

Chapter 10

Loving Dialogue between Guru and Disciple

In December 1936 (Magshar, V.S. 1993), Yogi Maharaj was scheduled to undergo a hernia operation in Rajkot. Hirjibhai Sheth had made arrangements for a private room in the hospital and an expert surgeon to perform the surgery. At the time, Shastriji Maharaj was in Gondal undergoing an Ayurvedic treatment regimen that included a diet restricted to milk and sugarcane.

The day before the operation, Shastriji Maharaj traveled from Gondal to Rajkot. On the morning of the operation, Shastriji Maharaj awoke early, took a bath, completed his puja, and was ready to go to the hospital. The devotees had arranged for a horse cart to take Shastriji Maharaj to the hospital, but when it didn't arrive on time, Shastriji Maharaj became impatient. He hastily tied a cloth around his

head and, with a companion sadhu, began walking to the hospital. What eagerness to meet his exceptional disciple!

At the same moment, Yogi Maharaj was experiencing a similar eagerness, as he was unwilling to go into the operation theater without Shastriji Maharaj's darshan. The doctors were trying to rush him along, but his consciousness had become fixed upon his guru. Thus, how could Shastriji Maharaj wait for the horse cart to arrive? He reached the hospital on foot just as Yogi Maharaj was being wheeled on a stretcher to the operating theater. Yogi Maharaj saw Swamishri walking swiftly toward him in the distance. He sat up, and if they had let him, he would have gotten out of the stretcher and done *dandvats*. Swamishri ran and met him with great love. Both guru and disciple were overjoyed by their meeting.

After the operation, Yogi Maharaj was brought to his private room, still under the influence of anesthesia. Shastriji Maharaj, Hirjibhai, Morarjibhai, Prabhudas Sheth, Daji

Bapu, and Jhaverkaka chanted *dhun*, waiting for Yogi Maharaj to regain consciousness. When Yogi Maharaj didn't regain consciousness after some time, the devotees summoned the surgeon, Dr. Aspinall. Hirjibhai told him, "Doctor! This sadhu is a treasure of all humanity, so please care for him properly."

After about two hours, the effects of the anesthesia began to wear off, and Yogi Maharaj turned his head. As he slowly opened his eyes, he saw Shastriji Maharaj gently smiling at him. Yogi Maharaj immediately folded his hands and asked the surrounding devotees, "Have you offered Swami his milk?"

As milk was part of Shastriji Maharaj's Ayurvedic treatment regimen, Yogi Maharaj had been making sure to offer Shastriji Maharaj milk at the designated intervals. Yogi Maharaj had retained the constant awareness of duty to serve his guru even in his unconscious state. This unparalleled state of devotion to God in which an unbroken consciousness of God was attained was the climax of the Gunatit state. A

state in which there is the consciousness of nothing except God can be said to be the true and pure form of Akshar!

A devotee, Nagardas Rajguru, had stayed at the hospital in Yogi Maharaj's service. He was an employee of the hospital, so this opportunity to serve had naturally come to him. Nagardas explained Yogi Maharaj's glory to the surgeon, Dr. Aspinall, who was so impressed that he offered all the special arrangements made for Christian priests and performed the operation free of charge.

Despite his illness, Yogi Maharaj celebrated the Vasant Panchami festival from the hospital and spoke about the glory of Shastriji Maharaj.

By the time Yogi Maharaj was discharged from the hospital, the surgeon, Dr. Aspinall, the other doctors, and the hospital staff had developed a deep affection for him. When bidding farewell to Yogi Maharaj, many of them became emotional, as if they were saying goodbye to a beloved close family member.

Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, and the sadhus were very pleased with Nagardas for cultivating such good relationships with Dr. Aspinall.

Yogi Maharaj convalesced for about six weeks in Rajkot before returning to Gondal.

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A complete oneness existed between Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj. Yogi Maharaj saw Bhagwan Swaminarayan himself within Shastriji Maharaj and thus followed Shastriji Maharaj's every command. Once, Shastriji Maharaj had told him, "You should see to the hospitality of these Darbars."

From that time, Yogi Maharaj had assumed the responsibility of serving the Darbars himself. His pure, loving gaze showered unbroken affection upon all. Whenever Yogi Maharaj insistently fed these Darbars fresh, hot *fulka rotlis*, despite knowing that they were being made by Yogi Maharaj himself, the Darbars could not help but eat beyond their

limit. Yogi Maharaj would lay out their bedrolls for them, prepare hot water for their baths, and often, he would even wash their clothes. He would serve these devotees of God, understanding them to be God's form.

Once, in Gondal, several Darbars told Shastriji Maharaj, "We never see Yogi Maharaj in the assembly. You should tell him to sit in assembly once in a while."

Swamishri laughed and said, "Only if you can forsake your cravings for the fresh, hot *rotlis* he makes for you will he have a chance to sit in the assembly!"

Realizing Yogi Maharaj's commitment to service, the devotees were speechless.

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After completing his travels in the Kanam region, Shastriji Maharaj was traveling by train to Ahmedabad.

Ghanshyam Swami was awaiting Shastriji Maharaj at Vasad station. He had come from Bocharan, having brought with him Shantilal,

the son of Motibhai Patel of Chansad. Yogi Maharaj was delighted to see this virtuous and gentle teenager.

Today, this teenager had embarked on the path of renunciation at Shastriji Maharaj's command. Thus, Yogi Maharaj's delight was but natural. Yogi Maharaj looked at Shastriji Maharaj and said, "Swami! A liberated soul has arrived from Chansad!"

Shastriji Maharaj expressed his deep happiness upon this young man.

Everyone continued on the journey to Ahmedabad.³

At the time, Nandulal Manchharam Sheth of Ahmedabad was suffering from insomnia. Shastriji Maharaj had blessed him, "You will be cured of your illness. Yogi Maharaj and Sadhu Bhagwatswarupdas will stay with you."

Shastriji Maharaj had also instructed Yogi Maharaj, "Stay with the Sheth and continue your bhajans and kirtans." Thus, Yogi Maharaj stayed in Ahmedabad in Nandulal Sheth's

bungalow. Although Nandulal had employed a Brahmin cook at his home, Yogi Maharaj made their meals himself.

Every night, both sadhus would deliver spiritual discourses. Bhagwatswarupdas Swami sang kirtans. And what to say of Yogi Maharaj? The entire *satsang mandal* of Ahmedabad would come to avail of Yogi Maharaj's spiritual discourses and kirtans. Nandulal Sheth experienced a divine peace in these assemblies and immersed himself in devotion. He once again began to fall asleep at night!

Yogi Maharaj stayed at Nandulal's house for one month. Nandulal Sheth's insomnia was cured, and he was left with an indelible impression of this affectionate sadhu.

3 Soon thereafter, in Ahmedabad on Wednesday, 22 November 1939 (Kartik sud 11, V.S. 1996), Shastriji Maharaj initiated Shantilal as a parshad. Then, on 10 January 1940 (Posh sud 1, V.S. 1996), Shastriji Maharaj initiated Shanti Bhagat into the monastic order and named him, Sadhu Narayanswarupdas. Eventually, Shastriji Maharaj appointed him his successor as the president of the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha, and he became widely known as Pramukh Swami.