

Chapter 7

Cloistered in Chansad

To prevent the sadhus of Junagadh from experiencing any type of hardship or harassment, Shastriji Maharaj sent them to Chansad. The Junagadh *mandal* stayed in Chansad for six months. Mansukhbhai Vaidya administered Balmukunddas Swami's ayurvedic treatment, while Harkha Patel and Galabhai attended to the sadhus' other needs. On occasion, Pujaji Bapu would also come to Chansad. Once or twice a month, Shastriji Maharaj would also come to Chansad and grant the sadhus the bliss of his company.

The devotees of Chansad, including Mansukhbhai Vaidyaraj, Amtha Patel, Motibhai Prabhudas, Bavajibhai, and others, used to attend the sadhus' spiritual discourses regularly. In this way, Gunatit knowledge was properly nurtured in the village of Chansad.

In that era, many sadhus and devotees firmly believed that life's fulfillment lay in self-restraint, adherence to God's commands, and singular devotion to Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Mahapurushdas Swami, who resided in Chansad, was one such individual. A one-time *kothari* of Vartal mandir and staunch disciple of Bhagatji Maharaj, Mahapurushdas Swami's sole goal in life was the propagation of Akshar Purushottam *upasana*. Chansad, which had often been sanctified by Bhagatji Maharaj's presence, had become Mahapurushdas Swami's favorite place of residence. Mahapurushdas Swami was eminently capable. Through his force of will and profound spirituality, Satsang had taken root and flourished in all the villages surrounding Chansad.

Yogi Maharaj now had an excellent opportunity to serve Mahapurushdas Swami. Mahapurushdas Swami adored this young sadhu whose intense *vairagya* spurred him to observe a waterless fast every third day. Mahapurushdas Swami believed that

austerities, renunciation, and *vairagya* were a sadhu's ornaments. Early every morning, Yogi Maharaj would go to Mahapurushdas Swami and bow at his feet. On the mornings after Yogi Maharaj's waterless fasts, Mahapurushdas Swami would affectionately ask, "Have you seen our guest off?" (Meaning, "Have you broken your fast?")

Yogi Maharaj would laugh and reply, "Yes! We have seen the guest off."

Then, Mahapurushdas Swami would give him some sanctified *sukhadi*.

Thus immersed in spiritual discourses, kirtans, and spiritual discussions, the sadhus passed their days enjoying the bliss of Brahman. Yogi Maharaj would prepare the meals and feed the sadhus and devotees with love. In the afternoon, an elderly *parshad* would wash the utensils. Yogi Maharaj thought, "This *bhagat* is elderly, and he must be straining to draw enough water from the well to wash all these utensils. Thus, let me take responsibility for this *seva*."

Following the afternoon discourses, everyone went to their own *asans* to rest. Yogi Maharaj went to that elderly *parshad* and said, “Bhagat, please go to sleep. I will wash the utensils. I don’t have any other work to do in the afternoons.”

The *parshad* protested, but seeing Yogi Maharaj’s insistence, he finally acquiesced. From then on, every afternoon, Yogi Maharaj would wash the utensils. One day, seeing the elderly *parshad* come to sleep early in the afternoon, Mahapurushdas Swami asked, “Bhagat, how is it that you are completing the task of washing utensils so quickly?”

The *parshad* folded his hands and humbly said, “Actually, now, Jogi Swami is washing the utensils. He doesn’t let me wash them. He looks after me with great care.”

Mahapurushdas Swami laughed and said, “He has actualized Vachanamrut Gadhada II 7. Though he is small, he has assumed a heavy *seva* responsibility.”

In that evening's spiritual assembly, Mahapurushdas Swami told Vignandas Swami, "This Jogi is enthusiastic in his *seva*. Make sure you take good care of him. I see in him all of the saintly virtues."

Yogi Maharaj was the apple of Mahapurushdas Swami's eye. Mahapurushdas Swami remained in Chansad until he left his corporeal body in 1918 (V.S. 1974).

Yogi Maharaj's every action inspired admiration. Not only did he cook for everyone, wash utensils and sing *cheshta*, but he fit in with everyone, big or small, at their level. Everywhere he went, he blended in like sugar dissolved in milk.

Yogi Maharaj had a profound love for Shastriji Maharaj coupled with a complete understanding of his divine glory. Thus, Shastriji Maharaj would always find some excuse to visit Chansad regularly. Moreover, Muljibhai, a young devotee of Chansad, who was the same age as Yogi Maharaj, had become very attached to Yogi Maharaj. When Muljibhai

was a baby, Bhagatji Maharaj had taken him in his lap and played with him. Moreover, when, as a baby, Muljibhai's head had been shaved for the first time, Bhagatji Maharaj had drawn the holy swastika in kumkum on his shaved head and blessed him. Due to his holy association with Bhagatji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj had great reverence for Muljibhai.

Whenever the youngsters would be sitting alone together, Yogi Maharaj would ask Muljibhai to narrate incidents from Bhagatji Maharaj's life which everyone would then discuss.

Yogi Maharaj would wake up every morning at 3:30 a.m. During the auspicious *Brahma muhurt*, he would focus his mind in unbroken contemplation of Bhagwan Swaminarayan while heartily singing the morning *prabhatiyas* one after another. As he would walk through the village streets to go for his morning bath at the village well, he would sing the padas of “*Dhira dhurandharã...*”, and the melodious notes of Yogiji Maharaj's *brahmic* bliss would

gently caress the villagers out of their sweet early morning slumber.

While begging for alms in the village, Yogi Maharaj would memorize and revise sections of the Swamini Vato, Bhaktachintamani, and Vachanamrut, encouraging the children and youth who had affection for him to do the same. Although he remained fully engaged in service activities from morning until night, this Jogi was also an expert in delivering spiritual discourses. Through his simple, colloquial language, he conveyed penetrating and profound truths. The power of his speech was such that it could incinerate the seeds of desire for sense pleasures lodged deep in the soul. In the short span of six months, this young and affectionate sadhu had become an object of reverence throughout the entire village.

After spending six months engaged in spiritual discourses and devotion in Chansad, Shastriji Maharaj commanded the group of sadhus to spend the next six months traveling

through Sokhada, Sankarda, Anjesar, Vasana, Mirsapura, and the surrounding villages.

The learned Shastri Shwetvaikunthdasji of Vartal was born and raised in Sankarda. As a young man, before initiation, he met Yogi Maharaj for the first time in the Swaminarayan mandir of Sankarda. He often shared his memory of that meeting, saying:

I met him for the first time before I became a sadhu. He had come to Sankarda with Swami Vignandasji. At the time, he must have been around eighteen years old. Seeing him embody so fully all the saintly virtues even at that young age, all the devotees who came in contact with him, including myself, felt that it is very rare to meet such a sadhu.

His recitation of the Swamini Vatos was reminiscent of the cool, peaceful flow of the Ganga River. A small smile was always playing on his lips. But most of all, all the values and virtues he spoke about were fully present in his life.

* * *

On 24 November 1912 (Kartik *sud* Punam, V.S. 1969), many devotees had come to Bochasan to celebrate Punam. Over the years, Shastriji Maharaj's influence had been spreading through the villages of Gujarat and Saurashtra. Thus, countless devotees had come from those villages to attend the celebration. Vignandas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, Jadav Bhagat, and the other sadhus of the *mandal* had also come to Bochasan from Saurashtra.

After the festival, Tribhuvandas Gopalbhai of Sokhada requested Shastriji Maharaj to grace his village. He had built a new house in the village, and to celebrate its opening, he wished to sponsor a *parayan* on the Swamini Vato. Along with Shastriji Maharaj, he specially invited Vignandas Swami's *mandal* to the event. During the *parayan*, Tribhuvandas's sons, Shankarbhai, Chhaganbhai, and Narsinhbhai developed a deep affection for Yogi Maharaj. Yogi Maharaj would encourage

and assist these youths in memorizing the Swamini Vato. Everywhere he went, children and youth would instantly bond with him. They flocked to him due to his selfless love and saintliness, and despite his young age, they would enthusiastically do what he said.