

Chapter 16

The Establishment of Satsang Centers

Wherever Swamishri went, he would invariably cast his compassionate glance upon the spiritually meritorious souls in the area. No spiritual aspirant would escape his Gunatit gaze. From the very first meeting, he would shower them with so much love that they would not just be immersed but drowned in it. Even if they remembered nothing else, they would be unable to forget Swamishri's divine countenance even if they wanted to, and they would continue to be more and more drawn to Swamishri. According to their worthiness, Swamishri sometimes offered them a *kanthi* and initiated them as a *satsangi*. He would instruct them to avoid addictions. In his talks, Swamishri always encouraged spiritual aspirants to consolidate their refuge in Maharaj and adherence to Maharaj's commands.

In Vaso, Maganbhai's family welcomed Swamishri and the sadhus in a festive procession through the town accompanied by musical instruments. In Nar, Swamishri visited the homes of Chhotabhai, Chaturbhai, and Rasikbhai Dhanjibhai. Swamishri reverently met the elderly devotee, Khushal Dada. As Swamishri viewed even ordinary devotees with reverence, was there any surprise that he would be overjoyed upon meeting Khushal Dada, who was a disciple of Bhagatji Maharaj?

Swamishri continued visiting devotees' homes, including the homes of Harmanbhai and Prahladbhai Barot in Tarapur, Motibhai Jhaverbhai in Palaj, and Harmanbhai, Purushottamdas, and Prabhudas in Gana. In each village, Swamishri would visit the homes of many devotees. Every morning and evening, he would hold assemblies in which he would deliver spiritual discourses and enthusiastically sing kirtans with everyone. In these satsang programs, Swamishri would note especially enthusiastic youths and devotees. He would

meet them separately, speak to them about the glory of satsang, and invariably encourage them to establish a Satsang center in their village. In this way, he established a Satsang center in Gana.

Though many considered him naïve and innocent, Swamishri had a clear plan that guided his actions. While few would walk the path of God of their own accord, through his love, Swamishri inspired faith in God and Satsang in all. Everyone was surprised to see from his saintly nature the emergence of an organized campaign to establish Satsang centers, encourage regular Satsang assemblies, and otherwise spread Satsang to all spiritual aspirants. By encouraging congregational worship, Swamishri inspired countless to walk the path of satsang when they would have otherwise been reluctant to do so. In this way, many people unfamiliar with the Swaminarayan Sampradaya began to slowly come into contact with Swamishri.

Swamishri visited the homes of C.K. Patel, Chunibhai, Khodabhai, Rambhai, Shivabhai, Umedbhai, and other devotees in Karamsad. Swamishri had specially gone to Karamsad on the occasion of the first haircut ceremony of the young son of Kalidasbhai of Ranoli, who had come to India from Africa for the Gadhada *murti-pratishtha* festival. Swamishri attended to such devotees' minor events with a smile. He would never reveal to anyone the hardships they caused him.

Eventually, Swamishri's travels brought him to the village of Vasana. While visiting devotees' homes in the village, he passed by a farm where Jethabhai Ramsang Rabari was digging a new well. Swamishri went inside the farm, showered flower petals into the well, and said, "The well will be filled with good, sweet water."

After the well was dug and full of water, Swamishri would often do his morning puja adjacent to the well amid the mango and moringa trees. Swamishri would make a

garland from the mango and moringa blossoms and offer it to Thakorji. Whenever he came to Vasana, he would use *chhas* and gram flour to prepare a *shak* from the moringa drumsticks that was so tasty that people would look forward to eating it. Swamishri had told the devotees, “You all should plant a lot of moringa trees here. This land prefers moringa trees. The moringa crop will become a lifeline for you. These moringa trees are great liberated souls. They have come to serve you.”

These blessings from Swamishri have borne fruit today. The moringa drumsticks from the village of Vasana are sold today in the major markets of Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, and other large cities around India. Any moringa drumstick seen in Gujarat would invariably have come from the village of Vasana.