

Chapter 9

A Bed of Arrows

The uncertainty of constantly changing circumstances, the fickleness of guru Vignandas's nature and whims, and the drudgery of constantly adjusting to the changes in food, water, and people that came from traveling to a new village every day all failed to stem the tide of Yogiraj's divine joy. In those days, traveling through Sorath in the summer heat was like enduring a constant, violent beating that left internal injuries—while there would be no visible marks, one would suffer considerable pain.

On one such blistering afternoon, Vignandas and his group of sadhus disembarked at a train station near Junagadh. At Vignadas's instruction, Yogi Maharaj had earlier sent a letter to the local devotees requesting pick up from the station. However, as they looked

around the train station in the blazing summer heat, not a soul was in sight.

Vignandas Swami jumped to the conclusion that Jogi had forgotten to inform the devotees about their arrival, and he erupted into a foul litany of curses and abuses against Yogi Maharaj. Even after curses, abuses, and accusations that could sear one's heart, Vignandas's hands remained forever eager to strike Yogi Maharaj. It was as if, without delivering savage punches and kicks, he could experience no inner satisfaction. Yogi Maharaj folded his hands and explained, "Swami, I did send a letter to the devotees by mail."

But rage is deaf. Vignandas had to endure a minor discomfort, and consequently, his spiritual knowledge and satsang understanding became comatose! So, he continued to sear Yogi Maharaj in the flames of his inner and outer fury.

Moreover, on this scorching summer afternoon, the station was so empty that even the stationmaster had retreated to his room.

So, Vignandas unreservedly continued abusing and beating Yogi Maharaj until his rage was partially quelled. When he finally stopped, Yogi Maharaj began to make his way to the stationmaster's office.

“Where do you think you’re going?” shouted Vignandas.

“Swami, I’m going to get some water for Thakorji and you.”

“I don’t want any water, Jogta.” Sparks of rage flew with every word from Vignandas’s mouth. “Today, you and I are both going to suffer!”

“But Thakorji will also suffer...,” thought Yogi Maharaj sorrowfully. But he followed guru Vignandas Swami towards the nearest village leading Bhagwatswarupdas Swami by the hand.

Just imagining the barefoot trek on blistering dirt roads while carrying everyone’s luggage with one hand and leading a blind sadhu with the other hand feels like being speared by thorns in every pore of one’s body.

If that is the case, how can one begin to conceive of the extent of the tolerance of Yogi Maharaj, who actually lived through these conditions? Yogi Maharaj walked like this for ten to fifteen miles. Finally, Vignandas tired. He was very thirsty. He had invited this misery upon himself by refusing water at the train station, but that didn't deter him from now unleashing the order, "Jogi! Go find me some water."

Yogi Maharaj spotted some houses in the distance, and he made his way there. He reached a small village only to find that a prominent villager had just passed away, and everyone was grieving. Thus, no one listened to Yogi Maharaj's request for water, and he had to return empty-handed. Vignandas fumed at the situation, but he ultimately had no option but to move forward. Finally, they came across a well on the road. Yogi Maharaj drew water from the well and offered it to Thakorji. With a choked voice and tears swimming in his eyes, Yogi Maharaj pleaded to God, "Please forgive

me, O ocean of compassion!” Then, he offered water to Vignandas Swami and Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, and he drank some himself.

All along the way, abuses and bitter insults had been spewing from Vignandas’s mouth. When he tired of swearing, he would walk quickly down the road, unmindful of his companions. Yogiji Maharaj, who was slowly leading the blind Bhagwatswarupdas Swami, was constantly afraid that guru Vignandas would break the rule of traveling within eyesight of a companion sadhu, and thus have to fast. This ‘pilgrimage’ continued for a long time. At dusk, Yogi Maharaj pleaded with Vignandas Swami to stop at a nearby village so that he could prepare *thal* for Thakorji.

Vignandas Swami turned red and retorted, “Is your father going to be waiting for us there? Stop your dawdling and come on!” Yogi Maharaj looked down. Such constant and utter scorn and disrespect were enough to bring anyone to tears. Even Yogi Maharaj was pained

—not by the disrespect shown to him, but to Thakorji! In the fading light, Yogi Maharaj folded his hands, looked to the heavens, and stood for two minutes praying, “Maharaj! Please forgive me. I am unable to serve you in a timely fashion...” Two tears dropped from his eyes into the dust, and the earth trembled. The surrounding wilderness bowed down to Yogi Maharaj’s devotion, and he continued onward.

When they finally reached their destination at 9 p.m., they had walked nearly twenty-five miles. All three sadhus were exhausted. The devotees of the village gathered to meet the newly arrived sadhus. When Vignandas angrily demanded, “Why did no one come to pick us up,” everyone looked down in embarrassment. Finally, someone said, “Swami, the letter only reached us when the mail arrived today at 4 p.m. We thought about leaving immediately and meeting you on the road, but we reconsidered, thinking that it has become very late anyway.” What could those foolish

devotees know of the terrible price that Yogi Maharaj had paid for their reconsideration?

After preparing the evening meal and offering it to Thakorji, Yogi Maharaj tearfully prayed to Thakorji. Then, he served everyone their meal, washed the dishes, and cleaned the kitchen. When he finally finished these tasks well after midnight, he had still not put a single morsel of food into his mouth. He looked around and spotted a jute cloth bag. He spread it out near a pillar and sat down against it.

In the silence of the night, together with the gentle sound of the *mala* turning, one could almost perceive the steady heartbeat of Yogiraj's saintliness. Finally, despite the bed of arrows comprising of incessant insults, abuses, disrespect, and beatings, Yogiraj peacefully closed his eyes, thinking of his beloved Thakorji and guru Shastriji Maharaj.