

Chapter 22

Divine Light and Divine Darshan

The renowned yogi and *jyotishi*, Nityanand Kavishvar Vibhuti Jyoti of the Kotagiri Ashram in the Nilgiri Mountains of South India had come to Rajkot specially for Swamishri's darshan. At Swamishri's first darshan, he felt that Swamishri was the incarnation of God on Earth in a child form. As introductions were offered, Nityanandji recalled the image of the sadhu who had given him darshan in his dream and told him, "Come!" Upon seeing Swamishri up close, he realized that the sadhu in his dream had been none other than Swamishri. Stunned by this realization, he became emotional while doing Swamishri's darshan.

Then, Nityanandji had the opportunity to travel in Swamishri's car from Rajkot to Gondal. As the car sped down the road, Nityanandji continued looking at Swamishri and felt that Swamishri's face and body

continued to change, becoming ever more luminous as if it were a divine vision. Thus, he began to look at Swamishri's feet, and they also had the same radiance. As he continued to stare at Swamishri's feet, he saw within them Swaminarayan Bhagwan's sacred lotus feet. Gradually, he began to feel that he was sitting next to the ultimate supreme divine power. In Swamishri's presence in the mandir and in Akshar Deri, he felt that he was going closer and closer to some divine entity. Finally, after taking Swamishri's blessings and resolving to observe satsang vows and participate in *seva*, he returned to Mumbai.

Around this time, a special issue of the Swaminarayan Prakash had been published, providing a full report of the special train pilgrimage. Offering his blessings for this endeavor, Swamishri wrote: "This issue has been published due to Swami's wish. You should believe this to be a sacred text. Just like the *Satsangijivan*, this sacred text describes Swami's divine actions... Everyone should

carefully care for this special issue as if it were one's very soul. Each year, everyone should read it during the holy month of Shravan. Take care of it. Don't lose it or misplace it. Preserve it so that the issue can be found in every home even after a hundred years. If even those who may not have come on the pilgrimage read this sacred text, they should understand that they have received the fruit of the pilgrimage."

Swamishri described the glory of this special issue to be on par with the *Satsangijivan* because it contained the divine exploits of the Sant through whom Maharaj was fully manifest. Swamishri would regularly read the Swaminarayan Prakash and encourage others to read it. He would also command everyone to subscribe to it, even writing letters of blessing for that purpose. As the Swaminarayan Prakash had been established by the blessings of Guruhari Shastriji Maharaj, to Swamishri's mind, it was the very form of Shastriji Maharaj himself.

Several weeks before Vasant Panchami the sadhus in the Sarangpur mandir received a letter from Swamishri stating, “I will be arriving in Sarangpur on Posh *vad* 11.”

Everyone was ecstatic and could scarcely contain their excitement at Swamishri’s impending darshan.

Hariprasad Choksi of Mumbai had come to Gadhada to perform the final part of the funeral rites for his wife, who had recently passed away. He specially requested Swamishri to sanctify the event. Thus, Swamishri traveled from Gondal to Gadhada. Swamishri delivered discourses and eased the pain he felt at his wife’s passing. Then, Swamishri went with him to Kariyani for darshan and met Kothari Dharmavallabhdasji, who offered Swamishri a warm welcome. Then, they traveled to Sarangpur.

After doing darshan and *pradakshinas* in the mandir, Swamishri did darshan of Hanuman and Ganpati before going to Shastriji Maharaj’s memorial shrine for darshan. Since

today was Ekadashi, Swamishri was not in any rush. He performed fifty-one *pradakshinas* of Shastriji Maharaj's memorial shrine and then sat on the platform and spoke at length about Swami's divine glory. Then he turned ten *malas* and did *dhun*. After this, Swamishri returned to the mandir and met all the sadhus and devotees. Smiling, he inquired about everyone's welfare. Swamishri's constantly smiling countenance was so captivating that his mere darshan would make one lose consciousness of one's body. What should one say? What should one do? Everyone would be at a complete loss, drowned in the bliss of his divine form.

An assembly was organized in the mandir at 4 p.m. Swamishri took Choksi Saheb to Shastriji Maharaj's room for darshan. Swamishri had him do darshan of the *murti* as well as the various objects sanctified by Shastriji Maharaj. Suddenly overwhelmed by memories of Shastriji Maharaj, Choksi Saheb became emotional as tears filled his eyes and he choked up. Swamishri consoled him saying,

“Swami is together with us. He remains present in our midst. All of these are embodiments of Swami. Moreover, this place is like Akshardham. Shastriji Maharaj truly loved this place.” With those words, Swamishri led everyone in the chanting of the *dhun*. Then he came to the assembly.

Swamishri’s seat had been arranged in front of the central pillar against which Shastriji Maharaj used to sit in the assembly hall. Everyone was engrossed in Swamishri’s divine form. Choksi Saheb conveyed his heartfelt sentiments.

The next morning, Swamishri woke at 3 a.m. and sat in dhyan for one hour. He went for his bath at 4 a.m. Balmukunddas Swami and Chuni Bhagat were in his service. While he was taking a bath, Swamishri would routinely recall the names of great devotees and liberated souls. In his puja, he would turn the *mala* fifty times. Only after completing *mangala arti* and doing darshan of Shastriji Maharaj’s room, did Swamishri have a little bit of lemonade to break

his fast. After Shangar *arti*, Swamishri sanctified the homes of Dhanjibhai, Vaghjibhai, Hakabhai Khachar, and Mehtaji Naran Gor before going to the Hanumanji Mandir for darshan.

At the Hanumanji Mandir, Kothari Mohan Bhagat welcomed Swamishri to his office with great affection. Alabhai Khachar, the manager Labhshankar, and many villagers had enthusiastically come here for Swamishri's darshan.

Ganod's Darbar Mahobatsinh and Jesingbhai had come from Rajkot with a new car to take Swamishri. Swamishri lovingly fed everyone a feast of *shrikhand* and puri for lunch. Then, he traveled to Gadhada and Gondal.

Swamishri observed the eclipse of Posh *sud* 15 in Gondal, celebrated Vasant Panchami in Atladara, and then arrived in Ahmedabad. Here, Swamishri met Nandaji and traveled to Sokhada and other villages before inaugurating Shantilal Purushottam's shop in Anand. From

there, Swamishri traveled to Anjesar before arriving in Sankarda.

In the evening, Swamishri was preparing to begin his home visits in the village. He was handed a gourd of water to drink before he set out. He looked up and asked, “Have you offered this to God?”

“Yes,” said Vinubhai. Swamishri raised the gourd with his right hand and began to drink the water without letting the gourd touch his lips. Standing up with his head back, his left arm braced against the wall for support, and his legs crossed, this image of Swamishri drinking water was unforgettable.

Vinubhai thought, “Even water should be offered to God before drinking?” He wanted to ask Swamishri this question but hesitated, lest it seem impertinent. Sensing Vinubhai’s confusion, Swamishri omnisciently clarified, “One who is an *atmanivedi* devotee should offer even water to God and remember him before drinking.”

Then recalling Shastriji Maharaj, Swamishri said, “Swami was also very slim, like Nilkanth Varni, due to his austerities. He was extremely radiant. I had done darshan of Shastriji Maharaj’s slender *murti*. Swami was very swift. He could walk 20 miles in a flash. He would fly! No one could keep up with him.”

Purushottambhai said, “The same is true for you, isn’t it!”

Swamishri said, “We are nothing! Shastriji Maharaj was something altogether different. In the entire universe, there was no one like him. He would often catch people in the assembly, saying, ‘Hey, what are you thinking about?’ And invariably, that person’s attention would have been wandering...”

Thus, reminiscing about the past, Swamishri shared the glory of his guru with everyone.

Bhailalbhai of Bhadran, who was known as ‘Member,’ had had a vision in which Shastriji Maharaj had instructed him to organize a

parayan. Thus, Swamishri agreed to organize a *parayan* in Bhadran starting on Fagun *sud* 5.

Then, Swamishri traveled to Bochasan and Dharmaj. Here, Umedbhai, a disciple of Nathjibhai, used to come regularly for Swamishri's darshan and discourses. He had great affection for Swamishri. The civil servant, Indulal Yagnik, had also come here for Swamishri's darshan and blessings.

Fagun *sud* 3, V.S. 2010 was the anniversary of the inauguration of Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir in Ahmedabad. Thus, Swamishri went to the mandir for darshan. After visiting Bhogibhai Choksi's house, Swamishri went with the sadhus and Jayantibhai Kothari to Navinchandra Sheth's bungalow to check on the health of the great devotee Nathjibhai Shukal. Swamishri prayed for Nathjibhai's good health and led everyone in the chanting of the *dhun*. Nathjibhai was very happy at Swamishri's visit. Speaking of the glory of Acharya Viharilalji Maharaj, Gunatitanand Swami, and Bhagatji Maharaj, Nathjibhai said,

“I had come into the contact of Bhagatji Maharaj. He instructed me to spread Satsang amongst the educated class. I still continue to follow that command. Bhagatji Maharaj was fair-complexioned, and one could see the radiance of divine light on his face.”

Then, Ishwarlal Vakil offered Swamishri puja and new *dhotiyas*. Manilal Bhalja and other devotees were also present on this occasion.

The Ahmedabad Diocese’s Acharya Devendraprasadj Maharaj’s son, Yogendraprasadj Maharaj, was gravely ill. When Swamishri learned of this, he expressed a wish to visit him to inquire about his health. To make arrangements for Swamishri’s visit, Jayantibhai Kothari went to Acharya Maharaj’s bungalow in Asarva. At the time, Navinchandra Vadilal Sheth, one of the trustees of the Nar-Narayan mandir, and Bhogilal Trivedi, the first Indian Traffic Superintendent of the Indian Railways, were sitting there. When they learned of Swamishri’s wish, they were very pleased.

Bhogilalbhai began to tell everyone, “I have read and listened to the Swamini Vato many times, but the bliss that I experience when I hear the Swamini Vato from Yogi Bapa’s mouth is unparalleled.”

“What you say is true,” said Acharya Maharaj. “He is such a pure sadhu that there is a oneness in his speech and actions. He has immense affection for me.”

Acharya Maharaj made all the relevant arrangements, and Swamishri soon arrived. Swamishri passed his hands over Yogendraprasadji Maharaj’s ailing body and prayed to Maharaj for his health. Then, Swamishri went to the sitting room, recited some Swamini Vato and immersed everyone in the bliss of Brahman. Swamishri had a devotee offer a donation at the feet of Acharya Maharaj and, after spending about an hour at his home, he returned to the mandir.

Then, Swamishri traveled to Bhadran to begin the *parayan*. Pramukh Swami and Shrijiswarupdas delivered discourses.

Hirabhai, Kashibhai, Dahyabhai, and others had made excellent arrangements for the *parayan*. The devotees of Bhadran were very affectionate, and thus many devotees from far and wide had come to participate in the *parayan*. The *parayan* concluded on Tuesday, 16 March 1954.

Upendrabhai, the son of Kashikaka of Bhadran, had come from Valsad to attend the *parayan*. He worked as a junior assistant in the State Transport Corporation. He was hoping to sit for the Indian Administrative Service exam. He conveyed his wish to Swamishri and requested blessings that he would pass.

Swamishri said, “What would happen if you passed?”

Upendrabhai said, “Bapa, I would be qualified to hold the position of a Collector.”

Swamishri laughed and, granting his blessings, said, “Go, everything will turn out well.”

At the time, Upendrabhai had not accepted *vartman*, and he had no knowledge regarding Satsang. Many years passed, but circumstances prevented him from sitting the Indian Administrative Services exam. When he thought about his situation, he felt that although Swamishri had blessed him, his blessings had not borne fruit.

Then, he was unexpectedly appointed to a senior post within the State Transport Corporation. This appointment was extremely improbable. He went again to take Swamishri's blessings. Soon, several successive promotions made him the Divisional Controller of the State Transport Corporation, which was a post at the same level as Collector.

Vitthalbhai Choksi of Zarola was originally affiliated with the Vartal diocese, but after Swamishri visited his home, he developed an intense affection for him. He would often travel in the villages with Swamishri.

During this period, Vitthalbhai was traveling with Swamishri. In those days, Swamishri

traveled by bullock cart through Badalpur, Ras, Kathana, and the surrounding villages. Swamishri would have Vitthalbhai sit in the bullock cart next to him and affectionately teach him Swamini Vato.

After celebrating the Vasant Panchami festival, Swamishri traveled in the villages for about a month after which he planned to leave on 18 March 1954 for Ahmedabad and then Sarangpur. When Vitthalbhai requested Swamishri to give him leave to return to Zarola, Swamishri asked why he wanted to leave. Vitthalbhai replied, “Bapa, I don’t have any extra clothes.”

Swamishri laughed and said, “Your clothes will come. So, don’t worry, come with us.”

Then Swamishri explained the unparalleled glory of Sarangpur and said, “Have you seen Sarangpur mandir? Shastriji Maharaj used to stay there a lot. He really loved it. It is holy ground sanctified by Shriji Maharaj. The mandir is very large. The gateway to the mandir

is also very large. Only Shastriji Maharaj can build a mandir like that.”

Inspired by Swamishri’s words, Vitthalbhai decided to stay with Swamishri. He sat together with Swamishri on the train to Ahmedabad. Many devotees from Zarola, including Vitthalbhai’s elder brother, had come to Anand station for Swamishri’s darshan. When his elder brother unexpectedly handed Vitthalbhai the clothes he had brought with him from home, Vitthalbhai realized Swamishri’s omniscience.