

Chapter 9

Partners in the Propagation of True Upasana

At the time, to begin walking the path of propagating true *upasana* was like exchanging a stroll along a smooth, level boulevard for an arduous expedition into uncharted mountainous wilderness. Although opponents threw thousands of obstacles onto his path, Shastriji Maharaj's determination and spiritual strength resulting from his constant communion with Shriji Maharaj made mountainous obstacles seem like blades of grass. All those who assisted in his great work as an act of devotion were not any less deserving of glory. Chief among these devotees were Madhabha of Mojidad, Harjibha, and Merubha of Chachana. Merubha Bapu was valiant, fearless, and undaunted by intimidation. He would never let anything, even ties of friendship, come in the way of speaking

the truth. When he would sit in veer asana, with one leg crossed and the other bent, and deliver discourses punctuated by the snap of his fingers, pundits and scriptural scholars wondered where this Darbar had acquired such indomitable wisdom. Wisdom, of course, is a consequence of spiritual experience and the grace of God and guru. Yogi Maharaj had great reverence for Merubha Bapu.

Every year, it was a tradition in the Sampradaya to celebrate the festival of Bhadarva *vad* Amas at Narayan Dharo near Mojidad. Shriji Maharaj and the *paramhansas* had often bathed in this sacred stream pool. Moreover, Devanand Swami had performed the *arti* of Hanumanji there. Thus, every year, that sacred spot would see a confluence of sadhus from Muli, Vadhwan, and Bochasan.

From Mojidad, Shastriji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, Vignandas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, Madhabha, Hirjibhai, and other devotees rode in a bullock cart on their way to Narayan Dharo. Following Bhagwan Swaminarayan's

command to spend one's time engaged in devotion, but not to waste it idly, on the way to Narayan Dharo, Yogi Maharaj recited Swamini Vatos and sang kirtans in his unique style.

When they reached Narayan Dharo, a crowd of sadhus and devotees had already gathered there. People were singing kirtans and listening to speeches. Enveloped in the divine joy of this loving gathering of devotees, time passed in a blink. At 4 p.m., everyone dispersed. Yogi Maharaj insisted that Merubha Bapu of Chachana, Bapubha Bapu of Adval, Agarsang Bapu, and other devotees come to Mojidad with him. There, Yogi Maharaj served everyone a meal prepared by a Brahmin. At night, everyone enjoyed a spiritual assembly filled with kirtans and spiritual discourses.

In those days, the Mojidad Satsang Mandal was led by the blind guru Ganesh Bhakta. He was originally from the village of Rampara next to Muli. However, discerning his virtues, Madhabha had brought him to stay in Thakorji's service in the Mojidad mandir. Every

year, Shastriji Maharaj would visit Mojidad and stay for two months, delivering spiritual discourses. Yogi Maharaj would prepare meals for everyone, while Ganesh Bhakta sat at the kitchen entrance and spoke on various spiritual topics. Ganesh Bhakta and Yogi Maharaj developed a close friendship. At night, both of them would sleep in the basin next to the well. Sometimes, Yogi Maharaj would quip, “Everyone is my guru, but I am no one’s guru,” and then descend into peals of laughter. Guru Ganesh Bhakta would also laugh at Yogi Maharaj’s humorous remarks. In this way, the days passed joyfully.