

Chapter 22

Varundev Coming for Darshan

After observing the solar eclipse and Rath Yatra festivals in Gadhada, on Saturday, 3 July 1954 (Ashadh *sud* 3, V.S. 2010), Swamishri arrived in Bhavnagar. Pramukh Swami, Sant Swami, Harmanbhai, and others were accompanying him.

A program of morning and evening discourses as well as home visits occupied Swamishri's days. Every day, the sadhus would go to a different devotee's home for lunch. In the evenings, bhajans, kirtans and spiritual discourses would continue until 11:30 p.m. The devotees here were enraptured by Swamishri. Seeing their devotional sentiments, Swamishri, with his divine, enchanting laugh, wholeheartedly showered everyone with the immortalizing nectar of Brahman through his kirtans and discourses. In the midst of all this,

he would continue to find time to read and respond to the letters he received.

Swamishri's timeless, divine laughter seemed as if it were manifesting the bliss of Akshardham itself. Upon his supremely serene countenance flickered the divine flame of God's liberative grace. He spread a constant avalanche of blessings through his supremely beneficent and joyous claps on the backs of devotees, whom he would invariably remember by name even if he had not seen them for an extended period. As he was the very form of *sat-chit-anand* (divine truth, consciousness, and bliss), in Swamishri's presence, everyone experienced the sublime bliss of Akshardham.

Swamishri stayed in Bhavnagar for eight days. During this time, he established the Bhavnagar Yuvak Mandal. Bhavnagar's mayor, Purushottambhai Vakil, had explained to Swamishri that the water levels in Bortalav Lake, which supplied Bhavnagar's drinking water, were dangerously low and asked

Swamishri to sanctify the lake and give his blessings that it may become full of water.

Thus, Swamishri visited Bortalav Lake one evening and performed the puja and *arti* of the deva of water, Varun deva. When he garlanded Varun deva by casting a flower garland into the lake, a water snake suddenly emerged on the lake's surface, to everyone's astonishment. Everyone wondered if this were not Varundev himself? Swamishri offered his blessings. Soon after this incident, heavy rains upriver caused the water level of Bortalav Lake to rise unexpectedly. Seeing Swamishri's blessings bear fruit, many of the citizens of Bhavnagar developed a profound reverence for Swamishri.

One day, Swamishri, together with the court poet Hardanbhai, went to the bungalow of the former King of Bhavnagar, the Honorable Krishnakumarsinhji. Pramukh Swami, Thakarshibhai, and Daji Bapu were also together with Swamishri. After Swamishri was offered puja and *arti*, several kirtans were sung. Then, the Honorable Maharaja Saheb said, "I

can see within you all the characteristics of the true Sant as described in the kirtan. It is Bhavnagar's great fortune that you have graced us with your presence.”

Swamishri explained the glory of the *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj that had been worshiped by Gunatitanand Swami and had the Honorable Krishnakumarsinhji do darshan.

During Swamishri's stay in Bhavnagar, many distinguished citizens came into Swamishri's contact, experienced his saintliness, and benefited from the presence of his company. They included the retired judge Kalidasbhai Oza, Dr. Nagardas Shastri, the Nagar Sumanbhai Desai, the attorney Rambhai Desai, Judge Dr. Labhshankar Acharya, Mugatbhai Kamdar Mithavala, Bachubhai Lokhandvala, Amrutlal Bhayani, as well as many other businessmen, government officers, and teachers.

On Devshayani Ekadashi (Ashadh *sud* 11, V.S. 2010), Swamishri traveled to Ahmedabad. Here, he gave all the devotees special

observances for Chaturmas and took the afternoon local train via Nadiad to Petlad.

At Petlad Station, the train halted for an hour, and many devotees from the surrounding area came for Swamishri's darshan. Swamishri's compartment became extremely crowded with devotees. Almost the entire train was full of devotees heading to the Guru Punam festival in Bochasan. The crowds of devotees attending the Guru Punam festival in Bochasan kept increasing year by year. During the festival's main assembly, Harmanbhai, Maganbhai, and Manibhai called upon the devotees to contribute to the quick completion of the Gadhada mandir. Everyone pledged to donate according to their capability. Then, for two hours, everyone had the opportunity to offer their guru puja personally to Swamishri.

From here, Swamishri traveled via Ahmedabad to Rajkot. At Viramgam Station, Swamishri spent an hour at Dhirubhai's house, where he had a bath.

From here, he boarded the train to Gondal. At the time, Chuni Bhagat was serving Swamishri as a *parshad*, and Swamishri was accompanied by his companion sadhu. It was 4 p.m., and the train was making its way towards Gondal, passing station after station. While both Chuni Bhagat and the companion sadhu slept, Swamishri got up, woke up Thakorji, and offered him the cool water that he had specially kept with him for Thakorji. Then with great humility, he told Thakorji, “Maharaj! You must be very hot. Here, drink this cool water.”

Then, Swamishri made a fan out of his upper cloth and began to fan Thakorji while saying, “Maharaj, if you have felt any discomfort or were unable to sleep, please forgive me.” With these words, he continued to gaze at Thakorji with unblinking eyes.

Hearing the noise, Chuni Bhagat woke up and was astonished to see this intimate conversation between Swamishri and Shriji Maharaj.

On the evening of Sunday, 18 July 1954, the president of the state of Saurashtra and former King of Bhavnagar Hon. Krishnakumarsinhji, the Chief Minister of Saurashtra U.N. Dhebar, Minister Jadavjibhai, Gondal's Maharaja Vikramsinhji, Prince Shivrajsinhji, Collector Govindsinh Chudasama, and others came for darshan of Swamishri and Akshar Mandir. Swamishri welcomed everyone by garlanding them and applying a *chandlo* to their forehead. He explained the glory of Akshar Deri to everyone and performed five *pradakshinas* with them. Then, Swamishri led everyone to the mandir for darshan. Swamishri explained to everyone the greatness of Shastriji Maharaj's work. After having some light refreshments, the guests came to the assembly. Here, Swamishri recited five Swamini Vato, briefly explained them, blessed everyone, and gave the guests *paans* sanctified by Thakorji. Engrossed in Swamishri's darshan and divine aura, everyone took their leave.