

Chapter 10

Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji in Awe of Jogi

The groundbreaking ceremony of Akshar Mandir in Gondal took place in the presence of Maharaja Sir Bhagwatsinhji. After the groundbreaking ceremony, Shastriji Maharaj and several sadhus traveled to Ahmedabad via Bochasan. Then, Shastriji Maharaj returned to Bochasan to celebrate the festival of Vasant Panchami.

Meanwhile, as the mandir construction commenced in Gondal, everyone began to serve according to their capacity. Shastriji Maharaj had instructed Yogi Maharaj to remain in Gondal to manage the mandir construction work, which was already progressing at breakneck speed. Yogi Maharaj would periodically go to meet Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji Bapu for mandir-related work.

Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji was a stickler for protocol. He was reluctant to give people an audience, and when, on occasion, he did, he would spend as little time as possible with them. Whenever Yogi Maharaj would visit the royal palace, he would always take prasad for the attendant. Thus, the attendant would be pleased with Yogi Maharaj and quickly deliver the message to the Maharaja that, “Sadhus have come from Akshar Mandir to see you.”

When Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji would summon Yogi Maharaj for the audience, Yogi Maharaj would first offer the Maharaja prasad and a garland sanctified by Ghanshyam Maharaj.

Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji would inquire about Shastriji Maharaj, and Yogi Maharaj would inform him of Shastriji Maharaj’s current location and activities. Then, Yogi Maharaj would say, “The next time Shastriji Maharaj comes to Gondal, I will certainly send you a message.” Finally, Yogi Maharaj would recite five Swamini Vato or sing a kirtan.

During this time, Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji would stare intently at Yogi Maharaj, and his heart would be gladdened to witness Yogi Maharaj's blissful abandon in God.

When Yogi Maharaj would take his leave, Bhagwatsinhji Maharaja would walk with him to the gate and see him off, saying, "Swami, if you need any assistance from us regarding the mandir construction, please don't hesitate to ask."

Maharaja Bhagwatsinhji was a brilliant and shrewd ruler who had immense respect for Yogi Maharaj. He would often tell his ministers, "This sadhu is absolutely pure and unencumbered by desire. He is aloof from this world. His mere presence and darshan fill me with peace. Don't make him wait when he comes here, but bring him directly to me. He casts such a spiritual fragrance around him whenever he comes that my heart feels drawn to follow him wherever he goes."

The sacred site of the Akshar Deri, which was venerated by countless *sadgurus* of Junagadh and beloved of the followers of Gunatit *jnan*, was starting to blossom. The foundations had been dug, and the stonework was ongoing. On the newly purchased farm adjacent to Akshar Deri, two small rooms had been constructed—one to be used for storage and another as a kitchen. Slightly further away, near a large banyan tree, a small room served as a stable for oxen. Whenever Shastriji Maharaj came to Gondal, they would clean up that room to use for his accommodations.

Once, several devotees from Rajkot arrived in Gondal, having heard that Shastriji Maharaj was there. Yogi Maharaj lovingly prepared a meal for everyone. He told his companion *sadhū*, Aksharswarupdas Swami, “Aksharswarup! Many guests have come today, and we need to feed them. The *khichdi* and *rotla* are ready. Now, please prepare some of your amazing *kadhi*!”

Once the meal was ready, Yogi Maharaj served all the devotees with such love and enthusiasm that they felt that the accumulated hunger of infinite births had been satiated!

Observing Yogi Maharaj's natural disposition, Shastriji Maharaj would praise him, saying, "Jogi has boundless love for the devotees!"

This truth was evident to all the devotees whenever they were in Yogi Maharaj's presence.

Yogi Maharaj's innate nature was to serve the devotees constantly. Despite the immense spiritual greatness of his *brahmic* state, Yogi Maharaj believed that to serve the devotees and please them was his devotion to God. In the Shrimad Bhagvat (11.3.29), it is said:

Evam Krushnātmanātheshu manushyeshu
cha sauhrudam,

Paricharyā chobhayatra mahatsu, nrushu
sādhushu.

(One should maintain affection for those for whom Krishna alone is their master and soul and serve both the moving and immovable. Of these, one should especially serve people. Of those people, one should especially serve those who observe dharma. And of these, one should especially serve those who are devotees of God.)