

Chapter 19

Fostering Faith in Bhagwan Swaminarayan

After granting everyone in Rohishala the bliss of satsang, Swamishri went to Lakhiani with Naranbhai and Mahijibhai, who had come to fetch him. Swamishri visited just about every home in the village. At the house of Ratubhai Rajput Swamishri noticed something in a niche and asked, “What is that?”

Ratubhai replied, “Bapa, that Meldi Mata’s shrine.”

Swamishri said, “Is it? Now that we are Shriji Maharaj’s, we need not keep such devas and devis where he presides. Here, take this *murti*.” Swamishri handed him a *murti* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj. Then he ordered some clean water, sprinkled it upon Mataji and the associated coconut, touched them both, and said, “Please deposit these in a well.”

“But... This is...” Ratubhai’s relatives began to object, but he boldly followed Swamishri’s command. His relatives berated him, “If the Mataji is angered, you will be destroyed.” However, Ratubhai remained firm.

Two years later, Ratubhai became gravely ill. His older brother said, “You have angered Mataji. Install her back in your house, or else you will die.”

“Let death come, but this mouth has chewed sweet, fragrant *paan*, so it will not be able to eat the bitter *aval*. I have attained Purushottam Narayan and a *sadguru* like Swamishri, so all these other things will not be possible.”

In Ratubhai’s words of conviction, his older brother felt himself being mocked, so he broke off all ties with Ratubhai. In the end, by Swamishri’s grace, Ratnabai recovered from his illness. When Swamishri learned of his conviction, he was very pleased.

Becharbhai had also kept an image of Surdhan in his home. Swamishri instructed

him to deposit it in the well, and also liberated him from this superstition.

After a devotee had taken refuge in Purushottam Narayan, how could Swamishri sanction such blind faith? In fact, this was one of the reasons for his ceaseless travels. So that people may be liberated from the noose of sense pleasures, addictions, and superstitions and, with pure conduct and consumption, could experience the bliss of worshiping God. One of Swamishri's distinctive qualities was his ability to inspire an individual's total transformation through his straightforward teachings.

Sheth Keshavlalbhai had come from Navagam to bring Swamishri to his village. However, promising that he would come later, Swamishri traveled by bullock cart to Kariyani.

Kothari Dharmavallabhdasji welcomed Swamishri to the Kariyani mandir and took him for darshan around all the sanctified spots while narrating the divine incidents of Maharaj associated with each spot.

Then, Swamishri went to Sarangpur, where he did darshan and met the sadhus. Upon seeing Harikrishnadas Swami, one of the sadhus who had earned Shastriji Maharaj's grace, Swamishri exclaimed, "Oh ho! Harikrishna Swami has the same love for us as he did for Shastriji Maharaj. Unflinching *nirdosh buddhi!*"

Harikrishna Swami replied, "You are Shastriji Maharaj, aren't you! What difference is there?" The senior sadhus had singular devotion to Swamishri.

From here, Swamishri arrived in Bhadran via Anand. Ambubhai Hirabhai had specially invited Swamishri to Bhadran on the occasion of his daughter's wedding. Hirakaka had served Shastriji Maharaj and had been willing to sacrifice everything for Shastriji Maharaj's sake.

After celebrating the festival of Bhim Ekadashi here, on 25 June 1953, Swamishri traveled via Anand to Nadiad to bless the wedding of Shantibhai, the grandson of

Dhoribhai Kishorebhai. Thus did Swamishri please everyone by ensuring that he was present to bless these worldly milestones of the senior devotees. Swamishri disregarded all the difficulties this caused in his travels.