

Chapter 10

The Advent of Youth Activities in Satsang

News of the impending inauguration of Akshar Mandir had spread throughout the Satsang community. Overcoming an array of obstacles, Shastriji Maharaj had given concrete form to the principle of Akshar Purushottam expressed in the Vedas, propagating it such that the divinity of true *upasana* would continue to spread through mandirs, *murtis*, and devotional commitment.

As Shastriji Maharaj completed his third grand mandir, everyone eagerly awaited the auspicious day of the sacred *murti-pratishtha* ceremony and mandir inauguration.

Fifteen days before the *murti-pratishtha* of Akshar Mandir, a *kishore mandal* (youth group) was established in Rajkot. The teenagers received training to form a marching band and a *dandia raas* folk dance team. The inspiration

and soul of this youth group was Yogi Maharaj. He would lovingly call everyone, shower them with affection, and share prasad. On festival days, he would affectionately feed the teenagers and deliver discourses to them. Thus, all of the boys in this group remained very enthusiastic about Satsang.

At the time, the mandir *pradakshina*'s slab was being poured. Yogi Maharaj would fill shallow metal tubs with lime mortar, and the teenagers of this youth group would quickly deliver them up to the mandir *pradakshina*. In the evening, everyone would use wooden or metal rods to tamp down on the freshly laid portion of the slab. Yogi Maharaj would join in the service with all the boys. Even when he was busy with other work, Yogi Maharaj would periodically take out time to go up to the mandir to encourage all the teenagers serving there. Yogi Maharaj would himself serve lunch and dinner to all the devotees and teenagers from Rajkot, ensuring they all ate their fill. He

would make such tasty food that everyone remembered it with pleasure.

Thus, even before the inauguration of Gondal mandir, Yogi Maharaj had already begun collectively bringing youngsters closer to Satsang. Yogi Maharaj's affectionate personality naturally drew youngsters to him.

✱

The sadhus and devotees served alongside the daily wage laborers in the mandir's ongoing construction work. Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, Mota Aksharapurushdas Swami, Ranchhod Bhakta, Naran Bhakta, and many others were engaged in this service. Kothari Aksharswarupdas and Yogi Maharaj served in the kitchen. Shastriji Maharaj had also called Kothari Bhaktivallabhdas from Bochasan to join in the service of the mandir construction. Gopinath Purani had also accompanied him. The stones used in constructing Gondal mandir were brought from the Paneli stone quarry twelve miles away. Gopinath Purani and two other sadhus worked in the quarry to procure

proper stones. Every day, Yogi Maharaj would prepare *dhebra*, puri, and *shak* to send to them. Thus, by the Herculean efforts of all the sadhus, this grand mandir was finally ready for inauguration.

The *murti-pratishtha* date was set for Thursday, 24 May 1934 (First Vaishakh *sud* 10, V.S. 1990). Amidst a unique and divine atmosphere, the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj were ceremoniously installed in the central shrine of the mandir.