
PANDARPUR TEMPLE OF VITHOBA

Eruch Jessawala

Mandali Hall, Meherazad, India

August 23, 1981

28:49

ERUCH: The other day when I showed her the things in Mandali Hall, you know this is the Mandali Hall. We can call it as a Mandali Hall. Formerly it was a stable and then it became the hall for the Lord. He would sit here and be with the mandali. That's why it is known as the Mandali Hall. And who is mandali? You all are the mandali also. Who love Him and would want to serve Him and would want to obey Him implicitly, you follow? So there is no special mark bestowed upon the mandali's backs or on their foreheads denoting that they are mandali. All are mandali who love Him, would want to serve Him and would want to obey Him. You follow?

So while going through all, the some of the pictures and all that, we came across this picture where Baba is working with the lepers. Have you seen that picture properly? That is the lepers that Baba is bathing. And time and again this picture appears to us you know. People have got enlargements. There are jackets you see having the same photo of Baba, contacting such a leper. And it appears as if, although we hear that Baba has been working with the lepers and it appears that there is only the one leper that is being shown through pictures that Baba has ever contacted. So the story is because of this peculiarity. The peculiarity of this picture is that it reminds us of so many things. That's the reason why this picture has been chosen and is being printed time and again and is in

circulation. It is connected with that old man standing behind Baba. Where Baba is bending and pouring water over the leper. But there is another old man you see there, he's the saint of the place. Of the state. Saint, can you hear me?

PILGRIM 1: Saint?

ERUCH: Yeah. And his name is Gadge Maharaj. Gadge Maharaj. Known because of that little thing that is on his head you know. It's the bottom of the broken earthenware chetty. Water jug. So that's how it is known and any earthenware jug you see that holds water is known as [foreign] ghadga. Ghadge, in Marathi. So he's known as Ghadge Maharaj because he always used to carry that. That served him as the begging bowl, served him to drink water from, eat food from and at the same time it was, helped in the sun, scorching heat of the sun. A shade, as a hat he would wear. So that's how he's known as Gadge Maharaj.

And we see in the picture Baba bathing the leper, Gadge Maharaj is there, and some other mandali helping Baba to bathe the leper. The scene is at a place not too far from here. It's a little place called Pandarpur. It's a place of great pilgrimage where people gather from different parts of this country for a pilgrimage over there. And it is so beautiful a place now but when the fair is held, well sometimes it is tens of thousands of people and sometimes

it is hundreds of thousands of people. Flock over there. Especially during two days in a year there are hundreds of thousands of people there mind you.

So, and there is a good size river that winds its way and skirts the whole township there. And the vast banks of the river serve as the spot where these people can pitch their tents. The pilgrims come there, they pitch their tents. So it is known as one of the most important places of pilgrimage in this country. Pandarpur, this scene is there. Baba is at that place. Why has it become a place of pilgrimage first of all you'd want to wonder. And it is associated with saints of this country. Formally it had no temple or anything of the sort. Some hundreds years, 400 years ago there was nothing there. But it is said that at the village, when it must have been a little settlement, a little village there, there was a family living and that family had a son. One of the sons was working and at the same time helping his poor parents. And he delighted in serving his parents whole heartedly and he was serving his parents. In the sense that well he looked after their welfare. He looked after the, he bore the burden of the household. He would go out working and give more comfort and rest to his parents and all that. And when he's not working he would be serving his parents by massaging the body, by looking after them, clipping their nails or washing their clothes and all. Always in all his spare time he would be devoting himself to the service of his parents.

And his service and love for the parents reached that height when the Lord Himself appreciated and was proud of his love. His name was Pundli. So, it so happened that one day the Lord was overwhelmed by his

love and service for the parents, He manifested while he was serving his parents. Massaging them and putting them to sleep one afternoon. So at that time what happened was that while he was in the process of massaging or pressing the feet of his parents there was a manifestation of the Lord. So he shood the Lord into silence. Not make any noise and just be there in the corner. So Lord Krishna appeared there. It is said so, the history says so. And he was shood to a corner and made to stand silent. And no disturbance while the parents are resting.

People came to know about it. He then of course paid his respect and obeisance and he was overwhelmed himself, the young man. But then with that township came to know about it and they erected a small memorial in memory of the Lord's manifestation. And that was a little alter there that was created in the end. In that hut. That became a little bigger one and with the passage of time a temple was created and an idol of Lord Krishna was installed and that temple grew with the passage of time into a huge place which the temple itself now is the town. It's such a big temple. It's known as Temple of Vithoba. Why is it known that it's Temple of Vithoba? Because Lord Krishna was made to stand, take a stand on heap of broken bricks that were in the house. You know earthen bricks which are not baked? They are known as vit so that's why he's known as Vithoba. The Lord's name was changed from Lord Krishna to Vithoba. One who obediently stood there. Took his stand there.

So well it was alright. Villagers would come and pay their respects there because the place has been sanctified because of the manifestation of the Lord there. And so

centuries passed by. Then no, it happened that something else happened there. In that same. Naturally because there was a little sanctuary or temple built it was sanctified so there was a settlement. More people came from different villages and settled there. People formed more work there and so forth. It became a place of pilgrimage. People would come. They were, they heard all the information they come to pay their homage and respect. So township started thriving over there. And in that the temple also started being rebuilt and built and enlarged.

In that township now there lived a tailor. Husband, wife and another young child that was born to them by name Namdev. And they were of the tailor family. You know that. So this Namdev was there and was growing. It's tradition in the Hindu household, when they worship the Lord, naturally the whole town would worship well, which is the Lord to be worshipped? Lord Krishna of course. Now how would they want to worship now? Of course in their own hearts they would worship, they would pay homage in their hearts. At the same time they would pray to the Lord in their own homes. But the best thing for them is to, temple is nearby. The whole township is nothing but the temple. So they would go and offer their homage and worship to the idol that is there. And it was idol worship all the time for the villagers.

But one thing led to another and that is the tradition of the place at the time was, and still it is in India at most places where there are devout families living, that God is not excluded from the household. Their household deity as it is called now amongst those who understand English and speak or have translated that. The household deity is not excluded from the

household. He is always having the preference and predominance in the house and one of the signs is that well the householders cook food or have anything. First of all the household deity is decorated, first of all preference is given to the household deity to be fed first and so forth. So the offering is always to the household deity. Instead of having a household deity in the house, people would go to the temple and offer their food there when food is cooked by the women of the house. Naturally the man of the house would take on a platter and offer it to the Lord. They feel satisfied and contended that they offered the Lord, they have propitiated and they bring it back and then they will eat the food.

So likewise in this family, the tailor family, when there was this Namdev's parents were there. So the man would go there to offer the food and so little Namdev would also follow the father and go there. While Namdev's father would be offering the food there to the Lord and worshipping and singing some hymns or something like that, Namdev, little Namdev would play about. And he started growing in that atmosphere with that tradition. One day it so happened, Namdev's father had to leave the place for some work for a day so who would go and offer the food now? So Namdev had grown sufficiently older so it was left to him now that he should go. So Namdev said, 'Yeah, I know what you have been doing. You have to make the Lord eat and bring the food back, whatever is left.' So he says, 'Yeah, so do that.'

So he takes the food from the mother and goes and offers there. But how can the idol? He did not know the stone image never ate. He thought that it would eat. Father always would coax by singing and

all that. So he was adamant in. When the Lord, there was no action, no reaction from his offering so he was very much disturbed. Says, 'What is the matter with you? When I go back home my mother will beat me taking back the food like that. Nothing has been taken by the Lord. It has to be offered, he has to eat it. Nothing has happened.' So he tried to plead and coax the Lord. Says, 'It's getting very late, my mother is waiting for me. I am myself hungry about it.' See when the food goes back, naturally they take it as the prasad. They mix it with the remaining of the stuff that is cooked and then they distribute the food. So, 'I am getting late now, I'm hungry. Please start eating now, what's the matter with you? Every time my dad would come and you would eat and we would go back soon within 20 minutes. And now it's one hour and you haven't even touched the food.' So that's how he was pleading and coaxing the Lord to eat something of it.

The innocence of the child reached its height when he got furious. And he was looking hither and thither and there was a staff there. Says, 'If you don't eat now, I'm going to beat you.' Just as he used to receive beating from his mother for being naughty. So he had got the staff to beat this idol that is there. And no sooner he did that, the Lord manifested there and started eating. And he was with his staff there watching over the Lord you see [general laughter]. And he was very happy that at last he could make the Lord eat. And the story runs that when the Lord was eating so he had to stop him forcefully from eating everything. Because he wanted to have it. So then what happened is that child stopped him perform. 'It's enough for you to have it otherwise my mother will say that I have eaten it on the roadside and

leave something for us.' So then the Lord desists from eating and again is transformed into stone image, the idol. And he's very happy that at last he got over this ordeal you know. And he puts a cloth over it and returns home. Happy that he has done this chore on behalf of his father.

Little did he know that as soon as he went there, mother opened it and she was horrified to know that for the first day in his life he was deputed with such a chore as to offer food to the Lord and this is how the child reacted. She knew that he must have eaten it. He must have shared it with his friends. How is it? Because it was so ingrained to offer food only to the idol which is known, in their heart of hearts they know that idol never eats. It's just a method of ritual, it's just a ceremony. Just offering. So she started beating the child. The child wept loudly and tries to bring home to the mother that it's a fact that our Lord ate it. 'I made him eat. It was so difficult for me to do so [clock chimes] but in spite of it because he used to eat so I thought, I made him eat.' She says, 'No, it's not possible. We know, I know you. You children you know, nowadays you play such mischief and you have no regard, no respect for the Lord. No respect for your parents. I sent you only for the first time and you did this.' Lot of things happened.

And poor child of course was very sad at heart. Did not know what happened and all. Well very soon the father returned and the father you know, the mother started reporting to her husband saying that well, 'This is the child we have got. Only for one day we deputed him to do this service to us and this is what happens.' And father was very annoyed. He called the boy and he said, 'Why did you do that? You promised me that you'll go and do such a

thing and why did you eat the food?' He says that, 'I tell you I never ate it. It is the Lord who ate it.' 'This is impossible. How can the Lord eat it? Does the stone image ever eat such things?' 'So I will show you if you want to. Why don't you believe what I say?' So that's how the next day the father takes the child. Deputes the child to take the food and see what happens.

Nothing happened. Because father wanted to sit over judgement. Judging the child's innocence. So nothing happened. But father had little sense and he got away from the scene. And the child began to coax and he started weeping and says, 'Do you want me to be thrashed again now? Yesterday you ate the food and what happens today now? You delayed yesterday but why do you delay so much now? Why do you want me to have a beating for your sake? If you don't want to eat say so that you don't want to eat to my father. But if you want to eat then eat, hurry up.' And so forth and so on he began to plead and coax and all. Eventually the father had left the scene and is witnessing it from far away. Again the same manifestation took place. He started eating and all that sort of thing.

So he starts calling out for his father, 'Where are you father? See how he's eating now?' And sure enough the father comes there. Falls prostrate at the feet of his own son and says, 'For years together I have been doing this service to my Lord but it's only through innocence and pure love can the Lord to manifest. And I'm blessed to have a son like you.' So father is happy. He goes and reports to the mother, and mother is happy and all that and the child grows up loving the Lord. And when he grew up he became a saint naturally. And very soon you will get a book you see from

Julie wherein you'll get the whole description of the whole thing you know. She's compiling such stories and remember to order such a book you know and [pilgrims laughing].

PILGRIM 1: You get any sales commissions?

PILGRIM 2: Special deals.

ERUCH: Five percent [general laughter]. So there are beautiful stories of how this young man grew up into a saint. And he did grow up into a saint and he would. Then his confidence and his belief and his faith was so great that he not only made him eat but he made him rock with all his music you see. Forceful music would pour out of him. Forceful songs and words were there that stirred the hearts of many in the locality and all that. And he was revered as a saint and his name is Namdev. And still his songs and hymns are sung you know. Now.

PILGRIM 3: Eruch what about Tukaram? [crosstalk][inaudible].

ERUCH: Just a minute, yeah. I've not finished with that others you'll drive me crazy you see [general laughter] asking me for. Mani is waiting for the time now. So, what happened is that I'm just trying to bring home to him. This story is left aside. I'm bringing the whole scene you see as to why such a picture is there. Why Meher Baba is there. Why that saint is there. Why the leper is being bathed there at that spot. All this will come in later on. But this is just a preface to that story. Which we will have to end in 20 minutes' time for Mani to tell the story and then we'll continue later on.

So what happened is, I'm just trying to draw your attention that a person who could make the Lord manifest through his love and devotion is still not perfect. So what has happened is this. What was the name of the Master? Chokhamela is not the name?

PILGRIM 2: No I tried to look it up but it starts with an A. And he's not a very familiar name.

ERUCH: Yeah. So whatever it is. What happened is now. He has earned the reputation of being one who can make the Lord. While he would sing bhajans, people would see. What people would see would be the image rocking you see. The idol rocking. But he would see the Lord himself manifest and enjoying his music. That's how it is. And people had witnessed all this and that is the reason why this temple is getting famous. After one manifestation, another manifestation, third manifestations that have taken place subsequently. So that's how it is that place is so famous and has come to have that reputation of being one of the best places for pilgrimages.

So one day what happened, this Namdev and there were contemporary saints, Tukaram and Gyaneshwar, whose story I told you all yesterday you know? About that Gyaneshwar. You'll heard the story. About that young man who became Perfect Master and had that confrontation with the yogi and all that. So all their contemporaries at the time. So Namdev, Gyaneshwar and Sawanta Mali and Gora Kumbar, they were the contemporary saints and Perfect Masters of the time. So Gora Kumbar was a master, Sawanta Mali was a master. So they all would congregate once in a while. So there came a time when these people had congregated there

and this is the area where they had congregated. In the garden of Sawanta Mali.

So while they are there, well they are having a picnic. People, they are singing songs to the Lord, a nice time. You can just imagine what time it must be for these people to gather and create an atmosphere there. So, there are masters, there are saints and there are disciples and wonderful time. So while they are whiling away and sitting after their lunch or whatever it is, I don't know anything of this. But the story is like this — All of a sudden Gora, means one of the persons there, the master there, gets into his head, whim. He was a potter and here in India potters' most important implement is the, that thing that which with. What do you call that?

PILGRIM 2: Hammer?

ERUCH: No it's not a hammer. Wooden, what do you call it?

PILGRIMS: Mallet?

ERUCH: Mallet, mallet, yeah. So he always carries it in his dhoti or in his. Here like that you see, always. he can't because that ring which is familiar to him can be had only through this little instrument of his. So he always has to carry it with him. Why? Because when the pots are baked and when they turn, when they are properly baked and all that in the kiln, then they give that ring, that particular ring which makes the potter feel that confident that it's properly baked. Properly, what do you call?

PILGRIM 1: Cured?

ERUCH: Cured. So that's how it was. So he was carrying that and all of a sudden this man gets, this master gets a whim. But it's not sudden. We think it. While we read the stories we feel it but it was time for Namdev to become aware of his status. So he goes round and he, it's all fun. Fun taking place over there you see. It's a picnic, fun. So he goes round, he takes his mallet there and starts hitting on the heads of these different dignitaries that are there. There are saints and masters and all that. So he goes on. 'Ah,' he says, 'This makes a perfect ring. It's properly cured. It's properly baked. It's mature yeah.' And then he goes to another, goes, comes to Namdev. And he also gives this, 'It has to be put through the kiln yet. It hasn't been cured at all. There's no sign.' And Namdev's ego flared up. Although he was the one. They did not do all these things but he was the one who could make the Lord rock and feel pleased and through whose hands He would eat and make him feel pleased and happy and all that. In spite of it, the ego is there that comes in the way.

So he got hurt in the assembly of the saints and the masters. In the assembly of the disciples who are adoring him and revering him and all that. This man has the audacity to say that this part is still not properly cured. And he left the congregation and went away. Where would he go? He goes back to the temple. And he says to the Lord, he cries, he feels helpless. He says, 'Such an insult. How did you allow such an insult to be hurled on me whom you love so much? Am I not your child? Why did you allow such a thing? And so forth and so on and he goes on complaining there.

So again the Lord manifests and He says, 'What Gora says is right. You are still not ripe. You haven't been baked properly. What he said is true. For that you have to go. I can't give you that. I can't make you mature. You have to go to somebody.' So He then gives the proper direction for him to go to another temple there. And there you will meet a man, the master who will make you. Who will give you the cure you may call it. Or he will properly bake you in the oven. So, alright. Very dejected, frustrated. Now the Lord Himself says that I am not proper. Not properly cured so he leaves the place and he goes. And he goes there, continues to sing and pours out his love to the Lord and all that. And there eventually where the Lord had directed him, he goes and sure enough there is a temple.

And inside the temple, it's a small temple. Inside the temple there is the idol of same, Vithoba is there. And to his horror he sees an old man, a leper. All the flies are around there and all that. And to his horror he sees this man is having his feet on the head of the Lord. What audacity! And the Lord had said, Vithoba had said that you will find inside the temple your master. He will guide you. Is he my master? Who insults my Lord like that. He got so furious, although you wouldn't want to touch those sore feet, but somehow or other because of his love for the Lord and feet were right, placed right on the top of the head so he flung the feet away. As soon as he did that, still the old man is snoring you know. He's asleep.

So as soon as he put, he through the feet down, the feet wouldn't go down. Immediately the statue turned the direction you see and held the feet on the head. Means the Lord held the feet of his lover

on the head. Means such a lover he must be. So seeing this, it went twice, thrice like that he wondered, 'He must be something. Then he must be the master that. How does it that the Lord wouldn't allow his feet to be dropped on the floor? Always carries on the head? What a lover he must be.' So the old man rises and says, "What are you trying to do? Why do you want to disturb me like that? Get out from here.' So he says, he falls at the feet of this old man. Then of course it was just an apparition that he tried to bring about. Trying to see whether he would want to touch him or not. So he is alright. I forget the name. She also doesn't remember the name of that master. And that master gave him realization. That's how it is.

So just imagine, beware. No amount of your love you see. No amount of your having pleased Baba and you feeling pleased that you have pleased Baba will help you to get rid of your ego. Beware of the ego, beware. Yeah. It's a terrible thing. That's the reason why people go to this temple. People go and not only for a pilgrimage once or twice a year but then the people who have retired they make it a point to walk the distance there. Say now they start today and they reach the place after about 10-15 days. And they remain there, pay their homage and all, they return back home on foot. And after a week's stay there, again go. So they wear out their souls. It is known as place of pilgrimage where they wear out their soul.