

Chapter 3

A Singular Desire to Renounce

After his exchange with Krishnacharandas Swami, this rare soul focused his attention inwards, like a great spiritual adept. Despite living with his family, Jhinabhai had remained forever untouched by family ties. Now he sought the chance to walk the path of renunciation at the earliest opportunity.

This child yogi had never addressed his sister-in-law, Nanduba, with the standard appellation, ‘Bhabhi,’ nor had he ever once raised his eyes and looked upon her. In this, his behavior was reminiscent of the legendary celibate Lakshman!

When Jhinabhai sat for his meals, he would add water to his food and mix it together before eating it. When Puriba sometimes chided him for this, he would temporarily stop mixing his food, only to return to this practice at the earliest opportunity. He would eat whatever

was served to him, but never would he ask for second helpings from his sister-in-law. Sometimes, he would sweetly ask Puriba, “Mother, can you give me another quarter of *rotla*?” or “The *chhas* is nice today.” He avoided milk, although Puriba would insist on having him drink it. He remained unconcerned if the food was warm or cold, and he never complained about the food’s taste. He rarely stayed at home. He spent most of his time in the mandir with Mohankaka. Mohankaka had great affection for Jhinabhai. If Jhinabhai was late in coming to the mandir, Mohankaka would immediately come to his house to fetch him. He couldn’t bear to stay without Jhinabhai. Jhinabhai had won him over with his service.

Jhinabhai remained uninterested in materialistic sense pleasures. He would chant the name of Bhagwan Swaminarayan and lose himself in the bliss of Brahman. He was restless to renounce his home and join

Krishnacharandas Swami, as if someone were summoning him, “Jhinabhai, it is now time.”

Eager to walk on the razor’s edge of renunciation as soon as possible, he felt agitated by the familial bonds of his home life. But the momentous occasion of renunciation had now arrived.

Early one morning, before the sun’s rays could spread over the horizon, Dhari was witness to a historic event. Jhinabhai and Jeram had decided to leave their homes and travel to Junagadh to become sadhus!

For Jhinabhai’s mother, Puriba, the news hit her like a bolt of lightning. Unable to bear the shock, she fainted. The younger children began to wail. Devchandbhai bore the news bravely, but inside, his grief was almost overwhelming.

Grandfather Virjibapa was spiritually wise, so he bore the shock in silence. But there was not a dry eye in the entire household. No one could quell Puriba’s heartrending lamentations. Still, Kamalshibhai’s wife, Nanduba, tried to

offer her some solace. “Mother, we all knew of Jhinabhai’s inclination for renunciation and detachment from this world. He is not one to stay in this worldly life. His soul is meant for higher things. So, let him go. You still have your other sons!”

“I do have other sons, dear,” said Puriba in a choked voice, “but my Jhino is matchless. How virtuous he is! When the brothers eat together, he gives his brothers the best items, and himself only eats *rotla*.

“When he would go to school, I would fill his pockets with grams and puffed rice, but he would give it all away to his friends. In his life, he has never once eaten until he felt full. He would never ask anyone for anything. What will happen to him, and where will he end up? Dear, he has no impulse to care for himself. Thus, I’m so worried for him that I can barely stand it.”

Puriba again began to sob.

Her mother's love was wailing for Jhinabhai, and Nanduba could say nothing further.

Finally, when he could take it no longer, Virjibapa declared, "Fetch Jhina from wherever he is. Without him, his mother will die!"

Kamalshibhai's younger brother, Tribhovanbhai, and Jeram's older brother, Jagjivanbhai, set out to find the boys and bring them home. They headed towards Junagadh at a fast clip and caught up to the boys in the Swaminarayan mandir in Mandanpara, near the town of Bilkha.

Tribhovanbhai tearfully explained the situation at home and asked them both to come back. Jhinabhai did not have the slightest wish to return home. His mind was in another world as if the huge, impassive boulders of Mount Girnar had sprouted speech and were calling to Jhinabhai to restore the divine lineage of the Gunatit era in Junagadh. But, given the circumstances, Jhinabhai and Jeram reluctantly returned to Dhari.

Jhinabhai's parents were relieved. But now, Jhinabhai forgot about all worldly activities. He began to behave like Jadbharat, completely aloof from the world. He remained fully engrossed in devotion and chanting God's name. An intense yearning awoke in his heart to reach Krishnacharandas Swami and stay in his company. He would only come home once a day to eat lunch. Puriba thought, "My Jhino is skipping dinner and must get hungry in the morning." Thus, she would go to the mandir each morning to lovingly feed Jhinabhai milk and *rotla*. Jhinabhai would nibble on the food in silence with eyes downcast. In this way, a year passed by.

Then, one day, Jhinabhai reiterated to his older brother, Kamalshibhai, his unwavering decision to become a sadhu. Kamalshibhai was aware of Jhinabhai's determination, but he felt it would be better if Jhinabhai left to become a sadhu after securing his parents' permission. So, Kamalshibhai again explained to his mother Puriba, "I have given Krishnacharandas Swami

my word. Now, Jhinabhai has lost interest in everything of this world. Please don't cause him further grief. We should send him to become a sadhu and earn Swami's *rajipo*. Moreover, Krishnacharandas Swami had told me, 'If Jhino renounces, he will be a gem of a sadhu. He is destined to be a sadhu.'"

Soon after this, Jhinabhai had a heart-to-heart talk with his mother and plaintively said, "Mother, why have you forced me to come back? Please let me go. This will make my birth worthwhile. Mother, please give me your permission."

This plea came from the depths of his being and pierced through Puriba's maternal intransigence. She began to weep but realized that she should make Jhina and Krishnacharandas Swami happy. She could not bear to give her son permission to become a sadhu, but in the end, she agreed under one condition—that her beloved Jhino spend a full day with her before he left. Kamalshibhai secured permission from Virjibapa and

Devchandbhai for Jhinabhai to become a sadhu. Jhinabhai's *vairagya*-suffused heart sang with joy.

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