

Chapter 10

Knowingly Enduring Poison

Shastriji Maharaj, Yogi Maharaj, Pujaji Bapu, Ranchhod Bhagat, and others had been extoling the glory of the pilgrimage places of both Bhadra and Dangara. Consequently, devotees began to visit both pilgrimage places more frequently.

In June 1936 (Vaishakh, V.S. 1992), when Yogi Maharaj was forty-four years old, Ranchhod Bhagat passed away in the holy village of Dangara. The heartbroken devotees organized a funeral and memorial service to which Shastriji Maharaj had sent Yogi Maharaj, Vignandas Swami, and other sadhus.

After the funeral, the customary rites on the twelfth day following death were also completed. Following those rites, everybody had lunch and retired for an afternoon siesta wherever they could find a spot to lay down. Despite not wanting to, Khengarjibhai of

Ahmedabad had come here at Shastriji Maharaj's command. Yogi Maharaj laid out a thin mattress for Khengarjibhai's afternoon nap, and then, he lay down to sleep. Khengarjibhai quickly drifted into a deep slumber. But he was soon jolted awake by a barrage of angry curses and the sickening sounds of someone being beaten. As he groggily turned toward the source of the disturbance, his jaw dropped in shock. Vignandas Swami had climbed onto the supine Yogi Maharaj's chest and was raining a flurry of punches onto his chest, face, and nose while shouting the vilest of curses.

After Vignandas had pushed Bhagwatswarupdas Swami down the stairs in Rajkot, Yogi Maharaj had forsaken his company and had gone to stay with Shastriji Maharaj. Thereafter, although they had sometimes stayed together when engaged in service at the mandir, Yogi Maharaj no longer traveled in the villages with Vignandas. Yet, whenever they ended up alone together in the

absence of Shastriji Maharaj or some senior devotee, Vignandas never failed to show his true colors.

“Hey, Jogta! Because everyone addresses you as ‘Jogi, Jogi,’ you no longer respect me as a guru! Who do you think you are?” With that, he continued to mercilessly pummel Yogi Maharaj all over his body.

Yogi Maharaj folded his hands as if in beseeching prayer and repeated, “Swami! O compassionate one! Please forgive me for any mistakes I may have committed...”

But Vignandas Swami’s jealous rage knew no bounds. Living forever immersed in the consciousness of being a guru, this sadhu’s poisonous ego was spewing forth from him in the form of blows being rained down upon the innocent Yogi Maharaj. The forever humble and service-minded “Jogi” had, in Vignandas’s mind, been born as his slave to endure his beatings!

The young Khengarjibhai had taken in this scene frozen in shock. However, now, his brave Rajput blood boiled over. Molded by the spiritual discourses of Shastriji Maharaj, his courageous temperament and indomitable spirit expressed themselves fully on this occasion. Khengarjibhai lunged over, grasped Vignandas's face tightly with both hands, and roared, "Stop your intimidation and abuse, or you'll be sorry!" Unaccustomed to such opposition, Vignandas went limp and looked away in dismay.

Yogi Maharaj sprung up and began to exclaim, "Oh, oh! Khengarjibhai! Let him go! Let him go! He is like our guru!" Then, Yogi Maharaj placed his hand on his own neck in a gesture of appeal and pleaded, "Please stop. Swami won't be pleased... We cannot do this. We must tolerate. We should endure such beatings if it pleases our guru..."

Khengarjibhai shoved Vignandas away in disgust and glared as he scurried into the other room.

Yogi Maharaj sat down dejectedly as if he were at fault. Khengarjibhai stood still for a while, not knowing what to do. Finally, he lay down again to rest, but sleep had deserted him. He thought, “Jogi! Such unbounded saintliness... An incarnation of mercy... And he tolerates the behavior of such a heinous guru! Yogi, kudos to your mind-boggling tolerance!” He choked up with emotion thinking, “How many times has Jogi knowingly endured such poison!”

Khengarjibhai realized why Shastriji Maharaj had insisted that he come here. The words of the Shrimad Bhagvat (1.18.48) were evident on this occasion:

Tiraskrutāhā vipralabdhāhā shaptāhā
kshiptāhā hatā api,

Nāsyā tat pratikurvanti tadbhaktāhā
prabhavo’pi hi.

(Despite suffering the scorn, deception, curses, and insults of others, the devotees of

God would never retaliate though they possess the power to do so.)