the cool and pleasing waves emanating from his soulful existence.

- Shri Umashankar Joshi

An eminent Gujarati poet of the Gandhi era, Prominent Critic and the winner of the coveted 'Gyanpeeth' award for literature

Universally Accepted Principles

Even a cursory glance at the writings of Shrimad Rajchandra exposes one to his immense knowledge, divine powers, unique qualities, unlimited compassion for the sectarians, great equanimity and purity of conduct. I feel a sense of great pride to know that even today India continues to be endowed with such great noble souls.

The noble objectives that Shrimad Rajchandra had set before himself, the high level of thoughts that emanated from his writings and the principles of spirituality that he enunciated during his life are relevant not only to the Jain community but to one and all and therefore they should be widely propagated throughout the world.

- Diwan Bahadur Krishnalal M. Zaveri

*Well-known litterateur and an eminent judge,
President at Shrimad Rajchandra Anniversary Celebrations, V.S.*

1966, Mumbai

Diary of a Spiritual Seeker

I have not had the good fortune to have benefited from a personal contact with Shrimad Rajchandra. While I was on my way to meet a senior friend, I happened to meet Shri Laghuraj Swami who was a close disciple of Shrimad. This meeting induced me to read some of Shrimad writings which were indeed unique in nature. I had never seen such a profound diary of a spiritual seeker that contained such zeal for self-realisation, the progress towards that goal, the obstacles in the path, and various miraculous experiences along the path; I had never come across something like this before.

Does the soul exist, is there life after death, what is the nature of liberation, what stages does a soul pass through before attaining liberation – such profound spiritual questions had been addressed in experience filled language of Shrimad.

- Shri Rasiklal Chhotalal Parikh

Erudite Scholar and Researcher,

*Source: 'Prasthan' - a collection of speeches
delivered during the Paryushan festival*

Shrimad, The Torchbearer

Great souls belong not only to one sect but are the pride of the entire nation. This land of India is blessed where such elevated souls have been born. Such souls who have risen above sectarianism, those who hold a universally encompassing vision, belong not just to India, but to the entire world. This is because enlightened souls

are not bound by regards for dogmatic beliefs; they are above such narrow views and treat all with the eyes of equanimity. These great souls consider the entire universe to be their family and indeed as soul mates. Such is their universal love. The entire universe is theirs and they belong to the entire universe. Foremost amongst such great souls that India has produced is the torchbearer Shrimad Rajchandra.

Through the emergence of such a gem of a person, the bondages of sectarianism were destroyed and the curtains of deceit were torn apart. The storm of superstition subsided and religion was propounded in its truest and purest form.

- Dr Bhagwandas Mehta

A scholar and an eminent philosopher

Contentment in Renunciation

The entire life of Shrimad was devoid of any materialistic temptations or desire for fame and thus he could teach Lord Mahavir's true philosophy to those he came in contact with. The strength of his total detachment enabled him to enhance his deep and broad mental capacity, equanimity and frankness, the qualities he considered to be the essential virtues for spiritual development.

- Shri Narmadashankar Mehta

A scholarly writer

Non-violence, Universal Viewpoint and Commitment to Truth

On 7th of May, 2000 under the sponsorship of Shri Raj Saubhag Satsang Mandal, Sayla, an extensive program was organised to commemorate the 100th Death Centenary of Shrimad Rajchandra under the auspices of the International Commemoration Committee at the Shanmukhananda Auditorium, Mumbai.

All the organisations devoted to the propagation of the philosophy of Shrimad Rajchandra, all the leaders and prominent members of the all Jain sects including the national and international organisations had participated in the event.

Those present on the occasion included Dr L. M. Singhvi, the eminent constitutional expert, a scholar of the Jain religion and the honourable member of the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House of the Indian Parliament).

On the occasion, Dr L. M. Singhvi said, “In Shrimad Rajchandra’s words ‘today is an unprecedented occasion’. It is an occasion for divine memories. Culture cannot be created without remembrance. Such memories combine to build up the culture and that is why it is our duty to bring together all the facts of such a culture, to preserve and to listen to such a culture. Shrimad Rajchandra made Gandhi the Mahatma. He gave him the inner vision and the experience of the divine, he taught him meditation and pure conduct. Gandhiji by himself was unique and a great soul. That is why one feels like reading repeatedly what Gandhiji had said about Shrimad Rajchandra, the description by which he had eulogised Shrimad and the devotion with which he fondly remembers him.

Shrimad’s life and teachings, his advice and his philosophy

were always in the mind of Mahatma Gandhi whenever he faced any difficult times in his life. The short span of the thirty-three years that Shrimad Rajchandra lived in this world are equivalent to a whole century, even more. The age of an individual cannot be counted in years alone. In addition to counting the number of years a person has lived on this earth; the other and more important measure of his life is the spiritual status that the person had attained during his lifetime. Taking this measure into consideration, one can confidently say that what Shrimad Rajchandra has said and achieved in just thirty-three years of his life was indeed equivalent to three hundred years. I feel that he was born on this earth just for accomplishing one great thing and that is to make the 21st Century the century of Mahatma Gandhi. It was a curious coincidence that non-violence, a universal viewpoint and unflinching commitment to truth were resurrected together once again in this world in the teachings of Shrimad and in the acts and deeds of Mahatma Gandhi.

There was a time in Gandhi's life when as a barrister, he did not have any briefs or any legal work, but this proved to be a blessing in disguise. He had enough time to listen to Shrimad attentively. His in-depth learning and training in spirituality were accomplished before he went to South Africa. The period of ten years during which these two great souls were in touch proved most memorable. Gandhiji had said, 'There was no soul other than Shrimad Rajchandra who had influenced me so deeply. I bow my head before him because, during the days of my moral and spiritual crisis, his advice came to my rescue and benefited me greatly.' To fully express his indebtedness to Shrimad, Gandhiji had used the word 'refuge'. Gandhiji's description of Shrimad Rajchandra is truly unique. That description not only includes Shrimad Rajchandra's physical features but also the devotion and

intimacy that Gandhiji shared with Shrimad. He has described not only Shrimad Rajchandra's extraordinary mental prowess and achievements, but also his inner spiritual elevation.

According to Shrimad, Gandhiji had lived a life of perfection and achieved tremendous success. Whenever Gandhiji faced any crisis in his life, the advice given by Shrimad from time to time rescued him. Gandhiji was in the habit of reading very few books but all the same he had read all the books written by Shrimad Rajchandra. He himself has mentioned that he had read the 'Vachanamrut' and 'Mokshamala' written by Shrimad."

- Dr L. M. Singhvi

Constitutional expert and Jain scholar

Mumbai 7th May 2001

Innovator of a New Era in Jainism

There is no exaggeration if one compares Swami Vivekanand and Shrimad Rajchandra; the former had reinvented the Vedanta philosophy while the latter had reinvented a new era in Jainism.

- Shri Bhagubhai Fatechand Karbhari

Chief Editor 'Jain' magazine

Mumbai, 28th November 1909

The Essence of His Ambrosial Words

The penance with which Mahatma Gandhi conducted himself for thirty long years to make India free from political bondage through the mass struggles consisting of adherence to truth and non-violence is a unique achievement, which remains unparalleled in the history of the world. This was a result of the closeness with which Gandhiji and Shrimad had come together in their lives and the true guidance that the former received from the latter from time to time. This has been adequately reflected in the speeches and in the writings of Mahatma Gandhi on Shrimad Rajchandra.

That is how Shrimad Rajchandra had contributed spirituality in the process of building up of a new India. The very revered Mahatma Gandhi has been immortalised in the history of India's independence struggle, similarly the name of Shrimad Rajchandra comes first and foremost in the life story of Mahatma Gandhi.

In this modern age, the presence of such eminent persons has become extremely rare in this world, so we can consider it our good fortune if we can see them in flesh and blood. Our country should be considered most fortunate for this. Such great souls become role models for all of us. Let us follow their path in our life in its true spirit. If we really do that, it will illuminate our own lives and will lead to perfect contentment for us.

Raichandbhai's life was that of a householder when viewed in physical terms, but in truth, he was completely detached from the worldly affairs so much so that he actually lived a perfectly spiritual life. This is manifested in his devotional poetic compositions, in his letters and writings that adequately reflect his inner thoughts.

- Shri Amarchand Mavji Shah

Litterateur



Shrimad Rajchandra's Life Timeline

V. S.

- 1924 Born in Vavaniya village on the full moon day of the Kartik month, Sunday at 2 AM.
- 1828 Pet name Lakshminandan, subsequently changed to Raichand.
- 1831 Attained recollection of previous lives atop a babul tree near a cremation ground.
- 1940 Wrote "Mokshamala" in the month of Chaitra. Began performing the miraculous feat of attending to simultaneous mental and physical tasks known as '*avadhan*'. Performed 8 such tasks simultaneously in Morbi.
- 1941 Twelve and sixteen tasks performed simultaneously in Jamnagar. The title of "Jewel of India" bestowed. Fifty-two tasks simultaneously performed at Botad.
- 1942 The title of 'Living God of Knowledge' was bestowed at Limdi, Wadhwan. Stayed in Mumbai from the months Bhadra to Posh and performed a hundred tasks simultaneously in front of a large national and international audience. Composed the text '*Bhavnaboth*'.
- 1944 Married: 12th day of the bright half of the month of Maha.
- 1944 Stayed in Ahmedabad from the month of Chaitra to Jeth. Met with Juthabhai. '*Mokshamala*' published.
- 1945 Stayed in Ahmedabad during the month of Kartik. Stayed at Bharuch and Surat in the month of Magsar, then Morbi & Vavaniya. Stayed in Mumbai in the month of Shravan. After the Paryushan festival, he started a trading business in partnership with Shri Revashankarbhai.
- 1946 Paryushan festival observed in Vavaniya in the month of Shravan. Moved to Morbi in the month of Bhadrapad where the first meeting with Saubhagbhai took place. In the month of Aso, six days spent at Sayla. During the Diwali festival, spiritual association with Shri Lalluji Muni at Khambhat.

- 1947 Observed Paryushan at Ralaj from the months Shravan to Bhadrapad. Experienced the highest level of self-realisation. Moved to Vavaniya and from there to Mumbai.
- 1948 Long stay in Mumbai.
- 1949 Four months of the rainy season spent at Mumbai along with Shri Lalluji Muni. Paryushan festival observed in Vadodara.
- 1950 Long stay in Mumbai.
- 1951 Spent the month of Maha at Kathod; Paryushan festival observed at Vavaniya; then moved to Sayla, Hadmatiya, Dharmaj, Veersad, Undel, Khambhat, and Mumbai.
- 1952 Stayed at Kavitha in the Shravan month; Paryushan festival observed at Ralaj, then travelled to Wadwa, Khambhat, Anand, Nadiad - where the 'Atmasiddhi' was written.
- 1953 From the months Kartik to Chaitra stayed in Vavaniya; then stayed in Sayla for ten days in the month of Vaishakh with Saubhagbhai, followed by Idar for ten days. Paryushan festival observed in Mumbai.
- 1954 From the months Posh to Jeth, Shrimad stayed in Vavaniya; and thereafter in Mumbai. The months Shravan to Bhadarwa Paryushan observed in Kavitha. In the month of Aso, stayed in Vaso; then in Uttarsanda, Kheda.
- 1955 Stayed in Mumbai during Kartik month, then from Magsar spent three months in Idar; then Morbi, Vavaniya, and again to Idar for 12 days in the month of Vaishakh. Then to Naroda, Ahmedabad and then Mumbai. In the month of Jeth, 6 days spent in Madras followed by a long stay in Mumbai.
- 1956 Stayed in Dharampur in the months of Chaitra and Vaishakh. Then moved to Morbi, Vavaniya. From the months Shravan to Kartik he stayed at Wadhwan camp.
- 1957 Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Teethal, Wadhwan and Rajkot.
- 1957 Passed away on the fifth day of the dark half of the Chaitra month, Tuesday, at 2 PM, in Rajkot.





Shrimad's Final Poem



Obeisance to Lord Jineshwars

1

That which the soul seekers desire, the abode of bliss infinite;
That is the soul, the pure substratum of all, or in other words the
embodied form of the Lord Jineshwar. (1)

Unfathomable indeed is the soul, hence to make it attainable;
The Lord Jineshwar's elevated state has been described, as a potent
medium for seekers. (2)

The state of the Lord Jineshwar and the individual soul are one and
the same, there is verily no difference;
So that this realisation may be experienced, all the Holy Scriptures
were composed. (3)

That which the Jineshwars have preached is truly unfathomable,
even the smartest minds tire out;
But with the aid of the enlightened Guru, the same becomes easily
attainable and a source of bliss. (4)

Worshipping the Jineshwar's lotus feet with the utmost devotion;
And cherishing the holy company of the monks, these lead one to
attain a state of restraint and discipline in conduct. (5)

Always engrossed in admiring good qualities, drawing inwards the
faculties of mind, body and speech;
Attainment of the divine grace from an enlightened Guru, this is
the essence of the Lord Jineshwar's religion. (6)

The ocean of spiritual literature thus implodes into one little drop;
Similar is the example of the miraculous charm by which the 14
vast ancient doctrines are known to the self-realised. (7)

The faculty of the mind that remains filled with carnal desires and
passions,
The soul's manifestations shall be distraught, and such a person's
association with the Guru and religion shall be futile. (8)

Weakened sensual pleasures, along with frankness, accompanied
by abidance with the divine instruction and deep contemplation;
The qualities of compassion and tenderness have evolved, that is
the first stage of spiritual progression. (9)

Where the materialistic indulgences such as speech have been
restrained, where the tools of austerity are practised with love;
Where worldly existence is no longer dearer than one's soul, there
the great fortunate one has arrived at the middle stage of spiritual
progression. (10)

Where there is not the desire to live, neither any fear of death;
 Those are the ultimate worthy souls of the path to salvation, they
 shall attain the ultimate union with the divine, and they shall be the
 conquerors of all greed. (11)

2

Having entered the land of equanimity, under the midday sun,
 one's shadow merges under oneself;
 Similarly, when the soul merges within itself, the mind and its
 multifarious thoughts cease to exist. (1)

The entire universe of materialistic existence arises out of
 attachment and delusional engagement in thoughts;
 As the awareness is turned inwards, it is destroyed in no time. (2)

3

That holy saint I desire, who is an abode of infinite bliss, day and
 night I remain engrossed upon him;
 That exalted state of infinite tranquillity, drenched in the ambrosial
 nectar, I bow down to and sing victorious praises of. (1)



