

Chapter 15

Appointment of Shastri Narayanswarupdas as President

Having reached the pinnacle of spirituality where even his enemies praised him, propagating the principle of becoming Aksharup and worshiping Purushottam, constructing mandirs that spread the glory of Akshar Purushottam, and laying the foundations of pure *upasana* down to the bedrock, Shastriji Maharaj had waived the flag of victory of Gunatit *jnan*. Now, in his old age, he showered his grace on a brilliant, virtuous young sadhu born to be a dynamic leader who could guide the Sanstha into the future. So, on the auspicious day of 21 May 1950 (Jeth sud 4, V.S. 2006), in the sanctified mandir in Ambli Vali Pol in Ahmedabad, a general meeting of the management committee of the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha was held under the

guidance of Shastriji Maharaj as President. Present in the meeting were Yogi Maharaj, Aksharpurushottamdas Swami, Shastri Narayanswarupdas Swami, Harijivandas Swami, Aksharswarupdas Swami, Bhaktivallabhdas Swami, Dharmavallabhdas Swami, Shastri Purushottamcharandas Swami, Soma Bhagat, and other sadhus and *parshads* as well as Sheth Champaklal Banker, Ashabhai, Vinayakrav Saheb, Hirabhai Chaturbhai, Mathurbhai Patel, Ramchandra Thakar, Chhaganbhai Naranbhai, Bhaichandbhai, Motibhai Patel, Ramjibhai Khatri, Sidibhai Saheb, Girdharbhai Patel, and other devotees. Rasikbhai Secretary read aloud the minutes of the previous meeting as well as announcements.

Shastriji Maharaj had the young, dynamic sadhu, Shastri Narayanswarupdasji, sit between himself and Yogi Maharaj. Then, Shastriji Maharaj addressed the assembly: “Just as Sadguru Ramanand Swami had entrusted the seat of leadership to Shriji

Maharaj at a young age, similarly from today I am appointing as President in my stead Sadguru Shastri Narayanswarupdas. Although he is young in age, he is abounding in virtue. So, all of you sadhus and devotees shall support him in the fulfillment of this great responsibility. Moreover, just as until now you have been following my commands, moving forward, you should follow the commands of Sadguru Shastri Narayanswarupdasji.”

Then, Shastriji Maharaj took his upper cloth and draped it around Narayanswarupdas Swami’s shoulders.

Shastriji Maharaj told him, “This Yogi Maharaj is a very powerful Sant whose every word becomes a reality. Staying in his refuge, you must bring glory to the Satsang fellowship.”

Then, Shastriji Maharaj told Yogi Maharaj, “Yogi Maharaj! Nurture this Narayan Swami. Bless him today that he attain virtues like yours.”

Yogi Maharaj blessed Narayanswarupdas Swami. Then, after the devotees offered him puja, Narayanswarupdas Swami performed *dandvats* to Shastriji Maharaj and Yogi Maharaj and addressed the assembly in an emotion-filled voice: “On this auspicious day, I pray with all my heart to Guru Hari that whatever aptitude and knowledge I may have has been given by you. My life as a sadhu until now has been spent in your service. Now, please grant me the necessary ability and strength to fulfill this colossal service to which you have commanded me.”

This melody of humility reverberated in everyone’s hearts. All the sadhus and devotees celebrated this occasion with great joy. Shastriji Maharaj was very pleased and said, “Today, I am at peace because all of you will grow this Satsang with unity and oneness.”

For the previous four days, Shastriji Maharaj had not eaten a single thing, but he accepted a small amount of mango pulp in the joy of today’s event.

After this event, Yogi Maharaj continued his travels until he reached Gondal.

The following day he received the tragic news that Nirgundas Swami had left his body for Akshardham. Yogi Maharaj was devastated. He began chanting the Swaminarayan *dhun*. As his guru-brother, beloved by thousands due to his intense loyalty and fidelity for Satsang, and constant inspirer of the Satsang fellowship in Africa, there was no way to fill the void left by this great sadhu. Yogi Maharaj organized a *parayan* in Gondal in Nirgundas Swami's memory. Moreover, he expressed his sentiments in a memorial article in the Swaminarayan Prakash, in which he addressed Nirgundas Swami: "I can never forget the immeasurable affection you have showered upon me your entire life. In countless incidents, I experienced your courage, humility, and unparalleled zeal to grow Satsang. I constantly remember these and your countless other holy virtues."