

Chapter 21

Swamishri Honored Everywhere Following the Successful Pilgrimage

In those days, in the absence of proper research, everyone had thought that Yogiji Maharaj's birthday was on Magshar *sud* 10, and so they used to celebrate his birthday on this day. Swamishri had never corrected this misunderstanding, choosing to remain silent on this point. What did he care about the celebration of his birthday? He often said, "I dislike my birthday being celebrated. But I would give my all to celebrate Shastriji Maharaj's birthday."

Later, it was discovered from Swamishri's relatives that this was not his actual birthday. His actual birthday was on Vaishakh *vad* 12, V.S. 1948. Swamishri's birthplace of Dhari had been under the control of the Gaekwad Kingdom of Vadodara at the time of

Swamishri's birth. Thus, this date was confirmed after a thorough search of the school records of the Vadodara state.

However, today was 15 December 1953, Magshar sud 10. So, according to the understanding at the time, it was Swamishri's 59th birthday. The Mumbai Satsang Mandal had made grand preparations for this celebration. Moreover, it just so happened that the special train had reached Mumbai on this festive day. Thus, everyone enjoyed the benefit of Yogiji Maharaj's divine company. A special birthday celebration assembly was held at 6 p.m. in Sundarabai Hall. Government lawyer and senior devotee Hariprasad Choksi was the chief guest in the assembly. So, he, together with the senior devotees Govindji Sheth, Manekchand Gandhi, and others, offered flower garlands to Swamishri. After a group prayer by the *yuvak mandal*, many youths recited Swamini Vatos from memory. Then Swamishri inaugurated the first volume of the handwritten magazine, *Gnanyagna*. Swamishri

began to flip through this new volume during the assembly. For a long time, he had expressed his wish that the youths should engage in some new activities. Seeing the satsang-related articles, essays, stories, and poems written and beautifully decorated by the youth in this volume, Swamishri was extremely pleased. This was because the youths were his heart, and this was their first effort at something like this. The senior devotees were also pleased with this effort by the youngsters.

Harmanbhai, Khengarjibhai, Harshadbhai, Choksi Saheb, and others spoke glowingly of Swamishri's glory and the recently completed pilgrimage. Choksi Saheb and all the invited guests performed the *arti* with fifty-nine wicks. At the time, Choksi Saheb was so overcome by Swamishri's darshan and spiritual greatness that he performed *sashtang dandvat pranam* to Swamishri right on the stage. The entire assembly was stunned by this sight. Everyone was touched by how this senior devotee of the Vartal diocese had cast aside his ego and

publicly prostrated himself on stage before Swamishri.

Swamishri recited some Swamini Vato and blessed the assembly saying, “One devotee lapsed in his religious vows. It was the Jeth sud Ekadashi festival in Junagadh. He confessed before Swami right in the assembly. So, Swami prescribed some atonement. The Satpurush burns the five great sins of those who confess their mistakes in the public assembly. It is very difficult to confess one’s mistakes in public.

“This Satsang is *brahmarup* and *Mahavishnurup*. Thus, according to Vachanamrut Loya 18 and Gadhada II 63, one should not perceive any human flaws within it. The *jiva* harbors the delusion that only if I perceive human flaws will I be happy. The village of Chhapaiya is extremely miraculous. It is worthy of worship by infinite liberated souls, avatars, and Pradhan Purushes.”

Following his blessings, there was such a mad scramble of devotees attempting to offer Swamishri flower garlands that an

announcement had to be made on stage that Swamishri would accept everyone's puja the following day at the Central Railway Station. Thus, everyone was instructed to bring their garlands there. Yet, the line of people who insisted on offering their puja right then was so long that it was 9 o'clock before the assembly concluded.

The following day was Ekadashi. Everyone had the opportunity to offer Swamishri their puja. From morning until night, there was such enthusiasm amongst Mumbai's devotees to have Swamishri's darshan, listen to his discourses and talks, offer him puja, perform his service, and get his blessings that the jostling crowds of devotees at Central Station, in the city, at Sundarbai Hall, and at Mahalaxmi Station imbued so much enthusiasm in the atmosphere that it seemed like the character of the city of Mumbai had temporarily changed from infatuating to liberating.

Swamishri was leaving for Mumbai that night. An hour before his departure, an assembly was held, and spiritual discourses were delivered. Even then, there was a heavy rush of devotees attempting to offer Swamishri their flower garlands and puja. Before Swamishri departed, saffron-infused milk and *penda* were given to all the devotees. Each of the devotees on the pilgrimage was offered a box of *halwa* from the devotees of Mumbai.

At 9 p.m., the train left from Mumbai and headed to Surat.