

Chapter 4

Enthusiasm for Austerities

Jhina Bhagat had exhibited an exceptional aptitude for *seva* and devotional service. His inclination to remain the smallest of the small, as per his name⁴, and his enthusiasm for austerities and renunciation, inspired in everyone a feeling of deep reverence for him.

At the insistence of the Darbar of Mengani, Krishnacharandas Swami celebrated the festival of Annakut in Mengani each year. However, due to the loving invitation of the Darbar of Lodhika, Krishnacharandas Swami traveled to Lodhika to celebrate the Annakut of 1910 (V.S. 1967). On the day of Annakut, the Darbar had prepared a feast of *sata* and jalebi. Jhina Bhagat, forever inclined towards austerities, decided to fast on that day. When the Darbar of Lodhika discovered this, he urged Jhina Bhagat to eat, insisting that one should not fast on New Year's Day. Jhina Bhagat made

an excuse about stomach pains and declined to eat. So, the Darbar requested Krishnacharandas Swami to tell this young *parshad* to eat. Krishnacharandas Swami asked Jhina Bhagat to eat, but Jhina Bhagat relayed his initial answer about stomach pains and then remained silent. Ultimately, Jhina Bhagat abstained from all the delicious delicacies that day and completed his fast. Krishnacharandas Swami was extremely pleased by his disciple's firm resolve for renunciation and austerities. When everyone was going to sleep that night, Krishnacharandas Swami called Jhina Bhagat and placed both hands on his head in blessing. Then, he told all the younger sadhus to cultivate a similar enthusiasm for austerities.

After celebrating the Annakut festival, Krishnacharandas Swami and his *mandal* went to Gondal and had darshan of Akshar Deri. Then, he visited the Amreli district villages of Chalala, Mota Gokharvala, Neshadi, Nana Gokharvala, Charakhadi, Oliya, Vankiya, and Ankaliya, among other villages to nourish

satsang. In the village of Kami Kerala, near Chalala, Jhina Bhagat offered exceptional service in constructing the mandir and pleased Krishnacharandas Swami. Similarly, this young *parshad* worked extremely hard to help dig a well in the Odhana Samadhiyala mandir. In this way, by performing a variety of *sevas*, Jhina Bhagat earned the favor of Krishnacharandas Swami.

Krishnacharandas Swami was traveling with three sadhus and two *parshads*, one of whom was Jhina Bhagat. As they continued their travels, they came to Kunkavav.

It had been decided that the two *parshads* would travel from Kunkavav to Vartal to be initiated as sadhus by Acharya Shripatiprasadji Maharaj. Shamalbhai Gigabhai sponsored the *mandal's* travel to Vartal for this occasion, and Krishnacharandas Swami was pleased.

Krishnacharandas Swami would never ask for money from the mandir for travel or other expenses. Instead, he would raise the needed funds from devotees who had affection for him.

In those days, only the head of the *mandal* of sadhus could ask devotees to donate funds for required items. The other sadhus and *parshads* of the *mandal* could not ask the devotees for something even as small as a needle. Whatever the sadhus needed, they would request and receive from the head of their *mandal*. Gunatitanand Swami had established this system for sadhus from the beginning of his time in Junagadh.

After a few days, Krishnacharandas Swami and his *mandal* arrived in Rajkot. Here, Swami Balmukunddasji⁵, originally of Napad, was suffering from a severe, painful rash. Deeply moved by his suffering, Jhina Bhagat began to help take care of him.

During this time, Shastriji Maharaj came to Rajkot mandir for darshan. As Shastriji Maharaj was leaving the mandir, he passed near Jhina Bhagat bathing Balmukunddas Swami on the open-air bathing platform. Seeing Shastriji Maharaj approach, Balmukunddas Swami immediately stood up,

hurriedly wiped himself dry, and began to do *dandvats* to Shastriji Maharaj. In a choked voice, he prayed to Shastriji Maharaj, “Swami, I am suffering from a severe skin ailment. I have tried numerous treatments, but nothing has worked.”

Shastriji Maharaj said, “Come to Gujarat, and we will get the ayurvedic physician from Chansad, Mansukhbhai, to treat you. You will be cured of this ailment and once again be able to perform all basic tasks independently.”⁶

Jhina Bhagat also did *dandvats* to Shastriji Maharaj. Shastriji Maharaj briefly locked eyes with Jhina Bhagat, smiled, and blessed him before leaving the mandir.

• • •

4 Jhino means tiny.

5 Sadhu Balmukunddas was originally from the village of Napad, near Anand, in central Gujarat. He was born in a Patidar family. Sadhu Raghuvircharandas of Junagadh has once visited Napad after attending a festival celebration in Vartal. Upon observing this sincere spiritual aspirant, he thought to himself, “If this young man renounces the world, he will become a good sadhu.” So, Raghuvircharandas Swami spoke to him about the futility of worldly life and other topics that engendered vairagya in the young man, and ultimately brought him to Junagadh.

After he had spent some time in Junagadh, one day, Raghuvircharandas Swami asked, “Do you think about home?”

He replied, “No.”

Constantly listening to spiritual discourses had inspired him to renounce the world. Listening to the talks of Sadguru Balmukunddas Swami and Vignandas Swami helped him develop a firm conviction in Akshar Purushottam upasana. Following this, he received initiation as a sadhu.

6 With Shastriji Maharaj’s blessings, Swami Balmukunddasji spent six months in Chansad, where Mansukhbhai prescribed and supervised his ayurvedic treatment. Due to Swamishri’s blessings, Swami Balmukunddasji’s condition improved significantly. He was able to function independently, prepare meals, sing kirtans, and deliver spiritual discourses in the assembly. Due to Shastriji Maharaj’s blessings, he experienced peace and happiness.