

Chapter 25

A Grand Reception in Mombasa

A large crowd had gathered at the Mombasa train station to welcome the *sadgurus* who had come to perform the *murti-pratishtha* of the Mombasa Swaminarayan mandir. Approximately 3,000 devotees and well-wishers were at the station. They all joined in the procession of honor taking Swamishri to the mandir.

Ravibhai Pandya, Chunibhai Patel, Ramdasbhai, Hansrajbhai, and other devotees welcomed Swamishri and the sadhus with flower garlands.

Joined by a broadcasting vehicle that played processional tunes as well as kirtans, the grand procession of honor commenced.

Although it was Sunday, the Mombasa stationmaster, Mr. McDermott, had remained present and offered all assistance in making

necessary arrangements at the station. The police chief had also designated two European police officers and twenty other policemen to escort the procession from the train station to the mandir. With a hearty clap on the back, Swamishri had blessed the stationmaster that he would progress in his career. Just five days later, the stationmaster received a long-delayed promotion.

When Swamishri arrived at the entrance gate of the mandir, flowers were showered upon him. Then Swamishri went to the first floor balcony from which he gave darshan to the crowds of people standing below.

A r r a n g e m e n t s f o r S w a m i s h r i ' s accommodations had been made at the house of C.T. Patel. After freshening up there, Swamishri had lunch with all the *satsangis* at the Patel Samaj Community Center. At 5 p.m., Swamishri and Mota Swami arrived at Mombasa mandir. He met with many devotees and well-wishers and presided in an assembly where he delivered discourses and sang kirtans.

On the evening of 18 April 1955, Swamishri visited the home of Shri Ravibhai Pandya, the owner and editor of the prestigious daily newspaper, the Kenya Daily Mail. Many of the city's leading dignitaries had also gathered here. Impressed by Swamishri and the *sadgurus'* discourses and kirtan bhakti, everyone received Swamishri's blessings.

In the evening assembly, Swamishri had a boy from Mbale, Balbhadra, stand up and recite some Swamini Vato. Three other children stood up and recited Swamini Vato with him. Swamishri was very pleased. As the phrase, "One should cling on to the Satpurush..." was said in one of the Vato, Swamishri said, "We should bring him to the ground, right? What say you, Balbhadra?"

Then, as another Vato referenced taking refuge in God, Swamishri had Vachanamrut Vartal 5 read aloud. Swamishri would often have children recite Swamini Vato and sing kirtans, whereby the children would be granted with a lifetime memory. On one occasion,

Swamishri instructed Balbhadra to sing kirtans in an assembly of only five devotees! The boy began singing the kirtan, “*Avo Yogi, avo Yogi, avo Yogirāj...*” (Welcome Yogi, welcome Yogi, welcome King of Yogis...).

Swamishri broke out into hearty laugh and said, “Guru! You should not sing such kirtans!”