

Chapter 19

Blessings to Lalji Maharaj upon His Yagnopavit Ceremony

Swamishri celebrated the Swaminarayan Jayanti festival with great enthusiasm in Ahmedabad. A large portion of the Satsang community has arrived in Ahmedabad for the *yagnopavit* ceremony of both sons (Lalji Maharajs) of Acharya Devendraprasadji Maharaj. Many of these *satsangis* also enthusiastically came for Swamishri's darshan in Shahibaug mandir.

On the evening of 25 March 1953 (Charitra sud 10, V.S. 2009), Swamishri visited the homes of Vallabhdas and Someshwardas Pithwa in Maninagar. Then, he visited the mandir of Muktajeevandas, where they offered Swamishri a warm welcome.

Then Swamishri visited Baldevdas Sheth and blessed him before returning to the mandir. At 8:30 p.m., Swamishri went to

Acharya Maharaj's bungalow. Pramukh Swami, Mota Swami, Champakbhai Sheth, Vinubhai, Khengarjibhai, Hakabhai, Major Bhagwatsinhji, and others accompanied Swamishri. Swamishri garlanded Devendraprasadji Maharaj, and on the auspicious occasion of the Lalji Maharajs' *yagnopavit* ceremony Swamishri offered a large donation on behalf of the Akshar Purushottam Satsang Mandal. Shastri Gopalcharandas, Mota Swami, and Swamishri each spoke briefly. Devendraprasadji Maharaj expressed his best wishes and requested Yogiji Maharaj to bless both his sons. Keshavlal Karbhari had made all the necessary arrangements.

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On 30 March 1953, Swamishri celebrated the Chaitra Punam festival in Bochasan before visiting the mandir in Anand's Nana Adadh neighborhood.

As Swamishri walked to devotees' homes in the town, he held onto the hands of Vinubhai

and another youth for support. The youth told Swamishri, “Bapa, I am staying apart.”

“From women?” asked Swamishri immediately.

“No, Bapa! From my parents!”

“What of that? Everyone stays apart from them eventually! You should stay apart from women!” Swamishri expressed his natural wish. Swamishri believed that even householders should practice restraint regarding the opposite gender. Swamishri was explaining that everyone should stay vigilant about this matter.

A little further up the road, there was a dog seated in the middle of their path. Vinubhai thought, “I will nudge the dog aside with my foot.” But as he got close to the dog, Swamishri pulled Vinubhai’s hand and went around the dog, saying, “You can’t do that. It was meditating!” Then Swamishri said, “Well, our gaze has fallen on it.”

Vinubhai asked, “What will happen to it now?”

“It will go to Badrikashram to perform austerities...”

This raised some questions in Vinubhai's mind, but he didn't ask. But, as if Swamishri were giving an answer to all his questions, Swamishri suddenly said, “We should worship God!”