

Chapter 9

“He Tolerates a Great Deal of Abuse from Me”

Around this time, in 1924 (V.S. 1981), Vignandas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, and other sadhus and devotees traveled to the village of Gariya for a *parayan* organized by Manishankarbhai Jani. On this occasion, there were extensive spiritual discourses and discussions in the presence of Kuberbhai and other devotees from Bhavnagar.

Vignandas Swami and Yogi Maharaj used to go for a bath at the river adjacent to the farm of Gariya’s Darbar, Mansinhji. All the devotees would go with them and bathe Vignandas Swami. Once, Vignandas Swami remarked, “You should bathe this Jogi. No matter how much you search, you won’t find another sadhu like Jogi. He tolerates a great deal of abuse from me.”

The devotees were surprised to hear this guru sing the praises of the disciple whom he never tired of cruelly abusing. As the devotees already had intense affection for Yogi Maharaj, they relished the chance to take turns pouring water over his head and body. Then, all the sadhus and devotees did their puja on the farm. After that, everyone returned to their accommodations in the village.

In this way, this group of sadhus made great efforts to travel through the villages and reinvigorate satsang in people’s hearts.

After celebrating the ninth anniversary of Sarangpur mandir on 29 April 1925 (Vaishakh *sud* 6, V.S. 1981), Shastriji Maharaj traveled through central Gujarat, eventually arriving in Anand. Purushottambhai Jorabhai of Anand, who had migrated to Jabalpur for business, had sent many letters inviting Shastriji Maharaj to visit Jabalpur. Finally, Shastriji Maharaj agreed to visit Jabalpur with his *sant mandal* and do a *parayan* on the *Satsangijivan* in the village of Dhansur on the banks of the Narmada River.

As the *parayan* commenced, Shastriji Maharaj was seated on a cot under the open sky, bathed in the cool light of the full moon. Shastriji Maharaj was absorbed in the bliss of Brahman, and all the sadhus and devotees surrounding him were absorbed in his *murti*. As he described the concept of devotional servanthood, Shastriji Maharaj said, “Harji Bhagat of Surat had such a virtue of devotional servanthood. Today, Nirgun Swami, Yogi Maharaj, Aksharpurushottamdas, Ghanshyam Swami, and others also have this virtue of devotional servanthood. When we are eating, this Jogi does our darshan without even blinking, and he meditates on the *murti* while singing the kirtan, ‘*Nānā grās levat mangamatā, nenā bhari joyā re Hari jamatā...*’ (Taking small morsels in an enchanting fashion, my eyes never tire of seeing of Hari eating...)” In this way, he spoke at length on the topic of devotional servanthood.

Shastriji Maharaj stayed in Jabalpur for six days, fulfilled all of Purushottambhai’s wishes,

blessed him, and returned to Anand. After that, the sadhus continued their travels through Gujarat, and Vignandas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, and the other sadhus eventually reached Sarangpur.

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Once, Vignandas Swami, Yogi Maharaj, and the other sadhus left Bochasan and took the train to Ranoli Station. The blind Bhagwatswarupdas Swami and the young devotee Bhagwatsinh Rana were also accompanying them. From Ranoli Station, the sadhus had to walk four miles to Sokhada.

Bhagwatsinh held onto Bhagwatswarupdas Swami’s hand and led him down the road. Along the route, Bhagwatsinh began to wonder what it would be like to be a blind person walking in the wilderness. So, he closed his eyes and continued walking to see how it felt. Before he knew it, he veered off the road and fell into a cactus hedge. Since he had been holding onto Bhagwatswarupdas Swami’s hand and leading him down the road, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami

also fell into the cactus hedge. Pierced by innumerable sharp thorns, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami began shouting and rebuking Bhagwatsinh. Vignandas Swami and Yogi Maharaj rushed to help them up. Even after Yogi Maharaj helped remove the thorns and straighten his clothes, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami continued to castigate Bhagwatsinh, shouting, “Hey, blind boy! Why did you have to come to lead me forward?” Bhagwatsinh was on the verge of tears. Then, Vignandas Swami began to reprimand him as well. Yogi Maharaj took his side and humbly said, “If a mistake has been made, please punish me. He is but a child and will make mistakes. So, please forgive him.”

Due to Yogi Maharaj’s plea, Bhagwatswarupdas Swami calmed down. But Vignandas Swami said, “Without rebuke, no one improves. So, stop coddling him.”

But Yogi Maharaj continued to repeat his abject plea for forgiveness as if he had made the mistake himself! Vignandas Swami tended to

lose his temper when a fellow sadhu or devotee made a mistake, and he would often strike at them as punishment.

Yogi Maharaj was aware of Vignandas Swami and Bhagwatswarupdas Swami’s strict natures, and he was also aware of Bhagwatsinh’s playful nature. So, to maintain harmony between both extremes, he shouldered the blame upon himself and got both sadhus to stop rebuking Bhagwatsinh. Yogi Maharaj’s actions helped ensure that Bhagatsinh would happily continue staying with them instead of going home. In this way, Yogi Maharaj’s empathy ensured that countless sadhus, new youngsters, and spiritual aspirants could carry on in Satsang. In Yogi Maharaj’s mind, this was a very great service.