

Chapter 17

Love for Devotees

That afternoon, Swamishri arrived in Saring. The young Vinubhai and Ramanbhai of Anand were traveling with him. Manibhai had lovingly invited Swamishri to his village. Since it was Ekadashi, Mota Swami and Swamishri delivered discourses the entire day.

The following day, Swamishri sanctified almost every single house in the village. When he returned to his accommodations, lunch was ready. Swamishri washed his hands and feet and was just about to sit for lunch when a devotee came and said, “Bapa, I need to go to Ahmedabad, and you have yet to visit my house. My train will be leaving soon, so could you...”

Swamishri understood his situation and said, “Of course, we will come right now. Go and make the arrangements.”

However, the other sadhus, particularly Mota Swami, became irritated and said, “Let it go Jogi! Doesn’t he have any sense? Where had he gone until now? We don’t want to go out in this scorching heat.”

Then Mota Swami asked the devotee making the request, “Hey, where’s your house?” The devotee apprehensively told him the location of his house, and Mota Swami again exploded, “You live all the way on the other side of the village! Go, we don’t want to come right now.”

However, Swamishri got up. He requested another sadhu as well as Vinubhai to come with him. Smiling, Swamishri told the devotee, “Let’s go to your house!” Then, he told Mota Swami and the other sadhus, “All of you go ahead and start eating. I will be right back.”

The sadhus and devotees were stunned. Swamishri affectionately sanctified that devotee’s house and made him happy.

Following the afternoon discourses, Swamishri put his hand on his heart and told

Vinubhai, “Meditate on this *murti*. Shastriji Maharaj will give you darshan.”

Due to Swamishri’s intimacy with the youths, he would casually reveal his innermost thoughts and spiritual principles to them.

Due to this affection, the youths who accompanied him always yearned to follow Swamishri’s wishes. Swamishri would have the youths memorize Vachanamruts, Swamini Vato, and kirtans. The youths would try to memorize these things, but they sometimes found it difficult to memorize kirtans in the traditional style, particularly the *cheshta*. Failing to commit these verses to memory due to their complicated structures and esoteric meanings, the youth sometimes worried that it was not right for them to travel with Swamishri and eat free food if they were unable to properly follow Swamishri’s commands. Instead, it would be better for them to stay at home.

Today, Ramanbhai and Vinubhai shared such thoughts with Swamishri. Swamishri

emphatically replied, “What of it? Don’t worry that you cannot memorize it. You are traveling with us, enduring hardships, and offering service—that is such a great thing! You can’t say that is freeloading! Actually, I am unable to offer you what you deserve! That is my mistake. So please remain happy and stay with us. Stay in our company and give us your darshan!”

Who would not be inspired to offer their everything at such heartfelt, loving words? So, the youths decided to stay with Swamishri.

That evening, Swamishri sanctified Muljibhai and Someshwarbhai’s well by sprinkling flower petals into it. The great devotee, Manubhai, was ecstatic because Swamishri was everything for him.

Different devotees had different sentiments and conceptions of Swamishri; however, Swamishri saw everyone the same—as divine! Swamishri was always eager to fulfill any devotee’s wishes. In his eyes, the devotees’ sentiments were primary, and their actions were secondary. However, he would give just as

much importance to their actions so that their sentiments might be strengthened. This was his message, and this was his influence. Transcending body-consciousness and filled with Maharaj's consciousness, his cascade of devotion and pure sentiments would drench even the most callous.

On the evening of 8 April 1952 (*Chitra sud 13, V.S. 2008*), Swamishri traveled to Vitthalbhai's house in Bharuch. Here, Swamishri visited the homes of many doctors and lawyers, including Dr. Maganbhai. Maganbhai was very interested in spiritual discussions. One of Swamishri's distinctive characteristics was that when he met intellectuals who had read widely, heard many things, and thought deeply, he could satisfactorily address their questions and fully resolve their doubts. He did not provide a plethora of scriptural references, but he had profound spiritual experience coupled with the spiritual power to fully understand the opposite person's deepest self. Swamishri's simple but

penetrating talks would cut through even the most outstanding intellectual's erudition and bestow peace in his heart because his speech emanated from the divine aura of his soul.

Then, Swamishri traveled to Bochasan for the Chaitra Punam festival.

Many devotees from central Gujarat would flock to every festival organized in Bochasan. A large canopy had been erected in the mandir courtyard to accommodate the crowds of devotees. The shade provided some much-needed respite from the scorching heat of the month of Chaitra. The sadhus' haveli had been freshly painted, making it even more attractive. Stone pillars had been raised on the mandir's second floor, and the mandir was slowly taking shape. In the mandir's *rang mandap* (ground floor), the painted *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, and Pramukh Swami had been installed. Mota Swami, Pramukh Swami, and Aksharpurushottam

Swami all spoke in the festival assembly. In the end, Swamishri gave his blessings.

On 14 April 1952 (Chaitra vad 4, V.S. 2008), Swamishri traveled to Atladara. From here, he once again began his travels around the Kanam region, starting with Vaghodiya. Mohanbhai, Ranchhodbhai, Morarbhai, Vitthalbhai, and Jesangbhai were very enthusiastic devotees here. For Swamishri's arrival, they had decorated the entire mandir, planted flags, and placed boards of proverbs all around the village. They sat Swamishri in a car and took him in a procession around the village led by a team singing kirtans. On the way, they would stop the car for Swamishri to visit devotees' homes. Some distance behind Swamishri, female devotees rounded out the procession carrying *kalashes* on their heads and singing kirtans. Although the village was small, everyone was filled with enthusiasm.

Men and women in every village harbored the same enthusiasm, together with a singular fear, "What if we are left out?" So, everyone

grasped the opportunity to please Swamishri according to their sentiments. Surrounding Swamishri everywhere he went, an atmosphere of love reigned supreme. Everyone would both fill and empty their vessels of love into him. He was the devotees' singular source of sacred joy on this Earth.

From Vaghodiya, Swamishri traveled to Anandpura, Samalatalav, and Khervadi before returning to Vaghodiya.