

Chapter 19

A Training Course in Brahmavidya

Due to the auspicious first days of the new year, devotees from all over flocked to Gondal to receive Swamishri's blessings. Akshar Mandir was overflowing with devotees. Preparations for Annakut would commence from Aso *vad* 9, and Swamishri would assign all the youths to serve in these preparations. The youths would be running around all day helping the confectioner make sweets, delivering provisions where needed, and helping in countless other ways. The production of many types of laddus, *adadiyas*, *pendas*, and other sweets required people to shape the raw material by hand into balls. The youths would sit in a large crowd around Swamishri, joining him in shaping the sweets into balls. Sitting with one leg crossed underneath him and one leg bent up, Swamishri would use both hands to rapidly ball

the sweets, producing balls of exactly the same size as if they had been made by machine. He would speak to the youths on satsang topics infused with a liberal dose of humor while performing his *seva* with such skill that the teenagers would stare in wonder. One could not help but note his zeal for service.

According to Shriji Maharaj's command, Swamishri was focused on doing bhajan, or contemplating on God, while performing *seva*. Thus, Swamishri would have the youth sing kirtans and talk on satsang topics one after the other. He would also talk on satsang topics at times, thus maintaining an unceasing contemplation on God. In Swamishri's affectionate presence, no one felt tired. In addition to the Annakut preparations, Swamishri had assigned the youths a variety of daily service activities, including sweeping the mandir, washing dishes, cleaning the courtyard and kitchen, and cleaning the urinals and toilets, among other things. Swamishri used to keep a close watch on each task to ensure that

the youths were performing their assigned services properly. Swamishri wouldn't let anyone be careless in their service. However, if someone was naturally slow or unskilled, Swamishri would overlook their deficiencies and support them. However, every day at 4 a.m. and 11 p.m., Swamishri would sit alone with the youths and speak so powerfully that everyone would be spiritually reinvigorated and cast aside all laziness and procrastination. Swamishri's words awakened an eagerness in everyone to be willing to sacrifice their body in service. Swamishri was an embodiment of love. His lifelong austerities, spiritual endeavor, and truth were reflected in his speech. Thus were his words able to uproot the teenagers' wantonness and carelessness and implant faith and service in their hearts.

On the day of Annakut, the youths also got the opportunity to arrange the food items before Thakorji. Many youths would help decorate the mandir during the new year days. The Brahmin youths would spend the entire

day helping in the kitchen while the other youths got the opportunity to serve food during breakfast, lunch, and dinner. In this way, at Swamishri's behest, everyone remained fully engaged in service and devotion. No one ever felt tired. Everyone's attraction for Swamishri continued to increase. And whenever there was a second to spare, no one tired of singing the praises of Swamishri's love and affection. Swamishri had become an indispensable part of the youths' lives.

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