

Chapter 16

Travels in Gujarat, Inspiring Faith in the Youth

The devotees who had come from Africa were eager to have Swamishri visit their native villages. Thus, Swamishri first went to Anand to bless a wedding in the family of Jivabhai Haribhai. Together with him were Pramukh Swami and fifteen other sadhus. Swamishri stayed there for six days and granted the devotees the bliss of his spiritual discourses and darshan.

Whenever Swamishri was in Anand, Manibhai Naranbhai would stay devotedly in Swamishri's service. Swamishri would also never fail to visit his home. Manibhai's son, Vinubhai, had an aversion for Hindu sadhus. So, whenever Swamishri visited his home, he would escape down the back stairs. Once, when he was evading Swamishri in this manner, it just so happened that Swamishri and the

sadhus were entering the house through the back stairs. Seeing Vinubhai departing, Swamishri affectionately grasped his hand and said, “Guru! Where are you going? Come upstairs.”

Reluctantly, Vinubhai went upstairs. Swamishri showered his selfless love upon everyone and began to talk about satsang. Then he said, “Here, put on this *kanthi*!” However, as soon as Swamishri put a *kanthi* around his neck, Vinubhai grabbed it and tore it off. His intention was to irritate Swamishri so that he might be sent away.

But this sadhu was of a different mettle. He laughed sweetly and patted Vinubhai on the back, saying, “Oh, ho! You are very valiant!”

Vinubhai moved away from Swamishri. He was looking for an opportunity to leave. He spied the *murti* of Harikrishna Maharaj and discerned an opening. He pried a few small pebbles off the wall and began lofting them in the direction of Harikrishna Maharaj, aiming to knock off his crown. Although Swamishri noted

everything that was going on around him, he remained absolutely unmoved! After they did Thakorji's *arti*, when they brought it before Vinubhai, he blew it out. The other devotees felt that this youth had crossed all limits. Anyone would have been angered and irritated by his behavior, but when it came time for Swamishri to take his leave, he cast an affectionate smile upon Vinubhai.

Thereafter, Swamishri spent several more days in Anand before heading out to Valasan one afternoon at 5 p.m. At the time, Vinubhai was seated on the banks of the pond with his friends. Swamishri saw him from afar and called out to him by name. Vinubhai thought, "Oh, no! Now, surely this sadhu will make me carry his luggage."

Reluctantly, as Vinubhai approached Swamishri, Swamishri pulled him close, patted him on the back, and said, "Now, we are leaving. Please forgive my mistakes!"

Before Vinubhai could recover from his astonishment, Swamishri left. From his deep

remorse, a series of feelings blossomed in his heart, “When will I be blessed again by this affectionate smile? When will I again see his loving face?” Without his realizing it, the seeds of faith had sprouted in his heart.