

Chapter 23

Gift of Love to a Baraiya Devotee

About a mile from the outskirts of Bhadran stood a huge banyan tree under which a man of the Baraiya caste by the name of Jetha had occupied a small hut for many years. The Patels of the village had given him a small plot of land to farm for his subsistence. In the hot summer months, he would serve cool water to wayfarers, students from Zarola walking to Bhadran for school, and farmers in the surrounding fields.

Whether due to the strength of the merits of his past birth or his selfless service, one day, Jetha had darshan of Swamishri in Bhadran. Jetha was guileless by nature, and he humbly requested Swamishri to sanctify his tiny hut. Swamishri promised him, “Go, Jethabhai! We will visit your hut one day.”

A couple of years had passed since that incident. On this occasion, Swamishri had

come from Bochasan to Zarola, and he was traveling by bullock cart to Bhadran. In those days, the roads were unpaved, leading travelers to be buffeted by clouds of dust. Moreover, the bumps and bounces of traveling by bullock cart caused Swamishri to experience abdominal spasms. Travel by bullock cart did not suit Swamishri at all, but because there were no other vehicles available, Swamishri had set out in a bullock cart. Whether in the scorching heat, frigid cold, or pouring rain, Swamishri's travels continued unabated.

While on the road, Swamishri suddenly stopped the bullock cart and announced, “I need to get off to urinate.” Swamishri dismounted from the bullock cart, used the bathroom, and washed his hands. Then, instead of continuing on, he looked around and observed, “This is an excellent spot. There is a small pond nearby.” In this way, Swamishri purposely began to dawdle while the accompanying sadhus, Ramanbhai D. Patel of

Zarola, and the other youths became inpatient to reach Bhadran.

Meanwhile, word reached Jetha that a sadhu had stopped nearby, and he came running. When he saw that it was Swamishri, he was over the moon. It seemed like an echo of the incident of Shabari in the Ramayan! He welcomed Swamishri in his rustic language and lovingly led him to his hut. Even at high noon, the inside of the hut was so dark that Jetha had to light a lantern. Swamishri sat down in Jetha's dilapidated home with such joy that an observer might have been mistaken to think that he was sitting in a royal palace. To Swamishri's mind, there was no distinction between rich and poor!

Jetha placed an offering of a coconut, a tiny package of sugar crystals, and twelve cents at Swamishri's feet and said, "Please accept my meager offering and keep me forever with you."

Swamishri said, "Jethabhai! Today, we have fulfilled your wish. Soon, Shriji Maharaj will come to fetch you to his divine abode. God

looks after the guileless. Two years hence, Maharaj will come to take you.”

Exactly two years later, Swamishri himself arrived there in a divine form, granted Jetha a divine body, and took him to Akshardham.