



॥ Nitya Puja ॥

TRANSLATION

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INSPIRATION

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NITYA PUJA

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INTRODUCTION

By adorning the Indian soil Bhagwan Swaminarayan has introduced a number of ways and means to bring welfare of the innumerable embodied souls. He got constructed majestic crested-temples and He Himself established His own Murti (idol) to allow the numberless embodied souls to establish relation with His sacred Form on permanent basis. In order to enable His followers to perform Nitya Puja - daily morning worship, He asked the artist Narayanjibhai to make dies to be used for printing His various Forms on paper. Then people in every house started worshipping these pictures of Shriji Maharaj.

Shriji Maharaj had made such arrangement



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as the idol-worship should continue even after He had physically departed from this world. After Shri Hari had left for His abode such picture-idols continued to be printed and they were made available to all for worship.

After having confirmed one's faith in Shri Hari the only means to achieve happiness and welfare is to worship Him from the bottom of one's heart. It remains as the only means to attain fearlessness and reach the Bhagwan's imperishable abode.

Shri Hari Himself has advised us to have faith and adoration for the eight-type-idol because He dwells in such idols for ever. Moreover, He has told, "Even now, and after I leave for the imperishable abode, you should continue to

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worship My idols and Patpratima (picture-idols). I will accept your adoration through them and will shower My responses full of happiness and bliss upon you.

During the forest roaming Shri Hari had entered the idol of Jagannathji and had drunk plenty of water through the medium of Shaligram. He had also accepted the milk offered by Jivuba through the icon of Lalji. In this way by using His idols as medium Shri Hari had accepted the worship offered or extended by His devotees.

Being Himself Purna Purushottamnarayan He need not do anything, but He worshipped Shaligram and other idols (icons) to inspire His followers. This is how Bhagwan Swaminarayan

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introduced and propagated Pujavidhi (modes of daily worship) in our Holy Fellowship.

The dies for picture-printing which had been got made by Shri Hari had stopped the printing and they were no longer in use. As a result only Namaskar i.e. salute worthy Patpratima available in general market had to be used for worship. When I moved from village to village many devotees asked for Patpratimas for worship. So I requested the then H. H. Acharya Maharaj Shri Narendraprasadji, "If you please permit me to have the original blocks and dies of Patpratimas, I can restart the activity of printing Patpratima." Acharya Maharaj Shri was kind enough to give me the blocks and my request for printing was granted by him. Thus

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from A. D. 1966 picture printing on large scale using the black dust (ash) obtained by burning pure ghee, was started.

If worshipper did not follow the correct procedure of worship he would not get the fruit for the same, so one who was given the Patpratima should get proper knowledge about the procedure. With this view in mind the booklet entitled Pujavidhi was made prepared by Shri Rameshchandra L. Pandya. The demand for this booklet continued so the same had been published after making necessary changes.

This booklet has been prepared by keeping in view the basic principles of Shriji Maharaj. The aim of publishing this booklet is to

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enable the worshipper to practise Murtipuja and Nitya Puja following every detail given in this booklet and thus to help one get the blessings of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

– Kanji Bhagat



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This youthful idol is adorned with an endless number of welfare-causing qualities and merits. Taking human form all the four Vedas sing of the life-sports, fame and majesty. Shri Hari is the possessor of the incarnations like Varah etc. So nice is Shri Harikrishna Bhagwan Who is Purushottam and full of grace.

– Purushottam Prakash



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If in this universe there is One with endless number of sacred qualities, that is Bhagwan Swaminarayan. One could get the knowledge about His divine life-sports, renown and majesty in all the four Vedas. Shri Harikrishna or Bhagwan Swaminarayan Who assumed the incarnations like Varah etc. had adorned this earth by taking birth through Dharmadev and Bhaktidevi at the holy village of Chhapiya.

One who can cultivate intimate interaction with the idol of Bhagwan Swaminarayan can cross the ocean of life quite happily. Many embodied souls have achieved everlasting happiness by worshipping His idol. By worshipping the Bhagwan's idol our senses and mind get purified. Every staunch follower in Holy Fellowship with confirmed faith in Him

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offers worship on every morning as Nitya Puja. Now let us try to understand various aspects of this Nitya Puja.

On every morning as the Sun or Suryanarayan, fills the world with light and spirit. In the same way the life of every human being should also be filled with light and spirit. If there is any means to bring new strength and vitality every morning, it is the prayer and worship i.e. Nitya Puja of Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan.

A person can talk on the mobile phone to another person in any part of the world only after getting his cell phone charged. This charging process is essential and as a routine one has to follow it. In the same way spiritual charging is essential to strengthen our body,

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mind and soul. It is through the medium of Nitya Puja that we can charge our body, mind and soul and once we have done this, we can be progressive in the practical, social, political or spiritual fields. Thus Nitya Puja has a great significance in our life

When we ask some people about Nitya Puja they reply that they sit before the idol in their house and chant Swaminarayan Mantra on rosary five times (means 5 x 108 times), but in reality this is not enough, because the process of taking our mind and soul upward is included in Nitya Puja and that Puja can be taken with us when we go outdoors or out of station. This type of Puja can help us to maintain our constant relation with particular form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

As regards the doing of Puja, whom should

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we worship? Man by nature loves Puja or worship, and he likes it. Man feels overwhelmed when he comes to know or hear about the outstanding beauty, virtue, knowledge, intelligence, power, strength, grandeur, competence, prosperity, art or wealth in any being. This overwhelming astonishment turns into attraction and from attraction love and respect are born. When love begins he becomes a fan and a worshipper and then starts worshipping the same.

This type of inherited custom continues with us from ancient times, but this type of love and worship do not stay for long period, because the beauty, quality and power to which he was attracted do not subsist for a long time. When a person loves somebody or worships him, his

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purpose is to get happiness, peace and welfare but the type and nature of the beauty and quality worshipped by him keep on changing, so he gets nothing in return. On the contrary he has to face the circumstances in which he would lose whatever is good and pleasant he is having at this moment.

Another fact is that whoever has beauty may not have good qualities, or if someone has beauty and good quality he may not have good intelligence. If he has beauty, quality and intelligence he may not have a good character. Thus something is always lacking and finally we have to conclude that except Aksharbrahman (Imperishable Brahman) no one is adorned with all meritorious, divine qualities. You may look anywhere you will find that every worldly

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object or being has something lacking or wanting or deficient. Only Bhagwan Swaminarayan is perfect in this world because only He possesses perfect divine qualities, and for this reason He is called Purna Purushottamnarayan. No other living being can possess the beauty, divine virtues, majesty, intelligence, luster, competence, power and art like Supreme Brahman, Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan.

If any person or animal in this world seems to have beauty, quality, power and intelligence, directly or indirectly in one way or the other; these have been given to him by PurnaPurushottam Bhagwan Swaminarayan. In whatever person we find these qualities they do not manifest from him independently, but they

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are bestowed by the embodied heart-scient Bhagwan Swaminarayan residing in the soul of that being. Each worldly object which causes happiness, peace and pleasure can also become the cause of misery, discomfort and displeasure. Therefore the experienced enlightened souls have described worldly happiness as illusory water in desert and peace as concealed fire, because worldly happiness and peace are momentary. Only Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the source of real peace and happiness. He can bless one with eternal peace. Only Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the treasure of pleasure and the pleasure rendered by Him is everlasting and real.

Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the idol of welfare. The influence of Kaal (death) extends

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itself up to the abode of gods, therefore says Premanand Swami

स्वर्ग मृत्यु पाताल दसो दिश, सबही कालने घेरा रे;
मेरा ऐक आशरा तेरा रे, धर्मकुंवर घनश्याम.

The Kaal (death) has enveloped all of three worlds – heaven, earth and profound ocean. O Dharma's son Ghanshyam! You are my only shelter (against the fear of death). The only place which can free a human being from the clutches of Kaal(death), action and Maya – is Bhagwan Swaminarayan Himself. One can become free from such fears by taking shelter at His lotus feet. The idol of Bhagwan Swaminarayan can offer the boon of fearlessness.

Out of ignorance the soul begins to believe

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that his physical body and the persons related to it are close to him. But this is wrong because when a person dies his own relatives either cremate his body or burry it and dispense it far away from them. Whereas Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan as heart-scient power adorns his soul. Ignorance causes a veil between the heart-scient Bhagwan Swaminarayan and our soul. For this reason the soul does not get the realization of the form of God. The Nitya Puja can help as the best means to remove the veil (curtain) of ignorance and offer you the vision (Darshan) of God.

The only One, Who can stay closest to the soul and support one at the final moment is Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Therefore in this world the only most adorable figure is Bhagwan

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Swaminarayan. He is the only worship-worthy Bhagwan. Therefore the wise Satsangis should worship Him with fervor devotion from the bottom of their hearts.

What is Puja? Puja contains four basic factors in its process. **1.** Pujak or worshipper, **2.** Pujya – worshippable, **3.** The Puja material and **4.** Pujavidhi i.e. process of Puja. All the four components are essential for successful and fruitful Puja. If any of the four is absent the Puja becomes meaningless, fruitless and it may fail. Apart from this, other four factors should be present. The purity of the worshipper, the worship worthy material for worship, the process of worship and its activity from within and outside is most essential. Next important thing is the concentration of the mind. The third

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important point is your unwavering firm faith born out of the vital knowledge of His meritorious significance. The fourth important fact is to hold desirelessness for fruit while worshipping the supreme worship-worthy form.

Puja is the expression of the love which springs out from the heart. When the love in the devotee's heart merges with the love expressed through the process of worship it becomes meaningful and successful. Puja should be void of selfishness and should be full of love. Worshipper should never expect to take or receive anything in return but his or her aim should be to offer everything which he or she has.

There are two letters in the word Puja. प – 'P'

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means Paap-karma (bad action, evil deeds) and ज – 'J' means many births i.e. Janma-janmantar, which includes a sequence of life and death. So Puja is the means which can destroy the effect of evil deeds done by the individual during a number of past life cycles. Let us make etymological and phonological approach to the word Puja. It is pronounced like this

P + U + J + A = making a cluster of consonants and vowels we speak 'Puja' or 'PU:JA'

1. प P = papkarma i.e. wrong doings, evil deeds.
2. उ U = stands for overall protection.
3. ज J = past cycles of life (birth and death).
4. आ A = stands for returning or home

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coming. The soul returns to the abode of Almighty.

The soul has to travel through a number of birth cycles and it is separated from the Creator by the element of Maya. Puja is the best means to break the cycle, remove the cover of Maya and reunite the soul with God. It is an unfailing means to break the powerful stream of Kaal (death), Karma (action) and Maya to enter safely the worshipful shelter of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Let us now, see the pre-Puja requirements to be followed by us. The first requirement is to sanctify oneself by observing external physical purity. देव भूत्वा देवं यजेत् First become as pure as a deity, then start the worship. The worshipper has to maintain purity in all respects. The

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worshipper should get up before sunrise, make himself fresh after attending natural call, then clean his eyes, nose, ears, teeth, tongue, mouth, hands and feet with clean water. Then one should take bath using filtered water. The place and the vessel used for bath should be clean. The water used for bath should be clean and unused by anybody. While taking bath the worshipper should remember and recite the bath related sacred sports of Shriji Maharaj and should invoke the waters from all sacred rivers and lakes into his bath-vessel which will make his bathing sacred. He should chant God's name while taking his bath instead of singing film songs in the bathroom.

The time before sunrise is considered best for taking bath. Purity in bath is an essential pre-

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condition for sacredness in Puja. One should not perform Puja without taking bath. External and internal sacredness depends on the cleanliness and purity in taking bath.

After taking bath one should wear nicely cleaned clothes. It would be better if it is of dhoti type cloth. Winding and folding the cloth into dhoti is necessary for better comfort of the body and concentration of the mind. One more cloth should be used to cover the upper part of the body. The female devotees should wear sari, skirt and blouse. As far as possible try to wear the clothes allowed by our culture, at least during Puja time. After bath and before performing Puja the devotee should not touch any dirty and undesirable object. It is often seen that the person doing Puja receives and replies

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to a number of business calls on the phone. If mind is engaged in other activities the Puja may fail. One should be very careful about avoiding such disturbances at and during Puja time.

In our Holy Fellowship, there prevails carelessness and ignorance regarding the Pujaroom. There should be a nice Simhasan for Bhagwan Swaminarayan's idol in the room from where we get bliss and vitality. Very often we see that Pujaroom is smaller than a bathroom; or the place under the back of the staircase is used as Pujaroom. People spread newspaper and keep the idol on it. Often they lit lamp and offer Agarbatti and chant mantra on rosary in standing position! This practice needs to be improved. One part of the house should be like temple. Our house should be as sacred as

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temple where we go to seek God. We visit temple only for some time but we stay in our house for most of the time! We should make our house so nice and sacred that God would like to stay in it.

Pujaroom of God should be well furnished and well decorated in Sattvaguna way and not in Rajoguna style. It should look divine rather than gorgeous. We may arrange electric light, fan, curtains etc. in Pujaroom where we can sit with steady mind. Pujaroom need not be costly but it should be in keeping with one's economic condition but the point is that proper space should be spared for it and the atmosphere should be of sattva quality. In short it should match the meaning of स्वच्छता त्वां प्रभुता where there is cleanliness there is God. The water pot



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and other vessels for Thakorji should be kept in separate special place. These points for Pujaroom should be considered sincerely so that devotion and meditation can be practised profoundly. Now we shall look into the process of Puja.

Wearing clean clothes one should clean and wipe the floor of Pujaroom and then wash the hands (or you can do this on previous nightfall). Then spread Asan (mattress) on the clean floor where you would prefer to sit. This Asan should be that of Darbh, wool or hyde (skin) of deer or tiger purified by vapour or bajoth (square wooden platform) - these Asans are best for Puja. One should not prefer to sit on ground, paper or stone for performing Puja. The Asan should be comfortable for sitting and it should



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not have been touched by anyone else. The size of the Asan should be large enough for sitting comfortably so that no part of the body should touch the floor.

When we are engaged in Puja, a current of electromagnetic power flows in our body. If some part of the body of a worshipper touches the earth then the current would get earthing. Therefore the Asans recommended here are of such type that magnetic power of current would not flow through them. It is only to prevent the leakage of electromagnetic current. In this way Asan is an important thing in the Puja process.

The Asan on which the Moorti of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is to be adorned, should be higher than the Asan on which the worshipper

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is to sit. The Asan of the worshipper should not be dirty and it should not be costlier than that of the Bhagwan.

Now the process of Puja consist of various rituals. The first stage in Puja is called : **1.** Aavahan – invocation means to offer prayer to call the God, **2.** Asan, **3.** Paadyam means water, flower or rice offered at the feet of the Bhagwan, **4.** Arghya means flower, rice, water, Darbh (green grass blades) offered in the hand of the Bhagwan, **5.** Aachaman, **6.** bath, **7.** offering garments, sacred thread, ornaments, sandal powder, rice, flower, incense, lamp, **8.** Prasad, **9.** Mukhavas, **10.** Arati, **11.** Pradakshina, **12.** Namaskar, **13.** Chanting mantra while offering flowers, **14.** Naam Japa, **15.** Prarathana and **16.** Visarajan.

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All these 16 Upacharas should be pure and should not have been borrowed, lent or stolen, but they should be religiously bought by one's honest earning. Puja is not to be performed mechanically with dry feeling but it should be done with pure love rising from the bottom of the heart!

One would say if we want to please God we can do it through the genuine feeling, then why do we require so many Upacharas for it? When a devotee is in his initial stage he needs to steady his mind and senses to get into relation with God. By following this procedure our mind and senses are bridged with God. While offering the Upacharas our emotion binds us in love-tie with the idol of God. Therefore these Upacharas are meant for the uplifting and

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strengthening of devotion. We should not be engrossed or bound by the process of Puja, because our aim is to make the mind stable through Puja process and get related with the idol of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. If it becomes mechanical and part of routine such Puja does not take us to God but it intensifies our ego and rigidity.

Many devotees share the bias that when on social or business tour they go out of station they do not carry Nitya Puja with them. They explain that “outdoors we don't get clean place, so where can we perform Puja?” This is nothing but an escape. In fact when we go out of station we should carry foldable plastic mattress; and after sprinkling water on it we can spread our Puja. In case of emergency or crisis if less purity

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is observed it would not matter, but performing Puja in all circumstances is quite essential.

Many devotees in the Holy Fellowship keep with them a bag which may contain everything necessary for traveling and in that bag they spare one special section for Puja material. Therefore if one has firm determination for Puja nothing is impossible. One should have a firm mind that Nitya Puja (daily worship) of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is as important and essential as the oxygen which we breathe to sustain our life. In this sense we should feel some discomfort on that morning when we could not perform Nitya Puja. We should feel that something is wanting in our life. When we experience such type of void or vacuum in life caused by the absence of Puja we should understand that we have

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genuine love and devotion for Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Nand saints have written such padas (devotional verses) as they may enhance our love in the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and encourage us to worship His idol. One may learn these verses by heart and recite the same. Here is one such pada written by Brahmanand Swami:-

*Let us do the august Arati of Mohanji,
whole heartedly;
Hold scented incense and lamp before Him,
with great love. 1*

*Behold the charming idol of Mahaprabhu,
with intense devotion;
In your heart plant the idol,
adoring from top to bottom. 2*

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*Let us sing pleasant songs of,
sacred form of Sahajanand;
And get engrossed in love,
offering Him a flower-garland. 3*

*Let me forget everything else,
linking the mind with the Soul-Master;
Says Brahmanand glancing the face of Hari,
move being blithe-some. 4*

In this lyric Brahmanand Swami has given expression to the heart of the devotee. This lyric is the revelation of the zeal, love, awareness and the art for minute Darshan (vision) of the Bhagwan's idol. We should learn from this present verse what and how should be the intellectual, psychological and emotional state of the devotee who is performing Nitya Puja.

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After offering incense-stick (dhoop), lamp (deep) and Naivedya (Prasad material) while waving Arati the devotee should glance emotionally at the idol and closely observing each limb of Bhagwan's body and this should be well-stored in the mind. Very sacred is the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. If you cultivate relation with this form, your life will be full of sacredness. Through this lyric Brahmanand Swami shows that how can one become plunged in God's love after offering flower garlands to Him.

In this world, only Bhagwan Swaminarayan is worth remembering and everything else is worth forgetting. As many worldly matters stored in our subtle body are all worth forgetting. So in this world if there is any form

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worth worshipping, that is the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. If one can get pleasure by doing His Puja then life would become meaningful.

So let us try to understand from a verse (shloka) of Mangalacharan.

ब्राह्मे मुहुर्ते शयनं विहाय, निज स्वरूपं हृदि चिन्तयित्वा ।
स्नातं विशुद्धं प्रचुराभिरद्धिः, श्री नीलकण्ठं हृदि चिन्तयामि ॥

Leaving the bed in the early morning and having contemplated in the heart on one's real form. Taking bath with clean water, I remember in my heart Bhagwan Shri Nilkanth.

If an individual's morning becomes sacred then entire life may become sacred through the touch of sacred element. In this world if Someone is full of happiness, sacredness and eternity it is Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

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The Mangalacharan points to this type of meaning. ब्राह्मे मुहुर्ते means time before sunrise. शयनं विहाय means awaking from sleep. निज स्वरूपं हृदि चिन्तयित्वा means asking who am I? We get the realization that I am Brahmarupa seeker of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and one should think like this in heart. शयनं means stage of ignorance. One should shake off the strong belief that **I am the body** means rejection of देहभाव i.e. body consciousness.

And this is quite an essential fact to be observed before Puja, because soul lives in the body and God lives in the soul. Therefore if there is any best place to adorn Bhagwan Swaminarayan, it is our soul. We should first leave the bed in the early morning and while

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getting up we should think “I am Bramarupa seeker of Lrod Swaminarayan and He adorns my soul.” Having your intelligence firmed like this, attending natural call etc. take a bath with profuse clean water. स्नातं विशुद्धं प्रचुराभिरद्भिः श्री नीलकंठं हृदि चिन्तयामि Tell yourself “I meditate on Shri Harikrishna Nilkanth within my heart.” This is the meaning of the morning Mangalacharan.

The second Mangalacharan runs like...

प्रातः स्मरामि हरिकृष्ण मुखारविन्दं,
बिम्बाधरं स्मितसुधाहृत विश्रुतापम् ।
प्रातर्नमामि हरिकृष्ण पदारविन्दे,
तीर्थीकृतावनितले हृदयाव धार्ये ॥

In the morning I remember the lotus-like face of Shri Harikrishna which destroys the pains of the world by the nectarian smile

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through His reddish lips.

In the morning I bow in the lotus-feet of Shri Harikrishna which have roamed at places and turned them into pilgrim-spots, now worth-holding in the heart.

Now प्रातः स्मरामि हरिकृष्ण मुखारविन्दं means that if there is anything worth remembering in this world, it is the lotus-like face of Bhagwan Shri Harikrishna. And how is the face of Shri Harikrishna? It is as red as the interior of Tindola fruit and His nectar like gentle smile is the destroyer of त्रिविधताप three-fold miseries of the devotees.

The next says प्रातर्नमामि हरिकृष्ण पदारविन्दे, तीर्थीकृतावनितले हृदयाव धार्ये. I bow to the lotus-feet of Shri Harikrishna wherever these divine feet

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travelled on the earth, those places have become sacred pilgrim-spots! While bowing your head at the lotus-feet of Shri Harikrishna Maharaj, you too should have this type of feeling in your heart.

Our mind becomes quiet and calm by doing the process of Nitya Puja. These two verses explain to us how is the God whom we are going to worship and what should be our eligibility before doing the Puja? These two verses help to bring stability in our aim for Puja.

The purpose of taking bath before Puja is to make body and mind pure and quiet. One should not touch any untouchable thing after bath and before Puja. This type of cleanliness is meant for mental purity and steadiness.

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Even after taking bath if the mind remains uncomfortable and rushes into many thoughts then three steps should be followed before performing actual Puja.

1. With a loud voice recite Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.
2. Have Atmavichar - sense of self-realization i.e. I have nothing to do with the waves of body and the mind. I am the soul – get firmly rooted to this type of self-realization in your rationality.
3. Remember the sports of Shri Swaminarayan Bhagwan and also the places where He had celebrated holy festivals.

If somebody is likely to be disturbed by your loud reciting you may create humming of

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Swaminarayan Mantra in your throat just to feed out the unwanted thoughts. A politician has to learn politics in the same way the worshipper has to learn about Atmavichar or self-realization which is very important.

This Atmavichar contains the thought that the worshipper is distinct from the ten senses and four-fold inner consciousness by form, nature, quality and power. All other worldly things are material, changeable and perishable, while I am Chaitanya - pure consciousness, unchangeable and imperishable. As in a state all ministers and citizens have to follow the king's order, the body is the state and soul is the king. In our body, senses and mind are ministers and servants of the soul. The soul who is the

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worshipper is the king of the state called material body. Therefore senses and mind have to act as per the order of the soul. The worshipper is a staunch devotee of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and his senses, mind and intelligence are auxiliary elements in doing the Puja and devotion of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

One should remember the sports of Bhagwan Swaminarayan previously recollected by the senses, hold self-realization in the intelligence and cultivate detachment from body-consciousness (sense of body and soul as one) only then you can do disturbance-free and obstacle-free Puja. The three remedies Mantrajaap, remembering the sports of the Bhagwan and self-realization should be

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practised for 15 minutes or more and as a result of that the mind will become calm. Then one may start Puja.

Before starting Puja the worshipper should hold in mind the significance of the form of God. In order to understand the significance of the Bhagwan's form let us use one reference from Vachanamrit Panchala –1.

In order to realize the pettiness of worldly happiness and supremacy of happiness given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in imperishable abode we should always concentrate on the point that “happiness of man is superior to the happiness of animals, and king's happiness is even more superior, and deities are happier than kings, Indra's happiness is superior to king's happiness, Brahaspati's is superior to

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Indra's happiness and Brahma is superior to Brihaspati. Happiness in Vaikuntha is superior to that. Golok surpasses Vaikuntha in respect of happiness and Bhagwan's imperishable abode Akshardham surpasses the happiness available in Golok; and I am going to worship Bhagwan Swaminarayan Who adores the imperishable abode Akshardham. This type of concept is called confirmed belief. In this regard Premanand Swami says :

*Chief God is the only my choice Deity,
Except Him I would not adore any other deity,
Surely He is my only Master. 1*

*He only is my yoga, yajna and meditation,
He is my Bhagwan, my heart-scient. 2*

*Says Premanand He only is my lifeline,
The name Sahajanand is the abode of all
happiness. 3*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

My worship-worthy chief God is Bhagwan Sahajanand Swami - the Giver of power of knowledge, power of action and power of will to humans, animals, demi gods, Maya and the imperishable Brahman. The fruit of doing Yoga practices, penance, Yajna and meditation is the direct Puja of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

Here Premanand Swami has used the word **जीवनप्राण** (life-soul). The worshipper should bear in mind that this body is material, subject to decay and perishable absolutely present in the Puja-idol in my Pujaroom. If I try to visualize with real feeling He will manifest in my heart and will bless me with His Darshan. When the concept of self-realization and the majesty of God are confirmed, the emotion of faith rises in the heart then the Puja becomes meaningful.

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

When the realization of the real significance of God merges with love then real devotion is born. Love should be unselfish and desireless. The worshipper should have no other desire but to get God's blissful favour. Worship is directly related with desireless devotion. Dharma - the code of conduct, Jnan - enlightenment and Vairagya - detechment - all the three are included in Bhakti i.e. the devotion of the Bhagwan's form coupled with the knowledge of His majesty. Dharma means to follow the codes of conduct propounded by Bhagwan Swaminarayan. A really attached devotee keeps in mind even the smallest instruction given by Bhagwan Swaminarayan and implements it. Such devotee does not show attachment for anybody except Bhagwan Swaminarayan; this is

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

the sign of renunciation. Having the knowledge of the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and with fervor devotion, one experiences the divine bliss of Bhagwan Swaminarayan is the real knowledge. Everything is included in the devotion of Bhagwan Swaminarayan so this feeling of devotion at the time of Puja is most necessary.

Let us now discuss the eligibility and authoritative right of the worshipper. In this world everyone has right to do Puja. It is irrespective of age, caste, creed, age level (Aashram), religion, country or time. But Puja done without getting eligibility (worthiness) may fail or may give fruit after so many births, after a very long period. Before starting Puja every Mumukshu (devotee desiring liberation)

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

should become the follower of the Holy Fellowship as per the tradition and custom of the Holy Fellowship.

Holding of five Vratamans is necessary for becoming the follower of the Holy Fellowship - **1.** Never to drink liquor in any form. **2.** Never to eat meat (including eggs, fish etc.). **3.** Never to do theft under any situation. **4.** Keep away from adulteration and debauchery. **5.** Never enter other caste or never force anyone to change caste. Never offer objectionable restricted food or drink to any body and never eat or drink such thing yourself.

There is no restriction of time or place for accepting these five Vratas (self-discipline). A seeker can accept these Vratas as and when desired by him. He has to follow only one Vidhi

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

(process) in order to accept and hold that Vrataman. Holding some water on the right palm as per the method stated above Mumukshu should take the vow to practise the Vratas firmly and he can take the vow before H.H. Acharya Maharaj of the respective diocese approved by Bhagwan Swaminarayan at Vadtal or Amdavad. He can also take it before an ascetic saint who has accepted Mantradiksha (initiation) in the original Holy Fellowship or an absolute householder devotee by holding water in right palm. Generally any sincere seeker who accepts Vratmanas consciously and seriously follows all the five Vratas.

By holding these five Vratamanas a Mumukshu gets the eligibility as the follower of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and he can be

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

regarded as the Satsangi of primary level in the Holy Fellowship. The female wards, instead of taking Vrataman from the Acharya, saint or householder Satsangi, should take it from the wife of the Acharya of particular diocese or from a mature Sankhyayogi (ascetic)female. Nothing is to be paid to anybody for taking these vows. The only thing one has to do is to express his heart's desire to become the follower of the Holy Fellowship.

It should be noted that after taking the vow of the five Vratamanas and after a few days if they are not practised or one or two of them are followed and the rest are left out, the purpose of taking the Vratas becomes useless.

Now when a Satsangi firmly follows the five Vratamanas he gets further eligibility of getting

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Sharanmantra and Gurumantra. Thus after accepting the Diksha (initiation) and Sharanmantra Mumukshu gets recognized as Satsangi as per rules. Sharanmantra and Diksha - both are compulsory for each and every follower in the Holy Fellowship. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given the authority to give Diksha and Sharanmantra only to Acharya Maharajshri in the Holy Fellowship.

Any other ascetic or householder Hari-bhakta (devotee), even if he is able to see absolutely in his palm the form of God or self-form like water drop, no other person can give Gurumantra and Diksha except Acharyashri of the Holy Fellowship.

Sharanmantra is as given here :

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

काल माया पापकर्म यमदूत भयादहम् ।
श्रीकृष्णदेव शरणं प्रपन्नोऽस्मि स पातुमाम् ॥

O Bhagwan! Who puts on fire the fear of Kaal (death), Maya, sinful deeds, messengers of Yama, O Shri Krishna! I take Your shelter. Kindly protect me. With this Sharanmantra the Mumukshu takes the shelter of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, Whose proximity is fearless of all fearless things. After putting water on the palm of the Mumukshu Acharyashri makes him recite the Sharanmantra twice and takes him into relation with God's feet-shelter and as the token of becoming a follower in the feet of the God a double laced rosary made of sandal or Tulsi beads is put round his neck. The double lace of the rosary philosophically symbolizes soul and super soul - servant and the Master. "Bhagwan Swaminarayan is my Master and I am

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

in His service divine.” - One should wear the rosary constantly to sustain this awareness about God's relation with him. In this way only he who has taken Sharanmantra and general Diksha from the Acharya (who must be born in the lineage of Dharmadev - the father of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, who have been installed as an Acharya of either Vadatal or Amdavad diocese.) is the rightful Satsangi. But one who has not taken Sharanmantra and Diksha from the Acharya and wears a double-laced rosary, puts Urdhvapundra Tilak mark on the forehead and recites the mantra of Swaminarayan even then he is not regarded as rightful Satsangi of the Holy Fellowship. Thus we tried to understand the details regarding the eligibility of doing Puja.

Now let us turn to Patmurti or picture-image

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

which Bhagwan Swaminarayan had got prepared at the hands of artist Narayanjibhai and clear description of the same can be seen in Hari Leelamritam Kalash-8, Vishram-36, Chopai 6 to 12 :

*Bhagwan said to Narayanji that,
you have made a block (die);
Beautiful by the statements,
from My sermons. 6*

*Considering both forms of Mine,
namely Radhakrishna and Harikrishna;
Make one image so skillfully,
let Me tell you. 7*

*Make another image of Mine full of beauty,
along with Bhakti and Dharma;
Make third one picturing close to NarNarayan,
attended by Uddhav and Narad. 8*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*Make the fourth of NarNarayan,
and make it smaller than the third one;
5th and 6th should contain Bhakti-Dharma-Vasudev,
all with extremely surpassing beauty. 9*

*Make the seventh to show My Tapasvi(ascetic) form,
following all details of My form and figure;
Let Me be named Sahajanand clearly,
enlightened by Dharma-Bhakti by My side. 103*

*The eighth should be the image of Shikshapatri,
which may bring Me to the memory of the seer;
The ninth should be the picture of My foot-soles,
with the minute details of lines and mounts. 11*

*Make nine blocks as in such artistic way,
So as to follow my instructions in real spirit. 12*

Out of these nine anyone image which suits
for meditation is quite fit for Nitya Puja.
Moreover in Shikshapatri verse – 62 Shri Hari

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

advocates that the form of Shri Krishna given by Acharya from Dharmakul(belonging to the family lineage of Dharmadev) for Puja or the form consecrated by Acharya, the same should be accepted for Puja; and any other form of Shri Krishna is good enough to bow one's head but not worthy of worship.

So out of the nine picture-images approved by Shriji Maharaj such as : **1.** Radhkrishna – Harikrishna, **2.** Buddhavtar, **3.** Big image of NarNarayandev, **4.** Small image of NarNarayandev, **5.** Image of Dharma-Bhakti-Vasudev, **6.** The Ascetic Image, **7.** Big image of standing Vasudevnarayan with Dharma-Bhakti, **8.** Image of Shikshapatri and **9.** Image of Charanarvind. Of these nine images whatever two or three can seem suitable for Dhyan –

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

pondering may be selected for Nitya Puja. Any image other than the nine prepared and approved by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, however good looking and beautiful it may be, cannot become Shastra-approved and up to the mark to be accepted for Puja.

Thus far we have seen eligibility for Puja, importance of Sharanmantra, Diksha and Pat-Pratima. What is the view of Bhagwan Swaminarayan about the Pat-Pratima which he got prepared can be found in Purushottam Prakash, Chapter - 46 written by Nishkulanand Swami. . .

*And should worship the picture-images,
given to you all with a heart full of love;
One who worships it with full extended love,
using Puja material splendid and exclusive. 9*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*Finishing Puja, waves aarati,
he shall recite dhoon and forward humble request;
I shall be residing in those picture-images,
will accept, approve and grant your Puja. 10*

*By worshipping these direct manifested picture-images,
will attain happiness perfect and boundless;
Many are other picture-images in the world,
and may worship them through life till the end. 12*

*Even then do not experience such realization,
which can help them destroy all troubles of life;
So by comparing all other images with this one,
one should realize the vast difference. 13*

*As these picture-image got My gentle touch,
causes ripples of pleasure within;
Bear in mind while worshipping this image,
the wicked will stop causing or giving any pain. 14*

*Desire, anger, greed and delusion dark,
and any distraction from irreligion shall not embark;*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*So one ought to worship the picture-image live,
all sins will run away, saying we shalln't stay any more. 15*

Picture-image is very important in Pujavidhi and the image must be an approved one. As currency notes without the signature of (reserve bank) govt. official become illegal and invalid, in the same way the Pat-Pratima also should be approved and authenticated by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

With a purpose that the activity of Puja-
Upasana should continue even after His life-
span, having built many temples Shriji Maharaj
had consecrated His idols and the idols of His
incarnations. Besides this, with a purpose to
facilitate the Satsangis to perform Puja in every
house, he got prepared Pat-Pratimas, and we

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

have seen the details of the same. Bhagwan Swaminarayan has given a boon that one who worships the picture-image approved by Him, waves Arati around it, recites dhoon and stuti (hymn) it will be accepted, granted and blessed by Him. Shri Hari says that in this world there are a number of other idols and images and man may worship them till the end of his life but he attains neither any relation nor any realization and his troubles are not removed. Because there is a vast difference between other idols and images and those images which are approved by Shri Hari. These Pat-Pratimas have been sanctified by Shri Hari and they have become graced images. If one worships these graced images; desire, anger, greed, delusion etc. internal enemies are destroyed. Pat-

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Pratimas are the ladder which can help to reach imperishable abode and attain liberation.

The blocks prepared from five metals for this purpose are displayed for Darshan at Aksharbhuvan in Vadatal. By preparing blocks on the line of these (original) blocks, picture-images are established in every house for Puja . This activity is accomplished at Jnanbaug, Vadatal. These original Puja-images are also available here. So here explanation regarding the approval and authenticity of Puja-images has been given which is supported by the holy commands of Shriji Maharaj. Therefore, every Satsangi should check whether he is having in his Pooja-room the Puja-image approved by Bhagwan Swaminarayan, and if it is not so he should get the image prepared from the original

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

blocks and should insist on worshipping the same.

Now let us see what should be done in the Puja process from beginning to the end? Every follower should get up before sunrise. Many Satsangis show reluctance in the matter of getting up before sunrise because their habit of going to bed at late night is not fair. If that is being regulated this instruction (of early rising) can be well implemented. There are many advantages of early rising. If we analyze scientifically, the level of Ozone gas is very low at this time and therefore we find a marked change in the energy and freshness of the brain and the atmosphere is also very calm and quiet. But more important is the fact that to rise before sunrise is the command of my dear God

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Bhagwan Swaminarayan and therefore I must get up before sunrise. If we go to bed with such mentality and get up before sunrise, next morning the activity of waking up will also turn into devotion!

First get up before sunrise, sprinkle cold water to wash your eyes, clean your mouth by rinsing and gurgling five times. Then sit at a clean place and meditate upon the idol of Bhagwan Swaminarayan singing the below given lyric by Muktanand Swami.

*Meditate, meditate on Dharma's son,
which can destroy all painful troubles;
The radiance of crores of suns and moons fades,
before the Master residing in your heart. 1
With flower-embelished crown on His head,
and floral-clusters beaming on His ears;*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*A flower garland on His neck-line fine,
enchanting the minds of devotees glancing Him. 2*

*Wearing the garments of five-coloured flowers,
arms adored by floral bracelets eye-catching;
In the feet of Shyam are the ringlets floral,
decorating the pleasant tri-line beauty of His body. 3*

*Covering all parts of body with flowery garments,
castes blissful glance on His obedients;
Says Muktanand worship with firm belief and feeling,
that ocean of happiness, destroyer of all miseries. 4*

This lyric explains that our soul is enlightened by crore of suns and moons and in that light we have the Darshan of the form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The description of that form is also given and one should meditate according to the details given in this description. If possible one should meditate

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

while singing this lyric. After this four or five minute long process if time permits one should write down separately other lyrics written by Nand saints only, describing Bhagwan Swaminarayan's form and its significance. And if time permits one should sing these lyrics. This will make the foundation of our Puja quite strong.

After that attend natural call and then brush your teeth. (It is not good to read the news paper while brushing your teeth.) Then take bath with clean water and then wear one clean cloth on body and use another one as covering. Then put Asan for God's Pat-Pratima on a clean floor and put the another Asan for you. Then wash your hands and sit for Puja keeping your face towards the East or the North.

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

The East and the North inspire the process of Puja. Sunrise takes place in the East. The sun is the source of light and fire. We have enlightenment in our soul and we get the Darshan of the form of God. We get the light in our soul when we realize that Bhagwan Swaminarayan resides in our soul. The fire element in the sun conveys that by the fire of Brahmanhood and by confirming our faith in Shri Hari our doubts and prejudices are burnt to ashes. When we sit for Puja with our face towards the East we should keep in mind the above stated concept of fire and light.

The Himalayas is in the North and it is the divine residence of Rishimunis and deities. In this place Rishimunis and liberated souls through penance and restraint try to achieve

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

the means of attaining God. So we should also, through penance and restraint try to please Bhagwan Swaminarayan – cherish such thoughts when you sit for Puja keeping your face towards the North. This is not Shastrokta (approved by sacred books) principle; but only to remove general human doubts “Why so?” This explanation is offered only to strengthen the Puja process.

The Asan (seat) on which we want to adorn (to place) the Pat-Pratima of God should be better and at higher level and should be clean. In selection of this Asan one can see that the concept of Master-servant-relation between Bhagwan Swaminarayan and the worshipper, is fulfilled.

The first step in Puja process is Achaman.

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Take pure water in one small glass, and put half spoonful water on the palm of the right hand and sip that water three times speaking respectively: Om Narayanay Namah, Om Vasudevay Namah and Om Vishnave Namah. All the three times here given names should be spoken while taking this Achaman hold in your mind the feeling that we are purifying our body, mind and soul, and if you keep a tail do the shikha-bandhan(tuff of hair tied). Then put Urdhvapundra Tilak and round mark in the center of that. Tilak should be made with Sandal paste(chandan) or gopichandan; and it should be made on forehead, chest and both the arms. In the middle of the tilak which we put on forehead round red dot of Kumkum should be made as prasadi (grace) of Laxmiji and Radhaji. In the middle of the Tilak marks put on both the

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

arms and chest another round mark should be made with Prasadi (graced) chandan (sandal).

The mantra for putting tilak on forehead is **Om Vasudevay Namah**, for tilak on chest **Om Sankarshanay Namah**, for tilak on left arm **Om Aniruddhay Namah**, and for tilak on right arm **Om Pradyumnay Namah** – should be spoken. Once again repeat the process of Achaman as stated earlier.

In Gadhada Vachanamrit First-78 Shriji Maharaj says: “Only one Who is Purushottam - narayan is Himself Vasudev, Sankarshan, Aniruddha, and Pradyumna – making divine square of Himself.” In this way the names which are spoken during Achaman process carry a very deep meaning. When we put Tilak on chest and speak Om Sankarshanay Namah in

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

that Sankarshan is hidden the light and power of knowledge and its function is the spread of Shastras (sacred text) and destruction of the evil. So while putting tilak on chest such feeling should be held that **“O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! burn all passions and bodily desires and make me chaste and take me to the original connection of Your real form.**

For the tilak on the right arm you address Pradyumna and its function is to enlighten and spread religion. In practical life also we do many auspicious activities with our right hand; so speak with a firm mind **“O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! grant me the firmness to follow Your commands, please be kind to me.”**

While putting tilak on the left arm we address Aniruddha. In that we find strength and

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

light and its function is to protect and offer philosophy. So while putting tilak there express silent prayer, **“O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! kindly protect me from the internal enemies who are obstacles in the path of Your devotion.”**

While putting Tilak on the forehead we speak **Vasudeva**. The Nirgun (free from three attributes of Maya) aspect of God is expressed through this word, so while putting tilak on the forehead we should silently pray, **“O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! Kindly give me such sense that I can do Your Kirtan-Bhajan crossing the boundaries of three bodies and three stages.”**

So the rituals prescribed to be done before Puja and the Mantras related to them are the remover of Dehbhav (the sense I am the body) and अहम तत्त्व (I am the doer) and after removing both, the connection with God's Form becomes

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

very easy.

There is a spiritual importance and value of the Tilak mark which we put on the forehead. The two vertical lines in the Tilak are the symbols of lotus feet of the Bhagwan. As per the commands of Shikshapatri, in the middle of the two vertical lines we are expected to put Kumkum round mark as prasadi of Radhaji and Laxmiji. Radha is the model of devotion full of unconditional love and Laxmiji resides at the feet of the Bhagwan, because she is the model of servanthood and the wealth of spiritual qualities. While putting the Kumkum mark we should pray in our soul and speak, **“O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! Induce and develop in me welfare causing qualities so that I can attain servanthood at Your feet-divine and attain absolute devotion through desireless love in Your Form.”**

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

The Tilak mark is not the symbol for 101 or a trademark, but it is a process which can take you to the depth of spirituality. Our spiritual position becomes stronger by doing this process day by day.

Generally putting Tilak mark remains an unconscious process. But if we put Tilak mark with above stated perfect understanding then throughout the day the Tilak mark will keep us in connection with the feet of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. The reason for explaining these points in detail is that if Puja is done with proper understanding and knowledge, the process will become meaningful and the seed of devotion in the Form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan will become strong. Otherwise Tilak mark putting will continue without understanding its great

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

value. Next to the process of Tilak comes Pranayam.

Pranayam is an essential process in our life. Suppose we buy an instrument operating on electricity but we do not use a stabilizer to control the fluctuations in the voltage of the current then the instrument may get damaged. In the same way stabilization of our inner self in the daily life full of ups and downs in the mental tension can be done only through Pranayam. Therefore Nitya Puja includes such stabilization right from the morning. So let us understand the process of Pranayam.

First press the second and third finger of right hand on your left nostril and with the right nostril take slow, steady and deep breath and carry it to the heart and then up to your naval

॥ Nitya Puja ॥



and hold it there as per your capacity. Then with thumb of right hand press the right nostril and let the breath out from the left nostril. In the same way press right nostril with the thumb of right hand taking the breath in through left nostril, make it steady and hold it and let it out through the right nostril. Repeat this process for few minutes. You should also learn the other techniques of Pranayam from experts and then follow the same everyday.

This process of Pranayam should always be सबीज (having seed) result oriented. So while taking breath, holding it and letting it out Swaminarayan Mantra should be chanted and the Form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan should be meditated and visualized within. Thus when breath in and breath out is done twice, it is called one Avartana (cycle) and if time and



॥ Nitya Puja ॥



energy permit increased number of Pranayamas will be better.

Practising Pranayam in this way can bring steadiness of consciousness; and when the consciousness becomes steady, the mind becomes steady and calm and the influence of flowing thoughts becomes quiet. When the process of Pranayam is over, one should chant the Vishnu-Gayatri Mantra ॐ नारायणाय विद्महे वासुदेवाय धीमहि तन्नो विष्णुः प्रचोदयात् while chanting this mantra you should meditate on the Patpratima of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. You should cherish in your mind the feeling “**O Bhagwan Swaminarayan Who has been described by sacred scripts as Narayan, Vasudev and Vishnu. O my chief God! I bow to You.**”

After Achaman, Pranayam and chanting



॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Gayatri Mantra your mind should meditate on self-form “I am the soul, quite separate from स्थूल (physical body), सूक्ष्म (subtle, minute) and कारण (causal) and I know three conditions of जाग्रत (waking), स्वप्न (dreaming) and सुषुप्ति (inertia-sleep) and in my soul resides Bhagwan Swaminarayan. When this is over we can start Puja.

Puja is of two kinds – mental and external. Before starting external Puja Manasi Puja (mental worship) should be completed. Manasi Puja is an essential part of external Puja. In Gadhada Vachnamrit last Chapter – 22 Shriji Maharaj has explained in detail how Manasi Puja should be done as per (changing) seasons. Besides, the description of Manasi Puja is given in detail in 'Dhyanmanjari' by Premanand

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

Swami. Manasi Puja can be done nicely by studying it. Also Muktanand Swami has written one lyric on Manasi Puja in which minute details have been given in a very simple way. Let us read and understand that lyric.

*All obedient of Shri Sahajanand Swami,
After getting up every morning;
do mental worship of God.*

*First remember form of Shri Hari,
sundar Shyam as observed earlier;
Meditate with steady mind on one's Bhagwan,
worship Hari, the abode of all happiness. 1*

*After getting done teeth-brushing etc.,
footwear be put into Hari's feet;
Keep all Puja material nearby,
there should be no disturbance in Puja of Hari. 2*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*First scented oil be rubbed on His body,
after making Him sit on sandal wood Bajoth (desk);
Then offer Him a bath of warm water,
then get Him ready with fine embellishments. 3*

*Offer Hari pitambar (yellow dhoti) to wear,
golden cloth for over clothe and golden turban on head;
Keep ready a comfortable cot to adorn Him,
pulp sandal paste on the body of Shyam. 4*

*Offer flower garlands round His neck,
and apply rice grains on His forehead;
Gem studded laces be placed on head,
a black dot on His cheek to enhance His smiles. 5*

*Put round His bust garlands of costly diamonds,
pearl-studded golden bangles on His hands;
Crocodile shaped earrings for His ears,
make His arms shine with golden armlets. 6*

*Now offer sandal paste to His feet,
bowing and hugging them make your heart calm;*

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

*Offer balbhog-prasad (sweets) and wave Arati,
making circular moves chant His prayer. 7*

*Bow and salute Him with eight parts of your body,
then worship His most obedient devotees;
Hari likes to eat the food with six various tastes,
serve the same with love and sit quite close. 8*

*In this way offering tasty food with great skill,
offer Him Nagarvel panbidi as for Mukhvas;
Make Him sleep on cot, gently press His feet divine,
offer Him your home to live, make it benign. 9*

*Stay forever, insecred attendance of Shri Hari,
and offer worship in the feet of the Bhagwan.
Says Muktanand, this is called Manasi Puja,
doing it heartily, one can swim across the ocean of life. 10*

Accurate, simple beautiful and minute description of Manasi Puja has been given by Muktanand Swami. Every Satsangi of Shri Hari should do Manasi Puja every morning. First

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

meditate the Form of God which you like the most and which is recollected in your mind again and again. Then make Shri Hari brush His teeth. Take care of His foot wear. Keep all materials ready to avoid any disturbance during Puja. Request Shri Hari to sit on Bajoth (wooden square desk) and masage scented oil on His body. In-keeping with seasonal temperature bathe Him in warm-cold comfortable water. Then offer Him garments, jewellery and embellishment. One Pitambar, silky over cloth, one cloth on His waist and a golden turban on His head.

Then adorn Shri Hari on bedstead with clean, silky and soft mattress, bed-sheet and a fine cushion. Make Maliager sandal Archa (vertical lines of sandal paste) on the forehead and put Tilak mark in the middle of His forehead and put

॥ Nitya Puja ॥

round Kumkum mark in the center of the Tilak mark and apply rice grains on it. Fragrant flower-garlands should be offered to Shri Hari. Laces of real gems and diamonds should be dangling on both sides of His turban.

Gem studded garlands should be offered to be worn round His neck. Golden diamond studded bracelets should be offered for His arms and crocodile-shaped Kundals (earrings) should be offered for His ears. Flower-clusters should be tied to both of His hands and the elbows.

Sandal paste should be applied to the feet of Shri Hari. By holding the feet-image of Shri Hari in our heart, our mind becomes cool and calm. Then eatable food items in keeping with the season should be offered to Shri Hari. Then

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after waving Arati stand before Him and obediently sing prayers, make pradaxina (move in circular motion) and male devotees should offer Dandvat Pranam - bowing with their eight body-parts and female devotees should offer Panchang Pranam - bowing with their five body-parts. Then Saints and devotees of Shri Hari should be worshipped with sandal paste, Kumkum and rice grains.

When it is lunch-time different types of sweets, desserts, tasty items should be offered to Shri Hari. All items should be served urging Him to eat while sitting close to Him. Keep moving a hand fan when Shri Hari is eating meal. When eating is over help Him wash His face and hands, and He should be offered (Nagarvel leaf) a Panbidi as Mukhavas. Then

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make Him sleep on a bedstead and gently press His feet. It should be the feeling that Shri Hari resides in the temple of my soul; Manasi Puja should be done in this manner.

Manasi Puja is the process of going deep into the soul to glance at Bhagwan Swaminarayan Who resides there and in every heart as heart-scient as absolute strength, to worship and serve Him. After Manasi Puja the same Form should be invocated and should be established for external Puja and should be worshipped with different types of Puja material.

After completing Manasi Puja start external Puja. The first necessary step in external Puja is called **आवाहन** (invocation); just like you call a person standing at a distance; you shout his name loudly to call him close. In the same way

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the worshipper should call out Shri Hari's name to invoke Him to accept the Puja.

The idols are of two types – fixed and movable. The picture image used for NityaPuja is movable. The idols established and consecrated in crested temples are immovable, do not require invocation because they have been permanently consecrated by Ved Mantras. Therefore, NityaPuja-image needs to be invoked every day. The invocation Mantra is as given below :

उत्तिष्ठ उत्तिष्ठ हे नाथ स्वामिनारायण प्रभो ।
धर्मसुनो दयासिन्धो स्वेषां श्रेयः परं कुरु ॥
आगच्छ भगवन देव स्वस्थानात् परमेश्वर ।
अहं पूजा करिष्यामि सदा त्वं सन्मुखो भव ॥

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The meaning of the verse is “O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! awake and get up. O Dharma's son, O Ocean of grace! Bring welfare to all of those who come to Your shelter. O every heart-residing Bhagwan! You are residing in the imperishable abode, please come from Your abode to adorn my Puja and bless me with Your Darshan, sitting face to face and kindly accept my Puja. Invocation should be done like this.

Then set the Puja-images on clean, comfortable, beautiful Asan. With firm emotion that the imperishable abode-residing Bhagwan Swaminarayan has adorned the Puja-images and He is directly present in them. With this feeling offer Namaskar (bow) to the images. Do not give a bath to the images because these are picture images, but taking one dry towel

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(napkin) softly wipe the images. You can sponge the images with soft, clean piece of dry cloth. Then offer flowers, garlands, incense, lamp and Naivedya (prasadi-food) and then wave the Arati. First offer Arati to the God and then take it yourself, and then do the Pradaxina. Then male members should do Sashtang (using 8 body parts) Pranam and female devotees should do Panchang (using 5 body parts) Pranam in such number as would be comfortable and suitable. You have to chant Mantra 108 times on rosary as *Tap ni Mala*.

Then sit straight in front of the image and as far as suitable do the chanting of Swaminarayan Mahamantra. It would be good if minimum five Malas are done every day. Mantras are of two types – Diksha Mantra and Ishtanaam Mantra.



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The chanting of Diksha Mantra is to be done by sitting at a clean place and as per the process of Japa. The chanting of Ishtanaam Mantra does not have any fixed rules. The Ishta Mantra “Swaminarayan” can be chanted at any place and at any time.

The worshipper should do the chanting of both Diksha Mantra and Ishta Mantra during Puja time. First turn one mala of Diksha Mantra and then the rest should be done for Ishta Mantra. The common words in Diksha Mantra are श्रीकृष्ण त्वं गतिर्मम – this is for the worldly or household people. Saint and ascetic should speak ब्रह्माहं कृष्णदासोऽस्मि as Diksha Mantra. In both of these the word कृष्ण is addressed to Bhagwan Swaminarayan because out of the four names of Shri Hari, one is Krishna. While



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speaking श्रीकृष्ण त्वं गतिर्मम the worshipper realizes what his goal is and this realization is confirmed. “ I chant this mantra because I want to make my movement towards God.” The saint speaks ब्रह्माहं कृष्णदासोऽस्मि and realizes that his goal is to become one(identical) with Brahman and attain servanthood of Shri Hari.

The Mala (rosary) for counting beads and chanting Mantras should be kept in sacred condition. The two fingers under the biggest finger on the right hand should be folded to make a triangle. The rosary should hang from the biggest folded finger. When you turn the beads keep your hand close to your heart on the left side of the body. Do not turn the beads uncovered but keep it in Gaumukhi (sleeve type bag). Do not turn the beads in a hurry. When

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chanting is done first speak the Mantra and then turn the beads. First turn one Mala (rosary) of Diksha Mantra and then turn Mala of Ishta Mantra as long as it is suitable.

“Mala is the destroyer of sports of the mind.” says Muktanand Swami. Therefore turn as many beads of Swaminarayan Mantra as possible. One should keep in mind that number of Malas done by the worshipper is not important but the quality of chanting Mantra on the Mala is important. Means it depends upon how much you are tuned with the Form of God while chanting.

After doing Mantrajap with folded hands pray to Shri Hari or you may recite hymn from Sanskrit language or Kirtans from Prakrit (vernacular) language or sing such prayers

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which describe the idol-image of Shri Hari or describe its majesty. After that one should do the reading of Shikshapatri. One who cannot read should ask other person to read and one should listen to it. Then read Janmangal stotra etc. and then offer apologies to Shri Hari, "If I have committed any mistake in doing Pujavidhi please pardon me for it."

Then chant Visarjan (valedictory) Mantra like this :

स्वस्थान गच्छ देवेश पूजामादाय मामकीन ।
इष्टकाम प्रसिद्धयर्थं पुनरागमनाय च ॥
आत्मेश परमेश्वर विसर्जयामि हृदि मे ।
स्वामिनारायण प्रभो सदा वसतु हृदि मे ॥

O God of gods! After accepting my Puja now please return to Your abode. I request You to

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please visit my Puja place everyday to accept my Puja and to fulfill my desires. O Master of my soul! O Supreme God! I do Your visarjan (ending-concluding) in my heart, O Bhagwan Swaminarayan! You please reside in my heart for ever.

After you have accomplished Puja as a Satsangi, following the commands of Shri Hari as permitted by your individual code of conduct only to please the Bhagwan. After that you can carry on your work and duties of general practical and domestic life.



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