

Chapter 19

Distaste for Weak Names and Work

Once, when Swamishri was in Ahmedabad, he traveled to the nearby village of Kali, where the villagers welcomed him with great enthusiasm. Between 12 noon and 2:30 p.m., Swamishri visited fifty homes in the village.

While speaking in the assembly, Swamishri suddenly said, “The name of this village should not be Kali. Now that it has come into contact with God and the Sant, it is no longer ‘Kali’(inauspicious) but holy. So, from this day forward, you should tell everyone that the name of this town is Akshar Puri.” Thus, Swamishri gave the villagers an everlasting memory that they are not from Kali, but they are liberated souls from Akshar Puri. Moreover, by changing the village’s name, he ensured that they would never forget it.

Ambalal Bhagat of Ahmedabad lived in the neighborhood of Bakri Pol (Goat Pol). Thus,

everyone would refer to him as Ambalal Bakri Pol. Swamishri said, “The neighborhood in which a courageous and wise devotee like Ambalal lives should be known as ‘Sinh Pol’ (Lion Pol). So, from today the name of the neighborhood is Sinh Pol.” To reinforce this change, when Swamishri would ask Ambalalbhai to get up and speak in the assembly, he would often introduce him, saying, “Now, Ambalalkaka of Sinh Pol will say a few words!”

Just as with place names, Swamishri similarly didn’t like negativity in people’s names. Swamishri did not like meaningless names or names connoting weakness. He liked names that connoted strength, possessed some significant meaning, or had an association with God. So, when householders came to Swamishri and asked him to name their sons, Swamishri often named them after one of God’s names, whereby both the child and the parents would naturally remember God. Swamishri often told the story of Ajamil, explaining,

“Because he named his son Narayan at Naradji’s word, at the end of his life he was liberated.” So saying, Swamishri would sometimes joke, “Although named Lakshmidas, he would be selling piles of kindling, and although named Ganga, she might be dying of thirst!” But, the point was that Swamishri felt that whatever had an association with God was the best.

On 24 August 1953, Swamishri traveled to Himmatnagar via Prantij to give Chunibhai the benefit of his company. From there, Swamishri traveled to Khedbrahma Station, where he disembarked and began walking to Narayan Modi’s house. They had to cross the Harnav River on the way, but flooding caused by heavy rains led the deep parts of the river to have water over one’s head.

To cross over the floodwaters, the villagers soldered shut six empty canisters of kerosene and tied them together to create a makeshift raft. After getting Swamishri to sit on this makeshift raft, they began to pull him across

the river. However, the current was so strong that the slightest inattention would be disastrous. A lapse in Harmanbhai's attention caused him to lose his grip on his umbrella, which was instantly swept away.

While Swamishri was seated on the raft and being taken across the river, he made a wish and had everyone chant the *dhun* that a bridge would be built over this river. In the public assembly that night, Swamishri again gave blessings and had everyone chant the *dhun* that a bridge would soon be built.

After this, every time Narayanbhai Modi went for darshan, he would ask Swamishri about the bridge. Since Swamishri had made the wish and done *dhun*, a bridge was built in just five years. Otherwise, with governmental bureaucracy, it would be no surprise if completion of the bridge would have taken two or three generations!

After having darshan at the Khedbrahma Mata mandir and other mandirs, Swamishri bathed Harikrishna Maharaj in the Mataji lake.

Many devotees from the surrounding areas had come for Swamishri's darshan. Mota Swami and Swamishri both delivered spiritual discourses to the assembled devotees. Narayanbhai Modi and Udesinh both served sincerely in making Swamishri's arrangements. After crossing over the river on the way back, Swamishri visited the Adivasis' ashram, where he sang bhajans and delivered discourses. Then, Swamishri had darshan of Bhrugu Rushi's ashram before returning to Ahmedabad. Every place he visited, Swamishri initiated many new spiritual aspirants into Satsang and brought them to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's refuge.

After celebrating the Janmashtami festival in Atladara, Swamishri traveled to Kheda. From 3 to 10 September 1953 (Shravan vad 10 to Bhadarva sud 2, V.S. 2009), Chhotabhai of Sarsa had sponsored a seven-day *parayan* on the *Satsangijivan* in Swamishri's presence. Swamishri and Pramukh Swami delivered spiritual discourses to the assembled audience

in the Ramji mandir sanctified by Shriji Maharaj near the new bridge on the Vatrak River. About thirty sadhus and more than a thousand devotees from near and far had come to listen to the *parayan*. On the auspicious day of Somvati Amas, Swamishri, the sadhus, and devotees had all bathed together in the Vatrak River. At the conclusion of the *parayan*, the devotees organized a grand procession with the sadhus and the holy texts. Mota Swami, Ghanshyam Swami, Akshar Swami, Shrijiswarupdas Swami, Naranji Maharaj, Harmanbhai, and the other speakers had spoken effectively throughout the *parayan*. The youth bhajan group of Gana had pleased everyone with their bhajans and *raas*. The sadhus' accommodations were in the mandir. The *parshad*, Ramji Bhagat, had served the sadhus by making all their arrangements. Govindbhai, Nathabhai, Chaturbhai, Mahijibhai, Prabhudas, Muljibhai, and other youths had come together to help make

arrangements for the event. From here, Swamishri traveled to Pij for one day.

On 13 September 1953, Swamishri traveled to Matar, where he wrote a letter to the Satsang community to be published in the Swaminarayan Prakash, in which he encouraged everyone to join in the upcoming special train pilgrimage. He began the letter extolling the glory of the Swaminarayan Prakash:

“I wish to tell everyone to maintain love for the words of Param Pujya Swami, and accordingly, every devotee should subscribe to the Prakash.” Having commanded everyone with such affectionate words, Swamishri then wrote:

“Due to Swami’s grace and blessings, the pilgrimage by special train will be happening. Everyone will be able to pilgrimage to the holy birthplace of Aksharatit Purna Purushottam Sahajanand Swami. This is a chance to collect the treasure of a lifetime. So, you should make sure you seize this opportunity. Experience the

bliss of Akshardham. That is why we are especially inviting you.

“In this way, the special Akshardham train will depart with the singing of kirtans and bhajans, so you should seize the opportunity. Shriji Maharaj will not allow anyone to experience the slightest discomfort during this pilgrimage. Our compassionate Lord Shriji Maharaj will grant us peace and ensure the tolling of the bells of victory.”

Conveying boundless glory in just a few words, Swamishri invited everyone to join the pilgrimage by train.