

Chapter 21

A Historic Honor in Chhapaiya

The mandir in Chhapaiya had made arrangements for an unprecedented reception for the Shastriji Maharaj Special Train, Yogiji Maharaj, and the entire Akshar *mandal*. The villagers, senior *satsangis*, Acharya Maharaj's administrative assistant Ravjibhai Patel, Bhalabhai, Keshavlal Karbhari, Ghanshyambhai Dave of Anand, and all the sadhus of the Chhapaiya mandir had reached the station in advance to receive the pilgrims. They awaited the train with great anticipation, together with a cavalcade of six elephants, shehnai players, drums and gongs from the village, and a host of cars, horse carriages, and sixty bullock carts.

However, this great Sant, who routinely shunned sumptuous food, drink, and acclaim, appeared to have omnisciently discerned the grand honor awaiting him and, being dismayed

by it, changed his plans in advance. Upon the sacred soil of the birthplace of his beloved Purushottam Narayan, who was his very life and his everything—how could a servant accept such honor? For this reason, Swamishri invited illness and separated from the group. Everyone was disappointed to learn that Swamishri would not be present at the grand welcome, but they were comforted that he would arrive in the afternoon.

When Swamishri reached Chhapaiya at 3 p.m., everyone gathered around him. Everyone was revitalized as the lifeforce of the community had returned to them. The mandir's mahant and sadhus joyfully welcomed Swamishri and arranged for his accommodations in the special residence of the Acharya Maharaj. Then, Swamishri went to the mandir for darshan of Ghanshyam Maharaj and Dharmakul. As Swamishri gazed at Maharaj, the *murti* smiled back. Swamishri was wholly engrossed in darshan! Maharaj must have asked Jogi, "Why were you late? So many

arrangements had been made for your grand welcome!”

Swamishri must have replied, “Maharaj, I am your servant. How can there be a grand welcome for me?”

Maharaj seemed to reply, “No, you are more beloved to me than my life itself. I wanted to honor you in my birthplace!”

This type of conversation must have occurred between God and his ideal devotee! Swamishri stood for quite a long time with his head reverently bowed in a posture of absolute submission before his master.

Then, Swamishri called Pramukh Swami close to him and had him do Thakorji’s darshan, thus fulfilling Shastriji Maharaj’s command to him.

From here, Swamishri went to the Rang Mahol, where he had darshan of the exquisite *murti* of the child form of Ghanshyam Maharaj. Then Swamishri came to the sacred birthplace. While doing darshan, Swamishri was

overwhelmed with emotion. Then, Swamishri affectionately met with the sadhus of Chhapaiya, including the mandir's mahant, Swami Yagnapurushdasji, Shastri Narayanprasaddasji, Sadhu Ghanshyamdasji, the former mahant Chitara Baldevprasadji, and the other sadhus.

In the evening, Swamishri held an assembly in his residence hall. His health was good, and he was in high spirits. Swamishri said, “Due to this delightful place, my illness has been completely cured. In 200 years, this sacred place will be renowned far and wide. Thousands will come here for darshan. The holy discourses in the evening assembly are the pilgrimage itself. Otherwise, anyone can do darshan and roam around in the pilgrimage places of the unmanifest God. But the essence of all these talks is that you should remember this pilgrimage place.”

The following morning, Swamishri went for darshan at all the sacred spots sanctified by Ghanshyam Maharaj. Bhagatji Maharaj's

devoted disciple, Vignandas Swami, had spent his final days here, and Mota Swami pointed out the spot where he had been cremated. Swamishri commanded Mathurbhai to construct a memorial shrine with the imprint of Maharaj's holy feet on that spot. All the devotees cherished this memory of being in Chhapaiya together with Swamishri, in whom Shriji Maharaj himself remained constantly and fully manifest. When Swamishri returned to the mandir, Nandaji brought the general manager of the Northern Railways, Mr. Arora, to meet Swamishri. Swamishri blessed him and sent him to all the sanctified spots for darshan.

A historic assembly was held in the mandir's beautifully decorated assembly hall that evening. Swamishri, Pramukh Swami, Mota Swami, the mandir's mahant and other *sadgurus*, as well as Nandaji and all the devotees were present in the assembly. Swamishri recited and explained some Swamini Vato, saying:

“Swami used to carefully look after the needs of the poor devotees. He even used to send grains to the Darbar of Panchala. When his financial situation improved, he resumed offering his tithe to Junagadh mandir. But who can be called poor? He who tolerates is poor (meek). It is difficult to tolerate when one is powerful. When someone speaks rudely to us, and we don’t retaliate, that is meekness.

“Such a lovely place. Countless avatars, Prakruti Purush, and Pradhan Purush rub their heads on the sacred soil of this place. If one remains distracted in such a place, one will not experience peace and happiness. But, if you understand its glory, your capacity for wisdom will blossom, and you will experience peace. There is a kirtan on this point:

“Shānti pamāde tene sant kahie...”

(He who grants us peace is called a Sant).

But one needs a Sant who can grant us peace. What is such a Sant like? There is a kirtan on that topic:

“Hāji bhalā sādhu, Hari ki sādḥ, tan ki upādhi taje soi sādhu...’

(A good sadhu is he who remains focused on God, renouncing bodily concerns.)”

In this way, Swamishri spoke extensively on becoming *brahmarup* and developing a firm attachment with the Sant.

Acharya Devendraprasadji Maharaj had planned to be present on this occasion, but due to poor health, he had sent in his place his elder son Tejendraprasadji, his administrators, and *sadgurus*.