

Chapter 9

Enduring an Inferno of Rage

Guru Vignandas Swami and disciple Yogi Maharaj's innate natures were as different as night and day. The guru was extremely incendiary, while the disciple was remarkably serene; the guru insisted on having everything his way, while the disciple was utterly accommodating; the guru was devoid of patience, while the disciple displayed superhuman forbearance. Despite having such disparate personalities, Yogi Maharaj had stayed in Vignandas Swami's *mandal* for years, when anyone else would have left long ago. Vignandas Swami viewed Yogi Maharaj's saintliness as helpless cowardice. Consequently, everyone had witnessed numerous incidents of Vignandas Swami intolerably bullying and mercilessly beating Yogi Maharaj. However, Yogi Maharaj endured everything without complaint.

After Shankar Bhagwan ingested the dark, venomous poison that threatened to consume the world during the churning of the oceans, he became gratefully known as “Nilkanth” since the poison had turned his throat blue. However, there was no hue to the insults, abuses, and inhumane cruelty that Yogi Maharaj was subjected to; otherwise, we might have given some name to the manifestation of suffering that Yogi Maharaj tolerated so silently!

Moreover, Shankar Bhagwan had to become Nilkanth only once, whereas Yogi Maharaj had to swallow Vignandas Swami’s smouldering embers repeatedly.

Once, in the searing heat of a summer afternoon, this guru-disciple pair reached a small village near Dhandhuka. The village chieftain was an atheist, and he believed all sadhus were filthy, leeching mendicants. Thus, he not only refused to offer the sadhus any assistance but instead, he hurled vile abuses and insults at them. The Darbar’s wife was

horrified by her husband's treatment of the sadhus. She pleaded with him, shedding tears and begging, "We cannot turn away sadhus hungry from our home."

Unable to spurn his wife's entreaties and tears, the Darbar reluctantly went to the mandir with one of his helpers carrying a bag of provisions in tow. The sadhus extended a warm invitation to the Darbar, saying, "Please share this meal with us." The Darbar simply glared at the sadhus, turned his back on them, and walked away.

Yogi Maharaj began preparing lunch, but a shortage of cooking utensils made it a slow process. When Yogi Maharaj finally finished preparing the meal, he was dismayed to find that the Darbar had not brought any ghee to spread on the *rotlis*. As the village was new to him, Yogi Maharaj did not know who to ask for ghee. And, remembering the arrogant expression on the Darbar's face, Yogi Maharaj felt it would be imprudent to request anything else from him, lest it incite the Darbar's rage

and lead to a further hail of abuses and insults. Moreover, Yogi Maharaj was also concerned that the Darbar may mistakenly get the impression that, “These sadhus are so gluttonous, they are asking for ghee,” causing his request to reflect poorly on the entire *sant mandal*. So, after considering all of these options, Yogi Maharaj decided to remain silent.

Yet, that left him in a quandary—what to do about Thakorji’s *thal*? For Yogi Maharaj, devotion to Thakorji was life’s primary purpose. So, depriving Thakorji of ghee on his *rotlis* was not an option. Finally, he found a tiny bit of ghee meant to light the *divas*, and he used it to lightly spread ghee onto the four *rotlis* in Thakorji’s *thal*. Yogi Maharaj thought, “Well, at least we could serve Thakorji properly. Then, guru Vignandas Swami can eat these *rotlis*.” Satisfied, Yogi Maharaj offered the *thal* to Thakorji with loving devotion.

Soon the Darbar arrived for lunch. Yogi Maharaj sat the guests and guru Vignandas Swami down to eat, and he began to serve

everyone lovingly. As everyone ate, Yogiji Maharaj continued serving them with a solicitous, “Here, take another *rotli*.” But how could they stomach it? The *rotlis* devoid of ghee felt like cardboard in the Darbar’s mouth. His skeptical mind began to raise doubts, “These *bawas* have clearly eaten the ghee and left none for us.”

As he ruminated on this thought, his agitation increased. After a few more bites, he suddenly stood up. Without even glancing at Vignandas Swami, he left the mandir and went home, muttering bitterly about the *bawas*.

Vignandas Swami was enraged. He got up and began to scream at Yogi Maharaj, pelting him with a hail of curses. When he ran out of abuses, he began to strike Yogi Maharaj with his hands. When he tired of that, he began to beat Yogi Maharaj with a heavy stick of firewood! The merciless beating left Yogi Maharaj crumpled on the ground in a semi-conscious state. When the guru finally tired, he shuffled over to his bed and went to sleep. But

just before doing so, he commanded Yogi Maharaj to fast for the day as a penance his ‘mistake’!

With his battered body covered in bruises and welts, Yogi Maharaj was in severe pain, but he still had to wash the dishes and clean up the kitchen. Yogi Maharaj slowly finished all of this work and finally, leaning gingerly against a pillar, took a *mala* in his hand and chanted, “Swaminarayan, Swaminarayan.”

Meanwhile, as soon as the Darbar entered his house, he shouted, “What was the point of feeding those filthy *bawas*!”

As his wife attempted to calm him, the Darbar told her, “These sadhus are selfish, I tell you, selfish! They ate all the ghee themselves and served everyone else dry *rotlis*! Dry! Go and see for yourself!”

His wife opened her mouth to speak, but no words came out as she choked up and her eyes filled with tears. The Darbar looked at her with confusion. Then, with tears streaming down

her face, the Darbar's wife sobbed, “Oh, no! The ghee is sitting right here where I had left it. I forgot to send it with you. And when I realized that it had been left behind, there was no one here to send it with. I found out too late.”

For a few moments, the Darbar was rendered speechless. Then, he croaked, “What are you saying!”

He picked up the vessel of ghee, and instead of calling for a helper, quickly took it to the mandir himself. However, what was going to happen had already happened. When he reached the mandir, the Darbar heard Vignandas in the next room snoring loudly, and he saw the young, slightly built sadhu turning the *mala* with great concentration.

“Swami!” the Darbar panted.

Yogi Maharaj looked over, gave him an affectionate smile, and warmly said, “Please come in, Bapu!”

“But... Swami, what is this!” The Darbar stood frozen with the vessel of ghee in his hand.

This sadhu's face was swollen with the welts and bruises of a fresh beating. The beating had left his nose misshapen and his eyes black.

“It’s nothing,” said the sadhu as he got up. But with that motion, his upper garment slipped off his shoulder, and all across his chest and back, the Darbar saw large, ugly bruises and welts where he had been mercilessly struck by the firewood. The Darbar realized that his own mistake coupled with the guru’s hand had caused this innocent disciple such suffering, and his remorse knew no bounds. The Darbar could have taken the side of this young disciple and rebuked his guru, but there was no chance for that as Yogi Maharaj would not hear of it! With a grieving heart, the Darbar fell at Yogi Maharaj’s feet.

Meanwhile, Vignandas woke up and walked out of his room. The scene he saw was enough to fill him with consternation. The Darbar was bowing at Yogi Maharaj’s feet, and a vessel of ghee was untouched beside him. Understanding what had transpired, he glanced

at ‘Yogi’ for a second, and without a word, retreated into his room.

From that instant, a natural affection for Yogi Maharaj welled up in the Darbar’s heart, and he resolved to become a *satsangi*. He had the sadhus stay for two days and served them sincerely. Only after ‘Yogi’ ate a small piece of laddu that was part of a feast he had sponsored did the Darbar feel some peace in his heart. As the sadhus left, the Darbar asked them to offer him a *kanthi* and make him a *satsangi*. He invited them to grace his home with their presence. The Darbar’s wife was overjoyed. Today, this great sadhu had transformed her cruel, atheist husband into a sincere spiritual seeker.