

Chapter 24

The First Youth Convention

From Vasant Panchami, 20 January 1955, the first youth convention, bringing together various youth *mandals*, was held in Swamishri's presence. Various leading devotees had planned this event to bring greater organization to the youth activities that Swamishri had been single-handedly spearheading for years. Until now, Swamishri had been gathering together youth congregations in the villages he traveled. He would inspire them to establish *yuvak mandals*, and he would himself appoint a president of each chapter. He would offer inspiration and encouragement to everyone through his physical presence and regular letters.

Consequently, many *yuvak mandals* were established throughout India and also in Africa in Kampala, Mombasa, Nairobi, and elsewhere.

The Sunday youth assemblies had begun to happen with regularity. During the Diwali and summer vacations, many youths would travel with Swamishri around the villages. Moreover, crowds of youths flocked to large festivals in which they were not only active participants, but also volunteers who shouldered many of the festival responsibilities.

Pramukh Swami publicly inaugurated the first youth convention. One of the lead organizers, Balavant Bhatt, explained that the successful propagation of Gunatit *jnan* through the youth activities was the convention's purpose. Harmanbhai emphasized the scriptural injunction for everyone to apply *tilak-chandlo* daily. Shankarlal Thakar spoke on the topic, "True friendship is the ornament of satsang." Maganbhai entreated everyone to work to fortify their finances. Harshadbhai explained that we have the supreme Sant and the supreme *upasana*, and we must share that with the world through the efforts of the youth.

Yogiji Maharaj offered his heartfelt blessings that the youth activities might expand. Just his holy wish was sufficient. Serving as the president of the youth convention, Khengarjibhai explained, “The entire Satsang fellowship is the body, and Yogiji Maharaj is its soul. The youths must become its arms and legs. The elders must be its head and provide their full support such that these youth activities gain great energy and momentum.” Champakbhai Sheth and Manibhai Bhatt also conveyed their best wishes on the occasion.

Several programs had been planned to foster the youths’ physical, intellectual, and spiritual progress. For their physical progress, it was resolved to establish a volunteer corps and also organize regular symposia. For their intellectual progress, it was resolved to begin activities encouraging educational development, including granting scholarships, prizes, and medals. Moreover, planning was undertaken to provide for, among other things, further arrangements during festivals, training

to foster discipline, the establishment of bhajan *mandals*, special arrangements during Swamishri's and sadhus' visits in the villages, organizing outings, the publication of special volumes focused on youth, the establishment of a fund to support planning and publicity, and an organized structure of sending reports of local youth activities to the central organizing committee. Furthermore, for the youths' spiritual progress, the primary goals were to propagate the true, supreme *upasana* through the *yuvak mandals*, foster the observance of religious vows, strengthen conviction, and instill a spirit of camaraderie and unity within the group.

On the evening of Thursday, 27 January 1955, Swamishri, Pramukh Swami, and Mota Swami were presiding over an assembly of devotees who were packed into Shastriji Maharaj's room. Swamishri joyfully said, "Having developed the conviction of Akshar Purushottam, one can no longer get mired in the muck of Prakruti-Purush. Thus, fostering

that conviction in others is the highest humanitarian aid and the greatest almshouse. Maharaj had constructed such an almshouse. How can one who is himself starving build an almshouse? Only one who has something to give can build an almshouse. Thus, only one who possesses a staunch conviction in Akshar Purushottam is capable of serving in this way. Thus, the point is that everyone should focus on consolidating this highest conviction and spiritual realization.”

Early in the morning of 28 January 1955, after Swamishri completed his puja, he was sitting next to a brazier to stay warm. Many sadhus and devotees were sitting around him doing darshan. These early morning moments in Swamishri’s presence were otherworldly. According to his daily custom, Swamishri was singing the *prabhatiya*, “*Dhira dhurandharā...*,” when he came to the following verse:

“Prem bāgbagiche nav nipaje, dām kharache
nav prem pāme,

Mastaka dhadāma je jan melashe, te ghat prem pravāh pāme...”

(Love is not found growing in the garden, love is not something that can be purchased with cash,

Whoever places one's head as a counterweight in a set of scales, he is able to attain true love.)

Explaining this verse, Swamishri said, “To use a set of scales, one must use stones, bricks, or similar objects as counterweights. Only one who uses one's head in the place of a counterweight can be said to have recognized satsang. And one's true efforts come after this realization. The Europeans drill their troops every day. They don't allow anyone to become complacent. Similarly, if we drill ourselves with spiritual discourses day and night, we would not regress. Engage in question-answer sessions, and if a deficiency in someone's understanding comes to light, explain the truth to them and help them cultivate the true *upasana* in the supreme manifest form of God.

Contemplate upon and realize the truth of Vachanamrut Sarangpur 4. Cultivate the highest level of *nirvikalp* faith according to Vachanamrut Loya 12. If we persevere with faith, God will grant us opportune circumstances and an ideal teacher of spiritual knowledge.

“In our quest to become *brahmarup*, this body is an obstacle. Thus, we should associate with one possessing the highest spiritual realization, who can transform our ingrained body-consciousness to a realization of our *brahmic* state and, in that *brahmarup* state, can bring us in communion with Purushottam. Rathod Dhadhal of Sarangpur had gone to Junagadh for Gunatitanand Swami’s *samagam*. He listened to many of Swami’s spiritual discourses, but he found himself unable to remember anything Swami said. So, as he was taking Swami’s leave, he said, ‘Swami, you have delivered discourses incessantly, but I cannot remember a single one.’ Swami replied, ‘A bag of mustard seed

was spilled in a field, and rain showered upon it from the skies... What will happen next? Every seed will sprout. Similarly, the words of the great will surely sprout in the future, and you will be able to attain the *brahmarup* state. But because you cannot remember the words, you should not feel that even a single word has been heard in vain.' These words are generative. They will lead to spiritual realization. So, you should make a sustained effort to contemplate upon and imbibe those words. And, if you cannot do that, you should at the very least remember the great Sant.

“By associating with the great Sant, our body-consciousness dissolves, and the sentiment of devotional service develops. Servanthood is one of God’s virtues. A full realization of the sentiment of devotional service signals the culmination of spiritual endeavor. Contemplate upon Vachanamrut Gadhada I 14. Vachanamrut Gadhada II 7 was Shastriji Maharaj’s favorite Vachanamrut. Focus on reading, contemplating upon, and

imbibing the principles of such Vachanamruts. Then, the great will be pleased with us.” Swamishri’s *brahmic* speech penetrated deep into everyone’s hearts in the predawn tranquility. Thus, he would grant everyone the bliss of Brahman.

During the morning discourses, Swamishri read aloud the Swamini Vat 2/45 and asked, “One must come here to eradicate one’s deficiencies. What are those deficiencies?” Swamishri answered his own question, saying, “The inability to behave as *brahmarup* is the greatest deficiency. As long as one does not realize that Gunatit is my *atma*, one remains steeped in deficiency. When one develops profound love for the Satpurush according to Vachanamrut Vartal 11, then all deficiencies are eradicated.”