

Chapter 24

Nirgun Bliss in the Pilgrimage Place of Torda

On Tuesday, 8 February 1955, Swamishri boarded the morning train with Nanda Saheb and traveled to Himmatnagar, delivering discourses along the way. During his talks, Swamishri asked, “What is *nirgun* bliss?” When no one could answer the question, the devotees looked to Swamishri expectantly. Meanwhile, Nandaji asked another question, to which Swamishri replied with a question of his own, “Which is greater—the state of *jnan* (spiritual knowledge) or *sakshatkar* (spiritual experience)?” Swamishri answered his own question, explaining, “Bhagatji Maharaj and Shastriji Maharaj used to grant people the *sakshatkar* state (of spiritual experience). That is a different path. It is still possible even today, but we should attain the state of *jnan* (spiritual

knowledge). Through that state, the *jiva* is sustained and attains the ultimate goal.”

Swamishri then asked, “It is said that we perceive God through the state of *nirvikalp nishchay*. What does that mean?” Swamishri answered his own question, saying, “Unflinching faith in the form of God present before our eyes is itself the attainment of the *nirvikalp* state, spiritual communion, and samadhi. That itself is the state of *jnan*.”

Swamishri continued such spiritual discussions until they reached Himmatnagar. The local devotees led Swamishri in a festive procession to the mandir. At 4 p.m., Nandaji brought some local officials, Congress Party workers, lawyers, and other local dignitaries for Swamishri’s darshan. On that occasion, Swamishri spoke extensively on faith in God and an understanding of his glory. Additionally, he recited the Swamini Vato and explained, “It is Swami’s principle that listening to these talks allows one to see Akshardham in human form!”

At 6 p.m., Swamishri was sitting with several affectionate devotees, whom he told, “Never speak or write words that degrade others. As it is, Maharaj understands Swami’s glory, and Swami understands Maharaj’s glory. Who else can fathom their fathomless glory? Maharaj and Swami are present before our eyes, but one has to know how to enjoy their bliss. For this, one must constantly remain in the company of the spiritually great. One never knows when the speech that removes our deficiencies may be spoken. Those deficiencies are of our understanding. Maharaj can instantly shower his grace upon us and eradicate our base natures. However, our defects cannot be overcome as long we harbor any deficiency in understanding God’s true nature.”

From Himmatnagar, Swamishri reached Chunilalbai’s house in Vadali at night. Swamishri visited many devotees’ homes in the village by torchlight and candlelight. Early in the morning, Swamishri boarded the 4 a.m. train to Idar. Then, Swamishri went to the Idar

mandir, where he had a bath and completed puja. Then he delivered discourses on Vachanamrut Gadhada III 38, explaining, “This Vachanamrut contains Maharaj’s final advice. Before returning to his abode, Shriji Maharaj clarified this important point about the *upasana* of supreme God. Thus, one should attain this *upasana*—this unflinching faith in Shriji Maharaj’s divine form.”

After this small assembly in the mandir, Swamishri sat warming himself next to a brazier in the loft. After a while, Swamishri recited the final sermon of the first chapter of the Swamini Vato that begins, “An aspirant engages in discourses, sings bhajans...” Then, Swamishri said, “The point of this sermon is that one cannot uphold God as long as one harbors body-consciousness. God’s unbroken presence means his constant presence—not that he comes and goes for an hour at a time. The form of one who constantly upholds God is God’s manifest form. Thus, one who delivers

and listens to discourses in a *nirgun* state experiences spiritual progress...”

Swamishri asked a sadhu, “What is body-consciousness?”

The sadhu replied, “When I am behaving as the body, how can I speak about removing the consciousness of that body?”

Swamishri replied, “When one behaves according to God’s commands and talks on the subject, that act constitutes a reduction of body-consciousness. So, if one is commanded to deliver discourses, one should declare, ‘Swami is great, Maharaj is supreme,’ and thus speak the best one knows how. By doing so, the great are pleased.”

Thereafter, Swamishri traveled by car to Shamalaji. Here, Swamishri had lunch and then traveled in Nandaji’s car to Torda.

Nandaji had specially organized this program to benefit from Swamishri’s company. In Torda, Swamishri went to each sanctified spot for darshan while holding Nandaji’s hand.

Although Swamishri could see everything like a drop of water in his hand, he showed such wonder and curiosity as if he did not know anything. Learning about the sanctified spots of Gopalanand Swami, Swamishri would do their darshan and urge everyone to do their darshan with an understanding of the glory of those sacred places.

At night, Swamishri sang the *arti*, *dhun*, and kirtans at the mandir. After dinner, Swamishri sat in a spiritual assembly, while being warmed by a brazier. Nanda Saheb, Khengarjibhai, Champakbhai Sheth, Harshadbhai, and other devotees were eager to hear Swamishri's talks. Swamishri discoursed on the Swamini Vato, saying:

“Due to the body and its circumstances, the *jiva* becomes depressed. If the body suffers from poor health, the *jiva* becomes depressed. But one should not become depressed. Whatever happens is solely due to God's will. So although one may suffer miseries of the gross body, miseries of the subtle body (mind),

or miseries of the causal body, one should not consider those to be miseries.”

Champakbhai Sheth asked, “Bapa! I can understand what you mean by miseries of the gross body and miseries of the subtle body, but I don’t understand what is meant by miseries of the causal body. So please grace us with an explanation.”

Swamishri had instant answers, devoid of excessive commentary, explanation, and length. Swamishri responded, “The kindling of dormant desires should be known as the miseries of the causal body.”

As the night went on, Swamishri’s talks became more intensely penetrating. Soon, everyone was drawn into the rush of the divine bliss of Brahman. The devotees experienced the joy of Akshardham. Everyone gazed singularly at Swamishri’s divine form. Nandaji was seated completely still and singularly focused, faithfully and joyfully drinking in Swamishri’s every word. Swamishri had drawn everyone into his own divine form and stilled their

minds. Swamishri then said, “Attach yourself to God or attach yourself to the Sadhu. The extent the *jiva* is bound to the Sadhu is the extent of its satsang. This is because the Sadhu strengthens one’s dharma, *jnan*, *vairagya*, and bhakti; he grants one the elevated state of *ekantik dharma*; he connects one to God’s divine form. And that is exactly what is worth doing. God is blissful in his own spiritual bliss, but the realization of that divinity can come only through the company of the Satpurush. Thus, the company of the Satpurush is more important because his talks possess the momentum of time. They cannot be seen, but they eradicate one’s spiritual ignorance. Just as a boy becomes a youth, the growth occurs, but it cannot be seen as it is happening. The progress made elsewhere in one *kalpa* (4.32 billion years), is made here in one day.

“Once, Swami asked Mava Bhagat, ‘Mava Bhagat! What is this world doing?’ Mava Bhagat replied, ‘It transforms soil to sustenance and sustenance to soil.’ If one can realize that,

one would not perceive value in any worldly object. Only through the *samagam* of the Satpurush is the *jiva* spiritually transformed.”

Swamishri delivered these divine discourses until 11 p.m. Throughout his talks, everyone remained oblivious to place, time, and even their own body.

On Thursday morning, 10 February 1955, everyone woke to frigid temperatures. Swamishri did darshan in the mandir and went with Nandaji for darshan at all of Gopalanand Swami’s sanctified spots. One of the descendants of Gopalanand Swami’s family, Ravishankarbhai, was also with Swamishri. After traveling through the entire village, Swamishri held Harshadbhai’s hand and walked to a sanctified Mahudo tree on the river’s opposite bank.

On the train from Ahmedabad to Himmatnagar, Swamishri had asked Nanda Saheb and the other devotees: “What is *nirgun* bliss?” At the time, the question had remained unanswered. So, Harshadbhai asked Swamishri

that question while they were walking. Swamishri laughed and told him, “Experiencing the constant bliss of God’s *murti* is *nirgun* bliss.”

During puja that morning, Swamishri had a brazier placed next to Harikrishna Maharaj due to the extreme cold. Thus, a devotee had remarked, “Bapa, you’re taking great care of Harikrishna Maharaj.”

Swamishri had immediately replied, “You shouldn’t say that. Harikrishna Maharaj is taking care of us. What care are we able to take of him?”

Hearing these heartfelt utterances of Swamishri’s servanthood towards God, everyone had stared at his divine *murti* with wonder!

At exactly 9:45 a.m., everyone reached the Mahudo tree. The Mahudo tree was surrounded by a raised platform. Everyone performed *pradakshinas* of the tree, and at Swamishri’s command, did five *dandvats* each. Then, a

shawl was spread on the field, and Swamishri sat on it facing east. The sadhus and devotees sat around him. The local devotees brought roasted grams and green wheat kernels. Swamishri offered it to Thakorji and ate a little before distributing it by the handful to the devotees. Then Swamishri said, “We should discern what Maharaj’s wish is at present and, behaving accordingly, attain spiritual victory, make this our final birth, receive his blessings, and go to Akshardham. Whoever gains the favor of the great Sadhu, his *jiva* attains great bliss. How can one know that the *jiva* has attained great bliss? When the *jiva* becomes desireless, it should be known to have attained great bliss. Only then can it enjoy the bliss of God’s *murti*.

“We should all make a determined prayer that the entire Satsang community may become blissful, remain engrossed in the bhajan of Maharaj and Swami, and that *maya* may be quelled.”

One devotee asked, “How can one quell the intense waves of *rajas* and *tamas*?”

“When one achieves unbroken bhajan and remembrance of God, such waves would be quelled,” said Swamishri.

Another devotee asked, “When one perceives the influx of such intense waves of *maya*, but simultaneously remains unbothered by them internally, what should one understand by that?”

Swamishri replied, “It is the way of the body that such waves of *maya* come and go.”

In this way, in the mandir, in the fields, on the farm, at the well, or wherever he went, on every occasion, at all times, Swamishri generated that divine bliss of Brahman, those divine spiritual discourses, and that unbroken joy of Akshardham.

From Torda, Swamishri traveled to Idar, where he spent the night. The paternal uncle of Himmatnagar’s erstwhile princely ruler, Madansinhji, was a *satsangi*. Upon learning

that Nanda Saheb's guru, Swamishri, was traveling in Sabarkatha, he expressed a wish to have Swamishri sanctify his palace. Thus, he summoned Gunvantbhai Soni and sent him with his personal secretary to Swamishri with an invitation. Swamishri told them, "We are on our way to Prantij since there is a program organized there and the devotees are waiting for us. However, if Bapu sends his car to Prantij in the afternoon, then we will come to Himmatnagar."