

Chapter 3

Divine Birth

Puriba had attained an ideal confluence of spiritual knowledge and devotion in her life, for which she was widely respected throughout Dhari.³ By God's divine will, a Sant akin to God's very heart manifested within Puriba's womb to further sanctify our world and foster the *ekantik dharma* established by Bhagwan Swaminarayan.

On Monday, 23 May 1892 (Vaishakh *vad* 12, V.S. 1948), Puriba gave birth to an infant yogi who possessed a charming oval face and auspicious, long arms. It was an occasion of divine joy not just for their family but also for all of Dhari and the entire world. Indeed, the manifestation of such a divine being on Earth has been extolled in the scriptures:

Kulam pavitram janani krutārthā
vasundharā punyavati cha tena,

Apāra samvitsukhasāgare'smin linam
Parabrahmani yasya chetaha.

(The birth of one whose consciousness is ever absorbed in Parabrahma's vast ocean of knowledge and bliss sanctifies the family, fulfills the mother, and purifies the entire Earth.)

This divine newborn's birth in this realm was like a manifestation of Bhagwan Sahajanand Swami's sublime beauty and infinite charm. This slightly dusky newborn infant's expansive forehead shone like heated copper, which prognosticators took as a sign indicating his future greatness. His heart overflowed with the nectar of contemplation upon the *atma*, which exuded from his eyes in the form of profound love, expressing the living compassion of Paramatma Sahajanand Swami. The soles of both his feet carried the *urdhva-rekha* mark indicating that he was the greatest yogi. From just looking at him, it was instantly clear that this child devotee had manifest on this Earth to reside in the hearts of countless

people. Like the sounds of a bubbling brook, his gurgling laughter and ever-smiling face seemed to suggest that the secret of this infant yogi's manifestation on this Earth was contained in the divine sound of his unbridled laugh.

Devchandbhai and Puriba named their son Jhinabhai, and as the days passed, they felt blessed to see his cheerful and ever-smiling face. His parents were somewhat concerned by his delicate frame, particularly his thin legs. In fact, by the time Jhinabhai was eighteen months old, he still had not started walking or talking. Although it did cause his parents some concern, it was as if Jhinabhai knew all about the vicissitudes and selfishness of worldly life and had from the beginning chosen not to engage with it. His soft, innocent eyes reflected his pure love, and anyone who looked into them felt their heart fill with love. Puriba would often be overwhelmed by her love for him. Many told her, "He will probably remain mute and unable to walk. He will likely suffer from

these disabilities his entire life.” But Puriba’s heart refused to believe it.

When Puriba would go to work in the fields, she would never leave Jhinabhai at home, for Jhinabhai was the apple of her eye. She would take Jhinabhai to the fields, lay him on a blanket underneath a tree, and then start her farm work. The other women harvesting crops would also lay their babies in the shade of that tree. However, as soon as they stepped away to begin their farmwork, the babies, losing sight of their mothers, would wail at the top of their lungs. The farm owner would angrily scold the mothers, “Why must you bring your crying babies to my farm every day!”

But this was the daily routine. However, the farm owner would never scold Puriba; instead, he would look towards Jhinabhai with respect and say, “This Jhino is a very miraculous child. See, just like Shri Krishna, he always sucks on the big toe of his right foot.” He would point this out to everyone and say, “Puribai, this Jhino of yours will grow up to be great.

Everyone will revere him, and he will be beloved of all.”

In this way, from his infancy, Jhinabhai’s fame spread. Anyone who saw him could not help but be attracted to his innocence.

Once, at the end of a long day on the farm, Puriba and the other women returned to collect their children from under the tree, but Jhino was nowhere to be found. Puriba was terrified because predatory animals such as lions and leopards used to frequent the area in those days. Assailed by visions of large predators dragging a bloodied and senseless Jhino to their lair, Puriba began to cry. The rest of the women were also very worried. The farm owner came when he heard what had happened, and he instructed everyone to fan out and search the nearby areas.

As everyone joined in the frantic search, someone soon noticed little Jhinabhai ambling towards them from the other side of the farm. Puriba ran to Jhino and scooped him into her arms. As she shed tears of joy and relief, Jhino

pointed his finger in the direction from which he had come. Everyone was surprised, and the farm owner said, “It seems like Jhino is trying to show us something. Let’s go take a look.”

In the fallow land next to the field, they saw several bales of cotton concealed in the tall grass. Everyone understood what had happened. The farm owner said, “When we were on the other side of the farm, thieves must have stolen these bales of cotton. Then, Jhino must have gone to them out of curiosity, causing the thieves to drop the bales of cotton and run for it.”

Everyone was astonished, and talk of this remarkable incident spread throughout Dhari. People said, “That child must have given the thieves such a fearsome look that they ran away.” Thus, speculation on what had transpired was the talk of the town for days.

But, charming little Jhinabhai was a very serene child. He would listen to what people said and respond only with his innocent smile.

3 Liladharbhai was a native of the village of Babapur (Vankiya), who had had darshan of Shriji Maharaj, and who understood Gunatitanand Swami to be Mul Akshar. Liladharbhai's son, Purushottambhai, had received vartman from Gunatitanand Swami. Once, when Purushottambhai went to Junagadh for Gunatitanand Swami's darshan, Gunatitanand Swami called him close, give him prasad, and gazed into his eyes unblinking, which was very unusual for Swamishri. Purushottambhai felt it to be his great fortune that Gunatitanand Swami, the manifestation of Akshardham, had showered his grace upon him.

Thereafter, Purushottambhai would regularly stay in contact with Balmukunddas Swami, Yogeshwardas Swami, and Krishnacharandas Swami. Purushottambhai had a small shop in which he sold items for general household use. He was beloved throughout his village due to his integrity, honesty, and gentle speech. He had four sons, Trikambhai, Harjibhai, Fulabhai, and Naranbhai, and one daughter, Puribai. Since Puribai was the sole daughter amongst four sons, she was raised in a devotional environment with great affection. From childhood, she was engrossed in devotion. By nature, she was straightforward, affectionate, and quick to laugh.