
GADGE MAHARAJ

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15:39

ERUCH: So we have come as far as having set up the environment for the story, eh? That is Pandharpur, and it has become famous. People go there for pilgrimage and then you go again, return to the place again for pilgrimage. You heard that. Well, let us digress now.

Centuries have passed by, and the place is still there. And past some decades there came a man wandering, you know, and he saw what was happening over there. For the first few times of his visit he didn't mention anything. Then he started exhorting the people who were there to worship at that place. What they used to do at the time was, they used to sacrifice something. They sacrificed doves, and goats, and chicken, and rabbits like that at the place -- at the temple there.

And there would be a regular stream of blood flowing, and so this young man would come there and he detested all these things. And he started exhorting them, and begging of them to focus their attention on to worship rather than trying to propitiate the Lord through all this sort of thing, this nonsense that they were doing there. And that young man was this old man, now that you see in the picture, called Gadge Maharaj. So he would be there time and again he would visit the place and exhort the people. And people who are naturally so much entrenched in that tradition and all that, for them it was very difficult to get out of it. And on the contrary they started being rude to this young man, and said, "Who are you to tell us like that? Why should you tell us like that? We know the way to worship, it has been established for many centuries now. And why do you try to bring us something that's new and novel as you say?" and so there was friction.

And then he became more vehement and then he spent more time, and he made his headquarters over there, and was there, and got established there, and was the one who used the whip, so to say, and tried to mend their form of worship. Since then, he has been revered as the saint of this country. He is known as Gadge Maharaj. There's a film of his life and all that sort of thing. So that is the background of this picture, you see the old man there. And this man, while exhorting them, while years passed by, he even started promising them. He would exhort them and of course humiliate the whole crowd, you know how it is, tens of thousands of people, sometimes hundreds of thousands on the fair days. Humiliate them in the sense that "Is the way you worship the Lord? Does He want this? He wants your heart. If you want to sacrifice, sacrifice yourself then, slaughter yourself

then." He would go on very vehemently. and then he would say "Is it befitting for you all to come over here and wear out your souls like this, these boot souls are the soles of your feet to do what? To bang your head on the feet of the stone image? Worship in the way I tell you. I'll give you a promise that He'll come again if you were to listen to me. I am promising you. I am taking an oath before this Lord of yours that I will bring the very Lord in flesh and blood before your eyes." And so forth and so on, he would be very vehement and all that, and he would do that.

So years passed, decades passed by, and he would continue to dwell there. Time and again we would be hearing just a little hint thrown here and there by Baba, saying that you know, that people profess themselves to be saints and masters. Baba would say "How I suffer for them. My suffering is threefold, you have no idea. I suffer spiritually, I suffer mentally, I suffer physically. Spiritual suffering is that I find myself bound in you all, in your ignorance. I find myself bound because I'm one with you all. That's my spiritual suffering. You don't realize that. My mental suffering is that those who love me, those who have been made aware by me hardly have understood what I say and yet go from threshold to threshold in search of spiritual masters and saints and yogis and all that. That's my mental suffering. I suffer mentally just as parents suffer for their children who go wayward. You know how they behave. So they suffer mentally, so my suffering is mental because of my children going Helter Skelter like that. And I suffer physically. You have witnessed my suffering physically, he says. I have gone through accidents, how I am suffering, and triple suffering. I suffered mentally, physically, and spiritually."

So, but you have no idea who your saints are. Baba would exhort us. "Saints like Gadge Marahaj who knows me as I really am, and he has never come to us, we haven't gone to him." You see Gadge Maharaj never came here. So we'd hear that, "He sees me as I really am, and the one who sees me as I really am is the true servant" and we had been hearing that. So not every time but once in a while. And then He would say that "He is one of My beloved children. I love him very much." So such impulse, sometimes would go to his ears also, what Baba has been saying about him. Because how would it go to my uncle? Because he was very fond of my uncle, this old man here in Ahmednagar. They live here, my uncle, my mother used to live here. So he would go there, he would get all the followers there and he was the groom, mascot to carry you know? And everywhere he would go he would clean the place. Sometimes he had about fifty people around him. Each one, they knew he was very happy when people helped him to sweep the place, help keep the place clean. All the garbage in one place. Wherever he would go he would clean the place and make it appear very clean and tidy. That was his way of going from place to place. So he would do that. We had a huge compound over there, so he would do that. So what happened is, that he heard, he heard from my uncle, so my uncle respects him, of course he loves Baba very much. He was the one who brought the whole family to Baba. So he heard this, telling them in a jocular way that "Baba was saying this to us about you, oh Gadge Maharaj, you are very

fortunate". And so he would just smile and keep quiet, he wouldn't respond or anything. But the response we heard after many years from him.

So time and again, there were two or three occasions I still remember. While we were traveling by train on mast tours or any other tours and carriages. So once what he saw an old man, the same figure we had seen pictures of this man, so we immediately recognized him. He leaned out of the carriage holding the two bars, you know, the entry bars. And while the train was in motion, he leans out and he peeks in the next compartment through a window nearby, and he gazes at Baba. Just a little look, a peek. Baba would look and smile. Only the smile was exchanged, that's the contact, that's all. Decades passed by, we didn't know what he was doing, or what he was saying, or anything else. We didn't know anything about him. But one day he did come to this door, and he comes there and again in the same posture he puts his hand on the post. He looks at Baba and Baba calls him inside.

He comes inside, and then of course Baba embraced him, embraces him very lovingly. And then he gets it out of his system so to speak and starts complaining saying "How long do you wish me to continue like that? Why don't you put your hand on my head and bring a happy end to all that? Bless me!" Baba says, "No, you have a lot of time that's there for you. You go back and continue the work that you are doing." What work now? Baba says "There is still time. Now that my body is too tired I cannot continue with the work." Then he says "I have been hearing that you called me your beloved child, and is this the way when the child comes to the father, is this the way to be treated like this, rejected like this?" This is what he said openly to Baba. Then we came to know, then we tried to find out who told him. So then my uncle reported that it was him. So - I forgot that- when my uncle would tease him like that, he says "Well that he sees me as I really am, he's the real saint" and all that. So my uncle would be so happy to have him here in the house and all that. So then he would tell my uncle and those who are there, he says "You know who I am compared to Him? I'm the little light that is burning in a small lamp, the oil lamps, chimney? Have you seen those oil lamps with the little wick? I'm that light, the light in that little lamp compared to the sun, the blazing sun. He's that and we are just tiny ones like that. How can there be any comparison?" That's how he would tell my uncle. And so that would come to our ears like that. So then we told him about this, that uncle told me about this, that he would say this.

So that's how it goes. So he comes down and complains and says "You called me your beloved child and this is the way to reject me like that? When I ask you to bless me?" So Baba says that "I love you, and all that, but still this time you have to go, you have to continue to do your work." Then he says "Alright, do one thing. If there's still time to live, then allow me to live here at your door post. On the steps here I'll sit there and I'll keep a watch, guard the place. And I won't eat as much as they eat." He's pointing at us, and looking at me of course. So then he said that "All I would need is little part of bread and little vegetable on it, and that's my daily

food, I beg for it. And I can eat it from your household and I'll keep watch. Allow me to pass my days here." Baba says "You have to go back. You have to continue the work. There's still time. And he feels so rejected and says "Alright, all that I can do is ask for one last favor, that's all. Grant if you wish to, don't grant if you don't wish to, but I feel that you won't reject me again." Baba says "Don't ask me anything like breaking my silence or anything or again I'll reject you. Don't ask me - you can ask anything except to break my silence." All this conversation is taking place at this very spot you see. So he says "No, all I ask is will you please come for one day to Pandharpur?" means to this place. He says "All right, granted, which day you want me there?" So he selected that day, which is where hundreds of thousands of people pray there, this particular festival occasion. It was granted. From morning till night. "One day is twenty four hours. I'll be at your disposal. Ask me to do whatever you like, I'll do it. But after that, then you'll have to fulfill what I want." "What do you want?" Baba says "You know how I love my lepers, I would like to work with the lepers, I would like to be with them after that." He says "There is a colony of lepers, you can have as many lepers as you want" the old man is telling Baba. So fine, settled. So then he goes away having fixed the time, and we are here to continue and on the appointed day we go with Baba.

And there we are at Pandharpur, the place of pilgrimage and there is a crowd of people you know. But because of his authority there were a lot of rooms given, and Baba is made to sit right in front of the temple on a seat. There is the temple there in Pandharpur, and in front of it He's made to sit right outside. And then of course there is a lot of music there, and reception receiving Baba right royally. Amongst his group, amongst his own ones, and we are very happy to greet one another and this and that. Then he conducts Baba to a big hall, because what happened taking this opportunity Baba's lovers heard this, that Baba has accepted this promise and that on that particular day Baba would be going. Being a place of pilgrimage, having the Lord in their midst of the pilgrimage is wonderful occasion. Who would want to miss it?