

Chapter 14

The Hardships of Vicharan

On 18 April 1948, (Chaitra *sud* 9, V.S. 2004) Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj celebrated Swaminarayan Jayanti in Ahmedabad. From there, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, and Nirgundas Swami traveled to Petlad. On 22 April 1948, they went with the devotees to the Petlad train station to travel to Bochasan. The devotees endeavored to find a space on the train for Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, and Nirgundas Swami, but all three classes of compartments were completely packed with travelers. As the crowds of passengers pressed in from all sides, everyone was worried about Shastriji Maharaj's delicate health. Moreover, Yogi Maharaj was carrying three large *potlas*. It was noon, and with the blistering heat of the summer sun beating down upon them, the overcrowded train, their delicate health, the burden of carrying everyone's luggage, and the

rush to reach Bochasan, the accompanying devotees felt the hardships of travel to be overwhelming. They asked the sadhus to reschedule their trip to Bochasan, but Shastriji Maharaj replied, “Since we have decided to go, we will go!”

With great effort, the sadhus found a small space in a cramped compartment on the train where soda bottles were stored. With the crates of soda bottles, blocks of ice, and other luggage, there was no question of finding a place to sit. All the passengers around them were also standing. Finally, one passenger who had been sitting on a small raised platform meant to store soda bottles got up to offer his seat to the sadhus. So, these three eminent sadhus wedged into that tiny space. Yogi Maharaj kept all three *potlas* on his legs. Unable to move even an inch for the duration of their journey, by the time these three great sadhus reached Bochasan, their muscles had become stiff and sore. Yet, their faces radiated the same expression of joy present on all occasions.

“Ji re Prabhusange prit vadhāravā, fare jagmā re, sāchā sant sujān...”

(Know the true Sant travels throughout the world to increase people’s love for God...)

Who other than the true Sant would endure such hardship to travel around the land and inspire people to worship God?

Following the Chaitra Punam festival in Bochasan, in the month of Vaishakh, Yogi Maharaj traveled to Gondal for the *patotsav* of Akshar Mandir.

Shastriji Maharaj had also been eager to attend the *patotsav* in Gondal, but since his medical checkup had been scheduled in Mumbai, Nandaji insisted to Shastriji Maharaj, “Please remain here. In Gondal, Yogi Maharaj will grant everyone the same bliss as you.”

The devotees had begun arriving in Gondal from Vaishakh *sud* 9. Because Shastriji Maharaj was unable to attend, adding to his usual responsibilities of looking after devotees’ food, accommodations, and other needs, Yogi

Maharaj now had the responsibility of delivering discourses.

During his discourses on the Swamini Vato on Vaishakh *sud* 9, Yogi Maharaj had said, “Today, we have all attained satsang in the form of association with Shastriji Maharaj. Understanding Maharaj to be manifest in him is the path shown by Shriji Maharaj whereby one can secure all spiritual attainments.”

On 18 May 1948, the *patotsav* of the Gondal mandir was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Yogi Maharaj’s presence. In the *patotsav* assembly, everyone was delighted to hear Yogi Maharaj’s explanation of Vachanamrut Gadhada III 2.

Shastriji Maharaj had written everyone a letter from Mumbai that was read out in the assembly to bolster everyone’s spirits. Shastriji Maharaj had written: “Since Yogi Swami is currently presiding in Gondal, everyone should understand that Swami and Maharaj are present there, and I am also present there.” All

the devotees experienced the bliss of Shastriji Maharaj's presence.

After the festival, Yogi Maharaj traveled to some of the nearby villages but mostly stayed in Gondal. During this time, Arjunbhai of Ahmedabad came to Gondal with his family on the afternoon "Gujarat Mail" train.

At the time, Narayandas Swami of Sarangpur was looking after the Gondal mandir kitchen. When Arjunbhai asked him for some prasad for himself and his family, Narayandas Swami gave him all the leftover laddus in the kitchen. A short while later, Yogi Maharaj came to the kitchen and informed Narayandas Swami that several more devotees had come to the mandir, so he should provide them with prasad. Narayandas Swami initially didn't respond. Then he haltingly informed Yogi Maharaj, "I gave all the leftover laddus we had to Arjunbhai for his family."

Narayandas Swami thought that Yogi Maharaj would scold him, but Yogi Maharaj was pleased with Narayandas Swami and said,

“Yes, of course. You did well. We sadhus must look after the devotees.”

Then Yogi Maharaj instantly prepared some *shiro* and sat the new devotees down to eat. Understanding everyone’s requirements and circumstances, Yogi Maharaj offered his devotion through his innate inclination of perceiving everyone’s divine glory.

On one occasion, Yogi Maharaj needed to travel to Rajkot. He told his companion sadhu to get ready to leave in the afternoon. Hearing of this, Aksharprakash Swami told Yogi Maharaj, “Please take me as your companion sadhu. I want to come to Rajkot and have darshan of all the sanctified places there.”

Yogi Maharaj told him, “Currently, you are needed here in the mandir kitchen. So, we will take you to Rajkot in the future.”

But Aksharprakash Swami insisted, “Even if you refuse to take me, I will come. So permit me to accompany you. This is my final decision.”

Yogi Maharaj said nothing, and Aksharprakash Swami readied his bag. At noon, everyone sat for lunch. Due to his responsibilities in the kitchen, Aksharprakash Swami was helping the Brahmin cook take a large pot of boiling dal off the stove. Both of them used cloths to hold the rim of the pot without burning their hands. However, as they lifted the pot off the stove and set it on the ground, the boiling dal splashed directly onto Aksharprakash Swami's chest, stomach, and arms, scalding him. Large burn blisters immediately erupted all over his skin.

Yogi Maharaj ran to him, compassionately patted his shoulder, and led him by the hand to his bed. Then, he had someone call a doctor so Aksharprakash Swami would immediately get proper medical treatment.

Yogi Maharaj had to go to Rajkot due to a prior engagement, but he went to check on Aksharprakash Swami before leaving. Aksharprakash Swami said, "Swami, my stubbornness caused me to get scalded. Now I

can't accompany you to Rajkot. Please take your companion sadhu with you instead. Today, I am experiencing firsthand the misery that befalls one who transgresses the commands of the great.”

Yogi Maharaj gazed at him with love and said, “Don't dwell on such things anymore. Instead, remember God so that you can remain at peace.”