

Chapter 13

“Such a Sant Is Kin to All...”

One evening, two sadhus from the Vartal Gadi arrived during the evening discourses after *shayan arti*. Yogi Maharaj was very pleased. He met them, inquired about their welfare, and discovered that they had not had dinner. So, Yogi Maharaj led them to the kitchen and personally served them food from Thakorji's *thal*. Then, he had someone lay out bedrolls in another room for them to spend the night.

The next day, when the sadhus came to take Yogi Maharaj's leave, Yogi Maharaj folded his hands and asked, “Please, tell us, how can we be of further service?”

“Well, you've already helped out so much,” said a sadhu. “But, as we are both studying in Kashi, we need to purchase some books. We require `150 for that purpose.”

“Oh, ho! Is that all? You shall certainly have it...” Yogi Maharaj asked a senior devotee to provide them with the money and pleased the sadhus.

Suddenly, one of the sadhus became emotional. Tears began to roll down his cheeks. When Yogi Maharaj asked what was wrong, he replied in a trembling voice, “Swami! I have sinned against you. I have sworn at you profusely, and once, I had even beaten you mercilessly. I am a sinner. Please forgive me.”

He fell at Yogi Maharaj’s feet. Yogi Maharaj lifted him up and embraced him. Then, laughing, Yogi Maharaj said, “I don’t remember any of that, Guru! So, don’t let it trouble you. Just bury it. Don’t think about it anymore. Maharaj will make everything better. Just study hard, become a great scholar, and serve the Sampradaya.”

Both sadhus went to Gadhada. Then, they studied for several years in Kashi. When they had completed their studies and attained the designation of Shastri, they returned to

Gadhada. There, they related this incident to Dhirajlal Vaidya of Gadhada and said, “Despite being guilty of such crimes against him, Yogi Swami still bought the books we needed. He served us. My God! He even sat across from us and fed us like he was our servant. We had harassed such an innocent sadhu who bore malice towards none. But not only is he himself free of any sense of ‘us versus them,’ if there is any sadhu powerful enough to instantly eradicate such distinctions in others, it is Yogi Maharaj.”

Inspired by Yogi Maharaj’s pristine saintliness, many spiritual aspirants were able to realize their flaws and transgressions and wash them away in the waters of repentance. Of the many methods that “Yogiraj” employed in purifying souls, this was one additional way.

In December 1944, around six weeks before the Vasant Panchami celebrations of V.S. 2001, Champaklal Sheth of Ahmedabad had the thought, “Our matchless guru, Shastriji Maharaj, will be completing 80 years and

entering his 81st year. So, we should celebrate our guru’s birthday in an unprecedented fashion. When even worldly people striving for bodily pleasures are offered hundreds of thousands of rupees as gifts, then as a symbol of our devotion, we should offer `125,000 as a gift at the feet of our Guruhari who has blessed us with divine bliss.” Everyone welcomed this idea with boundless enthusiasm and pledged to donate beyond their capacity.

The holy pilgrimage place of Bochasan was fortunate to be selected to host Shastriji Maharaj’s 81st birthday celebrations. Everyone was yearning to present their offering as a token of appreciation for the life and work of the great soul who had spread the true Gunatit knowledge throughout the land via countless sadhus similar to Shukdev and the Sanaks and innumerable devotees like Janak and Jayadev.