

Chapter 9

Yogi's Higher Yoga

As the glory of the Akshar Purushottam *upasana* that Shastriji Maharaj was propagating began to reverberate through the Jhalavad-Gohilvad region, countless hostile hearts began to burn with envy. On the one hand, Shastriji Maharaj's sadhus received respect and honor from the community of Gunatit devotees, who remained absorbed in divinity through a series of festivals, assemblies, and spiritual discourses. On the other hand, these sadhus faced a whirlwind of opposition in every village they visited. As described in the verse, “*Ji re sant sadā shital rahe...*” (The *sant* remains forever serene...), this *sant mandal* remained tranquil in both situations, swallowing the poison slung at them and sowing the seeds of love in every village they visited.

Once, due to the insistence of the local devotees, Yogi Maharaj visited the village of Sodhi, near Dholera. He began to prepare *jadariyu* for Thakorji's *thal*. Meanwhile, someone sent a message to the Dholera mandir that, "The rebels have arrived in Sodhi." Enraged *parshads* immediately set out from the Dholera mandir on four horses and two camels and soon reached Sodhi. The *parshads* threatened Yogi Maharaj and the sadhus with violence and forced them to depart the village immediately, leaving the food simmering on the stove.

The sadhus walked toward the village of Khoriyana, but the *parshads* of Dholera were not satisfied by the persecution they had meted out in Sodhi. So, they followed Yogi Maharaj and the sadhus to Khoriyana and tried to force them to leave that village hungry and thirsty. But, the devotees of Khoriyana were outraged by the *parshads'* malevolence in the face of Shastriji Maharaj's sadhus' merciful forbearance. The villagers defended the sadhus

and rebuked the *parshads*. Then, they fed the sadhus before seeing them off.

To travel through the villages of Jhalavad in those days was like practicing austerities. It was difficult even to secure the basic necessities, and on top of that, these sadhus had a further challenge to endure—being insulted and abused!

Yogi Maharaj and the sadhus used to visit Chachana regularly. On one visit, sadhus from Muli arrived in the village and were furious that Yogi Maharaj and his sadhus were also there. They began shouting vile obscenities at Yogi Maharaj and proceeded to kick and beat Yogi Maharaj and the sadhus while screaming, “You filthy rebels! Why have you come here?”

Suddenly, Jilubha Darbar arrived, rescued Yogi Maharaj from the hail of blows he was enduring, and rebuked the sadhus of Muli. The sadhus of Muli felt, “Because the rebels have supporters here, we won’t be able to do much.” Thus, they left the village.

Yogi Maharaj slowly got up, smiled, and exclaimed, “Our bodies have been sanctified!”

When the sadhus of Muli would go to the village of Kanthariya, if they learned that “the rebels had stayed here,” they would wash the entire place, including the roof tiles of the kitchen! They would no longer use the water pots and instead insist that the devotees bring new ones for them. Merubha was disgusted by this behavior. Targeting the sadhus’ hateful attitudes, he would sometimes caustically remark, “Why don’t you throw out the blankets, too, because Shastriji Maharaj and Jogi Maharaj had slept in them!”

The sadhus of Muli could not say much before these strong-willed Darbars, so they would fume silently and take out their venom and hatred upon Shastriji Maharaj’s sadhus. Once, one such malevolent sadhu from Muli heard that “Jogi” and some of his sadhus were in Sundariyana. Thus, he set out for the village with his entourage. When Balubha Mahalkari heard that the sadhus of Muli were on their

way, he became frightened. He rushed to the kitchen and told the sadhus, “Hurry up! Finish eating and get out of here. An attack is imminent!”

To avoid the impending trouble, the sadhus quickly finished eating, packed their belongings, and exited the premises only to run into the sadhus of Muli, who had just arrived. Without any preamble, the sadhus of Muli began to beat Yogi Maharaj and his sadhus. They seized the cloth bags filled with grains they had received in alms and tore them open, spilling the grains across the ground. Yet, without the slightest bit of retaliation, Yogi Maharaj and his fellow sadhus quickly left the village.

During their travels, the sadhus would often meet people who treated them with great reverence. They would provide the sadhus with ample provisions and respectfully listen to their discourses. In one village, a villager had sponsored a feast of laddus. Yogi Maharaj, embodying the virtue of austerity, prepared the

laddus, offered them to Thakorji, and gave all of them to the person who had sponsored the feast. When the villager insisted on arranging for a bullock cart to take the sadhus to the next village, Yogi Maharaj responded, “There’s no need. We will walk.”

But, Yogi Maharaj’s actions left Trikamcharandas Swami incensed. Although he bit his tongue in the presence of that villager, afterward, while they were walking on the road, he began to berate Yogi Maharaj, “Why did you have to give him all of the laddus?”

“I’m sorry. I won’t do that in the future,” said Yogiji Maharaj. “I made a mistake this time.”

But Trikamcharandas Swami was not satisfied with Yogi Maharaj’s apology.

He decided that he would make Jogi fast. As a rule, sadhus must travel with a companion-sadhu. If a pair of traveling sadhus become separated such that they can no longer see each

other, then both sadhus have to fast as a penance for breaking the rule.

Thus, Trikamcharandas Swami began to run. As Yogi Maharaj was carrying both of their bags, he was soon straining to keep up. As he fell further behind, Yogi Maharaj began to plead, “Please wait.... Please wait....”

Trikamcharandas Swami forced Yogi Maharaj to continue running for six miles, all the way to Mojidad. By the time he stopped, Yogi Maharaj was gasping for air. Moreover, due to his delicate frame, such exertion risked serious injury. Shastriji Maharaj was in Mojidad at the time. When he saw Yogi Maharaj covered in sweat and panting while doing *dandvats*, he asked, “Why have you come running? What happened?”

Yogi Maharaj, “Nothing. I have met this guru!”

But when Shastriji Maharaj heard what happened from Trikamcharandas Swami, Shastriji Maharaj severely rebuked him.

However, Yogiji Maharaj’s affinity and behavior towards Trikamcharandas Swami did not change in the slightest.

In Mojidad one morning, Yogi Maharaj was singing *prabhatiya*, when the sound woke Akhandanand Brahmachari of Muli. He jumped up and threatened, “Stop your bellowing, otherwise you’ll pay for it.”

Yogi Maharaj stopped immediately without a word, but Ganesh Bhagat replied, “Please calm down. We won’t sing anymore.”

Truly, Jogi’s practice of “yoga” was even more grueling than the practice of ashtanga yoga. In the practice of ashtanga yoga, ensconced in a cocoon of solitude, what need would there be to tolerate others’ flaws and base natures? But a spiritual endeavor more powerful than any other was Yogi Maharaj’s distinctive ability to maintain an unwavering focus on his ultimate goal while transcending conflicts and keeping everyone happy by developing a habit of tolerating all obstacles.

Around this time, Ramjibhai's newly constructed house was ready to move into. However, he was determined that Shastriji Maharaj should come, cook a meal, and eat in his new house before he went to stay there. Thus, Ganesh Bhakta requested Shastriji Maharaj, “Bapa, Ramji wants to sponsor a grand feast. Please accept it.”

Shastriji Maharaj agreed and prepared *bundi* laddus himself, while Yogi Maharaj prepared the rest of the items for the meal. When everyone sat down to eat, Shastriji Maharaj began to serve everyone laddus. Yogiji Maharaj took half a laddu and some other items and began to eat. But, when Shastriji Maharaj insisted that he take more laddus, Yogi Maharaj expressed dismay as sweets did not suit his constitution. So, Shastriji Maharaj bit a laddu in half and said, “Now do you want it?” Yogiji Maharaj immediately held up his bowl to accept the laddu. Shastriji Maharaj was pleased. He knew that austerity-loving “Jogi” would not otherwise eat the laddus, so he

appealed to Yogi Maharaj's inherent sense of reverence for his guru.

A few crumbs from this sanctified laddu fell onto the floor. Seeing this, Shastriji Maharaj remarked, "Whoever eats this prasad will attain liberation."