
BLUE BUS TOURS, 1 OF 2

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Mandali Hall, Meherazad, India

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26:42

The following stories of the blue bus tours were recorded on November 28, 1977

ERUCH: I think it was at the end of 1938 that we were hearing that Baba wants to go out on a tour. Extensive tour in the country, India. And preparations were being made to get a bus to accommodate His disciples. And one fine day we hear that a bus called the Blue Bus because of the color that was given to the body had arrived at Meherabad on the hill. And all men mandali had heard about it and seen also the vehicle going up the hill. It was there parked there outside the gate. And we had heard that Baba is preparing, the women are preparing to go with Him and all that.

One night while we were in the Mandali Hall at Meherabad, lower Meherabad, we were in the old hall of the old building seated with all of us there and Baba in our midst. It was about say 8:30 at the time. And well those were the years when we didn't have electricity or anything of the sort. We used to use those pressure lamps you know? Yeah. With mantles that give a powerful light. We were there and Baba was conversing with us there. He was using His board at that time. All of a sudden there comes at the door somebody. A man comes there out of breath and immediately we recognised as soon as he came in the light, that he is the night watchman up the hill. So Baba gestured as to find out what's the matter? Why has he come down the hill? What happened?

So after he composed himself he said, "Kaka has fallen from the top of the bus." We didn't know, at least myself I didn't know, why Kaka had to be right on the top of the bus and doing what? So naturally Baba's next question was, "How did he fall down?" He says, "While he's tying the luggage there, all of a sudden I heard a thud and when I went nearby it was Kaka who has fallen." So Baba was very serious about it and He looked around and looked at us and pin-pointed me and questioned me and says, "Well what are you doing here? Why is it that you are here? Why haven't you gone to help Kaka?" So I, "Nobody told me and I don't know anything about it." He said, "Don't you know that we are going on a tour the next day?" I said, "Yeah we heard that there is going to be a tour but I didn't know the exact date or anything of the sort." He says, "Go immediately and help Kaka there."

So I went and of course we worked. The luggage on the Blue Bus was heaped to a degree literally where we had to put a small ladder on the top of the, on the roof of the bus to climb up to the luggage, the top of the luggage. It is a fact. So when I went up the hill I don't find any sign of Kaka, where is he? And I turned, I went round the bus and sure enough at the spot he was lying prostrate on the ground. He was unconscious. So with whatever little

water that was available there and all that I tried to bring him back to consciousness. So he revived and he was happy to have me and we worked together eventually. It took us more than two hours after that to finish off the whole thing. And then we got down and I told Kaka that, "Well I'm going to be with the party." He says, "You're coming?" And Kaka was very happy with the prospect that a young man like I was at the time, that I will be there to help him. Because I learned from Kaka that there was no man to be travelling that day. Because Elizabeth would be driving the bus, Kaka was the only man there. No hands to help him with such luggage and the bus there and going out in the country like that miles after miles.

There was no fixed date for return from the journey. It might take many months and it did take 9 months for the tour. So we went back to Meherabad and then of course I had no scope to have my luggage because all the luggage was tied up. And I had nothing to do except to carry a small bag of cloth in which I shoved in some knick knacks, my shaving kit and a flash light and spare clothes, spare pair of clothes that's all. And next morning we were ready. In short we started in the morning. Padri got the bus down with all that luggage you know, yeah. Empty bus down and I still remember that all of the women then boarded the bus there at the bottom of the hill near the railway lines. And from there on Elizabeth took the stirring wheel and Elizabeth at the wheel, myself in the centre, Kaka on the other end in the front seat, that is the driver's seat. And the rest of the women and Baba at the back. As passengers.

So we drove. We went on and on and on. And I still remember the luggage was the

height of the luggage that was packed was so great that at one of the big cities we tried to negotiate an overhead bridge over the railway track and while doing that, all the telephone wires that were laid there on the poles naturally, they got snapped. We broke them all. And we didn't know what to do now next. And the only practical thing was let's go ahead. We don't mind you see we can't stop there now. So we left the place and we went away. Cities after cities with, yeah we visited and all that. And then after some time Elizabeth had called for a small car. It was V8 Ford model. And it hadn't arrived at the time, on the day that when we were to leave. But it came at a later stage after a month or so.

So then what happened was when this small car did come so Elizabeth would drive Baba, Mehera, Mani, Norina in the small car. And I had to take the steering wheel. And I drove the bus. And that's how we went on tours, the car ahead of us and the bus following the car. I had to attend to cleaning, filing in, oiling, greasing of the bus after long drives and all that sort of thing. No garage work. Punctures also we had to repair. We had the kits with us. You see what Baba used to do is, just imagine I had to drive the bus during the day, whole day. And when we got down I was the one who had to go there and try to see whether the. Suppose if they want lunch or anywhere I had to make arrangements for all that. And all the time I was so active and busy. Now in the night after the bus is all cleared out then I had to sweep the whole place and go to the nearest gas station and get the thing filled for the next day and so forth. And then bring the bus back, wash the whole thing you see. Tidy it up and everything like that. And then in the night sit for night watch [Eruch laughs]

near Baba. So it was a terrible thing. And suppose if we arrived early say and Baba wanted to. Say the distance is from here to Pune now so Baba wanted to stop at Pune. So we would be in Pune. It doesn't take much time, two and a half hours, three hours at the most say.

So then the day would be spent not just resting or anything. Baba would want to go out you see to see the masts. So I had to go with Kaka and Baba. So we'd go out on foot and all that sort of thing. Incognito Baba would be travelling. And He would go out and whole day would be spent like that and then again come back tired and then keep watch. So it went on for some months. It went on for quite a long time. Well that told upon my health, yeah. But the worst trip of this Blue Bus and I really salute the Blue Bus for having gone through that stretch of land, really there's no doubt about it. It's a pet animal of ours. So the worst trip that I as a driver, I myself was frightened you see, and that was going from Multan right across no man's land to Baluchistan. You know Northwest Frontier is a place you see which is considered. Even the Britishers could not control that. Because of the highway robbers and the bandits there who were there. They are the Pathans you see from Baluchistan. They were not considered to be the Pathans of Baluchistan because Baluchistan is a nice place. Quetta is the Capital of Baluchistan. Now of course it is Pakistan. Formerly it was Baluchistan itself was a country so to say.

So but in between. This is Baluchistan, this is India, in between there is called the Northwest frontier. And that frontier, in that frontier also there was a strip called no man's land. Nobody could own it because there were people who were

living in the hovels so to say in the mountain regions. Had no houses, no settlement whatsoever and they were all men and they lived only by robbing people. Stray people. They would go to the borders and rob and then make their headquarters there in the no man's land. So Britishers tried their best you see. They even bombarded the place and all but nothing could happen. So of all the things I didn't know what Baba had once the pleasure to chalk out an itinerary that this route. He wanted to travel from India, go to Baluchistan via that route. Nobody takes that route and especially. Only the military with military escort they go.

So He asked me to prepare so I tried to collect more information and all that. So the last gas station would be at this place. The next gas station would be at this place. We had to go through the valleys and the valleys were very high valleys you see. And I still remember this Blue Bus. We started in the morning at dawn reached a place called Fort Munro at about say 5:30 in the evening. Whole day travelling mind you. And just I think it was 75 miles. Whole day. It was all in second gear or first gear.

PILGRIM 1: No roads just rocks?

ERUCH: No roads, yes. No but there were tracks you may call it on the mountain, slopes and all that you see. Military had created these things for their jeeps you see. But they they were all very dangerous.

PILGRIM 1: Was it dry all the way?

ERUCH: Very dry. Mountain no grass or blade or nothing of the sort you see. So when I went to fill in the gas you see at the last station. So at the gas station there he

just peeps through the windows, says, "What? All women! Where are you'll going?" So I said, "Well we are going to Quetta." "Which route are you taking?" I said, "Through no man's land and this Fort Munro and all this." "What? How? Do you know what it is all? Where you all are going, where you all are heading to?" Says, "Yes we know it but they are all you see related to the commander in chief." And I just started giving out things because otherwise the rumours will spread you see. Before we arrive those bandits will come to know. So there we had to be very cautious.

So he says, "Well they are the family of the Army lords you see here, Britishers." Because here westerners were with us [Eruch laughs] yeah. So he says, "This is the family you see," And the escort is there. "Oh escort is there then sir but why women should go there? It's not good for women to travel that way. Why can't you'll go by boat?" I said, "We don't want to go by ship or anything like that. We want to go. They want to see the places." "But this is not a sightseeing place. This is meant for fight, wars." "We are not concerned with that. We have got our escorts and all." Just I gave that you see.

Baba had ordered me. Then we started and that. The first stretch was like that as I told you. And when we went. Then we were all going down to the Indus basin you see. Called the Karakoram Mountains and all that on the western front. So we were going through that. And Baba had ordered that nobody should. I shouldn't stop the car for anybody to get down and piddle on my way while I'm driving. "It's an order from Me," He said. So I said, "You please, have you told the women there?" So He says, "You tell them." So I shouted from

there. And Baba went in the small car ahead of us. That white car Elizabeth was driving and I went there.

And I had nobody else as man except Dr. Neelkanth. Dr. Neelkanth he was no handy man. Kaka was a handy man but Kaka was not there. And the bus, the passengers in the bus you see. Bus is meant for 18 seats you see comfortable, but more than 30 people would be made to sit there. And so it was very uncomfortable journey for the women. I should say that. Very uncomfortable, very, very uncomfortable. And you should just see you see they were so upset you know because of this. Because they wanted to piddle and they couldn't. I don't know what they did you see whole day. Because it was not possible for me to stop the car. But then what happened is, so many. You know these people had improvised bridges over one cliff or the other and you know how rickety these things are built you know. And very dangerous you see. A danger to life. So we crossed over them and they were meant only for jeeps and this was a heavy vehicle and at the same time so many men were there and so much luggage over there. So many women were there and so much luggage was there. So we went across. But the worst point was while crossing the river. Indus River is considered a very big river you know Indus?

PILGRIM 1: Hmm.

ERUCH: Yeah. It feeds you see Punjab. Punj means 5, ab means tributaries or waters, 5 waters. That Indus river has 5 tributaries. That's why it's known as Punjab the bowl of wheat you see here in India. Because the water comes you see from the mountains. Spreads out into my tributaries

and that's why it is known as Punjab you see. 5 tributaries. So but that main river Indus is there and it flows through those mountains. So we had to cross in order to go there. Cross the borders you see.

Haan by the way it was arranged. 2 escorts were there. So they used to sit on the mud guard of the bus with the guns. Yeah, they were there. They were provided to us by the government. So Elizabeth got the. I told Baba that such a thing is there, "I don't mind after all what is there? There's nothing to live for except for you. You want us to go, we'll go but this is what they are saying." So immediately a wire was sent or something like that and they provided 2 good escorts. But we had to feed them. We didn't have any ration, much ration or anything but poor fellows they grumbled a lot you see. What is this and these people? They were told you see that they are the relatives of the British commanders and all that sort of thing [general laughter] So they kept quiet. They were Indians. So they were there with their guns. Two on the what do you call?

PILGRIM 1: Mudguards

ERUCH: Mudguards, 2 mudguards in the front and one in the rear. They were there. And rear outside. There was a nice board there, footboard you see. So he. There were two steps you see going. So he used to sit there and put his feet there. He was comfortable there.

PILGRIM 2: None in Baba's car?

ERUCH: None in Baba's car no. So now the river has come. And all the signs were there you see. But it had gone dark so there were huge people you know. Baluchis were there with the lanterns. You

know those lanterns that these guards have at the railway station and all they were there. Red lamps were there. So they stopped us. So I stopped the bus. So he says. I put the light on and I saw that we were at the bank of the river. And vast stretch of water is there. And on that, no bridge! So [Eruch laughing] it was just pontoon bridges you know? These boats tied together. And planks spread you see so we had to. So that is how improvised bridge it was. For the jeeps to pass by in emergency. Only in emergency. So the man stopped us. He says, "You can't go. See this, this is the rule and regulation of the army. No army people also can go. No army trucks can go from here or anything." I said, "What are you trying to tell me? Do you know who these people are?" I just again [general laughter] gave out lot of yarns you see. He says, "But at least they should get down. I'm telling you that it's danger to their lives." I said, "They can't get down. They have been ordered by their people not to get down. I am just a driver you know. I have to carry out. Just as you have to carry out your orders, our orders are such that no women should get down here. Nobody."

The escorts were there. The escorts also said, "Sir this is very dangerous what you are trying to do. How will this pontoon bridge hold this bus like this?" I said, "I don't know. I have been ordered. I can't, I can't do anything." So eventually with lot of. Half an hour argument took place. By the time it was dark. It was dusk when we reached and then it's now dark. And then they agreed that he will go in the front with the lamp, lantern and I had to follow him. I said, "That is very dangerous," I said. Says, "Why should it be?" I said, "You don't realise your life you see. Because I am not going to stop the bus half way

because you know how the boats are. So if something happens and then you are in the front." So "I will be there in the front but I will be by the side you see. On the side." There was little space for the bus there to go but there was also little space near where he would walk. I said, "Alright walk that way don't be in the right in the front of the bus." So eventually with Baba's name we got in.

Women did not realise the implications you see. Because they didn't see anything. They were there behind there. So I put the bus inside and you won't believe not a single plank remained you see. We could hear every time. Then they started hearing that crack [Eruch makes the sound of planks breaking] crack, crack, it would all just break you see behind us. Barely cross the thing and the thing would break. When we would cross the thing it would break behind yeah. And I always tease them, "You all the years with Baba never took Baba's name as diligently and with all your heart and soul as when we crossed the Indus." [general laughter]

What had happened is they had crossed it and they could go fast you see because it was a very powerful engine, eight cylinders and ours is just four cylinder bus, in spite of all the weight and all that. And it would go very slow with all the mountain ranges and all that. So Baba would get so upset waiting and all that. He said, "What happened? Why don't you come? Why don't you follow?" I said, "How can I follow? This is an elephant and you have got a plane in front of me, how can I follow? It's not possible." So that was the worst. And in that trip twenty-two punctures. Twenty-two punctures.

PILGRIM 2: And all the planks cracked? Did the bridge fall apart?

ERUCH: We don't, I don't know what happened at the back. Nobody dared to go back or see anything. I didn't even stop you see as soon as we crossed the river. Just went ahead so that the man wouldn't catch hold of us you see of what has happened. How what we have played. Nothing. Nothing doing. What he must have done he must have reported you see through wireless or something like that, yeah.

PILGRIM 2: Baba walked across before the car and bus went or did He stay in the car?

ERUCH: No, no His car passed by. Car it's, it was meant for such traffic you see. And it was nice because her car was absolutely white, [Eruch laughs] Elizabeth's. No colors nothing of the sort. It looked like some dignitary is there or some commander is there or something like that. [crosstalk] And Baba in his great coat would be seated in the front you see like that [general laughter] with a beret cap and all that. Whole thing belonged to the British. But they couldn't get that piece of land under their control. Therefore it was known as no man's land. You follow?

PILGRIM 1: You never met any of [inaudible].

ERUCH: No we didn't meet. There were firings we heard but not for us. But they were not the regular robbers. They had their political feelings you see. That they shouldn't, nobody should intrude here. Nobody should take possession and all that. So they used to guard them. Guard their places you see. And at the same time what about their livelihood? They will rob the people. Shoot somebody and get whatever money is there or the possession

and all that. Guns, usually the guns they would want.

We reached Quetta eventually after a long journey. And Goher's father had come there, at the border of Baluchistan. He was a great man there, Goher's father. Yeah. All the army and everybody knew him. Because he conducted a very posh restaurant there you see. And all the military people would go there and all that sort of thing. He had a toy shop and many things were there you see. So as soon as we crossed all this and we crossed, there were two, three forts that we crossed and then he was waiting for us to receive us. So when he came naturally he came with two other Pathans and then we dropped the escorts and they took us. They travelled with us in bus, front seat. Then it was easy going.

But then what happened is, it all you know body recoils later on at a little late. So we reached Quetta I remember, and then that night I had a good sleep. Baba at least allowed me to sleep that night. It was a long journey. Means we, I had kept watch on the other parts of the journey but there in Quetta itself He made me sleep. And next morning He says, "We have to send letter." So He was dictating a telegram. So He was dictating a telegram and I was taking down. He was on the board. He was using the board at the time and I was taking down. And what happened I don't know. I most probably I just swooned or something like that. I fell down you see. First time I experienced that. Yeah through exhaustion.

PILGRIM 1: But a delayed effect?

ERUCH: Yeah, yeah. I didn't know what happened. Then later on I found myself in

a bed and then of course "What happened?" Baba asked. I said, "I don't know. Just passed out like that." And it was so because there is a limit to endurance. When you pass, pass off from this world to another world. Means not permanently but temporarily. That's the story.