

Chapter 9

The Bawa of Bagad Bound by Affection

At the invitation of Mohanbai, Vignandas Swami and Yogi Maharaj traveled to the village of Bagad near the town of Limbdi. There was a severe water shortage in Bagad. The well on the farm of the Ramji Mandir's *bawa* was the only one in the village that had any water. At 6 a.m., the village women would come to fill their pots of water for household use. When Mohanbai informed Vignandas Swami of this problem, Yogi Maharaj replied, "Don't worry, Mohanbai. We will go there for a bath at 3:30 a.m."

So, despite the winter chill, Vignandas Swami and Yogi Maharaj took Mohanbai with them at 3:30 a.m. to the *bawa*'s farm. However, the gate to the farm was locked. Mohanbai banged on the gate and shouted for quite some time until the *bawa* finally woke up

and shuffled out of his house angrily muttering, “Why are you disturbing me at this ungodly hour before even the rooster has crowed!”

But when he saw the sadhus standing there, he unlocked the gate and let them in.

First, the sadhus brushed their teeth, and then, bucket by bucket drew water from the well and took a bath. The cold was so intense Yogi Maharaj’s teeth began chattering loudly.

Yogi Maharaj spent three days in Bagad. He would go through the village every day to beg for alms and then deliver spiritual discourses. At 4 p.m., when he would go to the *bawa*’s farm for a bath, he always took a sanctified *magas* laddu with him to give as prasad to the *bawa*. Before long, the *bawa* developed a deep affection for Yogi Maharaj. Thus, if some ladies happened to come while Yogi Maharaj was taking his bath in the afternoon, the *bawa* would politely request, “Please wait outside for a bit. The “Jogi” sadhu from the Swaminarayan Sampradaya has come. If you come inside, he will have to fast.”

Junagadh's Narayandas Swami also had intense affection for Yogi Maharaj due to his unparalleled saintliness. In 1923 (V.S. 1979), he sent a message for the third time saying, “If Gnajivandas comes back, I will honor him with a procession from Jetpur to Junagadh.”

These words welled up in Narayandas Swami's heart out of empathy that this delicate sadhu should not feel pained. However, Yogi Maharaj continued the great work of spreading the light of the true, eternal *upasana* taught by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

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Much of the Sarangpur mandir construction work remained unfinished. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj would regularly visit Sarangpur to boost the construction work, do darshan of Akshar Purushottam Maharaj, and meet his beloved “Jogi” Maharaj, who was engaged in service here. Yogi Maharaj saw Shastriji Maharaj as the manifest form of Shriji Maharaj and the focal point of his life. He had centered his entire consciousness and being into

Shastriji Maharaj's divine form, attaining the culmination of yoga. He believed Shastriji Maharaj to be his everything. Shastriji Maharaj was aware of Yogi Maharaj's supreme faith, and thus he craved Yogi Maharaj's darshan.

This "Jogi," born to be a proponent of the supreme Akshar Purushottam *upasana*, was truly Shastriji Maharaj's beating heart. Although Yogi Maharaj forever experienced Shastriji Maharaj's presence within himself, he still craved Shastriji Maharaj's physical company. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj would regularly come to Sarangpur or take Yogi Maharaj with him on his tours of the villages, granting Yogi Maharaj divine bliss.