

Chapter 17

A Confluence of Love, Devotion, and Hardship

From here, Swamishri took the night train to Antoli. About 100 sadhus and devotees were accompanying him. Swamishri and the sadhus were taken on decorated wagons and bullock carts from the station to the village. The procession followed a path lit by kerosene lamps and regaled with celebratory gunfire. The senior devotee Jethabhai had the support of the entire village. Thus, even in the middle of the night, the entire village was in a state of ecstasy. Everyone had eyes only for Swamishri. Everyone craned their necks to see Swamishri in the flickering light of the kerosene lamps, seated with downcast eyes in a bullock cart. The flower garlands that had been offered to Swamishri were in a large pile next to him. The procession periodically paused as Swamishri stepped off the bullock cart to sanctify the

homes of Mangalbai, Bhailalbai, Mohanbai, Gamelbai, Nagjibhai, and other devotees.

In the nearby Dev River, Swamishri bathed together with the sadhus and devotees. Then, Swamishri held an assembly. He pleased Jethabhai by granting him all the spiritual merit of the event. Swamishri recited some Swamini Vato and delivered spiritual messages with humor, as was his style. According to the occasion, Swamishri could talk about weighty topics and administer bitter medicine with directives and injunctions; whereas, in light moments, he could serve his spiritual messages with humor, delighting the devotees. Thus, all his talks were memorable, filling everyone's heart with joy!

Then, Swamishri sanctified Jethabhai's well. After *arti*, he held an assembly underneath a mango tree.

From here, Swamishri stopped in Karari to sanctify devotees' homes. Then he went to Bhayapura, where he sanctified the homes of

Somabhai, Vitthalbhai, Dahyabhai, Shivabhai, and other devotees.

Although today was Ekadashi, Swamishri's constant home visits and spiritual discourses continued unbroken. During his discourses, if someone mentioned, "You didn't visit my home," Swamishri would immediately go. Moreover, when he returned to his accommodations, he would deliver discourses there as well. This was his life. He was determined to spread Maharaj's message to every home. Thus, he continued to visit countless homes without regard for hunger, thirst, sleep, or timing. He wanted Maharaj's message to reach every ear. Thus, he continued to speak about Maharaj's greatness day and night. Sometimes he would speak on the Swamini Vato, and other times he would sing kirtans. Sometimes, he would have others deliver discourses and sing kirtans. In this way, satsang continued incessantly around Swamishri. The reek and talk of the world fled far away from Swamishri. Teasing and trifles

meant to pass the time found no harbor with Swamishri because peals of the joy of Brahman rang out constantly in his presence! Wherever Swamishri was, time seemed to stand still.

Ambalal Ishwarbhai had invited Swamishri to Bhayapura. Swamishri sanctified many of the village's homes while a group singing bhajans accompanied him. Then, Swamishri sanctified Ambalalbhai Mathurbhai's well. The life of a farmer was his farm, and the life of a farm was the well. Irrigation canals, bore wells, and tube wells were nonexistent in those days. The proverb, "What is in the well will come in the trough," was every farmer's reality. Thus, everyone wished that their well always remained full of water. But when would that happen? Everyone wished, "If Swami Bapa sanctifies my well by sprinkling flowers in it, then from the underworld, the god of water will forever have mercy on me." Swamishri would never accept that he was the doer. He would chant the *dhun*, pray, and place the responsibility for the outcome onto Maharaj.

However, the devotees had faith that “Whatever Bapa says, Maharaj will do.”

From here, Swamishri traveled to Karvan and visited the bungalow of the staunch devotee Pragjibhai Nagjibhai. Then he sanctified the homes of Gordhanbhai, Shamalbhai, Tribhovanbhai, Bhailalbhai, Mathurbhai, and other devotees in the village. Ramchandrabhai of Nadiad and Ranchhodbhai Vadivala of Anand had come to travel with Swamishri. Pragjibhai offered his loving service to Swamishri and pleased him. Then, he traveled to Salad at the insistence of Badrinarayanbhai, Jesangbhai, and Narharibhai. From here, Swamishri traveled to Runvad and Por before arriving in Anand.

Swamishri was presiding in an assembly in Anand when a small boy ran up to him and innocently said, “Bapa! Do a *chandlo* to me!”

The entire assembly’s attention was drawn to this boy. Some people were irritated. Others began to search for the boy’s father. One sadhu

even told the boy, “Go. He will do it later. Come after *sabha*.”

Swamishri said, “No, no, not like that. Wait.” Swamishri got a small bowl of kumkum and lovingly applied a *chandlo* on the boy’s forehead.

The child said, “Not just this. I want that yellow stuff too.”

Swamishri looked around, but he didn’t see sandalwood paste anywhere. Everyone was getting irritated. However, Swamishri slowly got up. He went to get his puja case. He opened his puja and rubbed the sandalwood stick on a small piece of stone to make paste. Using the paste, he affectionately applied a tilak on the small boy’s forehead. The boy gleefully ran off. Everyone watched wide-eyed, marveling at Swamishri’s large-hearted love for small children.

In one village, after the evening discourses, Swamishri went to retire for the night. However, the *parshad* serving as his attendant

had placed his bedroll in an open area that would be buffeted by winds all night. Swamishri requested, “I won’t be able to handle the wind here.”

The *parshad* became angry, “In the past, you used to take cold water baths and sleep on a jute cloth sack without any covering for your body. How can you not handle the wind now?”

Swamishri folded his hands and said, “Please, sir, now this body can no longer endure it.”

Completely ignoring Swamishri’s request, the *parshad* left Swamishri’s bedroll where it was and went off to sleep. Swamishri lay down for a while. Then sitting up, he told Vinubhai, “Place my bedroll in a corner where there is less wind.” So, Swamishri went to sleep in the corner, shielded slightly from the wind. Early the next morning, he woke Vinubhai and said, “Now go and place the bedroll just as it was before we moved it!”

Swamishri took care that even an ordinary *parshad* should not be offended by his actions, thus forestalling unnecessary conflict. Often, it became very difficult for sadhus and devotees to see the prowess of Brahman in such a meek sadhu.