

Chapter 19

Insistence on Tilak-Chandlo

During the Diwali vacation, with Swamishri's permission, many youths from Mumbai, Anand, and other villages were traveling with Swamishri. Swamishri would take great care of the youths with him. At 4 p.m. in Galodar, Swamishri went with the youths to a farm with a well to take a bath. After the bath, Swamishri sat next to the well with the youths surrounding him. Speaking words of encouragement, Swamishri told the youths, "We are the sons of Gunatit! Lion cubs! Don't be afraid of anyone. Don't be shy. Do the *tilak-chandlo*. Go to school and college wearing the *tilak-chandlo*. Walk in the bazaar with your gaze on the ground. While walking on the streets, recite Swamini Vato."

Thus, in his words of encouragement, Swamishri put a particular emphasis on doing *tilak-chandlo*. Then, Swamishri took some

water from a copper pot next to him and had Kishorebhai, Nathabhai, Jashbhai, and myself hold water in our hands and vow to do the *tilak-chandlo* every day.⁵

Moreover, in Kalvani, Swamishri had gone to each sanctified spot holding two youths' hands for support. At the spot where Maharaj had initiated 500 *paramhansas*, Swamishri spoke words of such glory that the youths resolved to abide by Swamishri's commands at any cost. By explaining the detailed glory of each sanctified spot, Swamishri established a clear image of Shriji Maharaj's divine personality within the minds of the youth.

In the kitchen of the mandir in Maliya Hatina, Swamishri taught Kishorebhai, me, and other youths how to cook. While we cooked according to his instructions, he helped slice the vegetables and did other tasks around the kitchen. Who would not fall in love with such a guru!

In Maliya Hatina, we were going to the sanctified mango orchard where Bhagatji

Maharaj had watered 300 mango trees. Swamishri, Mota Swami, and Harmanbhai left for the orchard in a covered horse carriage while the youths and others walked alongside. However, suddenly, one of the carriage wheels broke, and it toppled to the ground. Everyone tumbled onto each other and sustained minor injuries. They were barely able to pick themselves up out of the wreckage. The youths and others were aghast and ran to see if Swamishri was okay. When they got to the wreckage, they were surprised to see Swamishri laughing as he dusted himself off. Swamishri said, “It was a miracle, wasn’t it Harmanbhai!”

Mota Swami was already upset and busy yelling at the driver, but upon hearing Swamishri’s words, he broke out into laughter and said, “What miracle are you talking about?”

Swamishri exclaimed, “We escaped unhurt!”

Everyone laughed heartily. Swamishri had lightened everyone’s mood before the atmosphere could become somber or gloomy.

Everyone walked the rest of the way to the orchard and did darshan with devotion.

When we reached Junagadh, Swamishri visited every spot in the mandir sanctified by Gunatitanand Swami. Upon entering the gate, the cistern of wastewater in which Bhagatji Maharaj had bathed, the platform on which Bhagatji Maharaj would shave the sadhus' heads, the mandir, Jhinabhai's *darbar*, Akshar Ordi, the kitchen where Swami used to eat, the place where he used to bathe, the places of the great *sadgurus* and his own place in the old assembly hall, the *sinhasan* where Swami used to perform *mahapuja*, the room in which Swami granted Bhagatji spiritual realization—Swamishri went to each of these sanctified spots holding the youths' hands. The youths crowded around him as Swamishri would pull on their hands to get their attention as he explained Gunatitanand Swami's glory. Swamishri went around the entire mandir with the comfort and familiarity as if it were his own home. Swamishri provided such an immersive

and gripping description of each sanctified spot that all the youths felt that Gunatitanand Swami himself was speaking to us!

With so many youngsters traveling with him, if Swamishri spoke only about observing religious vows and cultivating dispassion for the sense pleasures, they would have all run away! He had to indulge them a bit so that even the difficult aspects of satsang would be digestible to them. At Natvarlal Jikar's house in Junagadh, Swamishri had served the youngsters great helpings of mango pulp and puri. Showering such love upon the youths as he insistently served them himself, even the most independent-minded youths would be bound by his pure and gentle love. They would never be able to forget him. They could see nothing in the world but him! Swamishri's love would inspire such devotion amongst the youth.

On the way from Junagadh to Gondal, Swamishri stopped in Jetpur. When everyone was enjoying the siesta after lunch, Chuni

Bhagat sat down to memorize the Swamini Vato by repeating them out loud, disturbing the youngsters' sleep.

When Swamishri was bathing in the evening, the youths complained, "Bapa! Today, Chuni Bhagat didn't let anyone sleep."

"Is that so?" Swamishri said, "Call him here. I will scold him."

The youths brought Chuni Bhagat before Swamishri, where he stood meekly with folded hands. Swamishri comported his face into a grave expression, but just as he began to scold him, Swamishri burst out laughing. He wasn't even able to give the impression that he was angry!

The youths traveling with Swamishri also began to laugh. They marveled at how Swamishri had to make such an effort just to give the impression of anger! And yet, he failed even in that! It is one thing to suppress one's anger, and it's another thing to be unable to get angry!

From here, Swamishri traveled to Gondal to celebrate Diwali and Annakut.

5 Swamishri had been commanding us to do the tilak-chandlo for quite some time. However, now all the youths felt that there was no option but to do the tilak-chandlo, otherwise, Swamishri would be displeased. Mumbai's Amulakh High School, where I was enrolled, had started its vacation term classes, so I had to return to Mumbai early. I gathered up my courage and left for school with my tilak-chandlo on. The overriding fear in my mind was that everyone would make fun of me! I was particularly concerned about the school's principal, Pavari Saheb. He was a Parsi with a very sharp wit who would find the most creative ways to make fun of people. I was afraid that the tilak-chandlo plastered so prominently on my head would give him ample ammunition to mock me in the front of the entire class! Moreover, he was himself teaching a class during the vacation term. All of these thoughts were roiling in my mind. On the way to school, I thought about wiping off my tilak-chandlo countless times, but I reached school with it on. I entered the classroom. Everyone stared at me, but no one said anything. Even after the class finished and everyone met me, no one said anything. I spoke to the principal on a number of other topics, but he didn't say anything about the tilak-chandlo. At the end of the school day, as I was walking back home, a thought occurred to me—because no one had said anything, did I actually have a tilak-chandlo on my forehead or not? So, near Matunga King Circle, I went to the bathroom of Aurora Cinema and looked in the mirror to see the tilak-chandlo clearly on my forehead just as I had put it on in the morning! That no one had said a word seemed to me a great miracle. I concluded that Swamishri had subdued everyone's speech and thoughts, otherwise this was not possible. But it gave me great courage, and I started doing tilak-chandlo every day simply due to Swamishri's loving command.