

Chapter 4

First Darshan of His Beloved

The great sadhu, Madhavpriyadas Swami, who, along with Madhavcharandas Swami, had served under Gunatitanand Swami, had reached the venerable age of 102. Having lived his entire life according to Bhagwan Swaminarayan's commands, he was seen as an ideal sadhu by the entire Sampradaya. It was difficult to find anyone who could match his saintly lifestyle and dedication to service.

Many years ago, while serving in the construction of the Junagadh mandir dharmashala, he had fallen from the top of the structure and severely injured his stomach. Since then, he had experienced constant pain in his stomach. When the pain became debilitating, the only thing that could offer some relief was to have someone step on his stomach and push down hard for several minutes. At Krishnacharandas Swami's behest,

Jhina Bhagat began to serve Madhavpriyadas Swami. Due to Jhina Bhagat's inclination of loving devotion, he felt it to be disrespectful to put his feet onto such a great *sadguru*'s stomach and stand on him. Thus, he would press down hard on Madhavpriyadas Swami's stomach with both his hands to help relieve his pain. Every morning and evening for six months, Jhina Bhagat lovingly offered his service to this great *sadguru*.

During this time, Madhavpriyadas Swami discerned Jhina Bhagat's multifaceted spiritual genius, his unwavering faith in Akshar Purushottam, and his pure devotion. Due to Jhina Bhagat's many virtues, Madhavpriyadas Swami became very fond of him.

Madhavpriyadas Swami intensely desired that the Akshar Purushottam *upasana* be propagated far and wide. Upon leaving Vartal, Swami Yagnapurushdasji (Shastriji Maharaj) had become the primary torchbearer for this exceptional work. Dazzled by Swami Yagnapurushdasji's keen intellect,

Madhavpriyadas Swami had developed an immense affection for him since his time studying in Junagadh many years ago. Madhavpriyadas Swami was also aware that both Bhagatji Maharaj and Jaga Bhakta Swami had showered their unstinting blessings upon Swami Yagnapurushdasji. Madhavpriyadas Swami had conveyed to Jhina Bhagat the details of Swami Yagnapurushdasji's exceptional scholarship and his tireless drive to propagate Akshar Purushottam *upasana*. Since then, Jhina Bhagat had nourished an ardent desire to have the darshan of this rare soul. The immense, divine power of Jhina Bhagat's resolve drew Shastriji Maharaj to Rajkot.

Around the same time, Krishnacharandas Swami's *mandal* also reached Rajkot. When they received news of Shastriji Maharaj's arrival in Rajkot, Jhina Bhagat and three sadhus left Rajkot mandir at 4:00 a.m., ostensibly for a bath in the Aji River. However, they instead went to Krishnaji Ada's house for Shastriji Maharaj's darshan.

When Shastriji Maharaj awoke at dawn, Jadavjibhai informed him that several sadhus had come for his darshan. The sadhus did *dandvats* to Shastriji Maharaj and gifted him a *mala* and drinking gourd sanctified by Gunatitanand Swami. Shastriji Maharaj was pleased with their offering. Then, Krishnaji Ada formally introduced Shastriji Maharaj to the sadhus. Shastriji Maharaj's comprehensive spiritual genius left an indelible impression upon the Junagadh sadhus, who felt like they had just experienced a shower of immortalizing nectar. They saw in Shastriji Maharaj the embodiment of supreme faith in Akshar Purushottam Maharaj.

It was Friday, 12 August 1910 (Shravan sud 7, V.S. 1966), and Jhina Bhagat's first darshan of Shastriji Maharaj left tears of love streaming down his face. He felt the divine melody of Shastriji Maharaj's name reverberating through every pore of his body.

J h i n a B h a g a t ' s s p l e n d o r w a s incomprehensible. His heart was brimming

with an ocean of loving devotion. This meeting of Shastriji Maharaj and the child yogi, Jhina Bhagat, was a sweet moment of the greatest fortune for this Earth and all the souls inhabiting it!

When the sadhus of Junagadh headed back to the mandir after experiencing the indescribable bliss of Shastriji Maharaj's presence, it was as if even the Sun felt blessed by the sight of this occasion as it colored the skies in the resplendent hues of dawn.