

## Chapter 24

### **A Dandi Sannyasi Is Inspired to Perform Arti**

On the way to Vadhwan, Swamishri organized an impromptu spiritual assembly at the Surendranagar train station. Many devotees from the surrounding villages had come for Swamishri's darshan. Swamishri blessed everyone. Then, Swamishri traveled to Vadhwan in Tyambakbhai Trolleyvala's car.

At 11 a.m., Swamishri arrived at the public assembly organized at the guesthouse of the Diwan Saheb. Collector Govindsinh Chudasama was presiding over the assembly. Vadhwan's respected sannyasi Dandi Swami Somprakashanandji was also present in the assembly. Everyone extolled Swamishri's glory. Swamishri spoke about the glory of the Sant and praised the Dandi Swami, thanking him and the Collector for their presence. Swami Somprakashanandji was profoundly impressed

by Swamishri's humility and egolessness, and he invited Swamishri to visit his ashram in the evening.

At 5 p.m., Swamishri set out for Swami Somprakashanandji's ashram, located in Zadeshwar Society. When Swamishri arrived, Swami Somprakashanandji welcomed him with honor and showed Swamishri the entire ashram so that it would be sanctified by his holy presence.

Then, he took Swamishri into his private meditation cave. He had Swamishri sit on his own deerskin asana and performed Swamishri's puja. He had kept an *arti* ready, and after offering Swamishri puja, he began to perform Swamishri's *arti*. Swamishri insisted for him to stop, but he continued performing the *arti*. So, Swamishri took Harikrishna Maharaj's *murti* in his lap and allowed the sannyasi to perform Maharaj's *arti*. Swami Somprakashanandji said, "After becoming a sannyasi, other than the Shankaracharya, I have not performed anyone's puja and *arti*."

However, today I performed Yogi Bapa's puja and *arti* because Bhagwan has said in the Gita, "*Nirmānamohā jitasangadoshāhā...*"<sup>2</sup> Yogiji Maharaj is such a Sant. Thus, a sannyasi like myself cannot help but bow my head at his feet. Paramatma himself is today giving me darshan in the form of Yogiji Maharaj!"

Speaking these words, Swami Somprakashanandji was overwhelmed with emotion.

From here, on the evening of 27 March 1955 (Chaitra *sud* 4, V.S. 2011), Swamishri arrived in Gondal.

As Swamishri was soon to be traveling to Africa, on 30 March 1955 (Chaitra *sud* 7, V.S. 2011), the sadhus and devotees in Gondal garlanded Swamishri, offered him the auspicious coconut and sugar crystals, and gave him an emotional sendoff.

A large crowd of devotees had come to Rajkot Station to see Swamishri off. Similarly, when Swamishri's train reached Surendranagar

Station, a massive crowd of devotees from the entire Jhalavad region had packed the station. Swamishri reached Ahmedabad Station at 10 p.m. Babubhai Kothari had decorated the mandir beautifully.

On 31 March 1955 (Chaitra *sud* 8, V.S. 2011), two sadhus who were accomplished singers came from the Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir. They sang two kirtans with the accompaniment of musical instruments. Swamishri was very pleased and said, “You have done a great thing by granting us your darshan!”

Both of the sadhus replied, “Swami! We have come here seeking your darshan and blessings. So, please don’t say the opposite.” With these words, both sadhus bowed down at Swamishri’s feet.

Swamishri clapped both of them on the back and blessed them.

Then, when Swamishri’s attendant came to call him for breakfast, Swamishri told Pramukh

Swami, “Bring both sadhus with us and offer them some hot milk.”

Pramukh Swami sat both sadhus next to Swamishri. After they were served breakfast, Swamishri said, “Please start.”

But both sadhus said, “Today, give us as prasad some food which you have partaken. We have come here for breakfast only for this reason.”

Swamishri was very pleased with their sentiment, and he gave them each a little bit of sanctified food from his bowl. Both sadhus were overjoyed at their great fortune.

The following day, Swaminarayan Jayanti was celebrated with great festivity.

Swamishri was observing a waterless fast. Yet, his program was packed from morning to night. After going for darshan at the Nar-Narayan mandir in the morning, Swamishri presided in a spiritual assembly in the Mistry loft area. The *mandal* in the Bakri Pol neighborhood had erected and decorated a

canopy as part of the arrangements for an elaborate sendoff ceremony for Swamishri. They welcomed Swamishri with a marching band. Swamishri was traveling to Africa for the first time to foster the growth of Satsang and inaugurate the Mombasa mandir. Consequently, the devotees were very excited and happy to support this historic occasion. The Rathod *mandal* also organized an affectionate farewell assembly for Swamishri. Swamishri sanctified many homes around the city. In the evening, a group of *satsangi* musicians had organized a kirtan program to bid Swamishri farewell on behalf of the Ambli Vali Pol neighborhood *mandal*. After this program, Swamishri reached Shahibaug mandir very late at night. In this way, these numerous sendoff ceremonies and an array of home visits coupled with Swamishri's waterless fast had been physically grueling, but Swamishri spared no regard for his bodily needs. He found joy in the joy of the devotees.

Solely for this reason was he able to endure such hardships at this advanced age.

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