

Chapter 25

A Guide for Spiritual Aspirants

At 8:25 a.m. on 12 May 1955, Ramnikbhai Valji Manek was scheduled to receive his *janoi*. Swamishri was leading him in this ceremony. Sitting across from Thakorji, Swamishri was singing the *shloka*s, “*Mahādhyānābhyāsam...Anekebhyo sadbhyo...*”

After handing Ramnikbhai kumkum and other ritual implements, Swamishri offered puja to Thakorji, and began reciting the resolution rite... “*Adya.. Māse... Pakshe...* What is the *tithi* today? What day is it? It is Thursday, the fifth day of the dark half of the month of Vaishakh. Raman Bhakta is being invested with the sacred *janoi* in the holy presence of Thakorji!”

Then Swamishri had him offer puja to the sadhus and devotees by applying *chandlo* to their foreheads. As he was giving Ramnikbhai

the *janoi*, Swamishri said, “When you go to the toilet or bathroom, make sure you raise the *janoi* to your ear; never tell a lie. The sins committed up to today have all burned away. Offer everyone *dhotiyas*. Eat only once today.”

Vajubhai was recording this in his diary. Swamishri glanced at him and said, “Leave that. Come massage my legs for a bit.” Then he said, “Sit a little bit to the side as Mota Swami will soon be here. We should not sit in a way that he feels crowded.” Then, Swamishri broached the topic of donations and said, “I have resolved that if everyone donates three months of their salary, then our mandir in Gadhada will be completed. Before we leave here in two to three months, everyone should submit this donation. Then we don’t want to ask for anything for two years. And if you are not able to donate that much, then still donate something.”

Vajubhai said, “Bapa, if you show some wealthy person a miracle, we will soon have piles of rupees.”

“Swami has told me not to. When I had told Shastriji Maharaj about Morarka Sheth, he had told me that it is not in his destiny to donate, so he will not be able to.” With those words, Swamishri gave a knowing chuckle.

Vajubhai persisted, “By miracle, I don’t mean anything else but just give them a vision of Maharaj’s *murti* in their dream. If they see that much, they will develop reverence for you.”

“Yes, that is true,” said Swamishri. But then, returning to his point, Swamishri observed, “The generosity with which the poor give cannot be matched by the rich. We should command all *satsangis* to donate three months of salary, and then we won’t ask for anything for two years. If they donate like this, we would feel exhilarated.”

At 12 noon, Swamishri sanctified the shop of one tailor devotee.

In the evening, Swamishri visited the home of Mota Bhailalbai in the village of Mnazi Moja. As he offered *vartman* to his son,

Mahendrabhai, Swamishri said, “You can’t watch cinemas and plays; you must not smoke bidis or cigarettes; come every evening to the mandir.” Then, Swamishri recited some Swamini Vato.

While at Madhabhai’s house, Swamishri also offered *vartman* to his son and said, “Turn five *malas* while chanting Swaminarayan, and visit the mandir daily.”

Similarly, Swamishri offered *vartman* to Harmanbhai’s brother-in-law, Chimanbhai, and instructed him to come daily to the mandir for darshan.

On his way to sanctify the home of Purushottam Bhagat, Swamishri held Vajubhai’s hand for support while saying, “Vajubhai is very good. He asks questions and also offers his hand.”

“But what about the question I asked this morning about eradicating lust, anger, and greed?” asked Vajubhai.

“When we reach Nairobi, I will tell you.”

“So, I will have to wait for four months, until August?”

“No, how could we let that happen? Here, let me bless you.” So saying, Swamishri clapped him on the back and blessed him while saying, “Go, you will experience peace.”

When they reached Purushottam Bhagat’s house, Swamishri sat on his sofa and sang all four stanzas of “*Āj māre orade re...*” Swamishri held a rose in his hand, which he periodically smelled. During the puja and *arti*, Swamishri sang all the *ashtaks*.

He offered *vartman* to several youths and spiritual aspirants. As they prepared to leave, Madhabhai said, “Swami, you still haven’t sanctified each room of my house with your holy feet!”

Mota Swami refused, saying, “You want to make us climb two stories?”

Swamishri said, “It’s no matter if there are three stories. Come on, you can’t refuse.” With that, Swamishri held onto Vajubhai’s hand, and

began to climb up the steps. Together with Thakorji, Swamishri sanctified each room before returning to the mandir.

During the afternoon assembly, Rasikbhai arrived. Swamishri asked him, “Have you quit cigarettes?”

“No.”

“That won’t do. Bring me some water.”

“I can’t function without cigarettes.”

“From the time you were young until now when you started smoking, you could function perfectly well, couldn’t you! So, throw away what you have in your pockets. Keep cloves in your mouth for a few days.”

With that, Swamishri put a few drops of water in his outstretched palm and said, “Oh Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, Bhagatji Maharaj, Jaga Swami, Shastriji Maharaj! Please grant this man the strength of faith.” Then, Swamishri had Rasikbhai pour the water onto the ground.

“How much do you smoke?”

“Forty-five shillings worth.”

“Forty-five shillings each month! Every day for one year offer 1.5 shillings in the mandir.” Swamishri balanced the accounts.

During the assembly, Swamishri said, “One should not listen to someone who is finding faults in others, even if what he is speaking is true. If someone attempts to say such things to you, you should reply with ‘Be off! Get out!’ That is *suhruddbhav*. If we listen to such speech, we will be negatively influenced. In Swami’s presence, if anyone tried to speak negatively of Vartal, he would make them leave. Swami would tell them that ‘I have come from Vartal,’ and thus shut them up.”

One afternoon, at Hansrajbhai’s insistence, Swamishri visited the Lohana Mahajan Boarding House on Makupa Road. Strolling through the complex with a small smile playing on his lips, Swamishri told the accompanying sadhus, “Bring Thakorji. Let’s have him sanctify

this place.” Swamishri removed Thakorji’s garland, extracted flower petals from it, and sprinkled the petals around the neem tree where there was a plan to build three halls. Then, Swamishri said, “This is the neem tree of Gadhada. Shriji Maharaj had sat under it.” Swamishri told Hansrajbhai, “Don’t chop this tree down.”

Whether Shriji Maharaj had traveled here in a divine form or if he was there today in the form of the Sant was a question that remained unasked.

As Swamishri walked along sprinkling flower petals to sanctify the grounds, Jashbhai asked, “Swami, who used to stay here before?”

Swamishri casually said, “This is the abode of rishis, and now we have come here.”

Here, Manibhai Lalabhai Desai’s wife would make various snacks with devotion and send them to Swamishri. She was an Anavil Brahmin from Vaktana who had been introduced to Satsang by the mother of Shankarlal Parekh.

One day, she prepared samosa and sent them to Swamishri. When Swamishri saw them, he asked Manibhai, “What is this item?”

“Bapa, they are samosa!”

“Oh....ho....ho...!” Swamishri exclaimed, drawing out his words for emphasis, “Today is the first time we are even hearing such a word!” With that, Swamishri broke into peals of laughter and everyone joined in.

Manibhai’s daughter Nimiben nourished a wish that it would be good if she could get Swamishri’s sanctified *mala*. One day, when her brother, Anilbhai, came for Swamishri’s darshan, Swamishri happily gave him his *mala* and fulfilled Nimiben’s wish. In this way, the entire family’s faith was further consolidated.

On the morning of Saturday, 14 May 1955, Swamishri was brushing his teeth. Two youths, Kanubhai and Jashbhai were in Swamishri’s service. Jashbhai was singing *prabhatiya*. The entire atmosphere felt holy. Then, Vajubhai asked, “Swami, is it like this in Akshardham?”

“No, there is no brushing teeth and bathing there. There, one gazes constantly upon God. Over there, there is not this sort of activity,” answered Swamishri while brushing his teeth.

“How would one see God’s *murti* in Akshardham? For those close by it would be a clear view, while for those very far away, God’s form would appear hazy, right?”

“What? How could it be like that? Over there, everywhere... From above or below... everywhere is seen as nearby. Everyone experiences the same bliss. Over there, it is not like here.”

“It would be seen thus in countless *brahmands*?”

“There is no end to the *brahmands*. But countless *brahmands* would be flying like atoms, such is the bliss of Akshardham,” said Swamishri.

In the evening assembly, Swamishri was in very high spirits. His cheeks were aflush with the joy of Brahman and his face was shining

with the radiance of renunciation and *vairagya*. He was sitting with his eyes closed in an introverted state. He had donned a woolen cap which he covered by draping a shawl over his head and shoulders in a way that covered half his cheeks.

His sacred form was so captivating that everyone was eager to have him sanctify their home. Whenever he traveled to the cities and towns surrounding Mombasa, trains were the only method of transport available. Today, Swamishri said, “Hey, C.T. Saheb! We want to perform a miracle. We have about fifteen to twenty people with us, so have the railways add a dedicated third-class railway carriage for us. You should visit the station and speak to the stationmaster. Go, it will be done. That way, everyone can experience joy...”

The reservations for sadhus and devotees had already been made in first class. To travel third class in the African trains seemed impossible. African men and women traveled in third class, and it was not a simple task to

explain to African women to keep their distance from the sadhus. Yet, Swamishri insisted on traveling in a third class carriage. Swamishri often used to tell devotees that they should also travel only by third class. His rationale was that with the money saved, that much more could be donated to Thakorji.

Meanwhile, Revandas of Reliance Press came with printed *murtis* of Yogiji Maharaj that he wanted to have Swamishri sanctify. Seeing that they were his own *murtis*, Swamishri said, “These are already sanctified.”

On the way to the mandir at 8:15 a.m., C.T. Patel said, “Chhotabhai is an asthma patient, and he is currently ill. So, he will come to the station today at 3 p.m.”

Swamishri said, “Then, let’s swing by his place.” Everyone went to the Makupa Railway Quarters. Swamishri went close to Chhotabhai’s bed and began to say, “May his asthma be cured; may his asthma be cured.” Then Swamishri blessed him, placed a sanctified garland around his neck, gave him

sanctified roses, and said, “You will be cured. Remember Maharaj. He is our master...” Then he said, “Do *dhun*.... Maharaj please cure him. Oh Maharaj! May his asthma be gone.” With that, Swamishri passed his hands over Chhotabhai’s body.

Swamishri visited a couple of devotees’ homes and offered *vartman* to many new spiritual aspirants. Swamishri had lunch at Hansrajbhai’s house at 1:30 p.m. and took his afternoon nap at C.T. Patel’s house.

In this way, for about one month, a perpetual *jnan yagna* was held in Mombasa in the presence of Swamishri and the sadhus. Swamishri had sanctified the homes of many devotees around Mombasa and the surrounding areas. The city’s leading businessmen as well as civic and political leaders had all invited Swamishri and the *sadgurus* to sanctify their homes, and thus obtained his invaluable blessings.

Swamishri also visited the homes of Mombasa’s leading citizens, including Sheth

Sundarji Nanji, Hansraj Durlabhji, Maneklal Kalidas Kanji, A.B. Patel, Premchand Raychand, and the Chandaria brothers as well as many others. Many Kutchis had also invited Swamishri to sanctify their homes and farms.

A grand reception for Swamishri had been organized by the Lohana community at the Lohana Rest House. Additionally, the Divine Life Society, Radha Krishna Mandir, Tononoka Social Hall, Theosophical Society, and many other religious groups had honored Swamishri and the sadhus in their respective mandirs and halls.

Swamishri also held large public satsang assemblies at many civic venues, including the Patel Samaj, Navnat Vanik Mahajan Vadi, Kutchi Leva Patel Samaj, and the Hindu Union.