

# Chapter 16

## Murti-Pratishtha in Gadhada

With Yogiji Maharaj as their central pillar of support, everyone re-immersed themselves in the final preparations for the *pratishtha*. Under Pramukh Swami's guidance, Gadhada's Kothari Harijivandas had made extensive progress on the mandir construction and preparations for the festival. Gadhada's prominent businessman, Mohanlal Motichand, and Darbar Dadabhai Khachar had provided much assistance, including arranging accommodations for the expected pilgrims.

On the auspicious day of Tuesday, 15 May 1951, after the conclusion of the *yagna* rituals, the *murtis* were taken in a divine procession around the town of Gadhada. Countless devotees from around India and abroad enthusiastically joined in the procession, singing *dhun* and *bhajans*. The streets of Gadhada resounded with the melodies of the

marching band and the shouts of the *jay naad*. Evident on everyone's face was their conviction and experience that Shastriji Maharaj was with them. The multitude of devotees brought to mind previous processions on these streets with Shriji Maharaj on horseback.

In the evening assembly, the film of Shastriji Maharaj's Suvarna Tula celebration was shown. Everyone's hearts were uplifted.

In that morning's assembly, Narayanji Maharaj of Dadma had narrated incidents of Shastriji Maharaj's divine life and glory.

On the auspicious day of Wednesday, 16 May 1951 (Vaishakh sud 10, V.S. 2007), underneath the central pinnacle of this grand marble mandir, the *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj along with *sadguru* Gopalanand Swami were installed with Vedic rituals. In the southern shrine of the mandir, Harikrishna Maharaj and Gopinathji and Radhaji were installed. In the northern shrine, the *sukh shayya* and the painted *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj were installed.

The renowned Brahmin of Umreth, Acharya Krishnashankar Shukal, was leading the *pratishtha* rituals. After the conclusion of the *pratishtha* rituals, Swamishri performed the *arti* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj in the central shrine. The sounds of the *jay naad* for Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, Shastriji Maharaj, and Yogiji Maharaj resounded in all directions. The hails of victory brought joy to thousands of hearts and minds.

Pramukh Swami, Bhaktivallabh Swami, Sant Swami, Mohanlal Motichand, Collector Govindsinh Chudasama, Ashabhai, Ishwarbhai, and Maganbhai of Africa, Harmanbhai, Purushottamdas, Tribhovandas, Prabhudas, and Khengarjibhai along with other devotees also took part in the *murti-pratishtha arti*.

During the *arti*, countless devotees had a divine vision of Maharaj's smiling *murti*. Maharaj and Swami's unique, life-sized, grand, divine metallic alloy *murtis* smiled gently. 125 years ago, Shriji Maharaj had walked on this very land and willed, "I want to build a mandir

upon this hillock on the banks of the Ghela River.” Seeing his wish fulfilled today by Shastriji Maharaj, it seemed as if Shriji Maharaj was showering his divine smile upon him. Thus, thousands of sadhus’ and devotees’ hearts were filled with joy as they experienced divine fulfillment. The golden peaks of the propagation of true *upasana* had been summitted today.

The morning assembly commenced with poets singing the praises of the divine mandir, *murtis*, and Swami Shastriji Maharaj. Nagarsheth Mohanlal Motichand narrated the history of the mandir construction, explaining that only Shastriji Maharaj’s firm resolve and Shriji Maharaj’s wish had made this mandir possible. He explained how the land was acquired and the mandir constructed, and expressed his gratitude for being given the opportunity to serve in this grand endeavor. Collector Govindsinh Chudasama also expressed his gratitude for being given the invaluable opportunity to serve. He also

thanked Mohanbhai Motichand and Dadabhai Darbar for their complete cooperation. Thereafter, Harmanbhai, Paliyad Bapu, Darbar Dadabhai Khachar, Manibhai Bhatt, Maganbhai Secretary, and other devotees spoke eloquently and powerfully about the glory and grand victory of *upasana*.

In conclusion, Swamishri blessed the assembly, and the devotees experienced great joy in hearing his divine words. Everyone could hear the sweet sound of Shastriji Maharaj's voice in Swamishri's words.

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Even before the Gondal mandir's construction, Shastriji Maharaj had prepared beautiful marble *murtis* of Gopinath Maharaj and Radhikaji from Jaipur and stored them in a box in the basement of the Sarangpur mandir.

Once, when Khengarjibhai, Babubhai Kothari, Champaklal Sheth, Vinayakrav Saheb, and other devotees from Ahmedabad had gone to Sarangpur for a festival, Shastriji Maharaj

had expressed his great pleasure upon them and opened the box to allow the devotees to have darshan of the *murtis*. When Khengarjibhai asked about the *murtis*, Shastriji Maharaj replied, “I have had this *murti* of Gopinathji made to install in the marble mandir that we will build atop the hillock in Gadhada!”

Several years later, Shastriji Maharaj had, in a divine mood, told Khengarjibhai, “I will have you perform the *murti-pratishtha arti* of the Gadhada mandir!”

Stunned, Khengarjibhai just stared at Shastriji Maharaj! He couldn’t understand the meaning of these words.

Today, years later, Shastriji Maharaj had returned to Akshardham and, on the appointed day of Vaishakh *sud* 10, the auspicious *murti-pratishtha* ceremony of the Gadhada mandir had been performed by Yogi Maharaj. While the shock of guru Shastriji Maharaj’s passing was still raw and painful, the time had come to hear the sounds of the *murti-pratishtha arti* of

Gadhada mandir. Khengarjibhai was standing in a corner amidst a massive crowd of devotees in a broken-hearted daze when something startled him.

He heard the words, “Khengarjibhai! Come.” The devotees in front were motioning to him, “Yogi Maharaj is calling you!” Khengarjibhai immediately came forward. Swamishri grasped his hand and brought him to the central shrine. The *arti* began. Accompanied by the sweet sounds of the gongs and drums, everyone paid homage to the realization of Shastriji Maharaj’s dream. As the last line of the *arti* began, with “ā avasar...” Swamishri brought Khengarjibhai forward and said, “Here, perform the *arti*.”

Shastriji Maharaj’s words came to Khengarjibhai’s mind, “I will have you perform the *arti*.” Khengarjibhai looked at Swamishri with astonishment. With a knowing glance, Swamishri recounted that very incident, saying, “Khengarjibhai! Hadn’t Shastriji Maharaj told you about performing the *arti* of Gopinathji!

Today, Swami has had the *arti* performed by your hand!"

Immediately, Khengarjibhai thought, "But at that time, no one was present except the devotees of Ahmedabad. How did Yogiji Maharaj know!" But, in the next instant, he resolved his own question, realizing that Shastriji Maharaj is himself present through Yogiji Maharaj! He was astounded. Countless devotees had such experiences in which their doubts dissolved and their hearts were suffused with a divine peace.

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<sup>1</sup> From now on, Yogiji Maharaj will be referred to as 'Swamishri'.