

PROMINENT LADIES OF MAHARAJ'S TIME

The prominent females of Maharaj's time were very devotional and loyal to Bhagwan when he was on this earth.

They renounced all worldly affairs, detached themselves from family affairs such as getting married, they ate non rich foods wore simple garments, spent day and night in Maharaj's service, they slept on the floor leaving comfortable beds. Many of them left all their wealth to serve Maharaj.

Their devotion and loyalty was boundless. They were exemplary women that modern day lady satsangis can learn a lot from.

Examples of such remarkable women include: Bhakti Mata, Jeevuba, Laduba, Dhanbai Fai, Jamkuba, Kushalkunvarbai Gangama and Ladhiva,

Bhakti Mata

'*Bhakti*' means devotion

'*Mata*' means mother

Bhakti Mata is the Mother of our God; Shree Ghanshyam Maharaj hence she is also known as the Mother of our Swaminarayan Sampraday. She was given the opportunity to give birth to God due the Karma (good deeds) she had done.

(Refer to the session on the curse of Durvasa Muni)

Bhakti Mata (also known as Premvati because of her devotion to Dharmapita) was born on Vikram Savant 1798 Kartik Sud Poonam, in Chhapaiya to Krishna Sharma and Bhavaani. She was born as the perfect incarnate of Bhakti (reference to Durvasa Muni's shraap (curse) and the sabha in Badhrikashram). When Premvati reached the age of marriage, her father arranged for her to marry Dharmadev (Son of Bal Sharma) of Itaar. Dharmadev and Bhakti Mata settled in Chhapaiya after their marriage. In Prayag, Bhakti Mata and Dharmadev met Ramanand Swami. They were given Mahabhagvati Diksha by Ramanand Swami (incarnate of Uddavji). As principal disciples of Ramanand Swami, Bhakti Mata was assigned to give Mantradiksha to female devotees, whilst Dharmadev was assigned to give Mantradiksha to males of the Uddhav Sampraday.

Bhakti Mata soon gave birth to their 1st son and named him Rampratapji. They moved from town to town, and finally returned to Chhapaiya. There she gave birth to Shree Ghanshyam Maharaj, on Chaitra Sud 9, Samvat 1837, 2nd April 1781.

(Discuss their journey highlighting the ups and downs they faced before returning back to Chhapaiya e.g. Family disputes,)

Bhakti Mata then gave birth to Her third son and named him Ichharamji.

Jeevuba

In the royal home of Gadhada, Abhal Khachar had two daughter's Jeevuba (Jaya) was the eldest and Laduba (Lalita) the younger. They were the devout elder sisters of Dada Khachar. They were more interested in devotion than even the royal riches and normal activities associated with youth. Abhel Khachar's earlier children had all died and hence she was named Jeevuba (one who had survived). She was also known by the names Jaya and Motiba. From a very early age she became firmly and lovingly devoted to God. She took a dislike to luxuries and tasty dishes and she slept on the floor. Jeevuba would spend her time in-front of the idol of Bal Krishna and perform pooja with chandan, pushpa etc. and would chant mantra whilst rotating the mala. She would daily perform arti.

Krishna Drinks Milk

Once Abhal Khachar was passing by Jeevuba's room and noticed her deep in devotion. He questioned her, "O daughter! Why is it that in your young age you choose to perform such devotion? These are the activities which, you should do when you are elderly. This is the time for luxury and enjoyment!" Hearing her father speak in such a way she said, "O father! You are educated in the scriptures, why then do you comment in this way? There is no guarantee of the body, who knows what will happen tomorrow? The human form is very rare and indeed Deva's even yearn for such form. We should use it to devote ourselves to God. In this murti you see before you, resides the Almighty himself. There is no question of this!"

Abhal then saw the divine miracles whereby the Lord himself emerged from the murti to drink the milk that Jeevuba had offered! Seeing this Abhal remarked, "Blessed and great is your devotion my daughter! Continue and serve the Lord as you wish. I will never again question your devotion." From that day forward Jeevuba took the vow of life-long celibacy. She even stopped looking at other men and would not enter places where men frequented.

Seeing her service and devotion, Bhakti Mata on one occasion gave her darshan and gave her a boon. When Maharaj was away at other towns and villages and did not return on time, Jeevuba would not be able to take any food until such time that Maharaj returned. She stopped taking food and water and would sit in deep meditation; such was she longing for Maharaj. Maharaj, seeing such penance would hurry back no matter how far away he was.

She died on the Sixth day of the bright half of Jeth Samvat 1961(1860 A.D) whilst chanting Maharaj's name.

Seeing the love of such a devout woman for God, Maharaj resided in Gadhpur. . She was endowed with the highest qualities. As a result she would have darshan of Maharaj at will. She lovingly served Maharaj's saints and haribhakta's. She often arranged great festivals in Gadhpur and personally saw to the getting together of necessary items, arranging the meals and preparing the Lord's thaal. In this way she extensively pleased Maharaj with her devotion.

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Laduba

Sister of Jeevuba and Dada Khachar whose family were strong followers of Maharaj. Maharaj regularly visited and stayed at Dada Khachars darbar and looked upon it as his own home.

She was a strong devotee of God always worshipped him and stayed beside Him or his idol serving Him.

She got married to Khoda Dhadhal of Botad, however her mind remained with Maharaj only. Therefore Khoda willingly sent her back to her parents. On seeing her back home her father Ebhal Khachar got angry, but when he saw the letter of permission from her in-laws he became quiet and didn't say a word.

Laduba had very similar pure qualities as her elder sister. Both had firm uncompromising love and devotion for Maharaj. Indeed sometimes this used to get in the way as they often used to compete for service to Maharaj. Both enjoyed celebrating and organising festivals in Gadhada and it was because of this rivalry that Maharaj decided to split their service by announcing that Jeevuba should look after the festivals of the brighter half of the month and Laduba looks after the festivals of the darker half of the month.

Ankoot

During Ankoot festival, Laduba managed to celebrate the Ankoot festival also, as according to the scriptures it is part of Diwali, which falls in the darker half. A fantastic celebration of Ankoot took place in the hands of Laduba and the feast prepared for the Ankoot was sumptuous. Maharaj remained manifested in the idols to accept all the dishes, which were offered with love.

Service to Saints

Although a Princess of a Royal Heritage, Laduba enjoyed serving the saints of the order. Once, Laduba along with Dada's wife were riding in a carriage on their way back to Gadhada. On their way they saw the saint Akhandanand. He had fallen severely ill. His body was dry of blood and his stomach had swelled. He lay in this state under a tree whilst other saints served him. Laduba could not bear to see this sight with Swami in such pain and halted the carriage. She instructed the driver to take Swami in the carriage back to Gadhada whilst she walked back. Maharaj was immensely pleased with Laduba's devotion to the saints.

Manakiye Chadiya

Once Maharaj decided to go to Vadtal for satsang, which both Laduba and Jeevuba did not like as they could not bear to be apart from Maharaj. He mounted his mare and set out with the other Kathis. But the mare brought Maharaj back to the Darbar from the outskirts of town. Maharaj tried repeatedly to leave Gadhada but it was useless. Eventually he realised that the sisters were influencing the mare. After pacifying the sisters that he would return shortly, they gave Maharaj permission to leave. The mare

then co-operated with Maharaj and they reached Vadtal. Premanand Swami, observing this incident wrote the kirtan, “Manakiye Chadiya Mohan Vanamari....”

Last Days

In this way, Shreeji Maharaj lavishly bestowed divine bliss upon Dada Khachar, Jeevuba and Laduba. On Maharaj’s departure, the brother and sisters were inconsolable. Maharaj appeared before them and said, “We never disappear from satsang. We are ever manifesting in the image of Gopinathji and shall always give you our darshan there.” Thus they spent their last days in service to Gopinathji Maharaj at Gadhada.



Dhanbai Fai

Dhanbai lived in Rampur of Kutch and was interested in kirtans and bhajans from a very young age. She got married into a family in Baladia. Her husband died soon after marriage. Dhanbai diverted her mind to God. Dhanbai soon came into contact with Surajbai.

Surajbai

A Brahmin woman named Surajbai lived in Bhuj. She had a great faith in Shreeji Maharaj. She used to recite and worship the name by devotional song of Shreeji Maharaj. Surajbai went to Gadhada to have Maharaj's Darshan. She was very happy to have received Maharaj's Darshan. She began to serve Maharaj with great passion; she used to herself prepare the food for Maharaj and fed him.

She once had a thought; "While I was in Bhuj, I used to throw corn to birds, but that is not possible here." She made her up her mind, but the mind was already occupied by Maharaj, he understood her heart's need. He got up to throw corns to birds; everyone was surprised to see this and thought why did Maharaj himself get up to scatter corns to birds?

Maharaj said, "If you want the answer ask Surajbai, it's her mind's determination to throw corns to birds." Everyone said "Extraordinary! Surajbai is so lucky" Maharaj said "Surajbai has accompanied me to this earth from Akshardham. A lot of good is going to be done by her hands" And it so happened.

Surajbai and Dhanbai meet

Dhanbai of Rampur diverted her mind from worldly affairs to devote herself to God soon after her husband died. Dhanbai came into contact with Surajbai. Surajbai had a great desire to perform a yagna in Kutch, to perform a big gathering (Jagan) and invite thousands of devotees to lunch. But there was a problem, Surajbai was a Brahmin. Devotees felt that they should give to a Brahmin but should never accept from a Brahmin. So she was confused at what to do.

Once she told Dhanbai her problem "You perform many Yagnas in Kutch and invite devotees on lunch."

Dhanbai said "This will require a lot of money. Have we got it?" Surajbai laughed and said, "Your name itself is Dhanbai. Why should you worry for money?" said Surajbai. Surajbai took out five **Koris** (Silver and Gold coins). This is equivalent to less than a rupee and a half.

Surajbai placed these five **Koris** in Dhanbai's hand and said, "Take this, perform Yagnas and Samaiyas and build temples. You are free to do anything in the name of Maharaj. This wealth will exhaust when the importance of Maharaj dies down."

Dhanbai accepted the five **Koris** in her khoru and went home. She recited Maharaj's name and put the **Koris** in a purse.

Dhanbai's service-camp started. One after another Parayana started. Plenty of wealth was spent for these Parayanas, Samaiyas, Yagnas etc. Celebrations went on for fifteen days. Thousands of devotees and sadhus lunched. Haribhaktos from all over the place were present. They all praised Dhanbai for organising a big Yagna on the passing away of Sadguru Aksharjivan Dasji Swami. She sprinkled holy water.

Where did this unlimited wealth come from? Did it come from that purse which contained the five **Koris**? She had no other source of money except the purse. Also the **Koris** were meant for Satsangis. Her food consisted of porridge made from Bajari, without salt. Taste had no place in her life. Only service, renouncement and devotion had place in her life. She was a very rare woman to be found in the Swaminarayan Sampraday. She freely left her body after the achievement of the duties entrusted to her. Even today her Samadhi (Meditation) stands as a place of pilgrim on the bank of the river in the village Rampur. She spent approximately 505851 koris in her lifetime. Even today 5 koris still remain in Rampur's ladies temple.



Jamkuba

Jamkuba was a great devotee of Maharaj; she was the Queen of Udepur one of the well-known cities in Rajasthan in India. She was immensely devoted to Maharaj.

Once she was at the window of the palace she heard someone nearby humming 'Swaminarayan.' She looked around to see who it was and saw two Brahmins bathing. She sent over a maidservant to call them to the palace once their worship was over. The Queen asked them who they were and where they were from, they answered and then she asked whose name they were chanting whilst having a bath. They told her briefly the life sketch of Lord Swaminarayan. She soon longed to meet Maharaj but was afraid to leave the palace in fear of the King.

Her Escape

Soon she came up with an idea came to her. One dark night she fled from the palace and started to run away like a thief. In the early morning the King realised she was missing and sent soldiers to run after her and bring her back. When she heard the horses she realised they were after her, she looked around for a place to hide and saw the remains of a dead camel on the road and ran to hide in it. She remained in it hungry and thirsty for 3 days reciting Maharaj's name. The soldiers eventually gave up and returned.

Meeting Maharaj

She came out of the skeleton and started to walk ahead not knowing where to go eventually she saw a Brahmin. He helped her to reach Gadhapur. After a while they stopped under a tree to rest. The Brahmin offered her some food, which he had brought with him; they ate and soon fell asleep. She awoke in the early morning and was amazed to find the Brahmin gone and to find herself near a river. There she saw a woman bathing and heard her chanting the name 'Swaminarayan Swaminarayan.' When she asked where she was she got told she was in Gadhapur of Swaminarayan. On hearing this she was delighted. She had a bath, got dressed and went to get darshan of Maharaj. She was very pleased to have met Shreeji Maharaj. The Haribhakto's told Maharaj Jamkuba's story, on hearing this he named her Mataji and looked upon her favourably.

To allow her to carry on with her devotion in peace Maharaj sent her to stay with Ladhibai in Bhuj. Here both Ladhibai and Jamkuba continued with their Bhakti. They went to Akshardham to reside eternally in Maharaj's seva.