

Chapter 11

The Maharaja's Esteem for Jogi's Saintliness

King Bhagwatsinhji of Gondal had studied in England. Upon his return to India, he instituted many reforms in the state of Gondal, including a building code that required open space on all sides of any large building. When the construction of Akshar Mandir's assembly hall commenced, an order was sent from the state requiring 125 feet of space to be left open surrounding the building. Shastriji Maharaj remarked, "We won't be able to keep so much space open on all sides of the assembly hall."

However, since the order had come directly from Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja, the Diwan and the state engineer were fearful of making any modifications or even suggestions relaxing this requirement. They were aware that Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja would not tolerate any laxity in the enforcement of his codes, nor did

he have much deference for others' opinions. He was by nature strict and uncompromising in the enforcement of every rule.

However, Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja did have great affection for Yogi Maharaj. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj sent Yogi Maharaj to meet with Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja. He instructed Nirgundas Swami and Hakabhai to accompany Yogi Maharaj so that their case could be properly presented before the Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja.

Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja was pleased to have darshan of the sadhus. He inquired about Shastriji Maharaj's health and then asked about the purpose of their visit. Nirgundas Swami informed Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja, "We will be unable to leave 125 feet of space open surrounding the assembly hall because it would cause serious problems for our masterplan."

Hearing this, Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja became very serious and said, "In my kingdom, everything happens according to the rule of

law. There is no other option. So, I will not be able to help you there.”

Nirgundas Swami said, “We have raised hundreds of thousands of rupees from all across the country and are using it to the benefit of your kingdom. Moreover, the glory of Akshar Mandir will raise the profile of your kingdom and the town of Gondal throughout the world. Thus, you should offer your support in this work.”

Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja was impressed by Nirgundas Swami's compelling arguments. He also had great faith in Yogi Maharaj, who he saw as an embodiment of saintliness, so he turned to him, eager to hear what he had to say. Nirgundas Swami said, “As you have affection for Yogi Maharaj, you should do what makes him happy. Because he is unable to tell you directly, Shastriji Maharaj has sent us with him.”

Now, Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja had no option but to give in. Ultimately, he decided to reduce the open space requirement to 75 feet on all

sides of the building. Then he said, “I have tremendous esteem for Yogi Maharaj’s saintliness, and I am proud that a compassionate embodiment of godliness such as he resides in my kingdom.”

Nirgundas Swami and Hakabhai were very pleased to hear Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja speak so openly of Yogi Maharaj’s glory. The sadhus returned to the mandir and informed Shastriji Maharaj of what had transpired. Shastriji Maharaj was also very pleased that Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja had agreed to his request.

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An elderly sadhu by the name of Dharmaswarupdas resided in Akshar Mandir. He kept himself engaged in the service of the mandir. He would often gather unwashed utensils into a room, lock the doors from the inside, and, together with Yogi Maharaj, wash the entire pile between them. By 3:30 p.m., when it was time for the assigned sadhus to wash the dirty utensils, they would instead find

a stack of clean utensils. When they would inquire, “Who washed the utensils today?” Yogi Maharaj would laugh and answer, “Who knows? The devas must have come and washed them all!”

Around 1:00 p.m., the train from Viramgam to Veraval would stop at Gondal Station. Then, around 1:30 p.m., the train from Veraval to Viramgam would stop at Gondal Station. Devotees who had come for darshan of Akshar Deri would sometimes arrive on these two trains. Yogi Maharaj would stand next to a pillar in the assembly hall, waiting for such devotees. At the sight of devotees, Yogi Maharaj would experience an inexpressible joy. On days when many devotees visited the mandir, Yogi Maharaj felt like it was Diwali! Yogi Maharaj would think, “Today, I will get more opportunities to serve!” He would lovingly insist on feeding everyone until they were full. On days when no devotees arrived, Yogi Maharaj would not feel like eating. He would feel sad, thinking, “When no devotees of God

have arrived today, who will I feed?” It is said that a lioness's milk can be held only in a golden vessel. Similarly, such Gunatit bhakti overflowed in the pristine and supreme golden vessel that was Aksharbrahma Yogi Maharaj.