

Chapter 22

“You See the Atma, but Don’t Believe It!”

As Swamishri’s train pulled into Atladara at 8 a.m. on Janmashtami, the local *yuvak mandal* and a large crowd of devotees enthusiastically welcomed Swamishri near the Mahadev shrine in front of the railway crossing. With great festivity, they led Swamishri in a procession to the mandir. The festival assembly commenced in the evening and lasted until midnight, with bhajans and kirtans interspersed with discourses by Swamishri, Mota Swami, and devotees. Letters from Africa were also read aloud. The Bochasan and Anand *yuvak mandals* pleased everyone with their kirtan bhakti program. Leading members of the Vadodara *yuvak mandal*, including Nathalal, Chandrakant, Virsing, Kalidas, Naginlal, Bhupatsinh, Ravjibhai, Jashbhai, Jayantibhai, as well as the *yuvak mandals* of Anand,

Ahmedabad, and Bochasan had shouldered the responsibility of making all the arrangements for the event.

In this way, by Swamishri’s inspiration, the *yuvak mandals* in countless towns and villages had developed the skills to effectively organize and serve in such festivals and large gatherings. In all the festivals celebrated in Atladara, the serving of food was invariably undertaken by a group of Brahmins under the leadership of Manibhai Bhatt. Kothari Aksharswarup Swami and Chaturbhuj Swami also lent assistance wherever necessary. Youths from Sejakuva, Goriyad, Jambusar, Antoli, Anjesar, Vaghodiya, Mirsapura, and other villages had also joined in the *seva*. Due to the youth activities that Swamishri had started in countless villages, many youngsters enthusiastically participated in singing kirtans and in serving to provide the myriad arrangements required in such festivals. One could see the role of satsang in people’s lives gradually increasing.

Swamishri presided in the assembly and asked the youths, “Are you able to see your own *atma*? Whoever is able to see it, raise your finger.”

For some time, no one spoke. Many of the devotees looked at one another, while some gazed with curiosity at Swamishri. Eventually, one youth raised his finger. Swamishri said, “Where is Vittal? Let’s ask him.”

Vittalbhai of Zarola was confused. He didn’t know how to reply. Then, Swamishri replied for him, “In Junagadh, Gunatitanand Swami had asked the same question in the assembly. At the time, he had answered his own question saying that you can see the *atma*, but you can’t believe it. The *ekantik Satpurush* who upholds God within him is our *atma*. Thus believe the Satpurush to be our *atma*. The darshan of the Satpurush is itself the darshan of the *atma*.”

All the youth were delighted by Swamishri’s extremely lucid explanation, and their faces shone with the contentment of having attained *atma* darshan.

After celebrating the festival of Janmashtami in Atladara, Swamishri traveled to Ahmedabad.

Here, with the enthusiastic support of Champakbhai Sheth as well as Vinubhai, Babubhai, Khengarjibhai, Shankarlal, Arjunbhai, Ambalalbhai, Shivlal Parmar, and the other devotees, a *parayan* on the Shrimad Bhagvat by the learned scholar Shastri Bhagwatiprasad had been organized for the month of Shravan, commencing on Shravan *sud* 1. In the evenings, discourses were delivered on the Harigita section of the *Satsangijivan*. Pramukh Swami also delivered discourses in the *parayan*. Shastri Bhagwatiprasad, inspired by the darshan of Swamishri’s laughing, swaying, divine form, would daily create Sanskrit *shlokas* describing Swamishri’s glory and sing them with devotion in the assembly. Hearing the praises of Swamishri, the entire assembly would sway with joy. Swamishri would smile gently and grant everyone his divine darshan.

One of these *shlokas* became so beloved that it could be heard on many devotees’ lips.

Tālipradānaranitair gamitāndhakāram,
snigdham prasannavachanair muditāntarālam,

D i v y a m p r a s a n n a v i b h a v a n c h a
vishālabhālam, Yogishvaram pranuta he
manujāhā satālam.

(He who has eradicated the shadow of countless births by the sound of his rhythmic clap, who has delighted the heart through his affectionate, joyous words, who is resplendent with his large forehead; To such a joyous, spiritually accomplished, divine king of yogis, O man! You should bow with affection.)

In the mornings and evenings, Swamishri’s main program was visiting devotees’ homes. Swamishri would invariably go for darshan at the Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir every day. Everyone would look forward to Swamishri’s invaluable talks every evening. Devotees and youths, desirous for liberation, would listen to Swamishri’s talks until midnight. Ambalalbhai

Brahmbhatt, Govardhanbhai, Manibhai, Rameshbhai, Natubhai, Madhubhai, Shantibhai, and other loving devotees as well as Harikrishnabhai, Dinubhai, Mahendrabhai, Jagdishbhai, and other youths served in making all the necessary arrangements for the event. Late at night and early in the morning, Swamishri would talk to the youth about spiritual topics of the gravest import in his lighthearted style.

In the mandir’s large courtyard that evening, everyone enjoyed the concluding session of the *parayan*. After speeches by the sadhus and devotees, Swamishri blessed the large assembly, granting everyone the bliss of Brahman. After that, the devotees offered their puja to Swamishri, which lasted until 10 p.m. In this way, Shahibaug Akshar Mandir remained packed with devotees every day. The devotees would not leave Swamishri’s presence until midnight. Countless devotees and some of the sadhus from the Nar-Narayan Dev Mandir would also come for Swamishri’s darshan. Even

they could not forgo this opportunity of Swamishri’s divine presence. Experiencing Swamishri’s extraordinary love and affection, they collectively said, “Through this deluge of divine love and devotion, this is Jogi will have the entire Satsang chanting, ‘Akshar Purushottam, Akshar Purushottam.’”

On occasion, Swamishri would publish public letters of instruction to devotees in the Swaminarayan Prakash. After conveying points relevant to the occasion, Swamishri would invariably include points on proper satsang understanding and knowledge. Thus, the Gunatit Sant ensured that his followers remained focused on the ultimate aim for which he had manifest on Earth.

Around this time, Swamishri wrote such a letter from Ahmedabad:

“Shravan *vad* Amas, Saturday, 7 a.m., at Narayan Ghat on the banks of the Sabarmati River, going for a bath.

“Oh, ho, ho! The time is ripe for us now to please Swami. Swami’s last wish was to complete the Gadhpur mandir. So, now his wish will be fulfilled by the Africa *mandal* and the *mandals* in India. I have started doing the *dhun* of twenty-one *malas* in Akshar Deri for that purpose. The Mumbai *mandal* and all of the devotees in India have joined in this great effort. So, now, making this our last birth, we must understand ourselves as *brahmarup* and constantly uphold Purushottam Bhagwan in our hearts—that is our principle. So, develop such a clear understanding, which according to Sarangpur 4 and Loya 7 is simply to become *brahmarup*. Today, on the occasion of the new moon of the month of Shravan, we have made this resolution together with Mota Swami and Naran Swami.”

Typically, in concluding a letter, an author would summarize the points conveyed to give them some emphasis. Whereas Swamishri, in concluding this letter, simply emphasizes the importance of becoming *brahmarup*. He

cautions everyone that after coming into contact with the Satpurush through whom God is manifest, be cognizant not to neglect the goal of becoming *brahmarup*. Of course, his every command was to make us *brahmarup*. So, with such sentiments and understanding, we must follow the Satpurush’s commands. Moreover, how extraordinary is the start of the letter! “The time is ripe for us now to please Swami.”