

Chapter 17

Inauguration of the Yagnapurush Memorial

At Shastriji Maharaj's cremation site in Sarangpur, a beautiful marble memorial with Shriji Maharaj's sculpted *charanarvind* had been prepared. It was decided to inaugurate the memorial with a grand festival on 11 March 1952 (Fagun *sud* Punam, V.S. 2008). The devotees were thrilled to participate in the inauguration of a memorial to Guruhari Shastriji Maharaj. Several committees had been appointed to plan and execute the festival. Ranchhodbhai Vadivala and the Anand *mandal*, Purushottamdas and the Gana *mandal*, as well as Manibhai Bhatt and the Kanam *mandal* were overseeing devotees' accommodations and arrangements. Naranbhai Mahijibhai of Mahelav was looking after the volunteer department. Everyone was engaged in their responsibilities under the guidance of

Pramukh Swami, Harijivan Swami, Bhaktivallabh Swami, and the other sadhus. Hakabhai Khachar and other local devotees were also engaged in organizing the festival.

Groups of devotees from Saurashtra and Gujarat began arriving in Sarangpur on 5 March 1952 (Fagun *sud* 9, V.S. 2008). Paliyad Bapu, Gadhada's leading businessman Mohanbhai, Collector Ramanlal, Dared Bapu, Dadabhai Darbar, Rajkot's Judge Anada Saheb, Pratapsinh Inamdar, Sidibhai, the Africa *mandal*, and other devotees had already arrived. The devotees were also given accommodations in the Hanuman mandir. The Kathi Darbars of the village had also joined in this opportunity to serve. The entire village was excited about the festival.

At 7:00 a.m. on 12 March 1952 (Fagun *vad* 1, V.S. 2008), Swamishri inaugurated the beautiful memorial with Shriji Maharaj's marble *charanarvind* at Shastriji Maharaj's cremation site. Together with Swamishri, Pramukh Swami, Nandaji, and other sadhus

and devotees performed the *arti* of the memorial. Karunashankarbhai, a Brahmin from Umreth, chanted Vedic mantras, adding further auspiciousness to the sacred occasion.

Every morning throughout the festival, Pramukh Swami delivered discourses on the *Satsangijivan* in his melodious voice. In the evening, Swamishri would deliver discourses on the Swamini Vato. Mota Swami and Aksharpurushottam Swami would also speak on various topics. Narayanji Maharaj also narrated extraordinary incidents of Shriji Maharaj's life in his engaging style, captivating the audience.

The delicate marble memorial stood on a large five-foot plinth. At the four corners of the memorial, stone sculptures of royal staff-bearers added to its beauty. Shastriji Maharaj's sacred ashes had been placed in a copper vessel underneath the memorial. A small copper pipe extended from the vessel up to the memorial shrine through which everyone could experience from afar the holy touch of

Swamishri's sacred remains below. The devotees were delighted by this novel approach, and thousands felt fulfilled by its sacred touch.

12 March 1952 (Fagun *vad* 1, V.S. 2008) also marked the conclusion of the *parayan*. Everyone offered puja to Swamishri and Pramukh Swami. The primary sponsors were Ishwarbhai Daji, Vinayakrav Trivedi, Thakarshibhai, Vasantray Pandya, Hirabhai of Bhadran, and others. On this occasion, Kaniyalal Munshi, Manu Subedar of Mumbai, and other dignitaries had sent messages of congratulations over telegram. In the evening, Swamishri distributed prasad of *fagwa* to everyone.

On the evening of Thursday, 13 March 1952, Swamishri and the sadhus traveled to Tajpur. The affectionate devotees of this village, which Shastriji Maharaj used to call “Gokuliyu Village,” welcomed the sadhus in a festive procession with drums, gongs, shehnais, and the occasional celebratory gunfire. The ecstasy of the devotees in this festive Kathiawadi

procession was an expression of the villagers' unadulterated love. The village women also sang hymns of welcome in their sweet voices, adding to the emotional atmosphere of welcome.

Shastriji Maharaj had sanctified every home in this village countless times. The devotees of the village had been ready to lay down their lives for Shastriji Maharaj. How could Swamishri forget their pure devotion? Swamishri had brought with him many senior sadhus and devotees who had come for the festival in Sarangpur. Shastriji Maharaj had performed the groundbreaking ceremony for a mandir in the village, and now the mandir had been constructed. On 14 March 1952 (Fagun *vad* 3, V.S. 2008), Narayanji Maharaj directed Kalyanjibhai to perform the *yagna* ceremony. The painted *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj were placed in a decorated bullock cart and taken around the village in a festive procession before being brought to the mandir. With a sacred ceremony, Swamishri installed

the *murtis* in the mandir. The entire village was jubilant. Jivrajbhai, Amarsinhbhai, Hirabhai, Velabhai, and other devotees played an instrumental role in the mandir inauguration.

From here, Swamishri and the sadhus traveled via Rajula to Ontvada, where Swamishri performed the ground-breaking ceremony of a new *hari mandir*. In this way, due to the devotees' enthusiasm, new Akshar Purushottam mandirs were beginning to be constructed in many villages.