

39. CONTRIBUTION TO THE TRADITION OF LITERATURE BY SAINTS

By composing the famous book ‘Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta.’ Avadhūtājī had already stepped into the realm of literature composed by saints. He enjoyed some literary distinction. He delivered the message of knowledge, action and devotion through ancient folk tales. His biography of his spiritual guide and Master is a great literary achievement.

‘Avadhūtī Ānanda’ is a collection of hymns, psalms and devotional songs. It is also a literary masterpiece. The Sanskrit poet-playwright Bhavabhūti once said that significance dogs the word of saints. This truth is reflected in the psalms of ‘Avadhūtī Ānanda’. It treasures his rich experiences of attaining to heights of knowledge and devotion; it comes out like one burps after a full meal upto the brim. These psalms and hymns are written in Gujarātī and Hindī.

‘Rāṅga-Hṛdayam’ comprises odes and hymns in the honour worship of Gods and Goddesses, and these are written in Sanskrit. There are profound philosophical poems in it too. They all mirror Avadhūtājī’s heart overflowing with love of God. It is also a great contribution to sacred literature.

In ‘Avadhūtī Ānanda’, morning prayers are very striking; “Akśara Gītā”, “Bodha Mālikā”, “Dattanāma Smaraṇa” attract the attention.

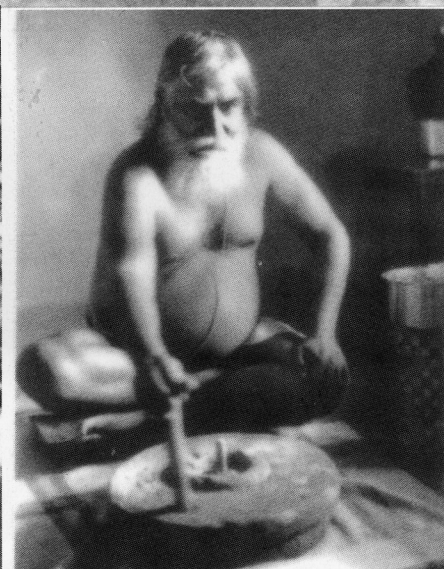
There are compositions in Gujarātī; Marāṭhī and Sanskrit languages addressed to Śrī Avadhūtājī in his honour and praise.

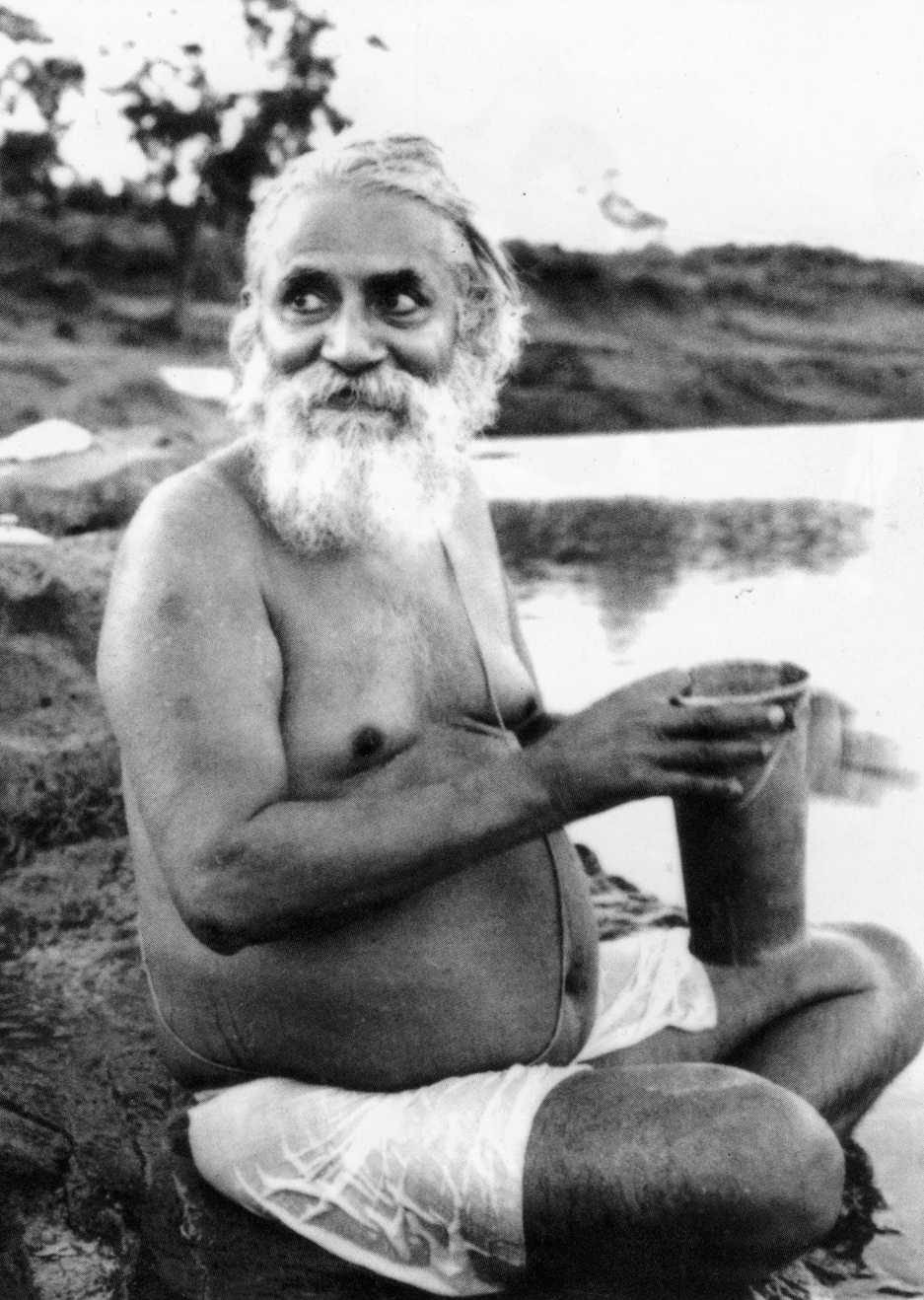
40. CELEBRATING DATTA-JAYANTĪ BIRTHDAY OF LORD DATTĀTREYA

Late Śrī Hargovindadas goldsmith from Raṅāpura was a true devotee. He used to visit Nāreśvara frequently. Once he thought of a plan to send loaves of Indian bread made with milk for Śrī Avadhūtajī every Thursday. Sometime a member of his family would visit Nāreśvara. Avadhūtajī, out of courtsey and politeness talked a few things with the person visiting Nāreśvara and on the rest of the days Avadhūtajī observed silence.

So people started going to him with their problems and miseries on Thursdays and Sundays. Śrī Avadhūta was absorbed in singing psalms. Very often he would utter the words “Datta” and “Avadhūta”. Lord Dattātreya’s birthday fell on the fifteenth day of Mṛgaśīrṣa. In the earlier times all devotees gathered there and celebrated the birthday in presence of Avadhūtajī.

For two days they would read and recite ‘Gurulīlāmṛta’. The celebrations began early in the morning on the Full moon day i.e. the fifteenth day. Morning prayers were offered and morning rituals performed. In the evening at the hour of Lord Datta’s birth, couplets in honour of Lord’s birth from Gurulīlāmṛta were recited. Hymns were chanted and prayers were offered. Then there was continuous chanting of Lord’s name. Balmukundbhai sang a lullaby composed by Avadhūtajī.





Mahijī led a team of devotional singers from Toṭidarā. At night they danced with ropes singing psalms and hymns for the whole night. The next day in the early morning they broke their fast. Then the people went away to their homes and villages. By and by this celebration assumed the form of a folk festival.

The first Datta-Jayantī celebration which involved an expenditure of only Rs.36 became more and more expensive as times went by. The crowds swelled.

Of course, all voluntarily observed religious discipline and enjoined others to do. So, it was more of a cultural meet than a common fair. The late National poet Zaverchand Meghani heard of this and he remarked: "Culture is the life giving breath of any community. It discards worn out conventions and produces new ones". Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta has given a new centre of pilgrimage on the outskirts of a river bank called Nāreśvara. It is throbbing with life now.

Avadhūtajī was by origin a Maharashtrian brahmin youth. His name was Pāṇḍuraṅga Valāme. He was a graduate of the Gujarat Vidyāpīṭha. Because he was possessed by spirituality in search of eternal bliss not only for himself but even for all his devotees, he pursued his quest on the banks of the river Narmadā. Neither did he build a new temple nor did he construct a sanatorium raising funds or collecting donations. But there are two new things to his credit. One, he being dedicated to Guru Dattātreyā, has written beautiful psalms

and devotional songs in Gujarātī and Second, he started a cultural fair of sorts.

Nearly ten thousand men and women attended this cultural meet every year and enjoyed poetic and religious atmosphere for almost a week. It became poetic because the devotees, while working in the kitchen, chanted hymns and psalms written by Raṅga Avadhūtājī and their laborious task in the kitchen became enjoyable and not at all boring by the melodious rhythms of his hymns. The pilgrims who were fetching water sang: Dattabāvanī- (Jaya Yogīśwara Datta Dayāḷa, Tuṅja Eka Jagamān Pratipāḷa) "Glory be to the Datta, the Lord of yogis you alone are our guardian and redeemer".

Another devotee, working in the kitchen, cooking Tur or Muga Dāla or Lentil soup and mixing it with a ladle sang: "Zoḷī Annapūrṇā Kara Māmhya, Śānti-Kamaṇḍala Kara Sohāya!": Holding in hands a bag of offerings, his vessel of peace shines: Thus the cultural meet resounded with the music Dattabāvanī. (the divine hymn of 52 lines).

The noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore said often that memorials of stones and metals have lost significance; organise cultural fairs for the memories of our national readers. Community festivals should be common and respectable. However, it is not easy to continue the tradition of community fairs. People are credulous and superstitious. It is true to some extent that laymen are taken in by the saffron robes, long beards and bald heads.

However, the community fairs don't thrive with such appearances. Even exhibitions, sports, seminars and discourses or singers don't make true community fairs worthy of a name that vibrates with joy and life-spirit of community life around. "He truly deserves homage and honour who transfuses into the veins of men and women the poetry of life; this means people drop away the inhibitions of society, abandon themselves with full freedom, and enjoy the beauty of nature as a free divine gift.

"I haven't seen myself how Raṅga Avadhūta conducted such a community fair. But to conceive and conduct and continue such a tradition of community fairs is an achievement of a master spirit-this certainly I can say." (quoted from an article ('Narmadāne Tīre') in Urmi Ane Nav Rachana)

What was distinct about such DattaJayantī-celebrations was this- all food was hand-made. Manual labour was encouraged. Crowds of followers came but they raised the tents for their stay and when they left, they dismantled the tents. The water used in cooking food and other utilities was brought by people themselves. Avadhūtajī himself fetched five Kāvaḍas (Bamboo laṭh on the shoulder with slings at both ends for carrying pitchers). This is now kept in a museum near the temple. Hundreds of men and women followed him singing in a refrain, "Digambarā Digambarā Śrīpāda

Vallabh Digambarā”. So the food people ate there was transformed by divine grace; it was God’s gift to people. They all sat together to share the divine “Prasāda” (Grace). They started eating after chanting aloud “Avadhūta Cintana Śrī gurudev Datta”. After eating, they collected their own dishes (made up of dried lotus leaves) and put them in trash bags. Thus the spirit of sacredness, dignity of self-reliance and discipline was observed. What he learnt and practised as a soldier of the freedom movement was translated into religious education.

Many such celebrations were held in his presence. Then after a few years Avadhūtājī said, “Now, all of you celebrate the Lord’s birthday in your own town. I shall visit some town every year turn by turn”. Thus the celebrations were decentralised.

41. IN THE MIDST OF THE WATERS OF THE NARMADĀ

Once Avadhūtājī and Śrī Ratanlal, a noble, righteous soul, who was responsible for Avadhūtājī choosing Nāreśvara as a seat of his spiritual journey, were staying at Araṇyeśvara Mahādeva shrine near Toṭidarā.

Many a times the shrine was surrounded by the tides or floods in the river. When the waters rose too high the priest and his assistant left the shrine. When Avadhūtājī had stopped by there, the waters continued to rise higher and higher, and the priest and his assistants

had already left the shrine. The villagers noticed that Avadhūtājī and his companion were still at the shrine, though the priest and his assistants were gone from the place. They went to the shrine, warned him of the imminent danger of not leaving the place but Avadhūtājī was determined to stay on there; Ratanlal could go away if he so desired. But how could he go away, leaving Avadhūtājī in the lurch? Both of them stayed there. Waters continued to swell higher and higher.

Ratanlal was scared but Avadhūtājī said, “Ratanlal, no need to fear. I took a circumambulation of the river and today, the river circumambulates me! It will go back after completing its aim!” Waters rose higher and higher and covered all the hills around the area, as if the river were making its pilgrimage around Avadhūtājī! After sometime the flood ebbed and, lo! to the amazement of all people, the saint (Avadhūta) and his companion were safe and sound.

A similar incident also occurred at Nāreśvara. In 1961, the Narmadā flooded overwhelmingly and the local people were frightened. In good humour Avadhūtājī said, “If the mother river comes over here to give me a bath I shall invite the Brahmins of Bhāloda and Koral villages and give them a grand dinner party!” Someone remarked, “O God, a brahmin of Bhāloda or Koral can come for your party if he is alive after the waters have flooded your cell!”

But Avadhūtajī composed an ode to pay homage to the river; it was ‘Revā Gītam’. The song in the rhythmic structure of Mālakaumisa has become very popular with the followers of Avadhūtajī.

It is worth nothing that this ode was sung as a prayer by Śrī Vimlātāi Thakar at the opening session at a seminar of Sarvodaya workers.

42. CELEBRATIONS OF RAṅGA AVADHŪTA’S BIRTHDAY (RAṅGA-JAYANTĪ)

Avadhūta’s old followers were once sitting by the side of his mother Rukamāmbā. While they were conversing it was mentioned casually that Raṅga Avadhūta was born on “Gopāṣṭamī” of Kārtika Month which fell on Monday and was regarded 9th day of the month. When the old almanacs were consulted it was learnt that the day was Kārtik 9th day of V.S. 1955. You think of Raṅga Avadhūtajī’s birthday as you do of Lord Dattā’s.

To start with, the first birthday, on a small scale but with full dignity and honour due to him, was celebrated in Diver. Then, by chance in Zanora, it continued, as years passed by, at Umallā, Pora, C’āñī, Jhagaḍiā, Garbādā, Pādarā, Navāpura (Khāndeśa), Ajupurā, Vaḍodarā (52nd), Naḍiāda, Bājawā, Nāreśvara (60th), Dākora, Dharmaja, Kaṇabhā, Dwārakā, Navāgāma, Ambājī, Kampālā (Africa), Jaipura and at several places. At Bājawā, Avadhūtajī began giving a short sermon

in Gujarātī. Later on, such didactic discourses were published in a collection entitled 'Amara-Ādeśa', At Navāpura he took a bird's eye-view of the history of Datta-worship and such other topics. It was printed separately but, later on, was included in 'Amara-Ādeśa'.*

His 60th birthday was celebrated at Nāreśvara. The inspiring idea to do this was that his own mother Mā Rukmābā could see such a celebration.

When the proposal was placed before Avadhūtājī he said, "If you are going to make it a truly religious occasion, I grant you my permission. And in so far as I am concerned, my only condition is that you take me on this birthday to my Guru's memorial site at Garuḍeśvara". All his conditions were satisfied and the birthday was celebrated with irresistible zeal. During the week of celebrations, over a hundred thousand men and women visited Nāreśvara and paid their homage to him. Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta's birthday celebration at Pādarā was a note worthy unique experience which the devotees will remember for ever. The procession at Pādarā to honour and welcome Avadhūtājī was of a different kind. We had not seen anything like it before. The shopkeepers and businessmen in every street and lane used the goods and wares of their own occupation to decorate the arches put up for the reception of their Guru Mahārāja. For example the goldsmiths hung real gold ornaments made by them. Florists decorated the welcome arch in their

* The english translation of Avadhūtājī's birthday message is now available in a book entitled "Thus Spake Śrī Raṅga Avadhūta = Call of Nāreśvara.

market with colourful flowers. Utensil merchants used their Brass, Aluminium and stainless steel utensils to decorate the arch in their locality. Capsellers used multi coloured caps. Potters used earthen pots and jugs. Electrical goods dealers used all kinds of decorative lights. Plumbers used all pipes and fittings nicely arranged in an arch to welcome Avadhūtajī. Leather goods manufacturers put up an arch decorated with shoes, sandals and leather jackets and so on. What a sight that was. Śrī Guṇavantarāy who was a host for Avadhūtajī greeted him showering real pearls. What a welcome Bāpajī received!

108 group- readings of ‘Śrī Gurulīlāmṛta’ were scheduled for the first time in Vaḍodarā. On his birthday his Pādukā was worshipped by newly composed hymns. Śrī Manishanker Upadhyay, a scholar of eminence, who was a resident of Baroda, wrote these verses. They are accepted as holy verses for his worship since then.

Devotional songs in Sanskrit were composed and sung. Three collections in Sanskrit in honour of Avadhūtajī are also published.

43. NĀRĀYAṆABHĀĪ IN NĀREŚVARA

Rev. Mother Rukamāmbā was living with Avadhūtajī’s younger brother, Nārāyaṇabhāī. He fell seriously ill in Bombay, and Avadhūtajī called him as well as their mother and settled them at Nāreśvara.

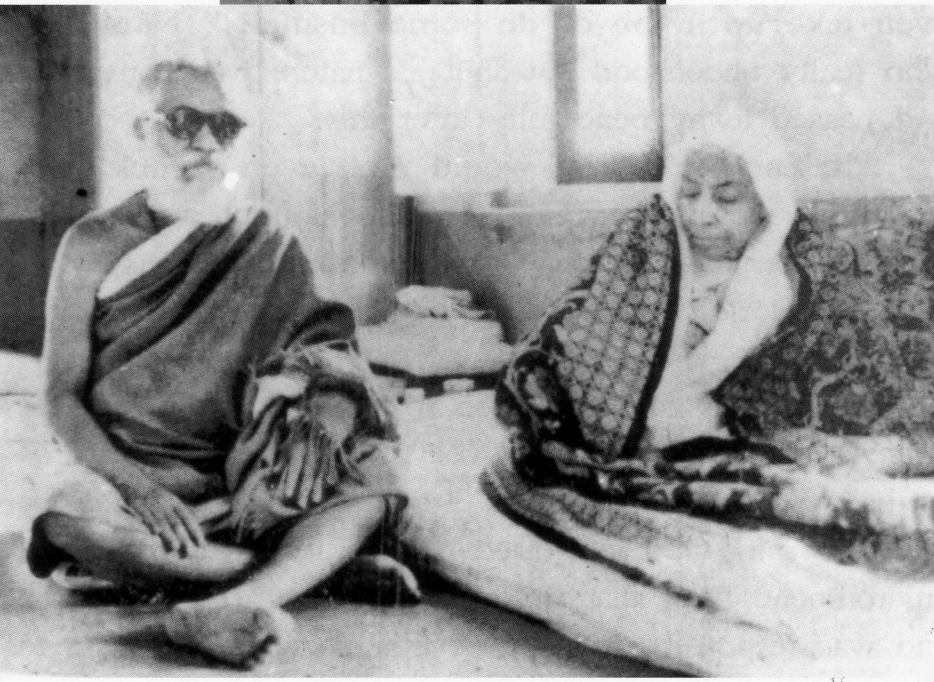
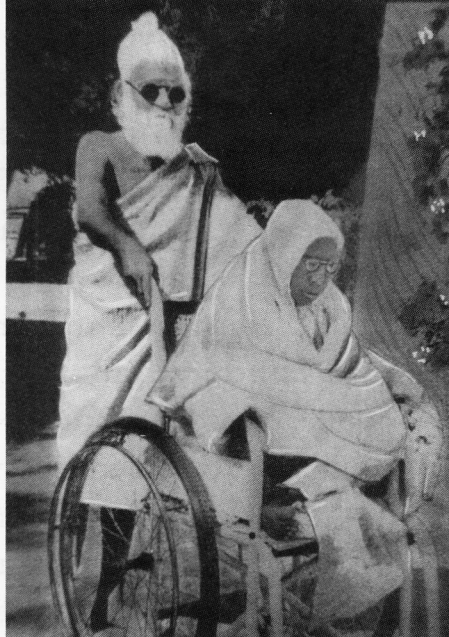
Nārāyaṇa’s illness was aggravating day by day and there were no signs of improvement. But the sacred and

pious atmosphere of the environment in Nāreśvara made the illness bearable to him. However, his soul was not ready to depart as something was bothering him. Avadhūtaji realised that Nārāyaṇa was worried about their mother. It was true. What would be the fate of their mother after Nārāyaṇa's death? Avadhūtaji had renounced worldly life! These were the questions that would have occupied Nārāyaṇa's mind, causing him worries.

Avadhūtaji could understand his brother's predicaments very well. He, peacefully but firmly promised his dying brother, "You need not worry about mother. I will take care of her. If I think that my renunciation comes in the way of my duties to her, I shall give up my ascetic way of life. If need be, I will even take up a job or do some business". Nārāyaṇa who really understood Avadhūtaji's nature was convinced and passed away peacefully after this.

The mother's grief would melt even a rock. She became a widow early in life, brought up her two sons with tremendous hardships and sufferings. Then one son gave up worldly life retiring to the forest and the other was dead.

By and by she got used to the life at Nāreśvara, and Avadhūtaji treated her well and looked after her as he had promised his brother. So the mother regained her peace of mind and readjusted her life to suit the changed environment. After that she took control of several things and was responsible for the development of Nāreśvara to a very great extent.



44. UNFLINCHING DEVOTION TO MOTHER (MOTHER AS DIVINITY)

Nāreśvara now began to develop after his mother settled down over there. In the begining, Avadhūtājī was against any construction of new buildings leaving everything to God. But now being obliged to live at Nāreśvara for the sake of his mother, he started granting his consent for allround development of Nāreśvara.

Every morning he would go and touch the feet of his mother; this was his way of mother-worship. Whenever he went out of Nāreśvara, he took leave and blessings of his mother and carried food prepared by her. He would cut short his scheduled programmes out of Nāreśvara and get back as early as possible whenever he heard of his mother's sickness.

After the grand celebration of his birthday at Pādarā, he drove straight to Hāmfeśvara on the bank of the Narmadā. One could go by train, in those days, to Hāmfeśvara via ChhotaUdaipur. From ChhotaUdaipur one had to travel in a bullock-cart to reach Kavāṁta, and from there walk down on foot. No proper roads were available in those days.

After a few days of his stay at Hāmfeśvara, the moment he came to know that the mother was not well, he set out at once from Hāmfeśvara, taking whatever transport was available to catch a train at 4 o'clock in the early morning at ChhotaUdaipur; he had to go on

foot for sometime, travel some distance by bullock-cart that would bounce high and low and some distance even by car. The journey was quite long from Chhota Udaipur to Viśvāmitrī, Miyāgāma, Karjana and Nāreśvara. He didn't stop anywhere even to cleanse his teeth; only after reaching Nāreśvara he attended to his morning routine.

After this experience he decided not to travel far from Nāreśvara and stay at near-by places only. Such was his unswerving love for his mother.

Once, Avadhūtājī stopped giving his Pādukā (a pair of wooden sandals) for worship. It so happened that visitors from not so distant places generally brought their own garlands and flowers to perform worship, but visitors from a foreign country or chance-tourists had to buy flowers from the local flowershops at Nāreśvara. A local florist once took undue advantage of a foreign tourist believing him to be very affluent. The flowers were faded and stale. And the garland was not worth the price he charged. Avadhūtājī came to know about this and thought that if a florist could charge heavily the priests and other shopkeepers could do the same thing as well. Why shouldn't the practice of worshipping his pādukā be stopped? This will curb unfair trading practices at Nāreśvara.

Once resolved, his determination was unbending. He was not prepared to make any amends or compromise in any way.

Every year groups of pilgrims came walking to Nāreśvara and, there came such a group of devotees, including a learned scholar Viṣṇuprasāda and Śrī Jayantīlāl Shah. They had taken a vow to worship Avadhūtajī's Pādukā at Nāreśvara and were disappointed to know that they would not get the Pādukās to worship and they won't be able to fulfill their vow. They all earnestly appealed to the mother to prevail upon Avadhūtajī to allow them to worship.

The mother immediately told Avadhūtajī, "Why don't you give your Pādukā to these devotees? Consider their commitment, faith and the trouble they have undergone!" Avadhūtajī said, "Why should I do this if my ideals are dishonoured and compromise on my principles? Anyway, since you are asking me to give my footwear, I'll give it to you". The mother took the Pādukā and gave them to the devotees. Avadhūtajī consented to do what he never would have done on his own just to respect his mother's word.

He often commented on a popular saying "Even mother doesn't offer a second helping of food without your asking" and reworked the maxim by remarking. 'A mother is she who serves food without your telling her to do so'. 'Mother is a living personification of motherhood.' 'There is no divinity greater than a mother,' such maxims were coined by him.

On the death of his mother on V.S. 2024 Jēṭha sud 11, he went to Morāṭakkā and performed all the last

rites in a traditional vedic style like a true son. He distributed clothes to Sādhus and on the first death anniversary (punyatithi) established a new monument of mother's day by raising "Mātṛsmṛtisail" there. On the spot where she was cremated he kept "Śrī yantra" and a memorial was raised there. Even today, in the months of Caitra and Āso, during the first nine days, songs and worship are chanted to celebrate her memory. The memorial is worshipped also in V.S. Jeṭha.

Once Avadhūtājī had to go out of Nāreśvara and had to sail by boat to catch a train at Koral. It was his practice to go and offer a prostrate bow to his mother and touch her feet before he left. Now, it so happened that she had gone out to the toilet and the attendants asked him to wait for her. Avadhūtājī was in a hurry to leave. So, he told the attendant, "Convey my regards to the mother and inform her that I'm gone. It's getting late". And, he went away.

Hardly had he gone a few steps away when his mother came back. She heard the story. She just said, "Couldn't he wait even for a little while? Why is he in such a great hurry?"

Avadhūtājī reached the bank of the river and took a boat. It was a machine-boat and he thought he would reach sooner and catch the train. But the machine of the boat got stuck and the time to catch the train was spent on the bank of the river only. Avadhūtājī now realised that this was all due to his leaving without

receiving the mother's blessings. There and then he resolved that he would never make this mistake again. As a mark of atonement he observed a fast on that day.

The mother too responded to his devotion in equal measure, with overwhelming love for him. She understood him and knew his nature very well and did everything to conceal from him her troubles, her problems and even her sicknesses. Once she vomitted profusely and her body began to shiver. She controlled herself because it was time for Avadhūtājī to take his meal. If he came to know that his mother had vomitted and she was not well, he wouldn't have taken his meal that day.

Once while cooking hot oil spilled over her feet. There were big blisters on her feet but she didn't complain about it until Avadhūtājī had finished taking his meal and departed.

There was no sign of any pain or agony on her face on both the occasions. After his meal, when Avadhūtājī left the dining place, she asked Modījī (Śrī Amrutlal Nathalal Modi, the Managing Trustee of Śrī Avadhūta Nivas Trust and the Chief Administrator of the Āśrama) to get a healing paste and some medicines. She further told Modiji that if she had complained of any pain, Avadhūtājī would have given up eating vegetables, telling to himself that "Just for me to eat vegetables my mother has to take so much trouble and even run the risk of getting burns on her body;

it is better that I stopped taking vegetables rather than giving so much trouble to my mother.”

Such was the bond of love and affection between the mother and her son.

Many a times Avadhūtajī would get lost in deep thought while taking his meal and his mother would often reproach him. Even if he left a small piece of Pāpaḍa in his dish she would ask, “Is this small piece going to be too much for you? This is a labour of love for you and you don’t care to eat it”. Avadhūtajī then said, “Mājī don’t you see that I eat with great effort?”

45. WIT AND HUMOUR OF AVADHŪTAJĪ

Although Avadhūtajī was a person of serious nature, he had a good sense of humour and wit. He would casually say: “ People may perhaps forget everything else about me but they can never forget my humour”. He always remained in a happy and cheerful mood and advised his followers to remain so. Be in a pleasant and cheerful mood always (Lit- Now laugh and laugh aloud). Why do you look unhappy? (Lit- Why are you crying thus o! dear) In this psalm he emphasised more on joy than unhappiness. It is because laughter makes a true home; it unites all, but no body bothers about a crying or unhappy person.”

There is a popular Sanskrit verse:

अखंड मंगलाकारं व्याप्तं येन चराचरम् ।

तत्पदं दर्शितं येन तस्मै श्री गुरवे नमः ॥

Akhaṇḍa- Maṇḍalākāraṁ Vyāptaṁ Yena Carācaram |
Tatpadaṁ Darsitaṁ Yena Tasmai Śrī Gurave Namah ||

With completely round shape, pervading entire heaven,
by whom are shown the feet of Him, bow to that great
Master!

In a light-hearted vein he interpreted the verse,
saying: “I bow down my head to the Master whose
figure is roly-polly; round as a sweet-ball and who is
expanded in all directions; to who has pointed to a
sweet-ball and helped me taste it.”

How do you identify a sādhu or an ascetic?
Avadhūtaji put it humorously, “Long tresses of hair,
clippers, jugs, sticks and loincloth!” He explained the
meaning of a loin-cloth to the pilgrims: “Loin-cloth of
greed, rag of temptation, deception of world and then
renunciation of world”.

Once a devotee who recited “Dattabāvanī” everyday
said to him: “Revered one! you promised that one who
recites this divine hymn daily will have exceptional
success and prosperity in life; I tried but all in vain. In
spite of repeated readings there was no fulfilment in my
life.” Avadhūtaji said, “Sir, you misunderstood the lines.
I meant by ‘Siddhi’ the wife becomes an obedient
servant”. The people who heard this laughed heartily.
But the husband said, “Yes, sir; nowadays my wife has
become obedient Dāsī.”

46. DOG 'BUCHIO' AS A DEVOTEE

After Avadhūtājī came to stay at Nāreśvara a dog with one ear, happened to go there and made its home near by. People called the dog "Buchio".

The peculiarity of this dog was that everyday he went to the river for a bath and after bath he went to Avadhūtājī as a token of worship. He never licked the dishes that were left out after serving. He ate only that food which was served to him by people. On Thursdays he observed a fast and did not eat at all, even though food was offered to him.

He guarded the area. He would bark at night-time if someone trespassed and stopped barking only after the inmates had recognised the visitor.

Every evening, at the time of train-arrival, he went to Mālod station. If someone was coming to Nāreśvara shrine he directed the visitor by walking ahead of him.

He died on the 13th day of Mārgaśīrṣa vada. Since then, loaves of bread are given to dogs in Nāreśvara on that day. A memorial is installed where he was buried. He was loved by people of the area.

You hear of some people treating "Buchio" as God to protect themselves if bitten by another dog.

47. NEEM TREE- A TREE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

While in Nāreśvara Avadhūtajī many a times sat under a neem tree and discussed philosophy and related subjects with devotees. Left alone, he would sit under the tree, absorbed in deep meditation.

Even now you can see this neem tree bent low on to the ground. Other trees and neem trees around stand tall and high whereas the branches of this neem tree touch the ground. Its branches, propped up high with poles, are kept skyward; its leaves have turned sweet and have transformed their bitterness. A neem tree is bitter but a poet has sung:

Śṛtaṁ Hi Nāreśvara-Raṅga-Saṅgān |
Nimbo'pi Mādhuryamupāgato'sti ||

In the company of Nāreśvara's Master, it is so said, even a neem tree has turned sweet.

This neem tree at Nāreśvara is revered and protected as the Budha's tree of enlightenment. There you can see a beautiful photograph of Avadhūtajī seated on a small pedestal.

48. NON-ATTACHED AVADHŪTA

Though Avadhūtājī was a moving spirit behind the growth of Nāreśvara as a place teeming with life, he always opposed the idea of naming anything after him. The new place that was meant for his personal residence and meditation was not to carry a line in the resolution of the trust. "For the use of Avadhūtājī". He resisted the proposal successfully. He never visited even the new constructions. If by chance, he had to visit any new building, he would take a bath with all his clothes on: this was an act of cleansing for him. He didn't permit either his devotees or other visitors to keep at his feet flowers, fruits, coconuts in the early days. Afterwards he allowed but these were distributed as a mark of divine grace among the people present over there.

On the occasion of worshipping his Pādukā especially on his birthday celebrations, the offerings were all given away to the needy and deserving people. If they were in excess, they were saved for another such occasion. He did not keep anything for his personal use from these offerings. He needed only two pieces of loin-cloth made of hand-woven coarse cotton fiber and one shawl or a blanket that was also coarse. He didn't accept these coverings from all, but only from his trusted and devoted followers who gave him without much ado. He wouldn't refuse offerings from anyone

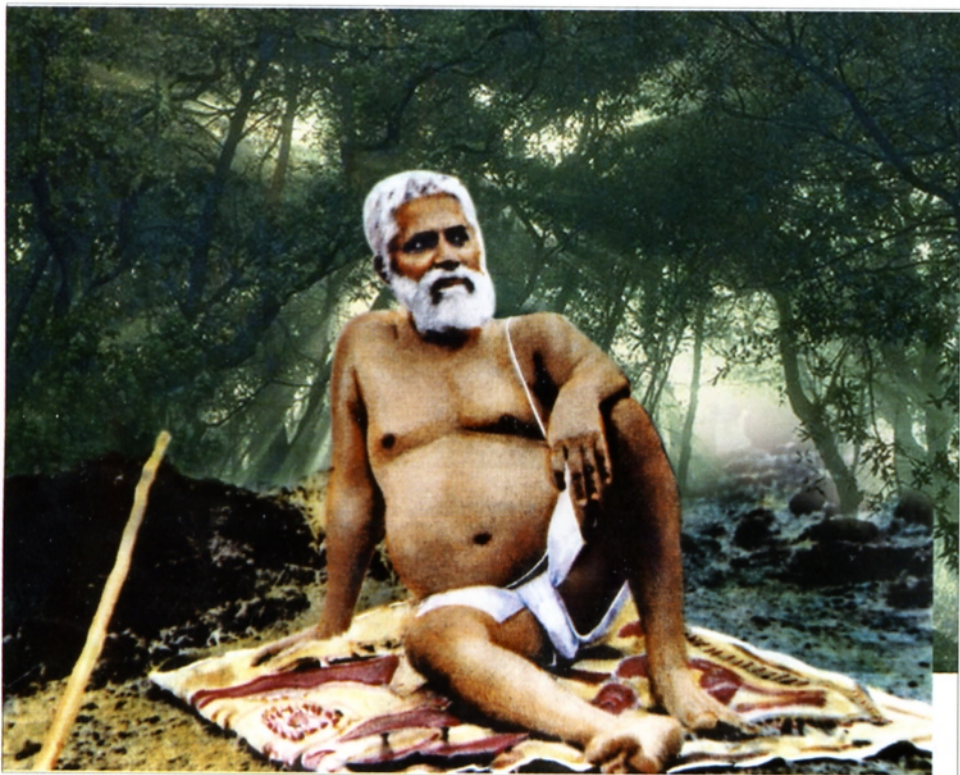
but never used any of it personally. He would fast if money was placed before him or kept near his feet: this happened in early days of his stay but people came to know about Avadhūtaji's vows and stopped offering money in cash or kind.

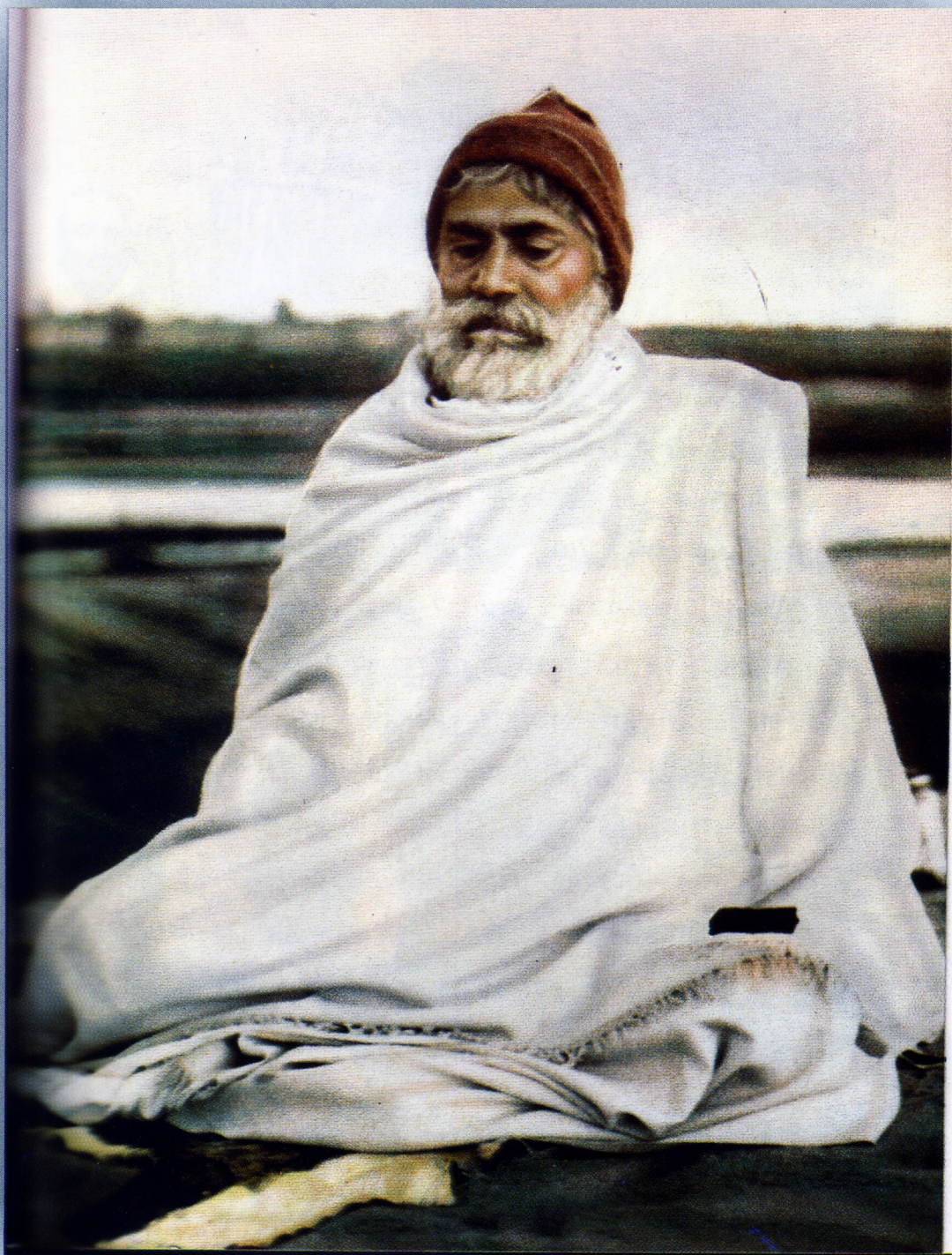
However an illiterate, rustic devotee, in the very early period of his settlement, put a four anna coin (Twenty five paise or one fourth of a Rupee) at his feet. That was the only wages he could make for a day. Two-three persons attending on Avadhūtaji reprimanded the poor villager. But Avadhūtaji said, "My dear fellows, it is a mark of Indian culture that you don't go to bow down to a saint with empty hands. True to our tradition he has offered his entire day's earnings to me with total devotion and reverence. Try to understand that depth of love. What does it matter if he didn't know my vow? I shall not eat anything today; there's no reason for you to raise hue and cry about it or yell at him".

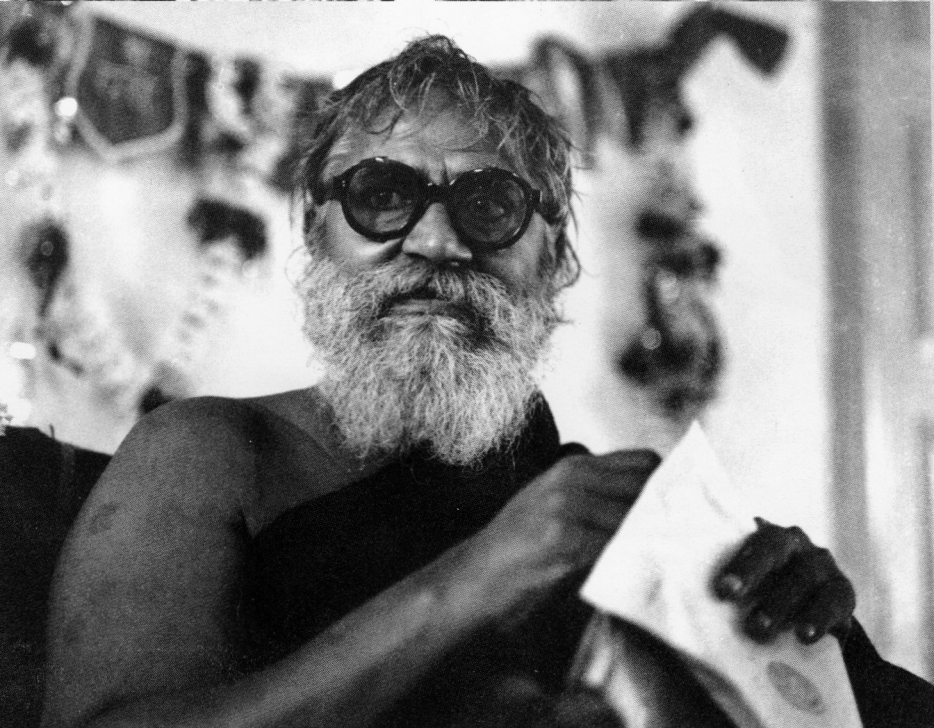
That peasant also decided to fast as the saint had proposed to do so on account of his ignorance. But Avadhūtaji told him, "My dear fellow! I am going to fast as it is my vow. You needn't. I ask you to go and eat". However, the peasant remained seated there. Then Avadhūtaji said, "I shall make an exception to my rule today; I shall eat something today. You go and eat."

A similar incident occurred in Africa. It has come to our notice that he had fasted for two days for the lapse of his attendants.

The revered-one also forbade offerings at his feet in the early period of his settlement. Once he had stopped at a near-by hamlet named Kahonā. There lived a devotee. His practice was to feed fishes with coconut pieces. So he stored many coconuts and offered one to Avadhūtajī when he visited him. Because of his love it was accepted; this encouraged other devotees to follow the example; There after, fruits, sweets and other offerings started pouring in.







49. HERMITAGE-SYMBOL OF VEDIC TRADITION

One Brahmin named Prabhashankar, a native of Miṇḍhoḷa, was an attendant in the service of Avadhūtajī. He daily recited the Gāyatrī Mantra, many hymns and psalms, and cooked food for Avadhūtajī. He was always ready to serve wherever he could.

One day he proposed to Avadhūtajī, “If a saint like you permits worship of your Pādukā here or else where, a Brahmin can earn a little and be in touch with ancient scriptures. He could sustain his interests in Vedic verses”. This suggestion appealed to Avadhūtajī. He thought he should allow the worship of his Pādukā if this could preserve the ancient vedic tradition; he would serve a noble cause.

Thus started the practice of worshipping his Pādukā. Many learned Brahmins began to participate in this mode of worship. The ancient vedas were revived at this centre in his presence.

The culture of sacrifice* is an important component of the ancient vedic culture. Many sacrifices were performed in his presence at Nāreśvara; Many experts from Gujarat and Maharastra, well-versed in vedic rites, performed sacrifices in honour of vedic deities. The discipline of the priests and ritualists of Nāreśvara began to be appreciated and admired. Because the sacrifices

* Sacrifice = Offerings to a holy fire for invoking and propitiation of a deity in vedic style while chanting verses and spells (Mantra).

were performed in true form and spirit, reward accrued soon. This spread the culture of sacrifices in other areas; and especially among his followers.

On the occasion of his 60th birthday the readings of the vedic texts of all the four vedas by the specialists were conducted; huts were constructed near by the cell of his abode.

Even after this, many vedic sacrifices such as “Swāhākāra” and Śrauta Sacrifice were arranged. On one such occasion Śaṅkarācārya of Dwārakāpīṭha Śrī Abhinava Śaccidānandjī was present there with his Chandra Maulīśvara. Both Avadhūtajī and Ācārya had close relation and they had high regard for each other.

50. A SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE

Avadhūtajī was keen to purify and perfect the procedures of performing the ancient vedic tradition of sacrifice. He wanted to make it a true deed of righteousness and wanted to restore it to its lost import and truth.

There is an incident of his life, which can be regarded as responsible for his interest in reviving sacrifices.

Once when he was a young student there was Viṣṇuyāga, a sacrifice dedicated to God Viṣṇu at Godharā and Avadhūta's maternal uncle was selected as one of the brahmīns to perform it. As the uncle had to go out of town and he couldn't avoid it, he asked his nephew

to represent him at the sacrifice. Avadhūta agreed. An old Brahmin told him that he couldn't stand the smoke of the holy fire, so he would recite the text, and asked Avadhūta if he could sit at the altar of fire.

Avadhūtajī agreed but another brahmin told him that he was deceived by that old man. "A reader of the text gets more money than a priest who offers sacrifices to fire". Avadhūtajī said to himself, "What meanness and cunning for money!" Then he heard a few young muslims passing by the tent and talking between themselves: "Look at these Hindu robbers. When the host is present, the priests pretend to recite the text and in his absence they are busy chit chatting, gossiping and enjoying their snuff."

Avadhūtajī was hurt by this insult to the Hindus as "robbers" and he made up his mind to revive sacrifices and encourage the right performances with honesty and sincerity by the priests.

51. AVADHŪTAJĪ- HIS RELATIONS WITH REPUTED PERSONS

Worship of Lord Dattātreya implies an ideal of harmony and concord among various religious faiths. There is no opposition to any religious sect or denomination; it teaches discrimination, to learn and choose the best out of all religious faiths. This is at the heart of Lord Dattātreya's choice of twenty four gurus. This ideal was well understood and successfully translated in to practice by Avadhūtajī.

He maintained friendly relations with several political and social workers. Right from the very beginning, he was on good terms with Swāmi Anand, then with Śrī Vāman Mukādama, and with honorable Nandājī and Śrī Chandrashankar Shukla. There were certainly disagreement of views; they parted but there was no disunion of hearts.

His relationship with Kākāsāheba Kālelkara forever remained close to both their hearts. Even after the nirvāṇa of Avadhūtājī, Kākāsāheba, at a seminar in Gandhinagar spoke very warmly and respectfully about his former brilliant student. The words in which Kākāsāheba praised Avadhūtājī came out deep down from heart and not as a merely a formality.

He maintained good relations with all the distinguished thinkers, the well read persons and orators conducting religious discourses (Kathākārs), story-tellers (Paurāṇikas), public speakers, who were famous or less known in Gujarat. He was intimate with Ācārya Vinobājī from his early years.

His relations with Pūjya Śrī Moṭā of Nadiad were very rich. Both of them had joined the Indian freedom movement in response to Gandhiji's call. Afterwards, their relationship was more spiritual. They met quite often and exchanged their views on religious matters.

Once Avadhūtājī stayed with Śrī Santarāma Mahārāja the religious head of the famous temple in Nadiad. Even

the present head of the Santarāma Temple holds very high regards for Avadhūtajī. Śrī Shantilal Thakar, a well known orator of Nadiad, delivered discourses on the great work, ‘Gurulīlāmṛta.’ Avadhūtajī also held Śrī Thakar in high esteem and respected his views.

His relationship with Śrī Kṛṣṇaśaṅkara Śāstri*, founder of Bhāgavat Vidyāpīṭha at Śolā in Gujarat and a renowned eminent scholar of Bhāgavata, developed to such an extent that Avadhūta attended the foundation stone laying ceremony with his devoted disciples and delivered an extraordinary address. Śāstrijī, even after Niravāṇa of Avadhūtajī kept close contacts, with Avadhūta Parivāra, the followers of Śrī Rāṅga Avadhūta.

Basically from Nadiad but on the bank of the river Sarasvatī, staying in water and performing religious rites of continuous chanting of ‘Gayatrī Mantra’ at the Arvadeśvara Temple Enlightened Saint Śrī Devshankar Bapa had so very close relationship with Śrī Avadhūtajī that even today followers of both the Saints are in close contact with one another.

Śrī Abhinava Saccidānandajī, Śaṅkarācārya of Dwārakāpīṭha and Avadhūtajī had built up true friendship due to their simplicity, sincerity and openness of hearts. Śaṅkarācārya always cherished the great honour accorded to him by Avadhūtajī when he visited Nāreśvara for the first time. In response to his respect Śaṅkarācāryajī enhanced the friendship with Avadhūta Parivāra by attending the Vedic Swāhākāra sacrifice at Nāreśvara.

* Left the body in the year 2002.

Raviśaṅkara Mahārāja of Gujarat also had many discussions with Śrī Avadhūtājī. Raviśaṅkaradādā listened to ‘Gurulīlāmṛta’ in the last days of his life.

Avadhūtājī went to Surat and Pādarā and personally attended the religious discourses of the saint and great narrator Dongareji on Bhāgawata Purāṇa. In reciprocation, Dongareji went to Nāreśvara and delivered a memorial lecture at the time of Avadhūtājī’s nirvāṇa in Nov. 1968.

He had also met a great scholar of Sanskrit, Sātavaḷekarjī. On his own he paid a visit to his residence at Atul village near Bulsar in South Gujarat. It was a memorable encounter of a great a saint with a scholar.

A great scholar of Ṛgveda, Śrī Yedurkar Śastri, also visited Nāreśvara. He had learnt the entire Ṛgveda by heart. He could recite its verses backwards to the start. Not only that, but he could even combine verses of the Ṛgveda with those of the Gītā and ViṣṇuSahasraNāma. He went to inaugurate “Raṅga Mandir” at Nāreśvara after Avadhūtājī’s nirvāṇa. “Avadhūtājī also had a great spiritual relationship with an exponent and propagater of kuṇḍalini (to awaken the serpent-power) Wāmana Gulavaṇī Mahārāja, who was also a disciple of Avadhūtājī’s own Master - Ṭembe Swāmī. He came to Nāreśvara on the occasion of the installation of Avadhūtājī’s idol in Raṅga-Mandir.

He was also intimate with Swāmī Muktānandājī the Saint of Vajreśwarī. Nityānanda Avadhūtājī, the Guru of

Swāmī Mukṭānandajī, once told his followers that his other-self could be seen at Nāreśvara. Remembering this, Mukṭānandajī visited Nāreśvara to attend the last rites of Avadhūtajī and witness the installation of his idol.

The famous singers, Master Vasant and Dost Mohmmmed, gave several performances in the presence of Śrī Avadhūtajī with great devotion.

52. AVADHŪTAJĪ- FRIEND OF THE POOR

Avadhūtajī could not see anyone suffer. It would be appropriate to say that he distributed clothes and food with the liberality of a prodigal.

Once a devotee, who looked like a farmer offered a prostrate bow to Śrī Avadhūtajī. The moment the poor peasant bent down to touch his feet, Avadhūtajī noticed that his jacket was almost torn and tattered on its backside. He at once covered the poor man's back with the shawl he had on him.

On another occasion he helped a poor devotee get clothes from other devotees.

He gave clothes and ornaments to the daughter of his mother's attendant Narasī and got her married.

In 1965 a huge surgical camp was organised at his hermitage and nearly 601 operations, major and minor, were performed by the doctors, all free of charge. Avadhūtajī would personally visit all the patients and inquire about the condition of each patient. He helped them get whatever they needed. Modern amenities were

provided to the doctors. He himself kept an eye over the breakfast, lunch and dinner served to the doctors and the nursing staff. The ideal 'Service of Humanity is the service of God' was put in practice. Since then, many such surgical camps, eye-operations and other camps were organised at Nāreśvara free of charge under his inspiration. Now, there is a big hospital at Nāreśvara. A camp for rifle shooting was also arranged at Nāreśvara in the presence of Śrī Avadhūtajī.

53. AVADHŪTAJĪ- HIS PRACTICAL SENSE

Avadhūtajī's ideals and ideas were even too high for heavenly stars. He was ever lost in the intoxication of meditation. His union with God was constant.

However, his practical resourcefulness was a striking trait of his character. One of his birthdays was celebrated at Garabādā in Pañcamahāls (Gujarat). The host was a Brahmin. He made his stay there short, so that the host didn't have to spend more money. He even arranged for free distribution of maize among the aborigins through some other devotee.

Once he was staying at a temple of Hanumāna in Vaṇakhunṭā. On Saturday, the devotees, there recited the text of Hanumāna Cālīsā and poured oil on the deity's idol. Avadhūtajī advised the devotees not to waste hundreds of litres of oil collected for anointing the deity's idol but distribute it among the aborigins who

could use it for cooking the food in their homes. What a social touch to a misguided religious practice!

After his birthday celebration at Pādarā, he went to Hāmfeśvara. There, Śrī Maganlal Pandya attended upon him.

A devotee from a near by place daily delivered milk at Avadhūtajī's camp. Avadhūtajī accepted some of it and what remained of it was used by Śrī Maganlal and others.

The town of that devotee was affected by evil spirits. Avadhūtajī asked him to bring four wooden nails(chips) and asked Maganlal to blow air over those nails through his mouth. Maganlal said to Avadhūtajī, "Revered one, how will my blowing air help this?" "You can drink their milk; but can't you blow air over the nails for them?" he asked. Maganlal blew over them. Then Avadhūtajī asked the devotee to dig these nails into four corners of the village and the trouble caused by the evil spirit disappeared. By making Maganlal blow air over the nails Avadhūtajī relieved him of the obligation for drinking the milk provided by that town. One has to be practical and take care of one's social obligations and responsibilities.

A muslim gentleman, Hasanacācā, from a near by village Mālod couldn't find his lost money. He came to Nāreśvara in a depressed mood seeking Avadhūtajī's help. Avadhūtajī casually remarked that the villagers sometime kept money under their beds and forgot it. Hasancācā suddenly recollected and found his lost money.

Avadhūtājī's commonsense was of the highest order. He would casually say that when you go out of your home to buy or get something, ask your family if they need something; otherwise after returning home you may have to go again to get what the family wants.

He taught practical lessons of worldly life to his devotees.

54. TRUE TO WORD-AVADHŪTAJĪ'S GRACE

The main rest house at Nāreśvara was under construction and it was the first building being erected. People were excited about it. Gaṅgā, a young girl and the daughter of a fisherman in the near by village was extending her helping hand to the volunteers engaged in the construction work.

All workers were given a meal by Nāreśvara management. They also accepted wages. But Gaṅgā brought her own food with her and never accepted any wages.

She thought to herself, "What would be my contribution if I accepted wages? Others donate wealth while I can only donate some manual labour. How can I take money for my labour and how can I accept a free meal?"

When the construction was over Avadhūtājī himself distributed sarees and dhotees among the workers, but Gaṅgā didn't join them and refused to accept anything even at Avadhūtājī's hand.

Upon too much insistence from Avadhūtājī and the other devotees, she expressed her desire that Avadhūtājī pay a visit to her home.

Avadhūtājī told her, “This is not your true home. When you have your own home. i.e. get married, I shall visit you”.

After many years, Avadhūtājī did pay a visit to her family even without any invitation and kept his word. Gaṅgā was blessed by Divine grace and she lived happily thereafter.

55. REMEMBERING OBLIGATIONS

Avadhūtājī never accepted any financial obligation but if anybody had done anything for him he would never forget that obligation and would do everything for that person to more than reciprocate his obligation.

He always called Hargovindadas Soni who suggested Nāreśvara for his settlement, respectfully as “Dāsakākā” and gave him all assistance in his weal and woe.

Once Avadhūtājī was resting under a neem tree and there was a long queue of devotees waiting to have glimpse and offer a prostrate bow. A devotee was waiting in the queue for his turn with a garland and when he had his turn to see Avadhūtājī he said to him. “Revered one, do you recognise me?” Avadhūtājī raised his eyes and said, “I am not such an ungrateful person as would not recognise the person, who 15 years ago, came with bare feet to offer me a loaf of bread continuously for 15 days.”

The devotee was from Māṇḍavi, a small town near Surat. Avadhūtājī was camping at a temple of Lord Śiva. He was not so well-known over there but respected as a Saint. This devotee brought bread made with milk daily while coming from home to the temple without any footwear. He remembered that obligation, 15 years later.

56. AVADHŪTĪ HEALING

Avadhūtājī couldn't stand anyone's suffering, physical or mental. He advised cures and medications to his devotees, in his own Avadhūtī style.

A person suffering from cancer sought Avadhūtājī's grace to cure his incurable disease. Avadhūtājī asked him to cover the cancerous growth on his neck with the clay that was used in the daily worship of Lord Śiva during the month of Śrāvaṇa and later discarded into the river. He was cured.

After being fully cured he wanted to settle in Nāreśvara but Avadhūtājī told him to go back, earn some money to pay off the debt he had incurred during his illness and then think of settling somewhere.

Avadhūtājī didn't like anyone shirking his duties and responsibilities. If a person in service rushed to Nāreśvara without leave or on a working day, Avadhūtājī prevented him from doing so. He asked him to go back and attend to his duty first.

Whether he advised medicine or a spiritual discipline it was typically 'Avadhūtī.' It was patent medicine!

It might cure one person but not others. Perhaps it might even aggravate the other's illness.

Once Avadhūtājī asked a woman to move a stack of hay over the sick person's head and offer it to a donkey. His mother asked him, why did he think of a donkey and not a cow or a buffalo or some other animal? He said why, is donkey not an animal? Is there God not hidden in it?

Just as he was an inspired physician, not text-bound, so was he also an inspired spiritual educator.

Once, some girl students of Rosary School Vadodara in Gujarat visited his Āśrama. A number of visitors were sitting around him and the girls asked his permission to ask a question. He gave his consent but one of the girls said "But Bāpājī, we are Non-believers (in the existance of God) - Atheists."

Avadhūtājī replied: "It means that you have an implied belief in something. You believe that there is no God, which means you believe in his non-existence. Don't you? Now ask me whatever you like.". The girls were all pleased and left the place enriched.

57. LOVE FOR YOUNG STUDENTS

Avadhūtājī had very deep love for students and children. Very often he used to say: "If you want to keep me in good health, leave me in the company of children. No elders should come near me. Then see how much my health improves." That is why in the midst of

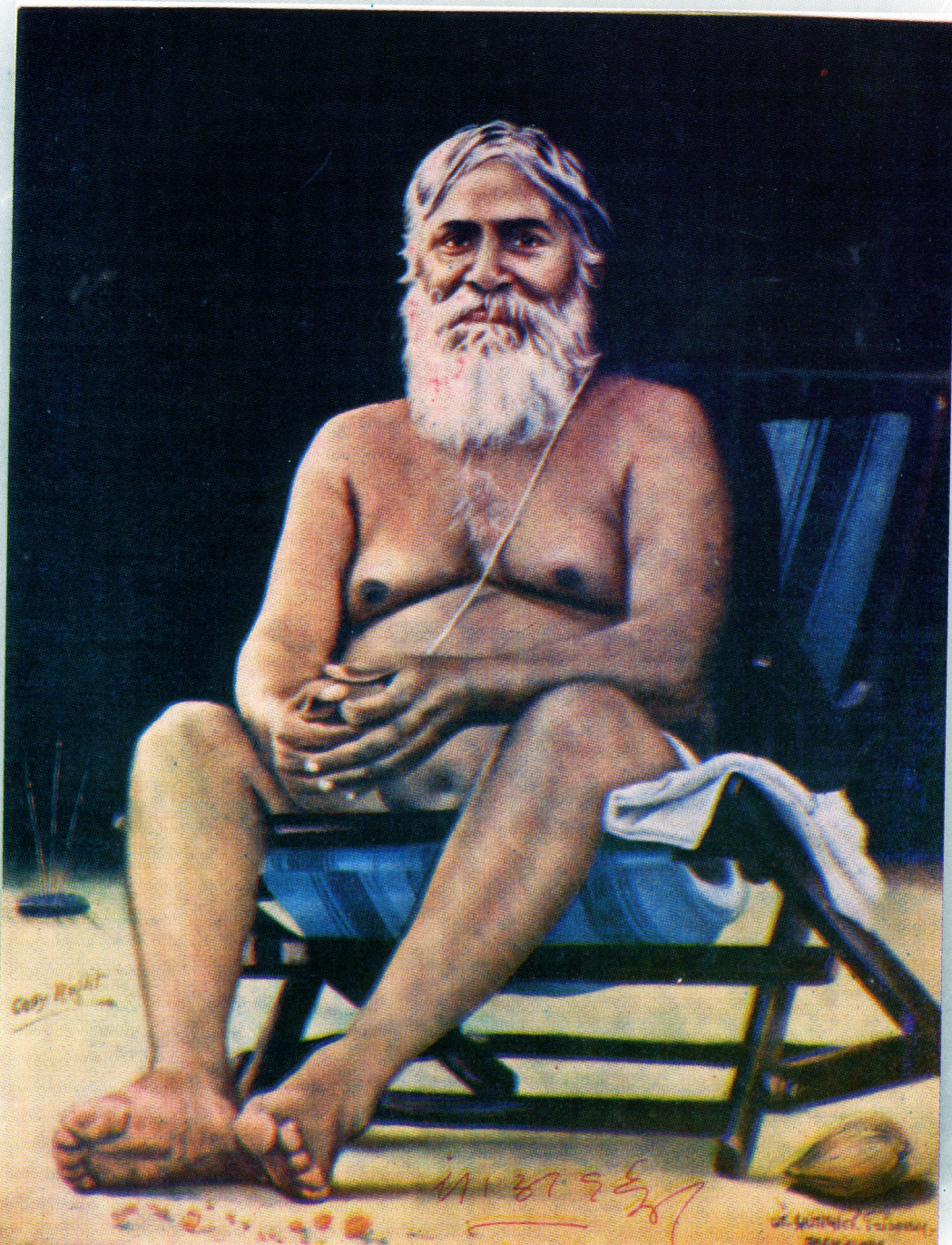
children he behaved like a child. He was always willing to address students without any hesitation.

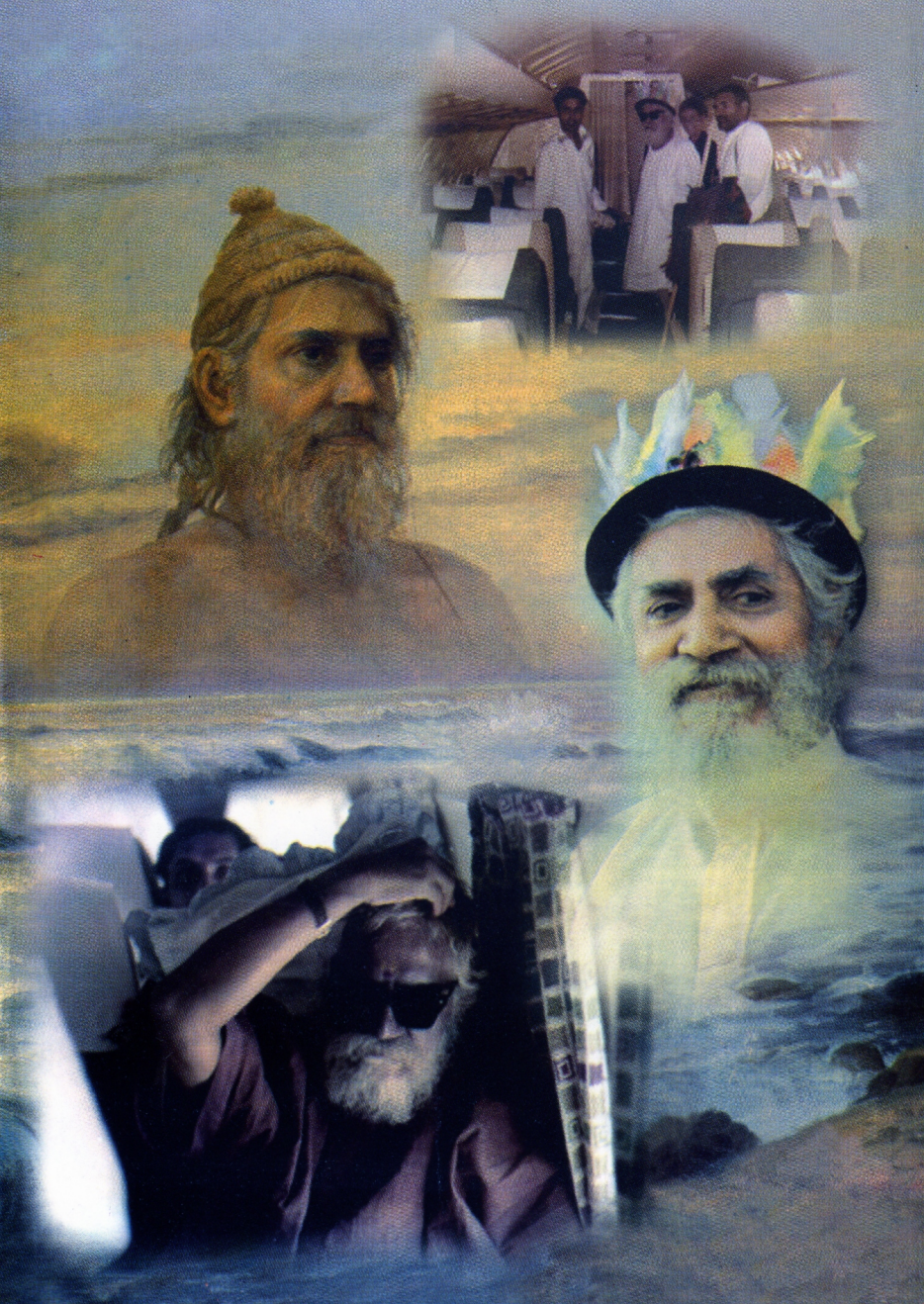
During his visit to Africa he encouraged children to sing his psalm “Evo Di Dekhāḍa” “Oh Dear! Show me such a day... Let there dawn such a day when I can witness your form all around! It was composed by him.

He expressed his educational philosophy at several institutions. In the Ḍākora educational institute, at the inauguration of the new building of the school at Valia and at the opening of a new S.S.C. class in the Navadurgā High School in Umallā.

He always reminded people that young students are the future makers of India. A young student is like God, he said often; so he gave a new aphorism, “Invoke the Divine unto the taught” (Cātra Devo Bhava). He desired that a college should be a centre of discipline, culture and restraint, co-operation, synthesis, concord and toleration. It should be a stream of new inspiration. He had faith and he inspired that kind of faith in others to work hard for good education that ensures well-being and prosperity in coming years.

He said that God has given “body, mind and intellect to a human being as means for his own development. These three should develop together to germinate true humanity and the society can breathe in peace. Schools and colleges can thus heavily contribute towards this goal.





58. VISIT TO AFRICA

After his mother relinquished her physical body there were circumstances that would, to a certain extent, permit Avadhūtājī to go to places a little more freely. Years ago he had promised to Śrī Maṇibhāī Patel, owner of Globe Cinema theatre in Nadiāda to visit Africa. Śrī Maṇibhāī died but his wife Kāśīben reminded him of his promise to her family and invited him to visit Africa. Her invitation was accepted and Avadhūtājī went to Africa.

Here, the birthday of Lord Dattātreya was celebrated. Avadhūtājī also sang psalms and choruses. A representative of Zambia Times who attended the celebration was very much impressed and said that he thought a Hindu Priest or preacher was visiting the place but now felt, he had seen a prophet. A European gentleman was so much moved that tears welled up in his eyes during his talks with Avadhūtājī.

An African lady was planning to visit India all by herself but she was nervous and afraid. Avadhūtājī gave her a photograph and said, “you are not alone; God is with you. You may not have seen God but I have. I am with you.” She was now fearless.

In Africa he left a lasting impression and proved wrong that Saints from India visit Africa to collect money and gifts. Saints and ascetics like Avadhūtājī go there to offer something to them, not to collect anything from them.

Some people in Africa had very good experiences. Avadhūtaji received praise in the African press; certificates of honour were awarded to him. One Englishman saw St.Paul in Avadhūtaji. Another one was so much impressed that he requested Avadhūtaji to touch his handkerchief so that his own kith and kin at home could experience his holiness and Divine Grace by the touch of that handkerchief.

He distributed shoes amongst the native Africans. When he visited the famous Victoria Falls he was reminded of the descent of the Ganges from Lord Śiva's matted hair on his head and he composed a hymn in Sanskrit.

He made a short speech to students there :

“If you have not acquired knowledge in the first phase of life, nor earned wealth in the second phase and not cultivated righteousness in the third one, what can be done with the fourth?” He explained the meaning of the sanskrit axiom and advised them to study well.

‘Oh, Dear! Please show me such a day... Let there dawn such a day when I could witness your form all around! Please show me such a day.’ Avadhūtaji made the students sing this devotional song, composed by him.

After that he shut his eyes and asked the students to observe silence and sit quietly for a few minutes.

On his return from his visit to five African states he said simply, “I have returned from Africa beating the drum for my spiritual Master over there.”

59. IN VALLABHA-VIDHYĀNAGARA

In 1968 Avadhūtajī went to Kuñjarāva in the months of July-August and, having spent a month there, proceeded to Vallabha Vidhyānagara. His discussions there with Raviśankara Dādā, Puṇya Moṭā, Bhāilālkākā, H. M. Patel, Śāradāben Amin were of a special kind. For Bhāilālkākā, talks about king Bharṭṛhari were a must. So Avadhūtajī's discussion with him on the subject lasted for about an hour.

Then talking to Pūjyaśrī Moṭā, he said "My dear Moṭā, I'm leaving (this world i.e. my physical body) first and shall make room for you; then, you come up over there".

In Vadodara he delivered a very thought provoking and unique address in Sanskrit to a gathering of scholars and after that he destroyed the manuscript of the speech. Then at the insistence of Śrī Maniśankar Śāstrī and other scholars and devotees, he dictated the speech once again, absolutely identical to the one he had delivered earlier, without change of even a word. The scholars were wonder struck at his brilliance of mind. What a fantastic photographic memory!

From there he went to Bākarola, Gopālapurā and to several places, where a noteworthy incident occurred. An old lady went to pay her homage with folded hands but as her sight was too weak, she couldn't get near Avadhūtajī. She said, "Oh, Revered one! where are you?"

Avadhūtājī guided her and she could go near him with the help of others. She could then have a glimpse of him.

Avadhūtājī suddenly spoke out, “My mother was like this” and so saying his voice was choked with suffocation. The loving memory of his mother, for a moment swayed over his emotions. But very soon he was once again calm and composed.

The poet Umiyāśaṅkara Thākar who was dedicated to Gāyatrī went to pay respects to Avadhūtājī and Avadhūtājī gave him a message about Gāyatrī mantra as a token of remembrance. Only then, did it come to light that Avadhūtājī had also continuously chanted Gāyatrī Mantra as his religious vow.

Another devotee of Gāyatrī visited him and he was welcomed as professor Avadhūtājī. This was all spontaneously done; he was also reading his (Avadhūta's) articles in ‘Gāyatrī Vijñāna.’

60. AVADHŪTA : AN ENIGMA

Avadhūtājī was a multi-faceted personality. In the words of Amrutlal Modi, his character was an embodiment of several kinds of moral virtues; he had on his countenance the radiance of Śukadevajī who was an unyielding celibate, force of Paraśurāma's virility worthy of a Kṣatriya, aura of Vaśiṣṭha's forgiveness, composure of Viśwāmitra's blameless austerities, unwavering, unequalled service of Hanumāna who served

Lord Rāma, firm faith in the spiritual guide that reminds you of Sant Jñāneśwara, matchless intellectual depth and sharpness of Śaṅkarācārya's mind, uncompromising devotion of Dhruva, natural instinct for selfless service that could be marked in Lord Kṛṣṇa, profound spiritual understanding and insight of Yājñawalkya, encyclopaedic inclusiveness of varied experiences of Vyas and non-attachment of king Janak whose renunciation was the fruit of his knowledge.

Avadhūta is a riddle- that is as true for his followers as it was for himself. He often remarked that he was a problem to his own self and could not solve it himself. This is very true of his life.

61. IN HARIDVĀRA

Avadhūtājī, after raising the memorial for his mother at Nāreśvara, 'Mātr-smṛti-śaila' paid a visit to several places and reached Kapaḍavañja where he casually mentioned, "This is our last station! True it turned out to be the last station of his Gujarat travels.

The birth centenary of Hon. "Gāṇḍā Mahārāja" was to be celebrated and the trustees were expected to reach here to extend an invitation to him. They didn't turn up. So a visit to Jaipur was fixed with the son of Shantilal Pandya.

A programme to visit Haridvāra was also worked out. He spent "Lābha Pañcamī" the fifth day of Diwali in Kapadvanj, then went to Jaipur and there the

71st birthday of Raṅga Avadhūtaji was celebrated with joy and fervour. In his last discourse he blessed the entire gathering of his devotees and followers. He told people to practise repeated recitals of God's names and practice moral discipline; this was a key to get freedom from the cycle of birth and death. This would flood their lives with bliss. They should spend sometime in selfless service. He also asked them to perform good deeds for God's grace and experience true joy in life."

Then he proceeded to Haridvāra. Someone just asked, "Revered one! when are you coming back?" He said, "Do you know of anyone coming back from the doors of The Lord Almighty? And truly he did not return from there! He uttered "Aum" three times and breathed his last on the last day, the darkest one, of Kārtik in V.S.2025. He left his physical body and his soul merged with the Eternal one.

His soulless, physical body was brought by air to Ahmedabad and from Ahmedabad carried to Nāreśvara by a decorated truck.

Thousands of people paid their last homage to this great saint with tearful eyes. Almost all the local news papers carried head line articles in admiration of the life of this departed soul.

His mortal remains were cremated and consigned to flames at the spot where a shrine today stands tall called the Raṅga Mandīra. He passed away on the 19th November 1968 and was cremated on 21st Nov.1968, at

midnight. As luck would have it, that happened to be his birthday.

There is a psalm written by Śrī Rāṅga Avadhūtaji that can be taken to sum up his own life and vision. Such a song in English literature is known as a SWAN-SONG.

62. SWAN SONG

When this body returns to dust,
 to dust it returns,
 There'll be a time to ask: who was really he?
 Whence had he arrived and alas, where had now
 disappeared?
 None knew this, yea, why untill this day?
 Neither did he speak much nor was wordless,
 Neither did he travel too far never stayed at one place.
 Whispering, whispering, where has he vanished?
 Darkness, thick and wide, now covers the sky,
 It spreads here, there, everywhere, stopping nowhere.
 There was brightness just for a moment!!
 He healed wounds of human hearts, not too many though,
 And washed tears from human eyes, true!!
 And spoke a few words of love and solace, unheard
 indeed!!
 He sported with roses and made them blush!
 And the nightingales wailed and wailed to no end.
 And the wood streams leapt not too high
 And he squandered away the treasure of love.

He who received it danced with joy,

Others lost it and cried and cried!

He consecrated pieces of stones for divinity of Lord
Śaṅkara.

And also turned Śaṅkara into lifeless stones.

Tears of joy- did Raṅga See.

Born with nothing on hand died too with nothing
with him.

Hardly was he here; then what to talk of where is he
gone now?

Raṅga remained the same for ever, without any change,
there and there.

63. MYSTERIOUS EXPERIENCES

(1) Glimpse of God during circumambulation:

In the lives of saints like Śrī Raṅga Avadhūtājī there are many experiences which can not be easily understood with reason. They are generally taken as miracles.

But Avadhūtājī used to say: A true saint never performs or exhibits miracles. The positive pole of faith and dedication conjoins with the negative pole of self-sacrifice and self-control; this generated light you may call it a miracle, if you like.

There have been many such experiences in Avadhūtājī's life and also in the lives of his many followers. One or two of these may be noted.

Raṅga Avadhūtajī was on a circumambulation of Narmadā. One day he lost his way. He continued walking endlessly but could see no end of his path. Who would guide him on the way out? Whom could he ask either? Day was running out and evening was fast approaching.

He was now worried and prayed to God. At that time he ran across, by chance, a person looking like a wood-cutter. He began, “Revered one, it seems you have lost your way! Come along I will show you the way”.

Avadhūtajī followed the stranger for sometime, and when the outskirts of a township were in sight the visage seemed to be moving towards the river. Avadhūtajī reached the town. He looked back- and lo! the visage had vanished!

The wood-cutter had mentioned casually to him that he was going to buy opium. Avadhūtajī stayed three days in that township but no one turned up for buying opium even three days later! Avadhūtajī took it as God’s graciousness-joyous offering-and proceeded further.

(2) TRUE MUSLIM

Rev. Avadhūtajī was going to camp in some small town, the population of which was almost totally Muslim. The host with whom he was staying did not enjoy a good reputation; he was known as an uncivilised person in his town.

A follower of Avadhūtājī cautioned him: “Honourable one your host is a wolf in sheep’s garb.” Avadhūtājī just said, If you do not allow people like us to go to such persons how can they reform?

The people of the town thought that the saint who was visiting a blacksheep must also be a notorious character. So the host was nervous and fearing mischief at the time of the saint’s visit, he had called for body-guards with sticks etc.

Avadhūtājī arrived, grasped the situation and said, “Oh! God is there to protect Avadhūta! Remove all sticks and the guards.”

Those muslims as if testing Avadhūtājī brought to him an insane lady and said, “Rev. Avadhūta! cure this woman”.

Avadhūtājī said, “Get me some water from the home of a righteous and pious muslim.

All of them were surprised and started looking at each other. Who could consider himself a righteous or pious muslim?

Avadhūtājī then said, “Bring water from any muslim’s house.

Water was brought to him. He covered the glass of water with his palm on its top and uttered these words: “O God, the sovereign power, O the most benevolent one! Let this woman be cured if I am a true muslim!” Then the water was given to that woman. She drank it, was cured of her ailment and started walking on her own!

(3) RAIN IN SUMMER

Once Avadhūtājī was invited to a poor family's home. The devotee was a man poor in material resources but not in his efforts to accomplish his aim. He was a dedicated follower of Avadhūtājī and with sincerity, love, affection, respect and devotion he had arranged everything and tried to provide all facilities for the comfort of his Master, as was possible for him with his meagre resources. Those were the days of summer. It was very hot and his house was made of tin sheets. Avadhūta was perspiring profusely and the poor man did not know what to do.

The devotee felt as if he had troubled his Master by inviting him to his place. So he approached a rich landlord to borrow the cooling screens, but who would listen to a poor man like him? His request was turned down and he returned home with sadness.

Avadhūtājī visualised the situation and seeing his devotee unhappy, simply looked at the sky and thick dark clouds started forming over the devotee's house. Shortly there after it started pouring heavily and it rained cats and dogs just over the poor man's house and not any where else in the whole town. It was all cool in the devotee's house and he was extremely happy. His heart was filled with joy. He could not help saying: This is really your miraculous doing. O Rāṅga Avadhūta!

We offer our countless prostrations to Avadhūtājī!

64. THOUGHT PROVOKING QUOTES

1. A person who has no compassion in heart for the poor is worthless and not welcome here.
2. God has countless names; He alone, the nameless one, holds the universe together.
3. He is one and one only but is covered under varied forms.
4. Begging has no value before God or the world.
5. Stand together in weal or woe of others.
6. Unity leads to glory and joy of peace, prosperity and power.
7. Religion makes you a human being from being a beast.
8. Refrain from speaking ill of any individual, community, institution or religious sect.
9. Listen to a few things but only the best, but ponder a great deal, discriminate and act accordingly.
10. Knowledge that is not translated into practice is a mere burden, like a treasure buried in the ground.
11. Always act with God in your heart.
12. Past has already slipped out of your hands, forget it.
13. Future is not in your hands; you do not know it, do not have terrible fears and anxieties about future.

14. Enjoy every moment of your life by making full use of the present moment.
15. You expect a reward but do not want to work; how is it possible, my friend.
16. He is a deluded one who wants to reform others without looking at the soles of his feet.
17. He is a great deceiver of God who simply recites God's name but shirks the call of duty ordained by destiny.
18. Give up your dogmatism and fanaticism.
19. Money is essential for building and maintaining social life but its foundation must be ethical.
20. Religion is a corner stone of social reconstruction and salvation serves as its roof.
21. He is indeed a true Hindu who is hurt by low-mindedness. He who avoids mean and disgraceful deeds is a true Hindu.
22. Repeated reciting the name of God is the foundation to happiness.
23. Nāma (not like this na Āma) is a common man's "neti (no, it is not.)" It is a pancea for the burden of human existence.
24. True worship of God is to give solace to suffering hearts, by whatever means.
25. Generally, why do people quarrel among themselves? Intolerance of other people's views.
26. Girdle up your loins for motherland.
27. Sports provide alertness to body, refreshes mind and fills your heart with sportsman spirit. It flows with selfless love and innocence.



65. MESSAGE ETERNAL

|| PARASPARADEVO BHAVA ||

INVOKE THE DIVINE UNTO ONE ANOTHER

Look at one another with Divine-Eye, Not with devil's look.

Feel the Divine Attribute in Each-one

and

Wishing welfare mutually, bestow welfare all around !

Practise integrity in Thought, Speech and Action.

Bless each-other, Curse not. Wish well, Wicked not.

Do good, Crooked not ! Supporter be, Exploiter not.

Saviour be, Detrimental not.

Helpful be, Harmful not. Speak less, Do more.

Keep head cool, Let there be warmth in hands and feet.

Cultivate tolerance towards everyone, Not hatred !

Speak always Truth, Falsehood never.

Virtuous deeds always do, Wicked never.

Wish welfare everyone's, Not only to ownself !

Look always at own faults, Praise always others' merits.

Earn your bread by self labour always !

On the tongue Eternal Almighty's Name,

With hands noble deeds and

In the heart a resolute courage Hanumanji- like,

Rush forward and forward sure.

Success is yours ! Success yours is !

Vairāṇīm Praśamaṁ Yāntu Sauhārdam Vardhatām Mithah |

Kalahā Vilayaṁ Yāntu Bhāvayantu Janā Mithah ||

May enmities be tranquillised, Friendliness be thriven,

Quarrels be dissolved, And Love supreme be prevailed.

Om ! Let Divine Peace Prevail.

Peace Physical ! Peace Mental !! Peace Spiritual !!!

World-Friend,

RAṅGA AVADHŪTA

APHORISM BY REV. ŚRĪ RAṄGA AVADHŪTAJĪ

1. PARASPARADEVO BHAVA.

Invoke the Divine unto one another.

1. ŚVĀSE SVĀSE DATTA-NĀMA SMARĀTMAN.

Oh Mind! remember Lord Dattātreya at every moment (Lit. every breath)

3. BHAKTIRDAMBHO VINĀ BHĀVAM.

Faithless devotion is hypocrisy.

4. SVAYAMĀŚĪSTU SATKARMA.

A Good deed is boon itself.

5. MĀTĀ MĀTAIVA KEVALAM.

There is no alternate to mother.

6. NA MĀTUH PARADAIVATAM.

There is no divinity greater than mother.

7. SARVO DATTAH SARVARŪPASTAVARŪPAH.

Formless and the one with form, all are Lord Dattātreya only.

8. GURUKRUPĀ HI KEVALAM!

ŚIṢYA PARAMA MAṄGALAM.

Master's grace is ever beneficial to the disciples.

9. ŚREYAH PREYASO VIŚIṢYATE.

Spiritual bliss is greater than worldly happiness.

10. ĆĀTRA DEVO BHAVA.

Invoke divinity unto the taught.

11. SATYAMEVA PARAM TAPAH.

Truth is the supreme penance.

12. ŚRĪ DATTAH ŚARAṆAM MAMA

Lord Dattātreya is my ultimate refuge.

WANTED ! WANTED ! WANTED !

Who ?

PRECEPTORS

What Sort Of ?

Not just talkers, But Spiritually Alive .

Not oral Pedant, But who awakens one through own Spiritual Practice.

Not Erudite who only precepts others, But one who precepts own-self.

Not a Crazy Master, But who exerts to be a disciple of all.

Not who hankers after wealth of the followers,

But who would give a Healing Touch.

Not a fake Idealist, But a Hard Realist. A Dreamer not, But an Awakened.

What the emolument be ?

Self Contentment, Immortal Bliss, Eternal Peace !

Where to apply ?

In the heart-within.

When to start ?

To firm determination when arrived at ; Right Now !

Where to report ?

On the spot where you are; Every Where !

Acknowledgement of the application if any ?

The joy within.

Whom to apply ?

TO THE INNER-SOUL-AVADHŪTA !!

World - Friend,
RĀṄGA AVADHŪTA

chosen? I had trouble reaching here and now does one have to go to the river for getting water? What would you have done had I not come and you felt thirsty in fever?"

But Pāṇḍuraṅga was truly an enlightened soul. He said in good humour, "Sir, that is why God sent you here today!" Keshavlal then went to the river and brought a potful of water. But then he realised what is a true life of an Ascetic saint.

After bath he would go back up the hill. The fire in the clay-stove would have subsided by then. He would go to the stove and ask: "Hi, my savoury dish! Are you ready?" And then he himself would answer: "Yes. of course I am ready." He would then have the delicious meal i.e. 'Khichadi' (a gruel of rice and lentils), drink some water and after resting a while he would spend his time on spiritual meditation. If by chance there was any visitor, he would spend his time with him. Otherwise, it was all quiet and he was at peace with himself. His mental condition has been expressed in one of the devotional songs written by him. It goes as follows:

In cool shades of woods lives a hermit in a jungle there,
Smiling, chanting or someday weeping, gossiping with none.
He would spend his day basking in the sun and talking
to the stars at night. Playing like the forest birds and never
complain of hardships.....1

Śrī Vāsudevānanda Sarasvatī Swāmī Mahārāja including “DattaPurāṇa” were there. But this gentleman who had all these books told him that since he had kept all these holy books in his daily worship; could not part with any of them.

Disappointed as he was, at least he came to know that there existed a book called ‘DattaPurāṇa.’ But then his host remarked, “Kalyāṇajībhāī keeps all such books. Let us go there.” They all went to Kalyāṇajībhāī’s place and there Pāṇḍuraṅga was told to stay on at Bharucha for three-four days to read that book, so saying Kalyāṇajībhāī opened the box in which all those books were kept. One by one they went on removing all the books and putting them aside. They found one copy each of all the books while they found two copies of “DattaPurāṇa.” Kalyanabhai interjected, “O celibate! it seems this extra copy of DattaPurāṇa has been preserved for you only. Please take it and carry on with your ritual of reading it repeatedly. Pāṇḍuraṅga accepted the book gratefully, pressed it to his heart, offered a bow to it and with great joy he returned from Bharucha. He came to Nāreśvara only to read this book 108 times.