

Chapter 7

Bochasan: The Birthplace of Upasana

Shastriji Maharaj decided that on 10 August 1911 he would celebrate the festival of Shravan Punam (V.S. 1967) in Bochasan with great fanfare. He called the sadhus of Junagadh to Bochasan for the festival and sent letters of invitation to the villages instructing devotees, “The *sant mandal* of Junagadh has arrived, so please attend this festival.”

As soon as Vignandas Swami received Shastriji Maharaj’s letter, he left Sarangpur with his *mandal* and headed to Bochasan. At the time, Shastriji Maharaj was staying at Naranbhai Jorabhai’s house in Anand. Shastriji Maharaj told Motibhai, “Today Vignandas Swami, Gnanjivandas Swami, and a total of seven Junagadh sadhus are coming from Sarangpur to Bochasan. So, go to the train

station, welcome them with flower garlands, and bring them here.”

Motibhai went to Anand train station with flower garlands, and when the sadhus arrived, he prostrated before them and garlanded them. At that time, Yogi Maharaj was carrying five *potlas*—two on each shoulder and one on his head. He walked quickly to the bullock cart and loaded everyone’s luggage onto it. Just seeing Yogi Maharaj’s smiling, contented countenance inspired in Motibhai and the rest of the devotees a feeling of deep respect for him. Everyone greeted each other with “Jay Swaminarayan,” and the sadhus went to Naranbhai’s house.

The atmosphere at Naranbhai’s house was full of warmth and affection as if one’s close and beloved relatives had arrived after a long separation! Shastriji Maharaj rose and lovingly embraced everyone. Not only did these sadhus have immense reverence and devotion for Shastriji Maharaj, but they were also deeply

touched by the depth of the devotees' affection for them.

Naranbhai had prepared a delicious meal for this auspicious occasion. He invited devotees from the town and celebrated the sadhus' arrival like a festival. His son, Manibhai, was also engaged in the service of the sadhus. From even his brief contact with Yogi Maharaj, Manibhai developed an abiding affection for him.

On the afternoon of 7 August 1911 (Shravan *sud* 13, V.S. 1957), everyone took the train from Anand to Petlad. Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus rode the rest of the way on bullock carts that had come from Bochasan to receive them.

Upon reaching Bochasan and witnessing the grand Akshar Purushottam mandir with their own eyes, the Junagadh sadhus further understood the limitless glory of its creator, Shastriji Maharaj. As they did darshan of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, the sadhus felt their hearts swell with divine bliss as the gentle smiles of both *murtis* seemed to welcome them

to Bochasan. Their eyes filled with tears of joy as they marveled at how the holy ground they stood upon was the birthplace of the propagation of Akshar Purushottam *upasana* that would lead to the liberation of countless souls.

For all those who walked the path of true *upasana* only to encounter opposition and obstacles, Bochasan was the one safe harbor where they could worship in peace. Upon arriving here, everyone felt an inner peace, the likes of which they had never before experienced. All the sadhus bent to touch the sacred soil of this holy land to their heads in a gesture of veneration.

To set foot in the place from whence they were to start their march for the propagation of *upasana* under the leadership of Shastriji Maharaj had fulfilled one of Yogi Maharaj's long-standing desires. Akshar Purushottam Maharaj had resided here and made this holy land their divine abode. Yogi Maharaj's loving eyes drank in the nectar of this divine pair's

beauty. His thirst was quenched by this first darshan.

Devotees had come to this festival in large numbers. Many people addressed the assembly. In conclusion, Shastriji Maharaj said, “The Junagadh sadhus have come to support our cause. Now we will speed up our work on Sarangpur mandir.” The devotees were very pleased with Shastriji Maharaj’s announcement.

The Junagadh sadhus also felt very happy that, “We have come to the right place at the right time. Here, our spiritual inclinations will be properly nurtured.”

The festival re-created an atmosphere of divinity reminiscent of the time of Bhagwan Swaminarayan.