

Chapter 24

Equal Regard for a Ruler and a Beggar

Ambashankar Umiyashankar Bhatt, an accomplished ayurvedic physician of the Akhandanand Ayurvedic Clinic in the Mandvi Pol area of Ahmedabad, was a native of Shiyani. Among his forefathers was Akhandanand Brahmachari, who had taken initiation from Shriji Maharaj and had been renowned throughout Satsang.

Ambashankar had come to Sarangpur to celebrate the Fuladol festival. A program for Swamishri had been organized in Botad, and through Ambashankar's contact with Hakabhai Khachar, Maganbhai Secretary, and other devotees, he accompanied Swamishri to Botad.

The following morning, a telegram arrived from Bhavnagar's Maharaja Saheb Krishnakumarsinhji. He was traveling by special train with his royal entourage for the

wedding ceremony of his son, prince of Bhavnagar, and he requested Swamishri to come to Botad Junction train station to give his darshan and blessings to the prince.

Swamishri, Mota Swami, Pramukh Swami, Santvallabh Swami, and other sadhus and devotees went to the train station. Swamishri garlanded the prince with a flower garland sanctified by Thakorji and gave him prasad. Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji and his entire family were overjoyed. The Maharaja expressed his gratitude to Swamishri and requested permission to take his leave. Swamishri happily blessed him and sent him off.

Then, a railroad switch operator approached Swamishri, touched his feet and said, “Bapa, please come with me and sanctify my hut.”

Mota Swami interjected, “It is half past twelve, and the scorching sun and heat has already become oppressive. Moreover, we still have to reach Sarangpur for lunch. So, it won’t be possible right now!”

Despite the truth of Mota Swami's reasoning, Swamishri's heart perceived a different reality. He said, "Mota Swami, let us make him happy. Just see his love."

With those words, Swamishri followed the railroad switch operator, and everyone followed Swamishri. Mota Swami was unable to object. As Swamishri entered his small room, the railroad switch operator was euphoric. He rushed to and fro, breathlessly gathering together the items needed for Swamishri's puja. Then, he performed Swamishri's puja and *artī*. Swamishri blessed him and instructed him to come to Sarangpur.

The railroad switch operator was ecstatic with the thought that, "The same holy feet at which the Maharaja had just minutes before bowed his head are now sanctifying my tiny hut!" Everyone present was wonderstruck at the compassion and equanimity of this ocean of mercy.

Then the stationmaster, Premshankar Dave, approached Swamishri and insisted that he

have lunch at his home, saying, “Swami, all the food is ready.”

Mota Swami replied, “The sadhus in Sarangpur will be waiting for us to arrive before they start their lunch, so we should go there.”

Swamishri said, “Let us fulfill the stationmaster’s wish. We will have lunch here. We can send word to Sarangpur.”

Swamishri fulfilled the wishes of all the devotees, great or small, due solely to his limitless compassion and desire for everyone’s ultimate liberation. Only the Satpurush is able to fulfill anyone’s wishes at any time, completely neglecting any concern for his own bodily needs or his own plans. Only one who transcends the body, *indriyas*, and *antahkaran* can behave in such a fashion so naturally, pleasing each and every one.

While Swamishri was in Sarangpur, he gave the extraordinary bliss of his discourses at the mandir’s farm every evening. On 10 March 1955, Swamishri recited the Swamini Vat, “In

Vankiya he said, ‘These talks are such that they will prevent you from taking birth again.’” Then Swamishri explained, “When you want to remove your deficiencies, you must do *samagam*. Believing yourself to be the body is a major deficiency. You become influenced by others’ words, affected by honor and insult. When one becomes *brahmarup*, all deficiencies dissolve. One should believe that ‘Gunatit is my very self.’ One should eradicate every last vestige of any desire for tasty foods. Once we swallow, there is no taste. When we achieve oneness with Gunatit, we attain the virtues of the Satpurush and the principles described in Vachanamrut Loya 10.”

On 13 March 1955, Swamishri, together with Sant Swami and other sadhus, set out by bullock cart for Unchadi via Vagad. En route to Unchadi was the village of Abasar. As the devotees there got wind of Swamishri’s proximity, they all gathered together on the road and prayed for Swamishri to sanctify their village. Swamishri visited every devotees’ home

in the village. On this occasion, he also convinced Mohanbai Dahyabhai to forswear his addiction to beedi cigarettes.

Swamishri visited the old Sampradaya's mandir for darshan. Seeing the dilapidated state of the mandir, Swamishri instructed all the local devotees, "Please repair the mandir."

The devotees said, "Bapa, over the past several years, we have suffered from decreased crop yields and lower farm income."

Swamishri replied, "This upcoming year will see plentiful harvests. So, make sure you renovate the mandir."

With Swamishri's blessings, the devotees had a good harvest that year and together renovated the mandir.

From there, Swamishri traveled to Unchadi before going to Adval, where he stayed for a week and granted the devotees the bliss of his company.

At 9:15 p.m. on Wednesday, 16 March 1955, Swamishri was explaining Vachanamrut

Gadhada I 22 when he said, “One should listen to spiritual discourses, sing kirtans, etc. while remembering God. If one ensures that they perform no action without God’s remembrance, they will experience great happiness. If one remembers God’s form while eating and drinking, sitting and standing, walking and in every activity, then fountains of bliss will sprout forth from one’s heart and one will experience unending enthusiasm. One should not allow into one’s heart the sentiment that ‘I am singing and the devotees are listening.’ Instead, one should keep one’s mind focused on God in every activity.”

Perform all activities remembering God... fountains of bliss will sprout forth... you will experience unending enthusiasm... These words, steeped in Swamishri’s lived experience, were enough for everyone to recognize Swamishri’s otherworldly spiritual state. From Swamishri’s words, actions and sentiments, anyone could see the bliss of God’s *murti* that Swamishri experienced.

“Previously, there was a deep scarcity of followers of the Gunatit *jnan*, but today that knowledge has spread all the way to Kolkata and even up to the gates of foreign lands.”

Prophesying the growth of Satsang outside of India, Swamishri said, “Gunatitanand Swami had said that we have sent many here after having taught them *brahmavidya*. Jaga Swami asked, ‘What are the characteristics of those who have already mastered *brahmavidya*?’ First, he would naturally develop a profound love for this Sant, even if the Sant does not foster such affection. Second, he would remain steady in his enlightened state. What does it mean to be steady in the enlightened state? He would remain engrossed in God’s form, constantly engaged in discourses, kirtans, and bhajan. And he would engage in worldly activities only superficially, as much as necessary.”

Following a week of spiritual discourses in which Swamishri taught devotees everything up to the attainment of the highest spiritual state,

Swamishri traveled to Jaliya. Everyone was very happy with Swamishri's arrival. The youths from the city were also traveling with Swamishri during their summer vacation. Swamishri made it a point to have them sit in the spiritual discourses, and he often addressed them directly during his discourses. The youths were deeply moved by such examples of Swamishri's uncomelled compassion.

On the night of 17 March 1955, while addressing the youths, Swamishri said, "Sant Swami will offer you extra tutoring, so you will all pass. This is because he has ample practice. One should sit crosslegged in the assembly and focus primarily on talks that foster our spiritual practices and religious traditions. Today you have such direct contact with the Sant. You should listen to and deliver discourses on Maharaj's greatness and the observance of dharma. One should cultivate the virtue of *shraddha*. You should develop expertise in all activities. In whatever activity one is engaged, even if one is going to urinate, one should keep

one's mind focused on God. In doing so, the *jiva* remains strong. One should not fritter away one's time in idle amusements. When a senior Sadhu is spending time with us, one should not climb into the loft, pull the sheets over your head, and go to sleep or otherwise act out. You should not brush your teeth (with a *datan*) while walking around. After using the toilet, one should scrub one's hands with dirt and wash them as the sadhus do.”

Then Swamishri had everyone sing *dhun* before declaring, “The Bhadar River is holy. Maharaj had bathed in it.”

Then, Swamishri had the devotees place a sanctified *patasa* in a small spring dug into the otherwise dry riverbed. To a devotee who was taking pictures, Swamishri said, “Before you shoot, make sure to say, ‘Ready?’” Then, addressing the youths, Swamishri said, “One attains the virtues of the Satpurush only when one understands that the Satpurush is free of all flaws. The extent to which we maintain a

barrier between us and the Satpurush is the extent to which our deficiencies remain.”

“What is *Buddhi Yoga* (the communion of the intellect)? Any increase in our own faith (*shraddha*) is a sign of *rajipo*. Bhagatji Maharaj had gone to call Mt. Girnar at Swami’s behest. What faith! What trust! Although the circumstances warranted doubts and even deceit, Bhagatji Maharaj did not doubt Swami’s words. When one’s heart becomes imbued with such faith, then one would follow God’s every command. No barrier would remain between God and the devotee. He would offer his everything—mind, body, and wealth—to God.”

In the assembly at night, Swamishri said, “If someone delivers discourses to me, I really enjoy listening to them. Previously, I would feel the urge to doze off, but not anymore.”

From here, Swamishri set out for Vadhwan via Khasta. On the way, Swamishri stopped at Botad Station and gave the local devotees the benefit of his company and spiritual discourses for three hours.