

Chapter 11

An Uphill Battle

One of Gondal's leading businessmen, Noormohamedbhai, had acquired royal licenses that gave him monopolies on various industries throughout the state of Gondal. He controlled all the stone quarries throughout the state. Once, he sent very low-grade stone from his quarries to be used in the construction of Akshar Mandir. Thus, Gopinath Swami went to meet Noormohamedbhai in his office. After quarreling with Noormohamedbhai's son, Gopinath Swami returned the low-quality stones. Noormohamedbhai needed to refund the mandir `800, but although he kept promising to send the funds, he continued to delay the refund. Yogi Maharaj was unhappy with his behavior. He had such a sense of stewardship, that he could not bear any amount of monetary loss to the mandir. So, he told Hakabhai, "Please go and convince the Sheth to

refund our money immediately so that it can be put to use in the ongoing construction. If you make an effort, by Swami's grace, we will surely secure our refund."

Noormohamedbhai Sheth was respected throughout the state. Thus, no one was able to tell him anything. Hakabhai met him and said, "Just as the work done for your mosque is a religious obligation; similarly, you should consider the work done for this mandir a religious obligation. You must help us with this. The mandir is currently suffering from a severe shortage of funds. So, it would be good if you give us the amount that you owe."

The Sheth replied, "Your sadhu came here and spoke quite disrespectfully. We have been insulted. And yet, when the time comes, we will return your funds. Right now, I don't have that amount on hand." In this way, he sent Hakabhai away with another empty promise.

At the time, Joshi Saheb was the Diwan of Gondal. He had studied with Mahatma Gandhi, and he was a shrewd politician. He had a deep

love for Yogi Maharaj, and he was always willing to help the mandir. So, Hakabhai informed him of the situation with Noormohamedbhai. Joshi Saheb said, “You should continue bringing this matter to my attention. When the time is right, we will get your funds back for you.”

When Hakabhai informed Yogi Maharaj of this conversation, he said, “Let us take a vow in Akshar Deri that if we get the refund quickly, we will prepare some delicacies and offer them in Thakorji’s *thal*.”

Hakabhai was surprised to see the extent of Yogi Maharaj’s faith in Akshar Deri, and he thought to himself, “This *bawaji* will take a vow and do *dhun*, but no way is he going to stop until he has recouped Akshar Deri’s money from the Sheth.”

Just then, a message came from the diwan, “Hakabhai should immediately come to meet me.”

Yogi Maharaj said, “See, Maharaj has accepted our request. We will get our refund.”

Yogi Maharaj sent Hakabhai with some *magaj* laddus as prasad for the Diwan Saheb. Hakabhai met the Diwan Saheb with anticipation and gave him the prasad along with a message of Yogi Maharaj’s blessings. The Diwan Saheb was very happy and said, “I also want to have darshan of Yogi Maharaj. I am currently the acting-Treasurer in place of Durlabhjibhai, and an invoice has come from Noormohamedbhai that I need to approve. So, tomorrow come with Yogi Maharaj to my bungalow. This way, I will get Yogi Maharaj’s darshan, and I can directly give Yogi Maharaj the pending refund out of the amount that Noormohamedbhai will be receiving.”

The next day, Yogi Maharaj visited the Diwan Saheb at his bungalow and blessed him for completing this work for the mandir.

Yogi Maharaj prepared a special meal, offered it to Thakorji, and then fed all the sadhus, devotees, stonemasons, and laborers

who were again engaged in the mandir construction. He also specially fed Hakabhai until he could eat no more.

As word spread that Akshar Mandir had recovered its funds from Noormohamedbhai, all the government officials and townspeople began discussing how the impossible had become possible. This is because no one was generally able to recover their funds from Noormohamedbhai. It was an uphill battle.

Everyone felt that except for a spiritual giant like Yogi Maharaj, no one else would have been able to make this happen.

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In 1938 (V.S. 1995), Yogi Maharaj went to the Jetpur mandir for darshan. Mohanbhai Mistry of Jamnagar was cladding the mandir's central shrine with marble. Yogi Maharaj was an expert in discerning art and artisanal skill. So, when he saw the marble work as he was doing *pradakshina*, he was very pleased and

said, “Oho, ho! This is excellent work. Mistry, where are you from?”

Mohanbhai folded his hands and said, “Swami, I am from Jamnagar.”

Yogi Maharaj said, “We want to do some marble work in Akshar Mandir. Will you come for that?”

“Yes, Swami! I will definitely come whenever you call me.” Mohanbhai bowed low to Yogi Maharaj, who then took his leave.

Years later, when Mohanbhai Mistry began to do the marble work for Akshar Mandir, Yogi Maharaj reminded him, “Mohanbhai, do you remember when we had told you in Jetpur to come to Gondal for the mandir’s marble work?”

Mohanbhai remembered he had met a sadhu who had come for darshan when he was doing the marble work in the Jetpur mandir. When he realized that it was Yogi Maharaj himself, he again recalled the sweetness of his speech and felt a profound reverence for Yogi Maharaj’s memory. He performed *dandvats* at Yogi

Maharaj's feet. Yogi Maharaj blessed him and said, "Even great avatars do not get the opportunity to serve Akshar Deri. You have received this opportunity, so offer your service, understanding it to be your great fortune."