

# Chapter 9

## **An Advocate for Cleanliness**

On 22 January 1923 (V.S. 1979), Vasant Panchami was celebrated on a grand scale in Bochasan. Countless devotees availed of the holy company of Shastriji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, and the other sadhus. After everyone left, Shastriji Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, and Yogi Maharaj traveled by bullock cart in the villages surrounding Bochasan, as the railways of that era had yet to reach Bhadran.

While on the road, Shastriji Maharaj had to answer the call of nature. After that, he walked to a well on a nearby farm. The well had a large wooden pulley, and instead of a bucket, a metal box with which they could draw out the water for a bath. Ratilalbhai, a student from Vaso who was staying at a hostel in Petlad and studying in Bhadran, just happened to be passing by, and he noticed Shastriji Maharaj

and the sadhus near the well. He ran to the sadhus and offered to draw water from the well for them. But Yogi Maharaj approached him and smilingly said, “Here, let me draw the water.” Then, he said, “We can’t draw water from this well without first scouring and washing this metal box. See, one must learn the proper way of doing these things.”

Then, Yogi Maharaj scoured the box with dirt, washed it and his hands, and then drew water from the well for Shastriji Maharaj’s and Nirgundas Swami’s baths. Following this, Yogi Maharaj also had a bath. Then, he laid out everyone’s wet clothes to dry.

Over the years, Yogi Maharaj had taught many youngsters the details of ritual purity observed by the sadhus. He would explain things meticulously and patiently. Even if he had to teach the same thing once, twice, or ten times, he would never get frustrated. He taught this ritual purity with great affection and patience, whereby the youngsters would realize

the importance of cleanliness and be inspired to behave that way in their own lives.

Due to Shastriji Maharaj's incessant travels, the number of centers with devotees of Akshar Purushottam *upasana* continued to grow. One such center was Mumbai. There, Someshwar Girdhardas Pithwa of Dahisar had invited Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus to hold a *parayan*. Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, Nirgundas Swami, Shrijiswarupdas Swami, Mohan Bhagat, and other sadhus and devotees traveled to Dahisar for this series of discourses. With Shastriji Maharaj's and the sadhus' divine discourses and Someshwarbhai's affection, enthusiasm, and sacrifice, an atmosphere of divinity pervaded the event.

After the conclusion of the series of discourses, everyone went to Mumbai at the insistence of Bhagwandas Sheth. Their accommodations were arranged in the office building of Jashbhai Bhailalbai. Local devotees and well-wishers appreciated the opportunity to get the blessings of Shastriji

Maharaj. Although Shastriji Maharaj had planned to travel from here to Bochasan, he received an invitation to visit Indore from Indrajibhai, son of Vallabhdas, whose uncle Himrajibhai was Gunatitanand Swami's direct disciple. So, everyone traveled to Indore, where they stayed for ten days and fulfilled the desires of the devotees through their discourses. Then, Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus went to Vadodara.

From Vadodara, Shastriji Maharaj went with all his sadhus and around 200 devotees to Vartal to have darshan of the centenary celebration of Vartal mandir on 8 November 1924 (Kartik *sud* 12, V.S. 1981).