

Early one morning Nilkanth sat under a banyan tree to perform his morning puja. At that time the king of Vanshipur who was out hunting, came there and saw the young Brahmachari. The resplendent face of the young tapasvi impressed the ruler as something out of the ordinary. There was an ardent seeker of liberation and in Varni he recognized at once his spiritual guide. He was overjoyed and thought to himself, "Today Narayan has 16 Nilkanth Charitra come in person to liberate me." At once he sought refuge at the young Brahmachari's feet. When Nilkanth opened his eyes he saw the king before him. He entreated Nilkanth to come to his palace and liberate him and his family. When he saw the sincerity in the ruler's request, the young celibate agreed to go with him. The king helped him sit on his royal horse, got hold of the reins and galloped to his city. On reaching his city his citizens thronged to both sides of the road to see their king leading a young Brahmachari to his palace. He received reverential salutation all along the route. Finally Nilkanth entered the darbar where the queen briskly and enthusiastically ran to receive the new guest. Everyone felt that the young Brahmachari was not an ordinary guest but God himself. The royal couple were wanting in one thing. They did not have a male heir. They had two daughters, Ila and Sushila. They too were impressed by Nilkanth's illustrious personality. From that day onwards till he left the palace, Nilkanth was served devoutly by the king, queen, and their two daughters. The princesses would arrange puja materials for the Brahmachari. Fruits, flowers and water would be brought everyday by Sushila and Ila. Nilkanth would offer it to Thakorji. He used to eat very little himself and distribute the rest as prasad. Varni would sometimes talk of his own life and sometimes about the past and the future. Everybody would listen to him with rapt attention. But the queen had some personal interest in keeping Varni in her kingdom. One day she came to Nilkanth and said, "Brahmachariji! We would like to give this kingdom to you. Along with that we would give you our daughters in marriage. Therefore give up the bother of going to the forest to do austerities." Varni laughed at the worldly inclinations displayed by the queen and said, "Mother! I have still to wander the forests and liberate souls like you. I have come here as a result of your austerities. You are very fortunate (in having me here)." The queen was greatly distressed and agitated on hearing Nilkanth in Vanshipur 17 this reply. "Brahmachari! Think carefully. You are a mere boy now. When you become a young man you will become restless without a woman? Kamdev has overcome great minds. Do you think he will leave you alone?" Varni took pity on the queen and said, "My joy lies in going to the forest and meditating on Paramatma." The queen felt as if the ground was slipping from under her feet. "Is Varni going to leave us?" was the thought that worried her most. She made one last attempt to frighten Nilkanth by vividly describing the dangers of the forest. To this Varni had a ready answer: "Mother, I am not afraid of the forest, its ferocious creatures or the extremes of heat and cold. One should be afraid of worldly pleasures. I have come to this world to liberate people from the allurements of maya and take them to my Akshardham. I

have not come to become attached to your kingdom or your daughters. However, since all of you have served me with devotion I shall grant you all Akshardham.” The veil of illusion was lifted from the queen’s mind. She went into a divine trance. Nilkanth left the room. When she awoke from the trance she was weeping. Her daughters advised her, “Mother we have in our midst a divine person who is pure and above mundane desires. Let us serve him according to his wishes. Do not be stubborn in your ways. Be insistent in keeping him within your heart and give up your mundane motives.” These words were like nectar to the queen. Then Sushila and Ila rushed to Nilkanth’s room. There they found him sitting in swastik-asan and in deep meditation. They had his darshan, came on tiptoe and made his bed. They also filled his gourd with fresh water, brought some fruits and flowers and quietly left the room. Nilkanth sat in meditation for a long time. He lost count of time. It was late night. The palace gate was closed. Varni opened his eyes and thought that he should leave the place because the royal family, out of their faith in him, would definitely be liberated. And with this resolve he left the palace in a flash. 18 Nilkanth Charitra The next morning when Sushila and Ila went to Nilkanth’s room, they found it empty. They felt that he must have left the palace. The weeping princesses rushed to their mother to convey the news. The queen could not bear the terrible news and thus collapsed on the floor. The king was informed and soon the tragic news spread to different parts of the capital and the kingdom. People thronged to the palace to verify the report. There were scenes of mourning in the palace. The king ordered horse riders to fan out in different directions to search for Nilkanth. “Don’t return without bringing the young Brahmachari,” was the royal edict. The mounted riders fanned out far and wide but found no trace of Nilkanth. The king himself went in search of Nilkanth but could not find any trace of him. He returned sorely distressed. Nilkanth assured the king through his uttering from the sky that he would be able to meet him later in Saurashtra