

Chapter 13

A Command on the Eightieth Birthday Celebration of Guruhari

On 30 January 1944 (Maha sud 5, V.S. 2000), Shastriji Maharaj's eightieth birthday celebrations were going to be held in grand fashion in Bochasan. Thus, all the sadhus had gathered in Bochasan from far and wide. Everyone had great enthusiasm for this occasion. Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj traveled via Petlad to Bochasan. A sense of auspiciousness and joy permeated the surroundings. A mass of devotees from all corners of Gujarat were eager to give their devotional offerings to their guru. For this occasion, Yogi Maharaj had written an article about the virtues of the guru in the Swaminarayan Prakash magazine, providing devotees with a unique spiritual vision with which to understand the glory of their guru. He had written:

“Pujya Swamiji presides in the assembly and with profound love delivers discourses on *brahmabhav*, spiritual greatness, and maintaining affection for fellow devotees. It becomes clear to all that Swami-Shriji themselves are speaking through him. Thus, this divine personality presides today like a pillar of Satsang. If we are unable to serve him, later there will be no end to our regret.

“See, despite his advanced age of eighty, he continues his travels for the liberation of thousands of devotees. Riding on bullock carts and similar vehicles, he travels from village to village, fulfilling the desires of thousands of devotees...”

Yogi Maharaj’s pen articulated the sentiments in everyone’s heart. His last two sentences were filled with the essence of experience. He was a silent witness to the hardships Shastriji Maharaj had endured and intimately aware of Shastriji Maharaj’s love for the devotees. Yogi Maharaj wrote further:

“Pujya Swamiji’s travels are so hectic that where he sleeps at night is different from where he brushes his teeth the next morning, and where he brushes his teeth in the morning is different from the place he sleeps that night. Amidst this horrific Kaliyug, he has constructed divine mandirs in Sarangpur, Bochasan, Gondal, and other places, installed the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam, and tolled the victory bells of true *upasana*. Such a person is to be celebrated...

“So all the devotees from every house and every village should remember Swami-Shriji and pray that Param Pujya Pragat Brahmaswarup Shastriji Maharaj always maintains good health and that he grants us the bliss of his spiritual discourses through his blessings face-to-face and from afar... Thus may everyone pray, such is my humble request!”

What an exceptional prayer! To pray for Shastriji Maharaj’s good health did not mean to have him travel incessantly through the villages

but that we should experience the bliss of his spiritual discourses through his blessings face-to-face and from afar. At every moment, “Yogiraj” experienced bliss and only bliss through the divine gaze and attention of Shastriji Maharaj, just as he experienced the bliss of Shastriji Maharaj’s divine discourses. Yogi Maharaj knew the mind of his guru! Everyone was profoundly impacted by this prayer, and they resolved to cease making Shastriji Maharaj suffer unnecessary hardships. With kirtans and speeches extolling the glory of God and guru, the birthday of this exceptional sadhu who had sacrificed his entire life for Akshar Purushottam was celebrated with great festivity.

After the festival, everyone traveled from Nagasar to Ahmedabad and then to Limbasi, where a *Satsangijivan parayan* had been organized in Shastriji Maharaj’s presence. Sponsored by Purushottamdas and Shankarbhai, Harivallabhdas Purani inaugurated the *parayan*. Shastriji Maharaj

narrated sections of the *Satsangijivan* on devotion and the glory of God and the Sadhu. Then, Yogi Maharaj and Nirgundas Swami delivered knowledgeable talks that flowed like the mighty Ganga River, bringing peace to all.

At the beginning of March, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj traveled to Sarangpur and celebrated the Fulldol festival. Then they went to Tajpur with Nirgundas Swami to perform the groundbreaking ceremony of the new *hari mandir* on 14 March 1944 (Fagun vad 4, V.S. 2000). Then, Yogi Maharaj traveled to Gondal. Since a member of Gondal's royal family had passed away, Yogi Maharaj wrote a letter to Shastriji Maharaj requesting him to come to Gondal. Thus, from Bhavnagar, Shastriji Maharaj came to Gondal and consoled and blessed Bhojrajsinh. That evening, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj went to Devchadi.