

Chapter 8

Seva in Sarangpur

In Sarangpur, Shastriji Maharaj's aesthetic vision was breathing life into the stones used to create the mandir. Everyone was so engrossed in the herculean effort of the Akshar Purushottam mandir's construction that they remained oblivious to hunger, thirst, fatigue, laziness, and sleep. Due to Shastriji Maharaj's grace, the threefold afflictions of worldly life remained absent from that holy place.

It is said that having begun a task, the great will not give up despite encountering repeated obstacles. In Sarangpur, Shastriji Maharaj and the sadhus faced a litany of obstacles. First, there was no end to the problems caused by antagonistic renunciants. Moreover, the sadhus would not hear a single warm word of welcome from anyone in the village for months on end; on the contrary, they had to endure a steady barrage of insults and abuses. Additionally, due

to the mandir's empty balance sheet they had to endure the subsequent lack of even basic provisions. Later in life, Yogiji Maharaj would often say, "Once we made a pint of vegetable oil last for three months. How could we use oil to stir-fry vegetables when there were no vegetables? The sadhus would beg for *chhas* from the village. We would get barely enough food to scrape together one meal a day."

Even under these difficult conditions, the devotees' faith, sacrifice, and loyalty were remarkable. Despite encountering opposition from all sides, they maintained an intense thirst for spiritual knowledge, for which places like Bochasan and Sarangpur served as liberative oases. Devotees would travel to Sarangpur not just from Botad or Bhavnagar but even from Ahmedabad and central Gujarat to openly sing the glory of Akshar Purushottam.

¹ As noted in our scriptures, trividh taap, or the three miseries, are adhideva (miseries stemming from natural sources), adhibhut (miseries caused by other people or creatures), adhyamta (miseries caused by one's internal base natures and primordial ignorance).