

Chapter 9

Uncompelled Compassion

Kanjibhai Soni of Bhavnagar had gone to visit his paternal aunt in the village of Kharva. When he went for darshan in the village mandir, he saw Yogi Maharaj and sat in his discourses. Seeing him to be *satsangi*, Yogi Maharaj lovingly patted him on the neck and asked, “Kanjibhai, when do you want to do satsang?”

Kanjibhai thought, “If these rebel sadhus cast some spell on me, then their Gunatit knowledge will invade my heart, and I will be able to see only these rebel sadhus everywhere.” Thus, without waiting to answer, he instantly stood up and rushed off. But this mysterious sadhu had already whispered a ‘magical mantra’ into his ear, as eventually, Kanjibhai would develop a firm conviction in the supremacy of Akshar Purushottam

upasana and intense affection for Yogi Maharaj.

A carpenter from central Gujarat had moved to Bhavnagar to start a business. He was addicted to opium. Every day he would sit with Vignandas Swami and vow to quit his opium addiction, but he was unable to kick the habit. Vignandas Swami would prescribe him severe austerities as penance for restarting his addiction and again endeavor to convince the carpenter to quit opium. However, the devotee was never able to completely forsake his addiction.

One day, Vignandas Swami forced him to stay at the mandir all day and prohibited him from leaving. By evening, his withdrawal symptoms had become so severe that he began screaming in pain.

Yogi Maharaj was extremely compassionate. He whispered into Kanjibhai's ear, "This poor man is a good devotee who is suffering. It will be good if you could find a little opium to give to him."

Vignandas Swami found out about this request, and he was enraged. He upbraided and beat Yogi Maharaj in front of everyone.

The devotee addicted to opium was aghast to witness Yogiji Maharaj's suffering on his account. He thought, "How sinful and wretched am I that because of me, this young sadhu had to suffer so much pain." Working up his courage, he quit opium within a fortnight, and for the rest of his life, never tired of singing Yogi Maharaj's praises.

The extraordinary virtue of compassion, which included profound empathy for others' pain coupled with a selfless desire to remove it, brimmed to overflowing in Yogi Maharaj's life. Rarely can one see such profound compassion and selfless altruism in the world today. But Yogi Maharaj perceived everyone as divine, and thus undergirding his virtue of compassion was the concept of "*Ātmavat sarvabhūtāni tataha pashyennachānyathā*" (He sees all beings as like his own *atma* and not in any other way).