

Chapter 15

Distressed by Alluring Sense Pleasures

After celebrating Janmashtami, Shastriji Maharaj traveled to Mumbai on 19 August 1949 (Shravan *vad* 10, V.S. 2005) with Yogi Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, Aksharpriyadas Swami, Premvatidas Swami, and others. They made their accommodations in Suryanarayan Vadi and held regular assemblies whereby the devotees enjoyed his spiritual discourses and kirtans.

Bhagwandas Sheth of Mumbai had a long-standing, deep affection for Yogi Maharaj. One day, he told Yogi Maharaj, “I want to offer you a beautiful, finely woven *dhotiyu*.”

Just hearing this, Yogi Maharaj began to feel distressed. Knowing how affectionate the Sheth was, Yogi Maharaj was afraid that if the Sheth brought the finely woven *dhotiyu*, he would be compelled to wear it. He would not be able to

refuse. This distress caused Yogi Maharaj to lose his appetite and experience a feeling of continual uneasiness.

Trying to find a way out of the situation, Yogi Maharaj shared his distress with Nirgundas Swami.

Nirgundas Swami was well aware of Yogi Maharaj's inclination for austerities, renunciation, and nonattachment to sense pleasures. He also knew that Yogi Maharaj was extremely conscientious in following even the s m a l l e s t c o m m a n d s o f B h a g w a n Swaminarayan.

So, when Bhagwandas Sheth came for darshan, Nirgundas Swami told him, “From the second that you told Yogi Maharaj you wanted to offer him a finely woven *dhotiyu*, he has been experiencing great inner distress. If you truly want to please him, then offer him a coarse *dhotiyu*. This will make him happy.”

Then, when Bhagwandas Sheth offered him a coarse *dhotiyu*, Yogi Maharaj experienced relief.

Yogi Maharaj was focused on following Bhagwan Swaminarayan's command:

Prabhuni āgnā tap, jāp, teha, Prabhuni agna vrat sarva eha!

Āgnāthi sau sādhan siddhi thāy, sarve padō hastipade samay.

(Following God's commands encompasses austerities, chanting the mantra, practicing observances, and all that!)

By following his commands, all spiritual efforts find fulfillment, just as all footprints are encompassed by the elephant's footprint.)

In Mumbai, Yogi Maharaj would gather young children, including Kishorebhai, Niranjanbhai, Mahendrabhai, me, and others, and teach them to memorize Swamini Vato, kirtans, and small Vachanamruts. He would also test us on what we had memorized. In those days, Yogi Maharaj would wake up in the

early hours before sunrise, and after having his bath, sit in the far corner of the *vadi* to do his puja, so that he would not disturb Shastriji Maharaj's sleep. Before his puja, he would softly sing in his baritone voice the 'salokas' of Raghavdas:

“Shri Sahajānand Mahārāj Hari, jāsho mā pal ek visari... gām Gadhadu... Hare...”

(Shri Sahajanand Maharaj Hari, let me not forget you for even a second... In the village of Gadhada....)

Yogi Maharaj would sing of the divine exploits of Bhagwan Swaminarayan in such a sweet, rhythmic, and baritone voice that even as ten to twelve-year-old children, we wanted to just keep listening. As children, we didn't fully understand the meaning of all the words. Still, Yogi Maharaj's habit of giving emphasis to certain words and phrases and his sweet singing made us feel like this was a divine inner voice capable of mesmerizing everyone's minds. A Kapadiya devotee named Premjibhai used to complement Yogi Maharaj's singing by belting

out, “Hare....!” at the end of each verse. The atmosphere felt suffused with divinity, and everyone experienced a lasting inner peace.

Listening to Yogi Maharaj’s devotional kirtans, whose sole purpose was to please manifest God, was infinitely more captivating than the singing of *dev-gandharvas*. So, all of us children would spend the night at Suryanarayan Vadi, wake up and get ready very early in the morning so that we could sit in Yogi Maharaj’s puja to listen to him. The joy and enchantment of those divine moments was indescribable and unforgettable.

*

Meanwhile, in Gondal, Bhaktipriya Swami fell ill. He was between seventy-five and eighty years old. At the time, Hakabapu’s nephew, Bhupatbhai Jivabhai Dhadhal, was studying at a high school in Gondal. Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj had instructed him to serve Bhaktipriya Swami. Although his illness wasn’t severe, he had a strong desire to go to Akshardham. Whenever Shastriji Maharaj

visited Gondal, he would pray for the same. Moreover, he also had an intense love for Yogi Maharaj.

One night, Bhupatbhai had a dream in which Yogi Maharaj entered Akshar Mandir's gate sitting atop a beautifully decorated elephant. Another elephant walked behind him with an empty howdah atop it. Yogi Maharaj had the elephants stop next to the Akshar Mandir steps and called Bhupatbhai. Yogi Maharaj dismounted from the elephant, held Bhupatbhai's hand, and went up the Akshar Mandir steps for darshan. Then he went to Akshar Deri for darshan. Finally, he asked Bhupatbhai, "That elderly sadhu who is ill—where is he sleeping?"

Bhupatbhai replied, "Swami, his bed is in your room."

"We have come to take him, so let's go there." Yogi Maharaj went with Bhupatbhai to the room where he usually slept.

As soon as he saw Yogi Maharaj, Bhaktipriya Swami instantly got up. Yogi Maharaj held his head and said, “I have come to fetch you.” Bhaktipriya Swami was extremely happy, and a large smile spread across his face. He moved with such energy as if there was not an iota of illness in his entire body. Yogi Maharaj then sat on one of the elephants, and Bhaktipriya Swami sat on the other. A divine light radiated everywhere. Yogi Maharaj flashed Bhupatbhai a divine smile, and in an instant, both elephants crossed over the gate of Akshar Mandir and vanished into thin air!

Early the next morning, Bhupatbhai shared his extraordinary dream with the sadhus, Daji Bapu, Kothari Chhaganbhai, Ray Saheb, and others in the mandir. Everyone was surprised because Bhaktipriya Swami’s illness was not serious.

Having had this divine vision in his dream, Bhupatbhai fervently told everyone, “Swami will be going to Akshardham today; otherwise, why would I have had such a dream?”

And just like that, at 9 a.m. that morning, Bhaktipriya Swami happily left his body. Everyone realized the meaning of the dream and praised Bhaktipriya Swami for his sincere service and great fortune for such an auspicious death.

*

In Mumbai, Yogi Maharaj did an extraordinary *parayan* on the third chapter of the Swamini Vato. After its conclusion, all the sadhus went to Surat and Ahmedabad before reaching Sarangpur in time for the Jal-Jhilani festival.

According to his custom, Yogi Maharaj celebrated Sharad Punam in Gondal. Shastriji Maharaj stayed in Gondal for one day, during which he visited the Vartal diocese's mandir, Kailas Baug, and other sanctified spots for darshan. Chandubhai Vidyadhikari came for darshan and informed Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj about the great work that had begun on the *Bhagwatgomandal*, a comprehensive Gujarati encyclopedic

dictionary. Then he requested Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj to sanctify the office where the work was being done. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, and other sadhus visited the office and sanctified it.