

Chapter 22

The Glory of Chansad

A grand *murti-pratishtha* ceremony for the painted *murtis* of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj and Hanumanji was planned for the Swaminarayan mandir in Chansad. The day before the ceremony, the *murtis* were taken in a festive procession from the village square to the mandir. On the way to the mandir, the procession halted at the village's government quarters, where the local devotees paid homage to the *murtis* and Swamishri.

On the morning of Saturday, 8 May 1954, (Vaishakh *sud* 6, V.S. 2010), the renowned Shastri Shankar Pathak of Vadodara led Swamishri in the Vedic rituals of the *pratishtha* ceremony of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj. The grand sponsor of the *yagna* was Jethabhai Amthabhai. Muljibhai Vaidyaraj and the *yuvak mandal* enthusiastically volunteered to organize the assembly canopy, the *yagna*, the

kitchen, and the myriad other arrangements that made the event possible.

Offering his blessings on this auspicious occasion, Swamishri said:

“Bhagatji Maharaj had visited this village twenty-one times and stayed here extensively. Mahapurush Swami used to stay here as well. Shastriji Maharaj and I have also stayed at length in this village. Moreover, it is Pramukh Swami’s birthplace. Pramukh Swami can be said to be Shastriji Maharaj’s very form. As this *pratishtha* has happened in his village, this village’s lifespan has increased by 10,000 years! Moreover, everyone will be blessed with peace, prosperity, and good health.

“In the old days, Shastriji Maharaj and I used to travel to this village by bullock cart. If arrangements could not be made for a bullock cart, we have even walked here from Makarpura Station. Bhagatji Maharaj used to travel here by foot. What hardships they have endured for the sake of our village! Thus, we must understand their glory. By Bhagatji

Maharaj's grace, a great soul such as Pramukh Swami incarnated here to the great fortune of this entire village. This village has become a place of pilgrimage."

On this occasion, a divine incident occurred that the elderly villagers of Chansad still remember today. Many devotees from the surrounding villages as well as from far and wide had come to Chansad for the *pratishtha* ceremony. In all, the number of devotees present was four times greater than the number for whom food had been prepared. The organizers were dismayed as the food was sure to run out.

At their request, Swamishri visited the kitchen and installed a small *murti* of Thakorji, before whom he lit a ghee *diva*. He instructed the organizers to continue adding ghee to the *diva* and ensure it does not go out. Ultimately, all the devotees who had come for the *pratishtha* ceremony and the entire village ate their fill, but the food did not run out! Finally, devotees were sent to the surrounding villages

and farms to invite people to eat. Even after feeding all of them, there was still leftover food. Finally, five laddus were given to each household in the village, and the cattle of all of the village's cowherds were also fed. Still, there was leftover food. Ultimately, late at night, they covered the leftover food and went to sleep.

The next morning, the organizers explained the situation to Swamishri. At Swamishri's instruction, the organizers once again distributed prasad to every house in the village. Then they sent basketfuls of food to the surrounding villages until the store of food was finally exhausted! Thus, at Swamishri's wish, the stock of prasad had become temporarily inexhaustible. Such incidents were not uncommon in Swamishri's presence. The Satpurush's primary purpose for displaying such powers is that upon witnessing such divine incidents, some *jivas* might realize the truth of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*! Thus, such miraculous incidents did happen on occasion; however, Swamishri's intent was

ultimately to have everyone consolidate the principles of satsang through knowledge. Therefore, he always insisted that people should not expect miracles.

After doing Thakorji's darshan in the evening, Swamishri performed eleven *pradakshinas* and eleven *dandvats* and then embraced the pillar in the mandir sanctified by Bhagatji Maharaj.