Part-2

ETHICS OF
SHIKSHAPATRI
Chapter : i

EXAMINATION OF ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ

HUMAN BEING – A UNIQUE ENTITY

According to Hindu mythology there are 84 lakh species on the earth. Out of which the specie of man is the most significant of all. It is the only specie that serves an opportunity for a human being to liberate his soul from the bondages of māyā. Therefore, we can say that human birth or human body is the only appropriate instrument for the liberation. Apart from this no other birth serves this sublime purpose. That is why Hindu scriptures, sages and seers have been singing the glory of human birth and showing its utmost importance since ages.

Human beings and animals are similar in many natural feelings like - hunger, sleep, fear and sex. Here the question arises, which is the element that differentiates man from other species? It is the power of discrimination (vivek) that makes the whole difference.

Even if one thinks about the anatomy and the working of human body, he undoubtedly agrees that human body is nothing but a supreme creation of the Supreme. All the available science and technologies to the date have failed to understand its mechanism entirely. There is multi level and multi dimensional highly complex network system. This system is controlled by intellect – a rational faculty.

Explaining the significance of rational intellect, Swāmī Činmayānand says, “The intellect has various functions - observing, analyzing, classifying, willing, wishing, remembering and a host of others - and yet, we find that the one faculty essential in all of them is the ‘power of discrimination’. Without discrimination, neither observation nor classification, neither
understanding nor judgement, is ever possible. Essentially, therefore, the function of the intellect is ‘discrimination’ which is otherwise called the faculty of ‘right understanding’.”

No doubt that human beings have innumerable other potentialities and power in him but the power of discrimination is the key faculty which if properly used in a right way and right direction, helps him to maximize his achievements with minimum efforts. It is rightly said in _Katha Upaniṣada_:

"Ātmanam rathinam viddhi śarīram rathameva ā
dharmim tu sārathim viddhi manah pragrahameva ā“

(Human body is the chariot, soul is the traveler, intellect is the charioteer, mind is the reign and five senses are the horses.)

Thus, intellect directs the whole organism through the power of discrimination i.e _vivek_. We can also understand _vivek_ by the analogy of swan. It is said that if milk mixed with water is presented to a swan, it derives only the milk and leaves the water behind as it is. Moreover, it eats nothing but pearls. Likewise, a man with his power of discrimination can segregate good from the evil and futile from the useful. Alike swan, man of discrimination abandons trivialities and accepts only that which is significant to him.

_Lord Swaminarayan_ has given a crystal clear definition of _vivek_ in _Vācānāmṛta_. He says,

“...Being detached from the physical and subtle body, one who lives with a constant consciousness of being the soul, ignoring the passions of mind; and one who avoids vicious company and worldly objects, (which may keep him in bondage, or may cause him to fall from his _ekāntik dharma_.) and one who accepts only positive thoughts and abandons negative thoughts. Thus, he who acts accordingly is said to have _vivek_ (power of discrimination).”
One more quality in human being that makes him unique among all the species is his dynamic personality. He never remains stagnant and inactive. Every moment he either moves higher towards sublimation or moves downward towards deterioration. Radhākrṣṇan rightly observes, “The uniqueness of man among all the products of nature lies in this, that in him nature seeks to exceed itself consciously, no longer by an automatic or unconscious activity, but by a mental and spiritual effort. Man is not a plant or animal, but a thinking and spiritual being set to shape his nature for higher purposes.”

Therefore, power of discrimination and dynamism differentiates a man from other species and make him unique in the whole creation.

SPIRITUALITY – ESSENCE OF HUMAN BEING

Uniqueness of man leads us to enquire into the very nature of him. Is he only an organism or something beyond it? What is the true nature of man? What is the essence of his existence? What is that quality which makes him eligible for liberation? The answer to all these queries lies in the super natural quality inherent in him. Spirituality and divinity are the very essence of his nature. Many claim that man is a social animal, while others say he is a selfish animal or an intellectual being, but above all man is nothing but a spiritual entity.

Man is a combination of finite and infinite aspects. Both these are supplementary to each other. Finite aspect constitutes his physical existence like his body, his mind, and his senses. Infinite aspect constitutes his divine existence that marks his real identification. The most fundamental and essential aspect of human existence is spirituality. The soul is the center of the spirituality.
So, whenever we talk about the nature of a man we are indirectly talking about the nature of soul; the most essential feature of his existence. Soul is the real glory of man and the very nature of soul is bliss. The longing for happiness of man is based on the spirituality of his soul. Soul is the fountainhead of joy, bliss and happiness. Swāmī Vivekānand describes true nature of man as Soul-Force or ātman.

This inherent spirituality in human being establishes him as a Supreme creation of the Supreme in a real sense of the term.

If one is ignorant about the treasure he has, it becomes futile for him. For instance – a deer has musk present in its own navel but due to ignorance it constantly wanders here and there in search of the musk. Similarly, a man, ignorant of his inherent divine nature, tries to find happiness in the outer world and can’t relish the most precious inherent gift of blissfulness.

God has created man not only to enjoy the worldly pleasures but also to experience something much more higher and precious. The most significant part of one’s life is to understand his own true nature for which it is necessary to understand what actually the soul is. Being a spiritual entity, realization of divinity is man’s ultimate goal. According to Swāmī Vivekānand, “Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control, or philosophy- by one or more, or by all these- and be free.”

The four main puruṣārthas as propagated in Hindu philosophy are dharma, artha, kāma, and mokṣa. Out of these four, mokṣa, i.e. salvation is the ultimate goal. According to Lord Swaminarayan identifying oneself with Brahma and offering devotional service unto the Lord is mokṣa – the ultimate liberation.
INDISPENSABILITY OF ETHICS

God has given the most valuable gift of human body to be used as an instrument for achieving mokṣa - the supreme goal of life. Ethics play a very significant role in achieving this goal. If at all any human being wants to attain the ultimate liberation, it becomes imperative for him to live a moral life.

Though it is true that man is a spiritual being but at the same time he is also a combination of physical body, subtle body and causal body. He is a combination of senses, mind, intellect and ātma. After passing through the cycle of infinite births, soul acquires human body. During these births, he collects infinite impressions (samskāras); good and evil on his ātma. These samskāras are carried forward along with the soul during all his future births.

According to karma theory of Hinduism, these samskāras get converted into prārabdha. This prārabdha creates obstacles and barriers during the pilgrimage of the soul towards the supreme. If one wants to attain the ultimate realization it becomes absolutely necessary for him to overcome these barriers. Unless these barriers are completely eradicated, one never enters the Kingdom of God.

Once when Jesus was asked by someone, ‘When can one enter the Kingdom of God?’ Jesus indicated towards a child and answered that when one becomes a childlike (Bhūlaku), only then he is entitled to enter the Kingdom of God. By this, he means that one should be pure by heart and innocent like a child. Impure soul never enters the kingdom of God. Thus, ethics is necessary for the purification of heart and thereby attaining the final goal of ultimate liberation. Therefore, Ethics is absolutely necessary for:
Examination of Śiksāpatra
- the purification of soul
- laying the foundation of spirituality
- developing the power of discrimination and motivating man for the manifestation of the inherent spirituality.
- overcoming imperfections of human nature
- releasing soul from the grip prarabdha
- To equip the soul for achievement of final goal - liberation

Therefore, it is very necessary to live an ethical life and thus to know Ethics: “Ethics may be defined as the study of what is right and good in conduct. It is the general theory of conduct which considers the actions of human beings with reference to their rightness or wrongness, their tendency to good or evil.”

Ethics is basically concerned with the issues like standard of judgement, principles of moral life, problem of good and evil, duty, responsibility, obligation and virtuous life. Dr. Joshi H.M. says, “The subject matter of ethics is the living organism of human individual. So its objects are intention, motive, aim and ends of day to day life and behaviour.”

Ethics mainly investigates into the questions like, whether the ‘good’ is singular or plural in nature, ‘what is the duty of a person in a specific circumstance? Is there any obligation of an individual towards his family, society or nation?’ For these and variety of many more questions, the answer is ethics.

Ethics is an endeavour of the individual for achieving progress and perfection. It shows him the path of self-knowledge and self-discipline. As the scope of contemporary ethics is very wide, it deals with social, political and psychological problems also.
Ethics play an integral role in this odyssey. Thus, a man is suppose to lead a moral life. He is expected to follow certain norms of do’s and don’t’s and live with a specific ethical discipline to attain the ultimate goal.

The principles of ethics in Hinduism are more subtle, sublime and profound than western. Western ethics speaks of social service, altruism, humanitarianism and philanthropy, whereas, Hindu ethics which are based on the sublime philosophy of Vedānta propounds the doctrine of oneness with the divine or ultimate realization.

The relation between ethics and metaphysics is like means and end. Metaphysics is a speculative and valuation study of the nature of reality and the problem of existence while ethics is a practical science of transforming the man from the level of a beast to the level of a dignified human being and ultimately to the level of divinity. According to Bradley, ethics is dependent on metaphysics. The problem of good and evil and its ultimate relationship could be perfectly analyzed when the nature of the Absolute is taken into consideration. That is the reason why each and every religion has its own code of conduct.

For the betterment of the mankind Lord Swaminarayan gave a miniscule scripture in the form of Śikṣāpatrī prescribing the codes of conduct for practically everyone who aspires to lead a happy, healthy and spiritual life. Thus, any one who lives as per the ethical discipline as explained in Śikṣāpatrī he is sure to attain physical, mental, financial, social and spiritual betterment.

ENDOWMENT OF ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ

In the later part of the 18th century when the society was passing through a dark phase of spiritual history, Lord Swaminarayan manifested his
divine self and launched a crusade against the evil forces that prevailed in 
the society, people, nation and religion as a whole.

He was a total divinity embodied in human form. His divine deeds 
achieved what nothing else or nobody could have ever achieved to purify, 
improvise and spiritualize the physical, mental, social and economical aspect 
of a mankind. He mercifully bestowed the blessing in the form of Śiksāpatrī; 
a scripture miniscule in size but profound in meaning, absolute in content, 
universal in acceptance and eternal in application.

**EVALUATION OF ŚIKŚĀPATRĪ**

**All inclusive** : Scriptures have valuable treasure of knowledge and 
wisdom so usually they are elongated in size, esoteric in understanding and 
complex in meaning. Consequently, it becomes difficult to derive its purport 
especially for those whose intellect is not highly developed. Moreover, in 
today’s context very few men have patience to read it, understand it, 
contemplate on it, and finally apply its teaching in day to day life.

The appealing and appropriate definition of ‘śāstra’, given by Shri 
Aurobindo seems exactly applicable to Śiksāpatrī, “‘Śāstra’ does not mean 
a mass of customs, some good, some bad, unintelligently followed by the 
customary routine mind of the tāmasīk man. Śāstra is the knowledge and 
teaching laid down by intuition, experience and wisdom, the science and art 
and ethic of life, the best standards available to the race.” ⁸

It may be easy to present the gist of all the scriptures in a 
comprehensive way, but if the same thing has to be represented in a brief, 
concise and yet all-inclusive manner, it demands an extra ordinary 
excellence. Such excellence of Lord Swaminarayan is clearly depicted in 
Śiksāpatrī. He has effectively and beautifully encompassed the duties and 
precepts related to the life of householders, married women & widows,
saints, celibates and ācārya just in two hundred and twelve verses. In Śikṣāpatrī, the duties and the responsibilities of literally every person of the society is effectively integrated. It clarifies the principle of successfully performing the various assigned roles for every one in the practical life. Thus, it teaches the basic art of living for every one, everywhere, every time.

The language and the presentation of Śikṣāpatrī is extremely simple, lucid and easy to understand. The verses of Śikṣāpatrī are very clear and unambiguous in their meaning and implication. Its expressions are free from hypocrisy and ostentatious words. Though its terminology is simple, the ideas, ideals and precepts are elevating and life focusing. It is unparalleled in its simplicity and elasticity.

Śikṣāpatrī gives the quintessence of all the scriptures. One of its most salient features is that it highly respects the teachings and principles of all the important scriptures, epics and literature of the world. Anyone who reads it can acquaint himself with the fundamental knowledge of all the scriptures. It represents the heart of Hinduism in its pristine purity.

Lord Swaminarayan, in Śikṣāpatrī states,

"...The four Vedas, Vyās Sūtras, Śrīmad Bhāgvat, Śrī Viṣṇu Sahastrānām from Mahābhārata, Śrī Bhagavad Gītā, the code of ethics enunciated by Śrī Vidurjī (Vidurūṇī), Śrī Vāsudev Mahātmya from the Viṣṇu Khānda of Skanda Purāṇa and Yajñavelkya Smrīti. I hold these eight sacred scriptures as authoritative."

Lord Swaminarayan, for the proper understanding of a layman, has specifically classified the different scriptures.

"According to Him the tenth and the fifth skandhas of Śrīmad Bhāgavat Purāṇa and Yajñavelkya Smrīti are to be considered as ‘bhaktisāstra’, ‘yogasāstra’, and ‘dharmaśastra’ respectively. The
commentary on The Bhagavad Gītā and the Vyāsūtra’s Śrībhāṣya authored by Śrī Rāmānujaśārya are to be considered as adhyātmaśāstra."

This excellent classification and confluence of scriptures underlines the glory of Śikṣāpatrī. It also helps the seeker to proximate towards his goal and guides him at every step of his life. It is a source of undending inspiration for all the spiritual aspirants irrespective of their caste and creed, space and time.

Śikṣāpatrī’s ideology is in line with all the religions including Hinduism. It resembles the Buddhism’s ethical discipline of adopting the middle path. It agrees with the Jainism’s philosophy of non-violence and austerity. It is in tune with Christianity’s core principles of tolerance and love. Confucious’ Humanism too is effectively comprised in it.

Śikṣāpatrī is rightly described as “sarva śāstra hrdayam”, i.e. the heart of all scriptures, because whatever is true, good and beautiful, and has eternal value, is enshrined in it. It is a priceless possession of mankind. It is given to facilitate a man to ascend in the ethico-spiritual path of perfection, to find a place in the highest abode (Aksardhām) in the service of the God.

More importantly, Śikṣāpatrī distinctly warns the disciples not to accept the scriptures that are blasphemous i.e. the scriptures that violates disregards the form and existence of God. Ethics of Śikṣāpatrī never compromise with the tenets and teachings of any scriptures that promote atheism directly or indirectly. Thus, He safeguards them from being misguided.

**Universal Validity**: Śikṣāpatrī presents objective and universal moral standard applicable to all. The very declaration by the enunciator “I have written this Śikṣāpatrī for the greatest good of mankind (sarvajīvahitāvaha)
mirrors its universality. Its appeal is universal, its message is global and its teachings are penetrating and its impact is eternal.

The compassion showered in the word ‘sarvajīva’ in the Śikṣāpatrī is not only restricted to human beings but also applied to the entire creation of the world i.e. the smallest creature of the universe. The similar compassion is shown by Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā: “suhradam sarvabhūtānām”

The ‘gems of Śikṣāpatrī’ is intended to meet the needs of those who wish their spiritual quest to be fulfilled in a simple and relatively easier way. That is the reason why Stephen Fuchs rightly observes that, “In 1826, Lord Swaminarayan summarized His ethical teachings in a book entitled ‘Śikṣāpatrī’ or ‘Code of Discipline’ – it is one of the best spiritual and ethical codes of the nineteenth century in Hinduism and remains an inspiring handbook of conduct.”

**Functional Applicability** : Teachings of Śikṣāpatrī are not abstract. They are very easy to be implemented in day-to-day life. They regulate and enhance the inter-personal relations in our social life and assist an individual to deal on ethical basis.

Ethics is a relative science. What is good for one man may not be good for another. What is good at one time may not be so at another. Moreover, each individual differs in his temperament, capability and nature. Obviously, his response and reaction differs in different situations. Keeping this reality in mind, Lord Swaminarayan has so interwoven the factor of relativity and elasticity that it directs the life of every person at every time, at every place under every circumstances.

Lord Swaminarayan believes in observing a firm discipline in the relations between men and women. He does not favour undue indulgence of any male follower with female follower and vice versa. Lord Swaminarayan
has also set a strict spiritual discipline for the initiated saints according to which they are not allowed to interact with woman in any form. They are not suppose to touch or even talk to any woman. But, at the same time in Śikṣāpatrī Lord Swaminarayan has mentioned that in unavoidable circumstances where the life of any woman is at stake, they should not hesitate in talking or touching her to save her life. He says,

"Nevertheless, at such times when the life of a woman or their own is at stake, they should protect their life and also the life of woman by talking to her or by touching her."\(^{13}\)

Thus, we can say that ethics of Śikṣāpatrī are relative and elastic but not rigid. Its teachings are most practical which shows the priorities of values in life. It teaches how to act according to the need of the time and situations. At the same time, it is very firm and does not compromise on certain issues. It asks to adamantly oppose the person who directly or indirectly tries to manipulate or violate the fundamental principle of personal form of God.

Śikṣāpatrī is extremely practical as far as the expiation is concerned. It honours the human limitations. This is clearly focused through the word 'yathāyogya' (as per one’s ability and capacity) which Lord Swaminarayan has used in many verses in Śikṣāpatrī. Precepts of Śikṣāpatrī never impose any compulsion in observing the duties. He clearly states,

"Religious usages, practical dealings and expiation should be adopted as per the place, time, age, means, caste and ability."\(^{14}\)

Lord Swaminarayan has also focused the aspect of appropriate social behaviour. He has even explained how to act at times of calamities so that the property and life is saved. He says,
“Even if it be your native or usual place of residence, leave it and migrate to a better place, especially when your prestige, property is in jeopardy on account of acute famine, harassment from the wicked or the tyranny of the state authority.”  

Lord Swaminarayan in Śikṣāpatrī has focused his attention on the behavioural, practical and psychological aspect of human life. It teaches us to strike the balance between two extremes; passivism and asceticism, over indulgence and inaction. He has not constituted His philosophical ideals at the cost of primary duties and responsibilities of social as well as cultural life. It gives due weightage to every petal of life. Its precepts include every thing and exclude nothing to beautify the life of the spirit.

It preaches the ideology of simple living and high thinking, righteous conduct with pious heart and pure mind, as well as supreme devotion through divine knowledge. It directs us to cultivate a moderate behaviour and gentle virtues.

Śikṣāpatrī is one of the best remedies to all the critical problems in the society stretching from the domestic to the spiritual aspect. It treats all the relations with equal dignity – the relation of man and family, man and man, man and religion, master and servant, king and subjects, Guru and disciple and finally devotee and Lord. Thus, Śikṣāpatrī unfaillingly encircles all the aspects of human life.

Śikṣāpatrī skillfully amalgamates the principles of the highest and the simplest ranging from the physical to metaphysical in nature. It does it in such a precise manner that even a layman can understand and follow them easily.

Indeed, any scripture can be designated as the best only when it is beneficial for all especially for an ordinary man of a society. Any creation is
praiseworthy only when it eternally enlightens the path of goodness for mankind. This phenomenal characteristic is an obvious feature of Śikṣāpatrī.

One of the most outstanding features of Śikṣāpatrī is its marvelous blending of both the extremes of the ordinary and the extraordinary codes. Such blending is rare to be found in any religious scriptures. On one hand deals with the metaphysical problems like nature of ultimate reality, nature of soul, relationship of soul and God etc while on the other hand it also deals with the most normal day to day chores of householder’s life. For instance, He says,

“None shall ever drink unfiltered water or milk, or shall bath with water containing small insects.”

It equally appeals both the layman and the scholar at the same moment. On the one hand it enunciates the four eternal principles; jīvā, īswar, māyā, Brahm and Parabrahma while on the other hand it also touches the most routine activity of personal hygiene, ecology, sexual behaviour. It has also effectively tried to teach the most common matter like how to sit, what to eat, where to spit. Thus, it genuinely justifies both the extremes of transcendental ethics and behavioural ethics. In Śikṣāpatrī Lord Swaminarayan says,

“None shall dispose bodily excretions or filth in places like antique temple, bank of the rivers and lakes, the ways, fields, shadow of the tree and gardens where such nuisance is prohibited either by the scriptures or by public authority.”

Religion embodied: A perfect sense of true religion is clearly proclaimed in every word of Śikṣāpatrī. Its teachings are precisely focused
on religion right from the beginning to end i.e. from *Swadharma* to *Bhāgavat Dharma*.

One of the prominent aspects of *Bhāgavat dharma* is that it believes in personal God. This principle is clearly mirrored in *Śīksāpatrī*. Unlike Buddhism, Jainism and Confucianism, *Śīksāpatrī* never favours any ethical discipline that is independent of the religious belief in personal God.

Many Western philosophers like Descartes and Locke have favoured the principle of *Śīksāpatrī* which says that religion is the source of morality. Morality emerges from the religion. Right and wrong are the commands of the will of God. Morality and religion are interdependent on each other. Dr. H. M. Joshi states: “Martinuaue holds that morality necessarily leads to religion. As F.H. Bradley has said, ‘the culmination of morality lies in religious consciousness as morality consists of infinite process.’ At the same time religion expresses its invisible contact with Reality through human behaviour. Ethics is a systematic expression of inward commitment of the individual towards the supreme Reality.”

Ethical discipline of *Śīksāpatrī* has the religious belief of personal God who is all-doer, ever incarnate and having divine form in its root. Morality is religion in practice and religion is morality in principle. Morality without religion is a tree without roots.” If we take away “*dharma*” from one’s life then it is only beast that remains. It is rightly said in *Hitopadesa*:

> “āhār, nindrā, bhay, maithunam ca sāmanyametat paśunirbharānām dharmo hi teśāmādhiko viśeṣo dharmeṇ hīnā paśubhihi samānāha”

The instinct of hunger, sleep, fear and sex is common both in men and animals. But it is dharma which distinguishes us from the animals. If one overlooks the aspect of dharma, he is no more good than animal.)
Lord Swaminarayan is the Supreme beholder, protector and supporter of dharma. Sikṣāpatrī abandons ‘adharmī’ - one who deliberately violates the codes of dharma. In Sikṣāpatrī it is clearly mentioned that,

“The Sikṣāpatrī should be given only to those who are having divine virtues and never to those who are having demonic qualities.”

It is well known that Sitā was well protected by a demarcated line drew by Laksman. Every code of Sikṣāpatrī is like laksāmanrekha; a boundary of morality. Whoever adheres to it, is definitely protected and entitled for God’s grace but if one who disregards it, he is bound to suffer severely. Whatever is commanded is right and whatever is forbidden is wrong.

According to Vivekānand, “…Religion provides a secure foundation and an ultimate sanction to morality also. Without this sanction, ethics will ever remain blind and chaotic. Doing good is all-right, but sooner or later we must come across the question – ‘Why should we do good?’ There must be an ideal and the ideal must be somehow universal. Religion provides that universal ideal and thus is able to justify ethics. Moreover a religious sense which somehow bases itself on an awareness of unity of everything makes ethical practice both convenient and easy.”

Thus, Sikṣāpatrī is a book of ethico-religious codes of conduct. Its precepts are the commands of God, which must be respected and followed. They are the divine injunctions that reveal the criteria of right and wrong, good and bad.

The Word of God: Lord Swaminarayan communicated His moral laws and divine will to the mankind through Sikṣāpatrī. The Divine Will of Lord Swaminarayan has personally constituted the right and the wrong for us. The moral injunctions and prohibitions are not arbitrary or irrational as
they emanate from the will of Lord - the eternal embodiment of moral perfection.

_Lord Swaminarayan_ has considered _Śikṣāpatrī_ as His own form. Therefore, its glory is similar as the exceeding glory of His divine form. Its adoration is the adoration of Lord and to violate its principles means directly violating the Lord. In _Śikṣāpatrī_, _Lord Swaminarayan_ says,

“If one does not find someone to read this _Śikṣāpatrī_, one shall worship it daily, _This, My auspicious speech (every word of _Śikṣāpatrī_) should be honoured with the greatest reverence as My own Divine Form._” 22

This verse comprises of two main principles of His theistic philosophy; _ājñā_ and _upāsanā_. Ājñā of adhering to 212 precepts of _Śikṣāpatrī_ and _upāsanā_ of understanding that Lord is ever incarnate and having divine form eternally. By this, Lord indirectly tries to convey that _upāsanā_ of My divine form lies in the strict observance of codes of _Śikṣāpatrī_. Many a times it so happens that a worshiper worships an image of the God but undervalues or ignores the do’s and don’ts of ethical disciplines as prescribed by the God. And thus, plunges himself into hypocrisy and impurity. To safeguard His devotees from this common danger, Lord insists upon His followers to give the same degree of reverence to _Śikṣāpatrī_ as His own form.

Thus, _Śikṣāpatrī_ is the voice of the Supreme personality of Godhead - _Lord Swaminarayan_. Therefore, the value of precepts of _Śikṣāpatrī_ is absolute and eternal, unaffected by the limitations of _kāla, sthala, karma_ and _māyā_.

In the scriptures, _'parāvāṇi' _means word of the Lord. It is rightly said that the sun might stop giving light but truthfulness and eternity could never
ever be separated from ‘parāvāṇī’. Lord Swaminarayan gives beautiful explanation of ‘parāvāṇī’, thus,

“When Lord Puruṣottam Bhagawan incarnates on this earth for the redemption of the souls, His main purpose is to enable the souls to understand Him properly, to realise the splendour of His abode, to describe His life’s episode, to discriminate between the soul and the body and to understand the distinct nature of jīva, māyā, iswār, Brahm and Parabrahma. For this purpose, God gracefully endows the soul with – ‘parāvāṇī’.”

Thus, every single word of Śikṣāpatrī having supreme value, glory and significance for the time eternal is the parāvāṇī of the Lord Swaminarayan.

Lord Swaminarayan practiced what He preached. He experimented the truth in His personal life and then propounded it. He did not acquire the knowledge by any scriptural study. Śikṣāpatrī is a truth born of sheer experience. It is neither a speculation nor a show of His greatness.

**Divine Blessings** : Śikṣāpatrī is the bestower of eternal peace and ultimate salvation. It helps one to fulfill the four objects of life, i.e. dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa. It helps one to attain the transcendental bliss here and hereafter. Such great accomplishment is not easy to attain for an aspirant through any amount of penances, scriptural study or meditation. Each and every verse of Śikṣāpatrī leads an aspirant to a rapt devotion without any tedious effort. In Śikṣāpatrī Lord Swaminarayan compassionately utters,

“My followers who will strictly observe the code of conduct (e.g. non-injury etc.) as prescribed by the Śikṣāpatrī shall derive the greatest happiness in this world and in that which is to come.”
He also adds,

"I have myself extracted the essence of all the sacred scriptures and written this Śikṣāpatrī, the epistle of precepts, the observance of which will yield the desired fruits."

"All my disciples male or female who shall live according to this Śikṣāpatrī shall certainly attain the accomplishment of four desired objects of life; dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa."

Such divine blessings and benedictions given in Śikṣāpatrī is the supremacy of the enunciator. He is the Supreme Moral Governor. So, the precepts set the ultimate moral standards for all of us and gifts us with the divine laws. The Lord is the promulgated moral laws through it. If it were not for the compassionate, absolute and divine personality — Lord Swaminarayan, the endowment of Śikṣāpatrī in its perfect language, content, practical and universal applicability, and profundity was impossible.

**Notes & References:**

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7. Joshi H.M., 'Traditional and Contemporary Ethics – Western and Indian', Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, Delhi, 2000, p. 3
9. Śikṣāpatrī, 93, 94, 95
10. Śikṣāpatrī, 99, 100
12. Stephen Fuchs, Religious Prophets, Asia Publishing House, India, 1908, p. 213
13. Siksapatril, 182
14. Siksapatril, 120
15. Siksapatril, 153, 154
16. Siksapatril, 30
17. Siksapatril, 32
20. Siksapatril, 210
21. As quoted in the book by Gandhi M. K. and others, 'Contemporary Indian Philosophy', pp. 37, 38
22. Siksapatril, 209
23. Vaćanāmṛta Sārangpur – 6
24. Siksapatril, 8
25. Siksapatril, 204
26. Siksapatril, 206

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