

Chapter 12

The First Directive for Sunday Sabha

Shantilal Hiralal Bhatt had organized a *parayan* at the Bhagwan Kalyanni Vadi in Mumbai's Bhuleshwar district. During the *parayan*, Yogi Maharaj urged the devotees to begin a weekly spiritual assembly on Sundays. Inspired by Yogi Maharaj's sermon, the devotees resolved to hold an assembly every Sunday from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Govind Nivas in the Lohar Chawl.

From ever eagerly following Shastriji Maharaj as his servant to losing all consciousness of the world while singing *dhun* and kirtans, Yogi Maharaj's actions appeared to be those of an ordinary sadhu. Undoubtedly, his honesty, innocence, and saintliness engendered a deep reverence and attraction in all who came into his contact. Yet, while people felt that this sadhu worked hard and strongly

encouraged everyone to worship God, it was difficult for them to discern the deeper purpose of his actions and his commands.

“Establish Satsang centers in every village and hold a spiritual assembly every Sunday. Everyone should gather, read aloud the Swami Vato and Vachanamrut, and sing *dhun* and bhajans.”

These commands, which regularly emerged from Yogi Maharaj’s mouth, seemed simple to most people, though many found them difficult to follow consistently. But Yogi Maharaj continued to insist that everyone attend the weekly spiritual assembly. He would encourage people to do so with repeated letters. On countless occasions, the established Satsang centers and Sunday assemblies would falter, but Yogi Maharaj would constantly keep everyone active. As Satsang centers were gradually set up in every village, the Sunday assemblies began to happen regularly. Thus, the entire Satsang community began to develop a strong institutional integrity, leading

everyone to realize that Yogi Maharaj's seemingly ordinary command had resulted in extraordinary Satsang growth and development. Previously, spiritual discourses had only occurred on festival occasions, whereas now they happened every Sunday in every village. Countless people developed a stronger satsang foundation by regularly listening to these talks about faith in God and the glory of the Sant. New spiritual aspirants began to join Satsang through their contact with the Sunday assembly. As the internal core of the Satsang community developed and became stronger without much extra effort, everyone appreciated Yogi Maharaj's foresight and understood that like the Jogi of Junagadh, Gunatitanand Swami, Yogi Maharaj possessed similar brilliance in both worldly and spiritual matters.

On 16 March 1940 (Fagun sud 7, V.S. 1996), Shastriji Maharaj and his group of sadhus traveled to Thanadevali at the loving invitation of Thakor Saheb.

When they reached at noon, the sadhus immediately began preparing for Thakorji's *thal*. Thakor Saheb had hired six cooks to prepare the meal in advance, so everything was ready when they arrived. The food was served to everyone, and everyone commenced their meal.

The Brahmin cooks who had prepared the meal were very affectionate but, in their rush to serve the food, they forgot to serve the vegetables (*shak*). Tribhovandas and the other devotees thought that perhaps the princely states of Kathiawad observed a custom to serve the vegetables as a later course, so they remained silent. While eating, Yogi Maharaj would regularly say aloud, "Maharaj, eat. Swami, eat," and just then, Yogi Maharaj, according to his habit, said aloud, "Maharaj, eat in person! (*Maharaj, sakshat jamo!*)" When a cook heard the word *sakshat*, he immediately realized his mistake and said, "Oh, Swami! I've forgotten to serve the vegetables (*shak*). But let me bring it now." As Brahmin cooks are often

called “Maharaj,” the cook thought that Yogi Maharaj was addressing him and calling for “vegetables, vegetables” (*shak, shak*), when he was, in fact, saying “in person” (*sakshat*).

As the cooks began to serve the vegetables, Shastriji Maharaj, the sadhus, the devotees, and the Darbar all erupted in laughter. Yogi Maharaj also laughed heartily along with everyone else. The cook was initially confused, but when it was explained to him, he also found it amusing.

At 4 p.m., the sadhus visited Thakor Saheb’s residence. He offered garlands and puja to Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus and received Shastriji Maharaj’s blessings. This was followed by a brief spiritual discourse in which Shastriji Maharaj instructed him to keep faith in Shriji Maharaj. Then Yogi Maharaj added to Shastriji Maharaj’s remarks.

Thereafter, Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus visited other devotees’ homes before returning to Gondal. Harisinhji, the Thakor of Bilara State, had taken a vow to have his son bow

down at the feet of Shastriji Maharaj. Thus, he invited Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, Shastri Shrijiswarupdasji, and others to Bilara for a seven-day *parayan* on the Shrimad Bhagvat.

The *parayan* began on 28 March 1940 (Fagun vad 5, V.S. 1996), and every night, Yogi Maharaj would recite the Swamini Vato in the *parayan's* evening session.