

Chapter 6

The River Meets the Sea

In those days, the environment in Junagadh mandir regarding Akshar Purushottam *upasana* was so hostile that the knowledge of Akshar Purushottam could not be openly declared but only whispered in hushed tones in private. Even the great *sadgurus* hesitated to speak of this ultimate truth in the public assemblies due to harassment from opponents.

In this situation, Swami Shastriji Maharaj had rekindled the flame of this divine knowledge. The snapping of the flags atop the pinnacles of Bochasan's mandir dedicated to Akshar Purushottam Maharaj proclaimed his divine work to the world. Shastriji Maharaj had prepared plans for an even grander mandir on the divine land of Sarangpur.

The effect of Shastriji Maharaj's glorious work reverberated powerfully throughout the dioceses of Vartal and Ahmedabad. In

Junagadh, his bold message had inspired the sadhus dedicated to Akshar Purushottam *upasana* to spread this truth with greater vigor. But, perhaps the most significant effect was seen amongst the sadhus in Krishnacharandas Swami's *mandal*.

At his seat, Krishnacharandas Swami would always be talking about the pure, eternal truth of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*—becoming Aksharrup and worshiping Purushottam. Vignandas Swami, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, Balmukunddas Swami of Napad, Baldevcharandas Swami, Jadav Bhakta, Ranchhod Bhakta, and others would sit near Krishnacharandas Swami's seat and expound on this vital knowledge of *atma* and Paramatma in their spiritual discourses. Together with everyone else, the young sadhu and embodiment of service, Gnanjivan Swami, had also become immersed in this pure knowledge of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*.

These sadhus felt drawn towards the company of Shastriji Maharaj. If they wished to

experience the divine joy of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj's knowledge and devotion, then they would have to break the bonds of affiliation they currently held and join in the work of Shastriji Maharaj. Such discussions began to occur frequently amongst the sadhus of this *mandal*. Finally, Vignandas Swami, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, and seven sadhus and *parshads* decided to leave Junagadh and join Shastriji Maharaj after the festival of Bhim Ekadashi (Jeth *sud* 11). The inspirer of this great renunciation was Shastriji Maharaj. The embodiment of service, Gnanjivan Swami, was also part of this group of sadhus. His heart was eager to take refuge at the feet of the propagator of this divine knowledge and jewel amongst sadhus, the great Shastriji Maharaj.

On the auspicious day of Jeth *sud* 7, V.S. 1957 Vignandas Swami, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, Balmukund Swami of Napad, Baldevcharandas Swami, Harijivandas Swami, Prabhujivandas Swami, Gnanjivandas Swami,

Jadav Bhakta, Ranchhod Bhakta, and Naran Bhakta resolved to leave Junagadh mandir. Many sadhus tried to dissuade them, thinking that it would not be good if such mature and experienced sadhus left Junagadh mandir. However, the sadhus were resolute in their decision.

As most of those leaving were sadhus and *parshads* of Krishnacharandas Swami's *mandal*, Krishnacharandas Swami requested Vignandas Swami and Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, "It would be good if you don't go ahead with this for now."

More than anything, Krishnacharandas Swami was devastated that the youngest sadhu of his group, Sadhu Gnajivandas, was also leaving with the others. Krishnacharandas Swami had been won over by this young sadhu's constant and sincere service. So, when Gnajivan Swami had privately met with him and informed him of his decision to go to Shastriji Maharaj, Krishnacharandas Swami had lovingly insisted, "Gnaji, please don't go.

You have won our hearts with your service and devotion. If you stay, I will gift you all nineteen pairs of Shriji Maharaj's consecrated *charanarvinds* that I possess!"

However, Gnanjivandas Swami's entire being was absorbed in the thought of going to Bochasan and meeting Shastriji Maharaj. That was the only thought constantly playing in his mind. Thus, he again bowed to Krishnacharandas Swami and humbly requested his leave to join Shastriji Maharaj. Seeing this young sadhu's resolve, Krishnacharandas Swami, by some divine inspiration, discerned a glorious soul shining through this teenage sadhu's body. He realized that if this sadhu takes the refuge of a spiritually powerful guru like Shastriji Maharaj, then surely the brilliance of his saintliness will reach its climax, and through him, the supreme *upasana* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan will resound in all four corners of the globe.

Krishnacharandas Swami realized that this young sadhu's well-considered decision was

appropriate in every way. So, he gladly gave his permission and said, “You have my inner blessings to join Shastriji Maharaj. Moreover, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami is going with you. He is an elderly and blind sadhu who has earned the favor of Jaga Bhakta Swami. So, make sure you stay in his service. Since you are inclined to serve, I am making this final request.”

Gnanjivan Swami felt it to be his great fortune that his guru had happily permitted him to go and also assigned him to serve such a holy *sadguru*. Gnanjivan Swami performed *dandvats* to Krishnacharandas Swami and Madhavpriyadas Swami. It was Madhavpriyadas Swami who had initially informed him of the spectacular greatness of Shastriji Maharaj. Thus, Gnanjivan Swami felt that it was the fruit of his service to Madhavpriyadas Swami that he would be able to stay with Shastriji Maharaj. Madhavpriyadas Swami put both hands on Gnanjivandas Swami’s head and bestowed his choicest

blessings. He reminded Gnajivandas Swami of Shastriji Maharaj's time as a student in Junagadh mandir and how they had sat together during the *parayan* in Una. He finally asked Gnajivan Swami to convey his "Jay Swaminarayan" to Shastriji Maharaj.

All those who had conviction in the pure Akshar Purushottam *upasana*, in which one becomes Aksharrup and worships Purushottam, gave their silent approval to these sadhus even though nobody wished to see them leave Junagadh. But seeing that the sadhus had made a resolute decision to leave, the senior *sadgurus* made no serious effort to stop them. Narayandas Swami's disciple, Nilkanthdas Swami, patted Gnajivan Swami on the back and said, "You young sadhus are bravely heading off to propagate the true knowledge of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*! You have my wholehearted approval to do this great work."

Nilkanthdas Swami used to go to Mevasa to stay in the company of Krishnaji Ada. Thus, he

had developed a firm conviction in the pure Akshar Purushottam *upasana*.

Around this time, a letter written by Shastriji Maharaj in Bochasan came to Junagadh addressed Vignandas Swami. Shastriji Maharaj had written, “Over there, there is great difficulty in speaking and listening to talks about true *upasana*. Thus, if you wish to come here, you should feel free to do so. If you need any assistance, you should speak to Diwan Keshavlal in Junagadh.”

Shastriji Maharaj’s letter provided an even greater boost of inspiration to this group of sadhus.

The great *sadguru*, Sadhu Balmukunddasji of Junagadh enthusiastically urged this group of sadhus, “If you wish to proclaim the *upasana* of Akshar Purushottam publicly, the gates of opportunity have opened in Bochasan. Thus, go join Shastri Yagnapurushdasji in Bochasan.” As these sadhus had chosen the path of true *upasana*, they were effectively putting their lives on the line against the vicious opposition

they would inevitably have to face. Moreover, these sadhus felt that their lifelong spiritual endeavors were insignificant compared to the universally purifying work of propagating this true *upasana*. They knew that if they took this next step, the entire Sampradaya would be joined in opposition against them. Yet, solely to please Swami Shriji did they renounce Radha-Raman Dev's bed of roses and don a crown of thorns. Although, in making their preparations to leave, one month passed by.

In the meantime, Swami Shastriji Maharaj wrote a letter to Diwan Keshavlalbhai instructing him, “Swami Vignandasji is in Junagadh. He has affection for us, so please inquire about his welfare.”

As soon as he received this letter, the diwan went to the mandir to meet Vignandas Swami. At the arrival of such a distinguished state official, all the *sadgurus* gathered together and took the diwan for darshan. When they came to the assembly hall, the diwan pointed to the painted *murti* of Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand

Swami above the *sinhasan* and said, “With great effort, Shastriji Maharaj has installed this *murti* in the mandir of Bochasan. It was to install this *murti* in the mandir that he had to leave.”

Hearing these words, everyone realized the diwan was a disciple of Shastri Yagnapurushdas; however, no one could say anything due to his worldly stature. Then the diwan inquired about the welfare of Vignandasji. Vignandas Swami was summoned from where he was resting in the infirmary. The diwan explained, “I received a letter from Swami Shastriji Maharaj in Bochasan, so let me know if you require any assistance.” With those words, he left.

The next morning, Keshavlalbhai sent a two-horse-drawn carriage to Junagadh mandir to pick up Vignandas Swami. Vignandas Swami and his companion sadhu took the carriage to Keshavlalbhai’s bungalow. There, Vignandas Swami told the diwan, “We want to go to Bochasan and join with Shastriji Maharaj’s

mandal. So please make arrangements such that no one stirs up any trouble in Junagadh mandir.”

Keshavlalbhai replied, “Don’t worry. I will send instructions in that regard with one of my men.”

Thus, with the help of Keshavlalbhai, this group of sadhus was able to secure their books, pairs of consecrated *charanarvinds*, and other possessions to take with them. Together, they decided to leave Junagadh the following morning at daybreak.

At dawn on 8 July 1911 (Ashadh sud 12, V.S. 1967), the sadhus hoisted their cloth bags on their shoulders and headed out of the mandir with *malas* in their hands. Before leaving Junagadh for the final time, all the sadhus eagerly wished to have darshan of the *murti* of Shri Hari and pray that he constantly remains with them. Mangala *arti* was at 5:30 a.m., and they had to leave before then. But hoping that God would hear their prayers, they all went upstairs to the mandir. Brahmachari

Krishnaswarupanandji was serving as the pujari at that time. When he saw the seven sadhus' intense desire for darshan, he immediately lifted the curtain, and the sadhus happily did darshan of the *murtis*. As they did darshan of the *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj, they experienced a sense of peace within. They felt as if Maharaj was gently smiling at them and saying, "My dear sadhus, leave from here, and I will always remain with you." As if they discerned this silent communication from Shriji Maharaj, this *mandal* of sadhus experienced a divine joy as they did darshan of the *murtis* of Radha-Raman Dev that had been installed by Shriji Maharaj. Then, they came down from the mandir.

Now, there were just a few moments remaining before the sadhus left the gates of the Junagadh mandir for the final time. Yet, despite the imminent, auspicious departure on this holy morning, it felt as if something vital was holding them back. Gnajivan Swami was lost in deep thought. His entire being was

focused on the small, mobile, metallic *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj which they were on the verge of leaving behind in the sadhus' kitchen.

This sacred *murti* of Bhagwan Swaminarayan, known as Harikrishna Maharaj, had been worshiped by Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami. Now, it appeared that the *murti* wished to continue being worshiped by the lineage of Gunatit sadhus. Young Gnajivan Swami had pleased Krishnacharandas Swami with his limitless service. Gnajivan Swami's innate loving devotion to God had made service of this unique *murti* of Thakorji second nature to him. From the eighteen sadhus in his *mandal*, Krishnacharandas Swami had selected Gnajivan Swami to offer service to this sacred *murti* of Thakorji. When he had assigned Gnajivan Swami this *seva*, Krishnacharandas Swami had said, "Gnaji! You have immense devotion for Bhagwan Swaminarayan, so please offer worship to this *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj."

This *murti* was Gnajivan Swami's singular and supreme wealth. The *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj in Vartal to whom Shastriji Maharaj had prayed and sought blessings upon his departure from Vartal was the very same Harikrishna Maharaj in this small, mobile *murti* eager to go with Gnajivan Swami. Where there is a climax of pristine love, there, even God awaits such a worshiper.

So, Gnajivan Swami rushed to the sadhus' kitchen to retrieve his beloved Harikrishna Maharaj.

As soon as the mandir's sadhus unlocked the kitchen to break their fast on the morning of Ashadh *sud* 12, Gnajivan Swami quickly went inside and retrieved his beloved *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj. His face glowed with the inexpressible joy of having attained something priceless. In being reunited with his beloved Thakorji, he now felt no hesitation in leaving Junagadh, as it was also Maharaj's wish.

As the mandir's sadhus and *parshads* woke up that morning, they heard urgent whispers

about the impending departure of this group of sadhus. Gnajivan Swami's contemporary, *parshad* Narayan Bhagat jumped up as soon as he heard the news. He ran to Gnajivan Swami and grabbed onto his upper garment. With a choked voice, he said, "Gnanji! Please don't go. We won't like it here without you! Our enthusiasm for service will fade away! Who will we sing kirtans with? Who will we sit with to understand the Swamini Vato and Vachanamrut? Gnanji, you are our source of joy! Why are you forsaking us?"

With these words, Narayan Bhagat began to weep. Seeing his tears, Gnajivan Swami felt very sorry for him. He stopped in his tracks. He had so much empathy for everyone that he would instantly feel others' pain in his own heart.

Until today, the Junagadh mandir had been his heart. In all the years he had been there, he had not even thought about climbing Mount Girnar or seeing the remains of the ancient fort in the old city. His only joy was the service of

the mandir and the sadhus, *parshads*, and devotees who stayed in the mandir. Shriji Maharaj has shown that the sole spiritual endeavor needed to attain the *brahmarup* state is the devotional service of God and his devotees. Just that one spiritual endeavor could uproot body consciousness, base natures, and flaws. While Gnanji Swami had no need to perform any spiritual endeavors due to his innate *brahmic* state, he had wanted to emphasize that active service and devotion without any desire except to please God was far superior to dry knowledge devoid of service and devotion. Thus, Gnanjivan Swami remained forever active in service and devotion to inspire other spiritual aspirants.

Gnanjivan Swami's enthusiasm to propagate Akshar Purushottam *upasana* remained ever fresh in his heart. How could this young and naïve Narayan Bhagat understand his resolute conviction on this point? Maharaj and Swami had determined to spiritually nurture the entire Satsang community through this young sadhu.

The living spark of his spiritual knowledge and *brahmic* state would spiritually enkindle the entire world. Shastriji Maharaj had raised the flag of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*—of becoming Aksharrup and worshiping Purushottam. Gnanji Swami's departure was necessary to continue to raise that flag such that it cast its reach across the entire world, and the Gunatit knowledge of Junagadh spread globally according to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's words, “We wish to make Junagadh's knowledge supreme.” Thus, Gnanjivan Swami was leaving Junagadh, having digested the intense *vairagya* that Gunatitanand Swami had propagated in this holy mandir for forty years. He was leaving having absorbed that Gunatit knowledge in himself so that he could spread it throughout the world and show everyone the beauty and greatness of devotion to Shri Hari coupled with a complete understanding of his glory. But how could this innocent Narayan Bhagat possess such divine foresight? So, Gnanjivan Swami consoled him

with kind words and continued onwards like the radiance of Gunatit of Junagadh, aiming to spread the light of Bhagwan Swaminarayan's knowledge in all directions.

At that time, Bhagwandas Sheth of Mumbai was waiting in the mandir compound with two rented bullock carts. He loaded the bullock carts with the sadhus' luggage and then took all the sadhus to the home of Jadavjibhai Contractor. There, the sadhus prepared a meal and broke their fast. Krishnaji Ada had sent Damjibhai with funds to cover the sadhus' transport costs and instructions for all the sadhus to go straight to Bochasan.

So, the sadhus left Jadavjibhai's house and went to the train station. Here, Vignandas Swami suddenly changed his mind and decided to go to Rajkot to have darshan of Krishnaji Ada and determine where to go from there. Accordingly, everyone took the train to Rajkot.

In Rajkot, the sadhus were given accommodations in the house that Avalba had donated for the sake of building a mandir.

The Rajkot devotees sent a telegram to Shastriji Maharaj in Sarangpur that the sadhus from Junagadh had arrived in Rajkot. As soon as he got the telegram, Shastriji Maharaj and his companion, Sadhu Harikrishnadas, took the train to Rajkot and arrived there at 11:30 p.m. Shastriji Maharaj was immensely pleased to see all the sadhus. The sadhus also experienced great tranquility upon having darshan of guru Shastriji Maharaj, who was the manifest form of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and who had come on Earth for the sake of propagating the Akshar Purushottam *upasana*. This auspicious meeting would come to be seen as a landmark event in the broader context of the global spread of the Akshar Purushottam *upasana* and the spiritual history of the world.

Thus, it happened that on 9 July 1911 (Ashadh sud 13, V.S. 1967), seven sadhus joined Shastriji Maharaj's *mandal*.

Shastriji Maharaj brought this group of sadhus to Sarangpur. Shastriji Maharaj had fulfilled his earlier promise by beginning

construction of the grand Akshar Purushottam mandir in Sarangpur together with the arrival of the sadhus from Junagadh. At the time, Shastriji Maharaj had installed the painted *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj in the house of Pitha Khachar of Sarangpur and established it as a *hari mandir*. That is where all the sadhus were staying. The sadhus had left Junagadh due to the difficulties in propagating Akshar Purushottam *upasana* there. Consequently, Shastriji Maharaj remained very pleased with them.

Inspired by Bhagwan Swaminarayan's divine will, Shastriji Maharaj had courageously left Vartal to propagate Akshar Purushottam *upasana*. But it appeared Bhagwan Swaminarayan had inspired this group of sadhus to leave Junagadh just so the extremely humble and meek-natured Gnajivan Swami, who had been raised under the wing of the Junagadh *sadgurus* and who had deep bonds of affection with all the sadhus and devotees of Junagadh, could leave Junagadh and join with

Shastriji Maharaj. Thus, Gnanjivan Swami's auspicious union with Shastriji Maharaj was only possible due to Shriji Maharaj's grace. Gnanjivan Swami joining in the service of Shastriji Maharaj, the great propagator of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*, was like the glorious confluence of a river meeting the sea!

In honor of the arrival of these sadhus from Junagadh, Nagjibhai Sheth sponsored a special feast of *kansar*. Gnanjivan Swami and another young sadhu went to the village to beg for alms. This Jogi's hands were blessed, and thus they received ample provisions from the villagers. In his diary, Yogi Maharaj had recorded Shastriji Maharaj's response: "On that day, we had received a hundred kilograms of high-quality coarsely ground wheat flour. Consequently, Shastriji Maharaj had been very pleased with us."

Nagjibhai Sheth supplied ghee, gur, vegetable oil, and other necessary provisions for making *kansar*. He invited the Kathi darbars as well as the mason and carpenter

devotees from the village. Yogi Maharaj and the other sadhus prepared the food. Shastriji Maharaj himself served large quantities of *kansar* to Vignandas Swami, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, and the other sadhus from Junagadh. Yogi Maharaj had a strong inclination for renunciation and *vairagya*. He always kept in mind the injunctions of the text *Nishkam Shuddhi* in order to maintain the perfect practice of eightfold *brahmacharya*. He never consumed milk or ghee, but today, Shastriji Maharaj had showered his inexhaustible grace upon him. After serving Yogi Maharaj *kansar*, Shastriji Maharaj began pouring ghee into his bowl. Yogi Maharaj lifted his bowl, and in his typical style, raised his hand to his neck to demur, but Shastriji Maharaj continued to serve him. Yogi Maharaj had always been a light eater, but today Shastriji Maharaj had served him beyond all bounds. Shastriji Maharaj's loving insistence on serving ghee in his *kansar* over Yogi Maharaj's protestations was all a divine *lila* of

these two divine beings. Yogi Maharaj ate everything that Shastriji Maharaj had served him. Thus did this become the first page in a long history of this great guru's love for his disciple and this great disciple's devotion to his guru.

At that time, Shastriji Maharaj had recently acquired the land for Sarangpur mandir, and the work of building a cactus hedge fence was ongoing. Yogi Maharaj would wake up at three in the morning, and after completing his bath and puja, would, together with another sadhu, make the daily supply of *rotla* for everyone. Then, before the sun rose, he would go with the other sadhus to help build the cactus hedge fence. Seeing the slim frame of Yogi Maharaj engaged in strenuous service caused everyone to develop a deep affection for him. Yogi Maharaj would prepare hot water, bathe the blind Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, and then wash, dry, and fold his clothes. In the afternoon, Yogi Maharaj would feed Bhagwatswarupdas Swami and then wash his

bowl and keep it together with his own. Then, Yogi Maharaj would lay out Bhagwatswarupdas Swami's bedding. In this way, everyone witnessed Yogi Maharaj's affection through his sincere service for Bhagwatswarupdas Swami and the other sadhus.

¹ Keshavlalbhai was not actually the diwan of the State of Junagadh. When the Nawab of Junagadh, Rasul Khan, passed away on 22 January 1911, his son Mahabat Khan was still a minor. Consequently, the British Raj assumed control of the administration of the State of Junagadh for ten years. During this time, a number of British officials controlled the administration instead of the diwan of the state of Junagadh. One of those British officials was Keshavlal G. Trivedi, who served as the chief revenue officer of the state of Junagadh. Thus, he was popularly known as the diwan. He was originally a native of the village of Mahisa in Mahemdavad Taluka, and he had great love for Shastriji Maharaj.