

Chapter 9

Jogi's Priceless Affection

Twice a year, in the months of Kartik and Fagun, Vignandas Swami and his group of sadhus would travel around Sokhada, Sankarda, and the surrounding villages collecting alms and delivering discourses. The grains and provisions they had collected would be sent to Sankarda mandir for storage, and from there, devotees would send it in bullock carts to Bochasan.

Once, Gujarat was struck with an epidemic of the bubonic plague, and almost the entire village of Sankarda had fled in fear. During this catastrophe, Vignandas Swami and Yogi Maharaj spent a month in a small pavilion they had erected on a farm outside the village for the benefit of a handful of devotees. Vignandas Swami delivered discourses on the Vachanamrut, and Yogi Maharaj would recite and expound upon the Swamini Vato. Yogi

Maharaj would also sing kirtans in his distinctive style, creating an atmosphere of divinity. His rhythmic claps, soulful voice, and communion with Shri Hari engendered a lifelong devotional impact on everyone's hearts.

Harisinh Bhavsinh, Guman Singh Prabhatsinh, Umedbhai Kalyanbhai, Mangalbhai Madhavdas, Somabhai Desaibhai, Fatesinh, Purushottamdas Gandhi, and other devotees came in the mornings and evenings to listen to the discourses and enjoy the divine bliss emanating from Jogi's captivating *murti*.

The sadhus from Vartal also visited Sankarda periodically. If Shastriji Maharaj or Vignandas Swami and Yogiji Maharaj's *mandal* happened to be in the mandir at that time, the Vartal sadhus would shout at them and threaten to beat them. Sometimes, they made good on their threats and did beat them.

To prevent such attacks and protect the innocent sadhus, Muljibhai Jhaverbhai, Mohanbhai Anopbhai, Motibhai Jethabhai, and Bhavsinh Umedsinh would spend the night in

the mandir with the sadhus. All four of them had immense affection for the sadhus. And of the sadhus, they had developed a special affinity for Yogi Maharaj. The affectionate nature with which he would serve food, feeding morsels into the mouths of those who had sponsored the meal, was so sweet and divine that it could unleash a torrent of sentiments even within a stone.

Yogi Maharaj often expressed his delight with someone by giving them a hearty pat on the back, a gesture he had possessed from childhood. During discourses, he would check the audience was following him by calling on devotees by name and asking them to summarize the main points.

As Yogi Maharaj continued to shower his priceless affection upon the devotees, all who experienced his loving presence would remember it for the rest of their life.