

Chapter 19

Where the Floods of Hatred Recede

Narmadashankar Acharya was a native of Surendranagar and held power of attorney for the Ahmedabad diocese's Acharya Devendraprasadji Maharaj. Sadly, he nurtured an intense hatred for the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha. Years ago, Swamishri had come to the Surendranagar mandir for darshan. Then, the sadhus and devotees accompanying him had gathered around in a small assembly during which Swamishri had recited some Swamini Vato.

Just as this was happening, Narmadashankar rushed to Swamishri in a rage and said, "You rebels from Bochasan have no right to deliver spiritual discourses in this mandir. So get out."

Swamishri, the sadhus, and devotees quietly got up and left the mandir without a single word of protest. Sometime after this,

Narmadashankar Acharya was implicated in a crime, and a criminal offense was registered against him. He utilized all his influence and spent a substantial sum, but it appeared impossible that he would be acquitted.

During this period, Swamishri's name was on the lips of the general populace as the great Sant of Saurashtra. Narmadashankar was already troubled, and upon recalling how he had insulted Swamishri years ago, he felt as if salt had been applied to his wounds. He relayed his distress to Chandulal Mehta, who told him, "There is only one remedy for this. You must go to Swamishri and seek his blessings."

Narmadashankar and Chandulal immediately went to Gondal. Narmadashankar put his head in Swamishri's lap and wept, pleading with Swamishri to extricate him from this unexpected calamity.

Swamishri compassionately and affectionately caressed his head and said, "Narmadashankarbhai! By Shriji Maharaj's grace, not a single hair on your head will be

harmed. You will be acquitted.” Saying this, Swamishri began to do *dhun*.

Just as Swamishri had blessed, Narmadashankarbhai was acquitted. He came to Gondal again, recounted to Swamishri how he had previously insulted him, and asked for forgiveness. Swamishri replied, “We don’t even remember anything like that happening! Nothing like that has ever happened! So, remove it from your mind!”

What an elevated spiritual state it is to forget that one has been insulted! Narmadashankarbhai thought, “The proverb, ‘Verbal wounds do not heal,’ is proven false here. This great soul is oblivious to even the existence of ‘verbal wounds’!”

With tears in his eyes, Narmadashankar bowed at Swamishri’s feet. Then, Narmadashankar invited Swamishri to have lunch at his home in Surendranagar, explaining, “That is the only way I will find peace.”

So, when Swamishri visited Surendranagar on this occasion, Narmadashankarbhai seized the opportunity to have Swamishri eat at his house. He had made food for forty-five people, but hearing that Swamishri had come to Surendranagar, many devotees from the surrounding villages arrived at Narmadashankar's house for Swamishri's darshan. Narmadashankarbhai was dismayed about how he would feed everyone. However, Swamishri lit a ghee lamp before Thakorji and instructed everyone to sit for lunch. Ultimately, a total of 300 devotees were fed from food meant for forty-five!

Narmadashankarbhai was stunned by this miracle witnessed with his own eyes. In the assembly, he said, “I became a manager and held power of attorney for Acharya Maharaj, but very late did I attain the perception to recognize Satsang and the Satpurush. I will remain forever indebted to Swamishri for the grace he has showered upon me.” Saying this, Narmadashankarbhai became emotional, and

tears of remorse welled in his eye, signaling that the floods of hatred had receded.

From here, Swamishri went for darshan in Gadhada. Then via Ningala, Swamishri traveled by bullock cart to Rohishala, where he visited Hirjibhai's house to celebrate the birth of his son. Kothari Sunderjibhai, Dahyabhai Merai, Tribhovanbhai, and other devotees helped make arrangements for Swamishri's visit. After having darshan at the birthplace of Sadguru Brahmachari Aksharanandji and the spot sanctified by Shriji Maharaj, Swamishri presided in an assembly on the riverbank and talked about how Gunatitanand Swami had visited this village.

Swamishri had also come to the village many times with Shastriji Maharaj. Once, upon seeing these two great souls traveling in a bullock cart, Vallabhbhai Kanjibhai was touched by their simplicity and saintliness. Although Vallabhbhai had not been very involved in Satsang, he had attended the Gadhada mandir *murti-pratishtha* ceremony.

The night that he returned from the *pratishtha*, he had a dream in which Swamishri told him, “Make sure you don’t forget the darshan you have done! Make sure you recognize who this Sadhu really is!”

Vallabhbhai sat up with a start. The exhilaration of the sweet dream was still fresh as he mulled over Swamishri’s words.

When Swamishri came to Rohishala this time, Vallabhbhai seized the opportunity to serve by offering his house for Swamishri’s accommodations. He told Swamishri, “I believe my house is infested with evil spirits. What should I do about that?”

“They will all be transported to Badrikashram. No evil spirits will remain here!” Then, Swamishri ordered some sanctified water and began to sprinkle it everywhere. Swamishri had them make a ring of soil around his house, after which he blessed him, “You will not have to experience hunger or other miseries.”

Vallabhbhai became emotional at Swamishri's uncomelled compassion. Swamishri's blessings removed all his miseries and problems.