

Chapter 9

Unbreakable Bonds of Attraction

For about two and a half months, Yogi Maharaj stayed at the home of Khengarjibhai in Rangil Pol, Ahmedabad, where he supervised the preparation of a set of crowns for Thakorji by Haribhai Soni. During Yogi Maharaj's stay, his affectionate nature and enthusiasm for serving devotees won the hearts of all the devotees in Ahmedabad. Everyone wished, "It would be wonderful if Yogi Maharaj could stay forever in Ahmedabad. We should get together and present this idea to Shastriji Maharaj."

At that time, the devotees of Ahmedabad, including Manchharambhai, his sons Nandulalbhai and Panachandbhai, Bhavanbha Bapu, Mansukhram Mistry, his sister's son Purushottamdas Gajjar, Babubhai Kothari, Kanjibhai Chauhan and his son Khengarjibhai, Haribhai, Amrutlal, Girdharlal Kadiya and his brother Amrutlal Sheth, Bhakta Mohanlal

Dhyani, Chaturbhai Kadiya, Tribhuvandas Mistry of Bakripol, and Bhagatji Maharaj's disciple Bhaktaraj Jethalal's son Mohanbhai, were all staunch, prominent devotees. However, like a mountain-sized magnet would draw iron to it from all around, everyone felt a special attraction for Yogi Maharaj. Everyone would go out of their way to meet Yogi Maharaj at least once a day. His matchless saintliness, mindful meekness, affection, service, distinctive style of reciting the Swamini Vato, and melodious singing of kirtans captured everyone's hearts. With these bonds of attraction, he had connected everyone to a common spiritual principle.

When Shastriji Maharaj arrived in Ahmedabad and learned of everyone's attraction for Yogi Maharaj, he joyfully exclaimed, "Only Yogi Maharaj possesses the highest art of winning everyone's hearts because within everyone he sees only Maharaj and Swami. Consequently, everyone can see the

qualities of Maharaj and Swami manifesting within him.”

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After completing their travels in central Gujarat, everyone went to Sarangpur to celebrate the Ful dol festival in March 1928 (V.S. 1984). The place where the Shastriji Maharaj Smruti Mandir stands today was a field of hay dotted with babul and *khijado* trees. Shastriji Maharaj assigned the sadhus and devotees the task of making the land cultivable. Yogi Maharaj enthusiastically helped in this effort. He hiked up his *dhotiyu* and tied his upper cloth tightly around his waist as he hefted large baskets of soil around the site. He served with such energy that his slightly dusky, slender frame, hunched with the weight of a large basket of soil on his head, seemed to be everywhere at once. As he performed this physical service, his mind remained singularly focused on Shastriji Maharaj, who was gently smiling, seated on a saffron cloth atop a pile of dirt a short distance away.

Several devotees soon came for Shastriji Maharaj's darshan. After prostrating before him, they sat and said, "Swami, please deliver some discourses that will bring us peace of mind."

Shastriji Maharaj pointed to Yogi Maharaj, who was walking towards them with a large basket of soil balanced on his head, and said to the devotees, "This Jogi will deliver discourses." Thus, Shastriji Maharaj had him stop transporting loads of soil and told him to speak to the devotees.

Instantly at Shastriji Maharaj's behest, Yogi Maharaj dusted himself off, covered himself with his upper cloth, and sat down. Then, clapping his hands in his distinctive style, he began with, "*Swaminarayan Hare, Swamie vat kari...*" and delivered discourses that granted peace of mind to the devotees.

Yogi Maharaj often broke into peals of laughter in the middle of his discourses. Whenever he begged for alms, after making the call for alms, he would recite the Vachanamrut

by memory and give sanctified *patasa* crumbs and please whoever deposited alms into his cloth bag. In Sarangpur, when Yogi Maharaj went for darshan of Jiva Khachar's *darbar* or for begging alms, he would recite Vachanamruts from memory as he walked. When Jiva Khachar's descendant, ten-year-old Haka Khachar, emptied a vessel of flour into his cloth bag, Yogi Maharaj would give him *patasa* crumbs. In those times, the grand festivals were celebrated on the alms that sadhus begged from the villagers.

After celebrating Fuladol, Yogi Maharaj traveled for two months with Shastriji Maharaj in the Bhal region. Then, on 6 May 1928 (Vaishakh *vad* 2, V.S. 1984), they went to Junagadh for the centenary celebration of the Junagadh mandir.

After that, Shastriji Maharaj decided to take the sadhus and devotees on a pilgrimage to the five holy sites of Sorath.