

Chapter 17

Pilgrimage to Bhadra and Dangara with Nandaji

A trip had been organized for Nandaji to go with Swamishri to Bhadra and Dangara. Early on the morning of Wednesday, 30 April 1952 (Vaishakh *sud* 6, V.S. 2008), Nandaji arrived in Rajkot. At Rajkot Junction Station, Girdharbhai Kotak, Ghanshyambhai Oza, Shastri Dharmajivandasji of Rajkot Gurukul, Manubhai Chavda, and others welcomed Swamishri and Nandaji with flower garlands. From here, Swamishri and his group, including Hirjibhai Chavda, Lakshmanbhai, and other devotees, traveled to Gondal.

Nandaji expressed a wish that Satsang literature may be prepared in Hindi and English and distributed through New Delhi so that the people of Uttar Pradesh might learn of Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Swamishri blessed

him in Akshar Deri for the success of that project.

After having darshan of all the sanctified spots in Gondal in the evening, Swamishri and Nandaji spent the night in Rajkot, and traveled to Bhadra by car the following morning. In 1948 (V.S. 2004), Krishnaji Ada's *mandal* and Hirjibhai Sheth had replaced the mud huts on Aksharbrahma Gunatitanand Swami's birthplace with a properly constructed brick building and installed Akshar Purushottam Maharaj's *murti*. Swamishri did darshan and *pradakshina* of the memorial shrine that marks Gunatitanand Swami's birthplace and distributed *chevdo* and *penda* to everyone as prasad.

Then, Swamishri went for darshan at the mandir in the village. Here, Swamishri distributed *magas* to everyone as prasad. Doubling back to Swami's birthplace, everyone went from there to the Und River. On the way, they had darshan of Mulji Bhakta's farm. Since it was summer, the river was dry, and

Swamishri held an assembly in the riverbed under the shade of the banyan tree. He requested some water from a nearby well and sprinkled sanctified water on everyone's head. Then he spoke about the various divine incidents associated with this place, including how Maharaj used to grasp the banyan tree's aerial roots and swing into the river. Then, Swamishri had Kana Bhagat sing a beautiful kirtan describing the incident in which Maharaj had made a coarse cloth float like a raft and sat on it with Mulji Bhakta and Lalji Suthar to go boating in the Und River. Finally, Swamishri distributed *patasa* as prasad to everyone.

Then, Swamishri left for Dangara. However, the driver took a wrong turn and got lost. On top of that, their car overheated. So, while they sorted out the car situation, Swamishri sat down under a date palm tree. Jhaverkaka gave Swamishri some almonds, which he distributed to everyone as prasad. Once they got on the road again, Jhaverkaka delighted everyone with his kirtans.

Swamishri and his group were going to have lunch in Dangara, so Chunilal and Ambashankar had gone there the day before to make preparations. Since Swamishri had not arrived on time, Ramjibhai sent his truck from Dangara to find Swamishri's caravan. Upon finding Swamishri, the truck led all the cars to Dangara. When they arrived, Jashvantsinh Babu welcomed everyone. Everyone was fatigued due to the intense heat. At 2 p.m., *thal* was offered to Thakorji in the memorial shrine, and then everyone ate. Following a short afternoon rest, Swamishri went to the mandir in the village for darshan. Then, he sanctified Pujaji Babu's house. Everyone went for a bath at the sanctified stream pool in the Ghel River. After performing *arti* in the mandir, everyone left for Rajkot and reached there at 8:30 p.m.

At 8 a.m. on 2 May 1952, Swamishri, Nandaji, and Anada Saheb visited the Rajkot Swaminarayan Gurukul, where Shastri Dharmajivandas offered everyone a warm welcome. In the evening, Swamishri traveled by

car to Gondal with Ganatrabhai, Adhia Saheb,
and others.