

Chapter 24

Traveling Training Seminars for the Youths

When Swamishri traveled in the villages, he would wake Harikrishna Maharaj at 4 p.m. and offer him water. Then he would do *mansi puja*. All the youths and devotees traveling with him would join Swamishri in this devotion. If Swamishri noticed anyone to be absent, he would call out to him to join the group. In this way, he would take attendance of the youths and devotees traveling with him five to six times a day, especially when spiritual discourses were being delivered and at lunch. Thus, no one traveling with him could successfully abscond from his presence unless there was some important work. If someone did not regularly attend the sessions with him, he would gently rebuke them, explaining that they should make the most of this opportunity since they had come to stay in his company. He

would urge them to recognize how to make the best use of their time together. He would encourage them that rather than lazing about, they should be present for his *samagam* in a timely fashion. They should not skip out for any reason.

Following the afternoon *mansi puja*, Swamishri would have the Vachanamrut read aloud. He would then expound on the Vachanamrut, time permitting. Since Mota Swami had a zeal for delivering discourses, if he was present, Swamishri would have him talk while he replied to letters. Then he would go around the village to visit devotees' homes.

After *sandhya arti*, Swamishri would not miss the opportunity to gather the village children and teach them to sing *dhun* and *bhajans* and engage them in other children's activities. Although Swamishri was quite advanced in years, he took a deep interest in children. He would check to see that each child wore a *kanthi* around his neck. Then he would

distribute prasad to everyone and bid them farewell.

He would also deliver spiritual discourses to the village devotees late into the night. If senior devotees were accompanying him, he would request them to deliver discourses in the evening assembly as well. Mota Swami would also speak for an hour. Swamishri would speak last, expounding on the Swamini Vato with examples and verses from kirtans in a manner so captivating that it would eradicate any trace of sleep from the audience's eyes despite the late hour. In the rare case that someone, exhausted from the day's toil, displayed even the slightest sign of nodding off, Swamishri would call out to them in the middle of his talk, effectively banishing all drowsiness from the assembly. If any youngsters happened to be traveling with him, he would sit with them after the assembly late at night and talk to them about spirituality. Finally, only after midnight would Swamishri go to bed.

The next morning, he would be up by 3 a.m. He would sit up in his bedding and meditate on God's form while chanting God's holy name. Then, with the aid of the dim light of a lantern or flashlight, careful not to tread on anyone in the dark, Swamishri would seek out each of the sleeping youths and wake them up. Then, with the youths seated around him, Swamishri would talk about the glory of God and the Sant. After completing his daily puja in the morning, Swamishri would sing verses of *prabhatiya* and explain their meaning to the youths and devotees around him. After a light breakfast, including hot, spiced milk, Swamishri would deliver discourses on the Vachanamrut, and only then would he set out to visit the devotees' homes in the village. After lunch, Swamishri would again preside in the midday discourses. The entire day was thus filled with continuous discourses on the Vachanamrut, kirtans, and satsang.

Since Thursday, 3 February 1955 was Ekadashi, Swamishri had planned for a daylong

series of spiritual discourses. Sant Swami spoke at length in the morning. At 4:30 p.m., Swamishri recited Vachanamrut Gadhada I 23, in which Maharaj has said that because Naradji and Brahma did not behave in such an elevated spiritual state, they harbored a desire to marry. Swamishri suddenly burst out laughing and said, “If they harbored a desire to marry, it means that their mind had not forsaken the *panchvishays*. That much is clear. To not contradict the sentiments of the scriptures and the general public, Maharaj describes their harboring of such thoughts even after having renounced the world as, they ‘did not behave in such an elevated spiritual state.’ However, the point is that for one who possesses such an elevated state, it is impossible not to behave in a manner reflective of it.”

The following day, Swamishri broke his Ekadashi fast at Harmanbhai’s house and traveled to Pandoli in the evening at the invitation of Dr. Keshavlal Dave. From here, Swamishri traveled to Nar to meet Khushaldas

and, via Pandoli, reached Dharmaj by evening. Revaba of Africa had requested that Swamishri visit her village, and Umedbhai also attended the spiritual discourses and enjoyed Swamishri's darshan.

At night, Swamishri was walking to the bathroom holding Harshadbhai's hand for support when he made an important declaration, saying, "It is my fundamental principle that I never perceive a flaw in anyone. Go, now. Go to sleep." Saying this, Swamishri sent him to bed.

This was another one of Swamishri's distinctive traits—at any time, he would hold a youth's or devotee's hand and impart such essential truths or ask about their observance of religious practices or whether they were properly observing *nishkam dharma*. If he wanted to give them some instruction, he would do it as they were walking. If there were many others nearby, he would lead the devotee to a distant corner and then speak his mind.

In the villages, while going to a pond or river for a bath early in the morning or at 4 p.m., while holding a youth's hand and grasping a gourd of water on his way to the toilet, while washing his hands afterward, while bathing, while holding a youth's hand on his way to visit devotees' homes, or whenever, as soon as the opportunity arose, Swamishri would gently whisper a few words of guidance or instruction in their ear. He would speak softly so that no one else would hear, but in a way that would leave an indelible impression upon the listener. It was Swamishri's style to provide such essential guidance casually, slipping it into the normal flow of conversation. But the pure affection embedded in such remarks was unforgettable. Through these small exchanges, Swamishri made such a huge impact on so many; he would transform people's entire lives.

Early on the morning of 6 February 1955, many devotees came to the mandir for darshan, right after Swamishri's puja. Swamishri sat in

the ensuing spiritual assembly and explained Vachanamrut Gadhada II 57:

“One should love God believing oneself to be the *atma*. As long as one is unable to behave as the *atma*, but is subject to hindrances and obstacles, one is under the sway of ignorance. Thus, once should learn true spiritual realization. What is that spiritual realization? When, with constant vigilance, one can keep one’s consciousness focused solely on God’s divine form, one has developed true spiritual realization. So, all obstacles will be overcome only when one can dispel one’s false notions of reality regarding all things *mayik* through the cultivation of this spiritual realization and *vairagya*. Similarly, when one develops true *vairagya*, everything up to Prakruti-Purush is understood as ephemeral and trivial and thus holds no attraction for one. Having thus cultivated *vairagya* and spiritual realization, one who behaves as the *atma* and loves Maharaj is a true devotee. But any devotee who bears love for anything other than Maharaj’s

divine form is said to possess an utterly petty mentality. Many must not have been able to live according to such ideals even in Maharaj's times, leading him to say such words in this Vachanamrut.

“Raibai of Kundal could experience samadhi at will and constantly behold Maharaj's divine form. Once, when Gunatitanand Swami was passing through Kundal, he asked a local male devotee, ‘In Maharaj's time, Raibai experienced samadhi and constantly beheld Maharaj's form. Can she still experience samadhi?’ Through the male devotee, Raibai conveyed to Swami, ‘I can experience samadhi if I wish, but my consciousness is rooted in my sons, daughters, farm, and worldly life. Thus, I don't have time to sit and experience samadhi.’

“In this way, when such a great devotee who had experienced the bliss of Maharaj's *murti* went on to forget that bliss and attach their consciousness to their worldly affairs, it betrays a deficiency in their *jnan* and *vairagya*. But when one realizes that the cause of all

happiness is God's *murti*, then one's consciousness can never be drawn to the trivial and ephemeral objects of this world. One could not perceive any value in them. Whoever perceives there to be any value in worldly affairs or objects has been labeled by Maharaj as a 'catlike' devotee. While they remain in the category of a devotee, Maharaj has said they are like a cat, or a dog who scampers off to solitary place to gnaw on a dry bone, believing it to be a source of happiness. But the fool does not realize that it is the taste of his own blood from the abraded skin of his mouth in which he is taking pleasure! Similarly, this *jiva* falsely believes there to be happiness in what is really misery and consequently prays before the great Sant for such miserable pleasures. Thus, one should become a true devotee. One must maintain that as a life principle.

“Servanthood is a virtue of God. So, one should learn to cultivate such virtues. As one develops such virtues, one's *divyabhav* grows, and one perceives all actions of the great Sant

as divine. So long as the arrogance remains that ‘I am something’, one will be tempted to give guidance and advice even to those who one has understood to be spiritually great. Thus, in order to develop the unbroken perspective of *divyabhav* and *nirdoshbhav* in all the actions of the Satpurush, one should imbibe the teachings of Vachanamrut Vartal 11. If one can develop such profound love for the Satpurush, then one has realized one’s *atma*. Only when all the virtues of the Satpurush are fully manifested in a devotee should they be known to have truly attained such an elevated spiritual state.”

On this occasion, Mota Swami, expounding on Vachanamrut Gadhada I 58, explained that one’s devotion grows as one continues to cultivate the virtues of the Satpurush.

Then, Swamishri, explaining Vachanamrut Gadhada I 40, said, “When one recognizes the form of God, then one attains an elevated spiritual state. When God’s form is recognized, desires for the world cease, and one

experiences pure desires like those of Narad, Sanakadik, and Shukji. At that point, one should be understood as having attained the *savikalp* state. However, one who attains the attributes of Aksharbrahma and remains engrossed only in the form of God should be understood as having attained the *nirvikalp* state. Thus, we should all strive to attain the state of *nirvikalp samadhi*, and recognizing the form of God, one should completely engross one's consciousness in him. When one attains this principle, one will experience true bliss. Waves of joy will wash over one as one experiences an unbroken sense of awe, wonder, and limitless peace.”

Then Swamishri sang the two kirtans, “*Sant vinā re sāchi kon kahe...*” (Who can speak the Truth other than the Sant) and “*Anup Santne āpu upamā...*” (Let me describe to you a Sant who is incomparable...).

On Sunday, Swamishri celebrated Punam in Bochasan. Here, he visited both ailing *sadgurus*, Nana Akshar Swami and Mota

Akshar Swami, and arranged their continued medical treatment. Then, he did *dhun* for their speedy recovery. Then Swamishri traveled to Bhadran at the invitation of Ghelabhai Ravjibhai Patel. From there, he went to Anand to bless Ramchandrabhai's son-in-law Ratilal's son at his *janoi* ceremony. Then at the insistence of Champakbhai Sheth, Swamishri traveled to Ahmedabad.