

## Chapter 23

### **He Who Casts Dirt at the Sun Ends Up with an Eyeful of Dirt**

The accommodations for Swamishri and the sadhus were arranged in the Rohishala Swaminarayan mandir run by the Vartal diocese as there were no other *sadgurus* residing in the mandir at the time. Swamishri delighted all the devotees with his discourses. Then he sanctified the homes of most of the villagers. However, one antagonist sent a message to Gadhada that “the rebels” had come to Rohishala.

While Swamishri had already departed for Sarangpur after staying just a day in Rohishala, when the news reached Gadhada, Gadadharanand Swami rushed to Rohishala and began to berate the devotees, saying, “You have been infected with rebels’ saliva, which is similar to the saliva of a rabid dog! So, you have all been defiled. Moreover, in one life, you have

made for yourselves two masters. So, if they come again, instead of going to listen to them, you should break their kneecaps.” Hearing such vile and venomous speech from the mouth of a sadhu, the devotees became upset and, forsaking his company, returned to their homes.

Several days after this incident, Gadadharanand Swami was descending from the mandir when he slipped and fell, breaking his femur. The person who had been assisting him also fell and broke his foot. So it happened that the one who cast dirt at the sun ended up with it in his own eyes. Yet, Swamishri had gone to Gadhada to visit him and offer his prayers for a speedy recovery.

Then, Swamishri traveled to Gondal as Mumbai’s Dwarkadas Morarka was coming on a pilgrimage to Gondal, Gadhada, and Sarangpur. After accompanying this Marwadi merchant family on a pilgrimage to Gondal, Gadhada, and Sarangpur, Swamishri returned to Navagam via Lakhiyani. Keshavlalbhai Sheth

and his family took this opportunity to offer Swamishri their sincere service. Then Swamishri traveled to Kalatalav, Dudhadhar, and Khopala before arriving in Gadhali. Swamishri did darshan of all the sanctified spots in the village. Here, the Mumbai merchants Kalidasbhai and Manibhai enjoyed the opportunity of Swamishri's company. In his discourses, Swamishri said:

“The characteristics of a true Sadhu are impossible to conceal. Shastriji Maharaj did not like being honored with a garland, an offering of puja, a festive welcome with a band, and similar gestures. If he saw someone in the distance waiting to honor him like this, he would walk the other way. But the virtues of the Satpurush cannot stay hidden. Whatever is there on the inside will ultimately be readily apparent to all.

“Once Maharaj told the sadhus traveling with him, ‘If you all would like to eat *shiro*, then you should do as I say.’ The sadhus had not eaten anything for two days straight. So

they replied, ‘We are ready to do whatever you say.’ Maharaj said, ‘Remove the garb of a sadhu, don the clothes of a mendicant, and don’t take the name of Swaminarayan.’ The sadhus changed their clothes according to Maharaj’s instruction. Soon, they joined a roaming band of mendicants, enjoyed a dinner of *shiro* with them, and went to sleep for the night. However, one sadhu rose early in the morning and, as was his habit, began to chant ‘Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.’ Realizing that the group which had recently joined them were actually Swaminarayan sadhus, the rest of the mendicants beat them up and chased them away.

“Because the sacred name of Swaminarayan was firmly lodged in their heart, it could not be prevented from coming out. Similarly, if we truly possess devotion in our hearts, it is impossible to suppress that devotional fervor. Although we may not receive the opportunity to offer water or other personal services to the Satpurush, if we behave according to his

wishes, then the virtues of the Satpurush will automatically come into our lives. We will attain his favor.”

From here, Swamishri traveled to Rajkot via Gadhada. On the occasion of Makar Sankranti, Swamishri would go to Rajkot each year and visit the homes of every devotee there.

This year, at 10 a.m., Swamishri was going to visit the shop of Bechar Meghji and Sons Booksellers. The devotees made all the necessary arrangements and waited for Swamishri’s arrival. However, when Swamishri did not arrive by 12:30 p.m., everyone who had gathered in the shop for the occasion went home. However, Pravinbhai Kakkad remained in the shop waiting for Swamishri. Pravinbhai was not a *satsangi* in the slightest. He ate eggs and other items prohibited by Satsang, and he had a gambling addiction! Although he had been born into a family of *satsangis*, he had not personally accepted Satsang. Finally, he, too, ran out of patience and closed up shop. Just as he was locking up, Chunibhai Chaturvedi

arrived at his shop and announced, “Swamishri is about to arrive.”

Reluctantly, Pravinbhai reopened his shop. Soon, Swamishri arrived. After Pravinbhai performed Thakorji’s puja and *arti*, Swamishri ran his hand over Pravinbhai’s neck to see if he had a *kanthi*. When he found no *kanthi*, Swamishri ran his finger over Pravinbhai’s ear. Pravinbhai thought, “This *bawa* is something else. Why is he touching other people’s ears?” But, suddenly remembering something, he prayed, “Swamiji! I suffer terribly from chronic ear infections; please cure me of this ailment.”

Swamishri said, “Sponsor a *mahapuja* in Akshar Deri. Your ear infections will be cured.” Pravinbhai immediately sponsored a *mahapuja*. Within a short time, his chronic ear infections were completely cured. He developed a strong faith in Satsang. He forsook his addictions and became immersed in a satsang lifestyle.

On the night of January 14, Uttarayan, Swamishri reached Ahmedabad, where

Kashibhai Jethabhai, originally of Ranoli, had come from Kampala for Swamishri's darshan.

This astute man had no Satsang background, but he was a committed student of the Aurobindo philosophy. However, he had become interested in the Swaminarayan faith through his friend Chunibhai of Adas. Chunibhai had also initially been a disciple of Aurobindo, but as he understood Gunatit *jnan*, he shared his realization with Kashibhai. Listening to the discourses of the great devotee Maganbhai, Tribhovandas, and others, Kashibhai understood the truth of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*. Soon, a deep desire arose in him for Swamishri's darshan. Then, he traveled to India for both his daughters' weddings. Here, in Ahmedabad, upon his first darshan of Swamishri, he was convinced that Swamishri was a spiritually elevated yogi.

When Swamishri affectionately asked him about his program, Kashibhai asked Swamishri for blessings for his daughters' weddings. Kashibhai further explained, "Although I am

struggling financially, these difficulties will be resolved with your blessings.”

Laughing, Swamishri clapped his back twice and said, “Go! Maharaj will be with you. Your wish will definitely be fulfilled.” Then Swamishri told Harmanbhai to stay with him and help him with the wedding arrangements.

Swamishri’s affection won Kashibhai’s heart. Choked with emotion, he bowed at Swamishri’s feet. During his daughters’ weddings, he experienced an invisible divine power at work making the event a success.

Kashibhai had invited Swamishri to grace the wedding. Swamishri traveled to Ranoli and fulfilled his sentiments, blessing his two new sons-in-law, Chandubhai and Ramanbhai.

Swamishri was the guardian of his devotees’ worldly and spiritual progress. Who else other than him would look after his devotees?

Then, Swamishri traveled to Ahmedabad to offer his darshan and blessings to Nandaji. Then, he traveled to Rajkot, Gondal, Dangara,

Bhadra, Jayva, Jamnagar, and again Gondal before arriving in Atladara for Vasant Panchami.

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