

Outreach

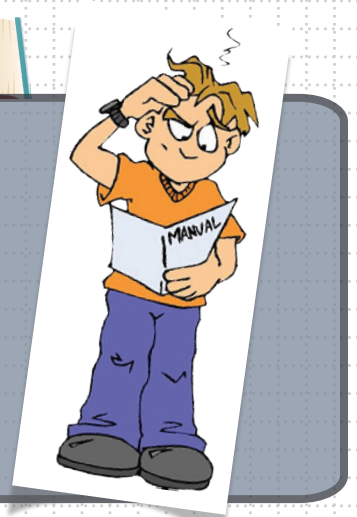
Volume 3 - Edition 5

Editorial

In Search of a Manual

Do you ever feel like you are stuck? Have you ever felt like you were confused and needed help fixing something? What would you do? Grab a manual of course! For instance, if you were having trouble with your car, the manual for a car on average is 380 pages long; if you were having issues with your laptop, the manual is about 250 pages long; and if you were having problems with your cell phone, the manual is about 130 pages long!

From something as small as a calculator, to something as large as a car; from something as simple as an alarm clock, to something as complex as a microchip. Every item we buy comes with a manual. If these simple technologies require such large manuals, can you imagine the size of the manual to run the human body? More importantly, what is the manual for human life? What guidelines must we live by in order to live a worry-free life? How can we remain joyous in our modern society? To answer these questions, this edition of Outreach will focus on **The Shikshapatri - A Manual for Life**



A Refreshing Glance

A Manual for Life

The Hindu culture is highly esteemed for providing mankind with a rich collection of traditional scriptures, which are regarded to hold the fundamentals for living a prosperous life. Combining for over a million verses, many of the scriptures (including the Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Puranas) have survived thousands of years and continue to flourish even today.

people of all walks of life, all castes, and all religions. Describing the benefits of the Shikshapatri, he writes, "Only devotees who live according to the Shikshapatri will attain spiritual and social prosperity [8]." Are we not fortunate to have in our possession the essence of life in just 212 short verses?

Although written nearly two hundred years ago, even today the Shikshapatri continues to provide practical guidelines for anyone who wishes to live a blissful life, regardless of their caste and religion. It describes specific guidelines all individuals ranging from students, professionals, householders, farmers, leaders, and saints. Also, it describes practices that everyone should refrain from performing in order to remain joyous, including gambling, violence, adultery, smoking, drinking intoxicants, and stealing. The Shikshapatri teaches us the most basic lessons from hygiene, dress, diet, etiquette, habits, and friendship, to more complex matters such as financial dealings, diplomacy, education, and religious duties. Not only that, but it equally emphasizes the spiritual aspects of life such as following religious vows, engrossing in devotion, staying in the constant association with a saint, respecting all deities and devotees, and the most spiritual lesson of all: to believe oneself to be Brahm and to worship Parabrahm.

The Shikshapatri is a unique scripture, which combines the customs of today's modern society as well as the teachings of the scriptures. By dwelling into the verses and following the guidelines described in the Shikshapatri, we can avoid the pitfalls of society, remove ignorance and become happy.



From the vast number of Hindu scriptures, there is one scripture that stands out to be very unique. Written less than 200 years ago, this particular scripture is the only Hindu scripture written by Bhagwan Himself. So small that it fits in the pocket of our shirt, this scripture is composed of only 212 concise shloks (or verses), which are practical in daily life while retaining the spiritual merit to encompass the essence of all Hindu scriptures. This unique scripture is called the Shikshapatri, and it was written by Bhagwan Swaminarayan in Vadtal on February 11, 1826. Bhagwan Swaminarayan states, "After thoroughly studying and understanding all Hindu scriptures, I have written their essence in this Shikshapatri to help all people attain their aspiration [204]." Due to his divine grace and unparalleled compassion on mankind, Bhagwan Swaminarayan bestowed the Shikshapatri to help

A Cool Fact

"The phaoxmneal pweor of the hmuam mnid -- aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttaer in waht oredr the lttters in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig huh?"

Chatting with Sahaj & Anand

A Friend in Need is a Friend Indeed!

Anand: Hey Sahaj! So how did the exam go? Did you ace it?

Sahaj: No way man! That calculus exam was tough! I didn't even have time to finish all the problems.

Anand: Really? Hold on a second, did you study for the wrong exam again? I remember last time you were studying for biology the night before the calculus exam.

Sahaj: No, I actually didn't study much at all. I just didn't feel like it.

Anand: You didn't "feel" like it?

Sahaj: Well, I just wasn't in the mood. My parents scolded me last night...they thought I was drinking.

Anand: Oh, I see. But, were you?

Sahaj: Of course not! You know I don't drink!

Anand: Yeah, but then why would your parents think you were drinking?

Sahaj: Well, I was hanging out with a bunch of friends, who just so happened to be drinking. Someone saw me with them and told my parents. Now my parents think I was also drinking. They won't let me go out anymore!

Anand: But this isn't the first time this has happened, right? These friends seem to be causing a lot of problems for you. Why are you still hanging out with them?

Sahaj: It's not like they are bad people. They get decent grades, and are fun to hang out with.

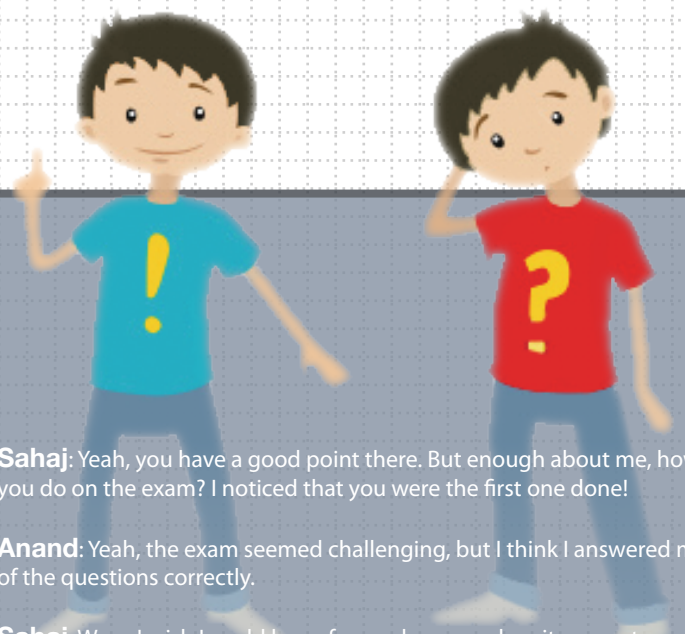
Anand: You really have to be careful who you hang out with. Let's say you see a group of people walk out of a pub. If there is a person in the group who did not drink, would you even know? No way!

Sahaj: But if I am not drinking or doing anything bad, why should it even matter? Why should I care what others think?

Anand: Staying in the company of such people will ultimately influence your thoughts, your decisions and your actions. This is why Bhagwan Swaminarayan has written in the Shikshapatri that a person should not associate with those who steal, sin, or have bad habits. Over time, the activities, mannerisms, and characteristics of your friends will slowly become a part of you. So you should care, for your own sake!

Sahaj: Hmm, I never really thought about it that way.

Anand: It is for this very reason that our Guruhari Swamiji emphasizes to stay with people from whom you can always learn something positive and who can guide you in the proper direction.



Sahaj: Yeah, you have a good point there. But enough about me, how did you do on the exam? I noticed that you were the first one done!

Anand: Yeah, the exam seemed challenging, but I think I answered most of the questions correctly.

Sahaj: Wow, I wish I could be as focused as you when it comes to exams. I easily get overwhelmed by difficult questions and lose track for the rest of the exam.

Anand: Well, I read a recent study which stated that people who meditated daily had a longer attention span when performing a given task, had an easier time adapting to changing circumstances, and handled multiple tasks more efficiently.

Sahaj: Meditation! That's your secret?! In this fast-moving world, who has time for meditation? Besides, I have never seen you meditate.

Anand: For me, performing pooja in the morning is my meditation. The morning time is the best time to put everything on pause and gather your thoughts.

Sahaj: Pooja? I thought that was for old people. How does performing pooja help?

Anand: Did you know that youths on average get about 60,000 thoughts and hear about 100,000 words in a day?! But by doing pooja and prayer in the morning, we can stay focused and channelize our thoughts for the rest of the day.

Sahaj: But I am always in such a rush in the morning. I have no time to sit down to even think!

Anand: Think about it, do you have time to shower in the morning? Just like we cleanse the dirt from our body by taking a shower, doing pooja washes the dirt of the mind. By cleansing the mind every day, we can study better, get good thoughts and remain stress-free in all situations.

Sahaj: You know, I can always count on you to lend me a helping hand!

Anand: It is really Guruhari Swamiji who has given us His hand and guided us in the right path. So let us pray to Him to grace us with the strength to keep our five senses positive and to bypass negative thoughts and imbibe only positive thoughts.

On The Horizon

Get Ready! This year's International Atmiya Youth Conference will be held at Hudson Valley Resort, NY on August 19th - 21st, 2011 in presence of our beloved Guruhari Hariprasad Swamiji. So mark your calendars!

Lasting Thought

"We must follow the disciplines that Lord Swaminarayan has given us in the Shikshapatri. In order to continually grow socially, morally, economically and spiritually, we must abide by the Shikshapatri." – Guruhari Swamiji