

Intimate Times with Meher Baba

by Bal Natu

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook

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Printed in the U.S.A. by Sheriar Press.

Second Printing, June 2021.

ISBN: 978-1-880619-51-3

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INTIMATE
TIMES
WITH
Meher Baba

Books by Bal Natu

Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Volumes I–VI

The Samadhi: Star of Infinity

Showers of Grace

Our Constant Companion

When He Takes Over

Tales of Meher Baba's Love

Conversations with the Awakener

More Conversations with the Awakener

Intimate Conversations with the Awakener

Flowing Conversations with the Awakener

INTIMATE TIMES WITH *Meher Baba*



GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN
AT GURU PRASAD

BAL NATU

2018

Sheriar Foundation

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Second Printing, June 2021.

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ISBN: 978-1-880619-51-3



To Beloved Baba's
Boundless and
Unconditional Love

CONTENTS

EDITORS' PREFACE	ix
PREFACE	xv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	xix

1951	3	1964	485
1952-1957	15	1965	499
1958	39	1966	545
1959	53	1967	555
1960	127	1968	607
1961	287	JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1969	623
1962	323	DARSHAN AT GURU PRASAD	
1962		APRIL-JUNE 1969	631
EAST-WEST GATHERING	341	GURU PRASAD MEMORIAL	659
1963	429	AFTERWORD	671

CONTENTS (CONTINUED)

APPENDICES	685
A. THUMBNAIL SKETCHES	687
B. BAL NATU'S 1952 CHRONOLOGY	740
C. MEHER DHAM MESSAGES, MEHERASTANA MESSAGES	750
D. <i>THE DECCAN QUEEN</i>	751
E. <i>MULAKAT</i> BY S. JAFRI	752
F. FRANCIS BRABAZON'S TALK AT THE 1969 DARSHAN	753
G. GLOSSARY	757
ENDNOTES	759
PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS	761

EDITORS' PREFACE

Who Wrote This Book?

*I*t is quite possible that the question will arise (if it hasn't already):

How is it that Bal Natu has written another book about Meher Baba almost twenty years after he died? The simple answer is that he wrote most of it and collected most of the stories from other people before he died. Most of the material for 1961 and 1967 comes from the diaries Bal kept at the time. (Actually, Bal kept a diary for every year he was with Baba at Guru Prasad, but somehow when his family moved from their home in Kurduwadi all these other diaries were lost.) Bal would scribe the notes as quickly as he could and then, when he got the chance, he would rework them in the evening.

These notebooks were scanned and transcribed by some of those working with Bal in the 1990s. At times there was some confusion as to whether a certain passage belonged on one day or another, because identical passages would occur on different dates, but the passages themselves, for the most part, were clear. Some of the longer "discourses" Bal edited into the more polished shape that you find here, although his notes contain a rougher version. A few of these discourses were subsequently reworked even more by Bal and printed in *The Everything and The Nothing*.

Bal loved to hear other people's Baba stories (and dreams for that matter). After deciding to write a book based on Guru Prasad, he asked different people to share their experiences with him. The accounts included in this book are by no means exhaustive, nor are they meant to be—they are the accounts Bal collected while he was alive. A very few were collected after his death.

Meherwan Jessawala and his sister Manu generously wrote up accounts for inclusion in this book or were interviewed for it. Material was also taken from the *82 Family Letters* and *The Awakener* magazine. Although this material has already been published, we felt that many readers would not be familiar with it. In addition, these accounts give some background to the text that makes it more enjoyable.

The actual editing of the material—insertion of some transitional text, the occasional aside (to clarify a passage, to give additional information, or to point out what seems like an obvious error or contradiction), and the thumbnail sketches given in Appendix A—was done by three people who worked with Bal on this project (and others) during his life. In the 1970s and 1980s, Steve Klein helped extensively with *Glimpses of the God-Man, Volumes II–VI*; Bal's three collections of Baba stories, *Our Constant Companion*, *Showers of Grace*, and *When He Takes Over*; as well as *The Samadhi: Star of Infinity*.

Erica Hodgkin and Amber Mahler worked with Bal in the 1990s and the last years of his life. In addition to helping Bal with his books of poetry, *Conversations with the Awakener*, *More Conversations with the Awakener*, *Intimate Conversations with the Awakener*, and *Flowing Conversations with the Awakener*, they also worked on *Tales of Meher Baba's Love*; they helped with his correspondence; and they did almost all the transcribing of the material Bal collected for this book. They also

were his primary caregivers in his last years and were with him when he died.

How Did This Book Come About?

After completing Volume VI of *Glimpses of the God-Man* (published in 1994), Bal declared that his health was not strong enough to permit him to undertake the task of writing a seventh volume. Because his health did not seem to prevent him from working on his poetry and various other projects, Steve tried for some time to convince him to go back to *Glimpses*. When it became obvious that Bal was not going to return to the *Glimpses* series, someone suggested he should continue to write *Glimpses* but leave out the history. It would therefore be an account only of the time Bal spent with Baba, as well as any other stories he wished to include, but it would not entail the painstaking research that had gone into the previous volumes.

Bal felt this approach put too much emphasis on him, so he was therefore less than enthusiastic about the project. Steve tried to persuade him that it was precisely because he was so ordinary that the book would be worthwhile. After all, if Bal was not deserving of special merit, the book would only highlight Baba's love and compassion in allowing Bal such intimate contact. For a short while, this idea intrigued Bal and he decided to go ahead with it. He even suggested that all of his Baba stories, as recounted in the volumes of *Glimpses*, be lifted from there and included in this new book, which he tentatively titled *When the Door Opened*, so that a more complete picture could be had of Baba's loving relationship. That title, incidentally, refers to the time in 1943 when a train compartment door opened and Bal saw Baba for the first time.

No sooner was this project begun than Bal decided he wasn't comfortable with a book just about his experiences, and he hit upon the idea of a book about Guru Prasad. This idea was a kind of a compromise: Because most of Bal's time with Baba was spent at Guru Prasad, most of the stories that would have been included in the proposed new volume of *Glimpses* had taken place in Guru Prasad and would therefore be included in this new book. At the same time, because Guru Prasad figured so prominently in the lives of so many others, Bal could collect their stories and publish them along with his own.

So *Intimate Times with Meher Baba* became a working project that occupied Bal off and on for the remainder of his life. After his death, Amber and Erica photocopied every relevant piece of paper from the Record Room (which served as Bal's "office") and brought the material back to America when they left India soon after Bal died. Nothing was done with this material for years, partly because Erica and Amber, who had been the ones collecting, compiling, and transcribing the material, wanted to follow Bal's wishes and publish the book along the lines he had indicated. Steve, stubborn as always, felt that because Bal could not object, now was the time to publish the stories Bal had given during the brief period when he took an interest in the initial project and flesh them out with some other biographical material about Bal. Therefore, Steve dragged his feet on the Guru Prasad project until, after seven years of procrastination, the others convinced him to start focusing on the material they had worked on with Bal. Although it was a bit disjointed and lacked any kind of narrative flow, it was surprisingly complete and did not require all that much work to turn into what you are about to read (or have just read if, like many people, you read the foreword after you've read the book). Once the work was started, the writing

was done quickly. Fact checking, rechecking transcripts, corroborating information, and tracking down loose ends took a few years because it was all done in their spare time.

Which Parts did Bal Write?

Most of the book is Bal's. Where the editors felt it necessary to insert something, they put this information in [brackets] to let the reader know. The editors also wrote some of the thumbnail sketches in Appendix A. A few were lifted from *Glimpses*, and other parts were taken from tapes of the mandali talking about their coming to Baba. However, as they had done with other books written by Bal in his lifetime, even those sections written by Bal were edited to some extent, which was something Bal had always encouraged. In fact, he used to refer to his writing as a collaborative effort and talked about the "Bal team." He even went so far as to write a letter to Sheriar Foundation to "officially" acknowledge his team and to grant them permission to publish this book.

Readers may notice that Bal wrote Guru Prasad as two words instead of one because the translation in English is "Gift of the Guru." Interestingly, there were also insignias carved into the windows of Guru Prasad with the initials "G.P." Bal was a teacher, and these little grammatical details mattered to him (were his hobby even); he was quite a wordsmith.

Will Bal Be Writing More Books in the Future?

Unless the diary accounts he kept turn up, it seems unlikely there will be more books by Bal. He did have two folders full of people's Baba dreams, and it is possible that some day someone might want to publish at least some of them, but there is currently no plan to do so.

PREFACE



Bal Natu

Guru Prasad holds a special place in my memory and in the memories of many who came into the orbit of Avatar Meher Baba. Although Meher Baba traveled throughout India and, indeed, around the world, meeting people individually and giving mass *darshan* (the opportunity or occasion to see a holy person) programs, more people got to spend intimate time with Him in Guru Prasad than anywhere else.

Except for a handful of His close ones, the *mandali* (a term most often applied to those who lived with Baba, although Baba sometimes used the term to denote any who were close to Him in their love), most people never had the opportunity to simply be with Baba in a casual and relaxed atmosphere. There were short periods in the 1930s, such as when Baba stayed at Challacombe (England), Harmon-on-Hudson (United States), or Portofino (Italy), when a lucky few got to live with Him, and these places will always remain hallowed in the hearts of those who spent time there.

Baba seemed to use these occasions as a means of meeting and drawing in many of those in the West who were destined to become His staunch lovers through the years. However, for most of the 1930s and 1940s, Baba was traveling incognito in India, or living with the mandali in various places that, although not closed to visitors, were still essentially private. There were those who came to see Baba at Meherabad, Satara, Jabalpur, Dehra Dun, and so on, but mostly for short individual meetings or larger darshan programs, which usually were just for the day.

Following the New Life in the early 1950s, Baba started contacting the masses, both internally and externally, in ways He hadn't done before. He traveled through Hamirpur and Andhra, meeting thousands and giving darshan to thousands more. In 1953, He declared Himself to be the "Highest of the High," and the next year He publicly proclaimed Himself as the Avatar. After years of seeming to avoid publicity, Baba was now giving out His name and status to the masses. But the opportunity to simply be with Baba was still unavailable except for the mandali.

In a small way, Baba broke this pattern with visits to Myrtle Beach (United States) and Avatar's Abode (Australia). In 1954, twenty-four Western men were given the chance to spend "three incredible weeks" at Meherabad. There were also *sabavas* programs [gatherings held by a guru or Master so that his devotees may enjoy his company for an extended period] at Meherabad for hundreds of Easterners in the following years. But these events were of relatively short duration and, for the most part, for those who had been specifically invited.

Only at Guru Prasad, where Baba spent three months every summer for a decade, were the gates truly thrown open. There were several very large public darshans, including the East-West Gathering in 1962, and hundreds of smaller darshan programs at which the hearts of count-

less people were awakened in His love. Perhaps even more precious was the opportunity for Baba's lovers to come and see Him repeatedly, for weeks on end, for several years running. This was not a case of being in a crowd and glimpsing Baba as He sat on a dais, while songs were performed in His honor or messages were read out. One had the chance to sit in a relatively small group in a room with Baba, while He joked and teased and played cards and chatted with those around Him as if it were a meeting of friends and not devotees with their Lord. Baba's presence was such that this gathering of friends became a rendezvous of lovers with their Beloved.

As such, Guru Prasad holds a special place in Baba's unending work of establishing Himself in the hearts of His dear ones. For me this is especially true, because Baba graciously allowed me to stay with Him at Guru Prasad for six weeks during my school holidays in 1957, and then each summer from 1959 until 1968. I had traveled with Baba in India and had been with him at Meherabad and Meherazad, but by far the most time I spent in Beloved Baba's presence was actually at Guru Prasad. It was mostly during my stays there that Baba helped me to slowly become more natural and comfortable in the company of His divine humanity while we played cards or listened to Francis Brabazon's *ghazals* [a poetic form emphasizing the relationship between the lover and the Beloved] or the correspondence being read out. Looking back, I can see how Baba, in the most natural way imaginable, brought me into ever-increasing intimacy with Him. This story is not mine alone. For many, Guru Prasad was the place where Baba's humanity unlocked their hearts so they could love Baba in a very personal way, instead of merely worshipping His divinity.

Each summer I spent in Guru Prasad was unique. In the first years, crowds of His lovers seeking His darshan and company would sit in the

Great Hall on the weekends for darshan programs. The hall would be filled with melodious music in total devotion to Him. In the last two years at Guru Prasad, Baba was in strict seclusion, and very few could visit Him. The only constant was the unending love that constantly emanated from Him.

Those moments with Him are eternal; I can almost still see Him in Guru Prasad sitting in His chair. Even after Baba dropped His body, many who came to the Great Darshan of 1969 continued to feel His presence, as though He were sitting there as they bowed down to His chair with love. Those of us who had been with Baba for years, and who accepted Him completely as the Avatar of the Age, were still amazed to see the reaches of Baba's universal divinity through the devotion of His new lovers who came to Guru Prasad in 1969.

Because Guru Prasad seemed to have a special role in Baba's life here with us, I would like to try to capture something of the atmosphere of those glorious days spent there. Thanks to Baba's generosity, I was allowed to have been an observer during those years at Guru Prasad. I hope now to honor that gift and the matchless opportunity that He offered me through this collection, which is simply a sharing of what I saw, felt, and witnessed of Baba's limitless love. It is also a compilation of some of the experiences of others who also were blessed with the opportunity to spend time with Baba at Guru Prasad. All these incidents illustrate the various aspects of His love, for He can turn even a grain of sand into a rosebush full of the fragrance of His bliss. May this book be a way to remember Beloved Baba and to express my deep appreciation for His boundless, unconditional love.

Bal Natu

October 16, 2002

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bal would not publish a book without dedicating it to the glorious presence of the Ancient One, Avatar Meher Baba. For Bal, nothing was possible without the grace and love of Meher Baba. He would always remind us to greet each task as if it were a game with Baba. He especially enjoyed the little coincidences he felt were Baba's conversation with him. When these coincidences occurred, he would exclaim "see, see, see!" When someone pointed out to him that the word "coincidence" had three "c's" in it, the "sees" transformed into "c's," so Bal called them "C-C-Cs."

Therefore, first, we would like to acknowledge Meher Baba's matchless guidance throughout this process. Second, we want to express our deep gratitude to Bal for giving us this opportunity to enjoy and participate to some extent in His game. We hope that reading this book will enable the readers to do so as well.

Writing a book, like philosophy, is a simple thing made difficult. For this book, Bal's team was greatly expanded. There were so many people who helped along the way to make this project possible by sharing deeply moving stories of Baba, helping us find sources and images,

carefully proofreading, transcribing diary notes, and even bringing us steaming cups of chai. We owe our thanks to so many and wish to name a few here, with apologies to anyone we have inadvertently missed: Meherwan and Manu Jessawala, the Meherazad family, Judy Robertson, Fayre Davis, Sheila Krynski, Sheila Gambill, Laura Smith, Subash Pokale, Mehera Arjani, Meredith Klein, Jessica Mednick, Irene Holt, Tom Brustman, Elaine Cox, the Meher Center staff, David Fenster, Anne Elizabeth Giles, and Pat Sumner.

We also wish to acknowledge and thank the Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust and Sheriar Foundation for their support. Lastly, but possibly most importantly, we owe a debt of thanks we can never repay to Leah Florence for the meticulous care with which she assisted in the development of the manuscript.

Steve Klein, Amber Mahler, and Erica Hodgkin

INTIMATE TIMES

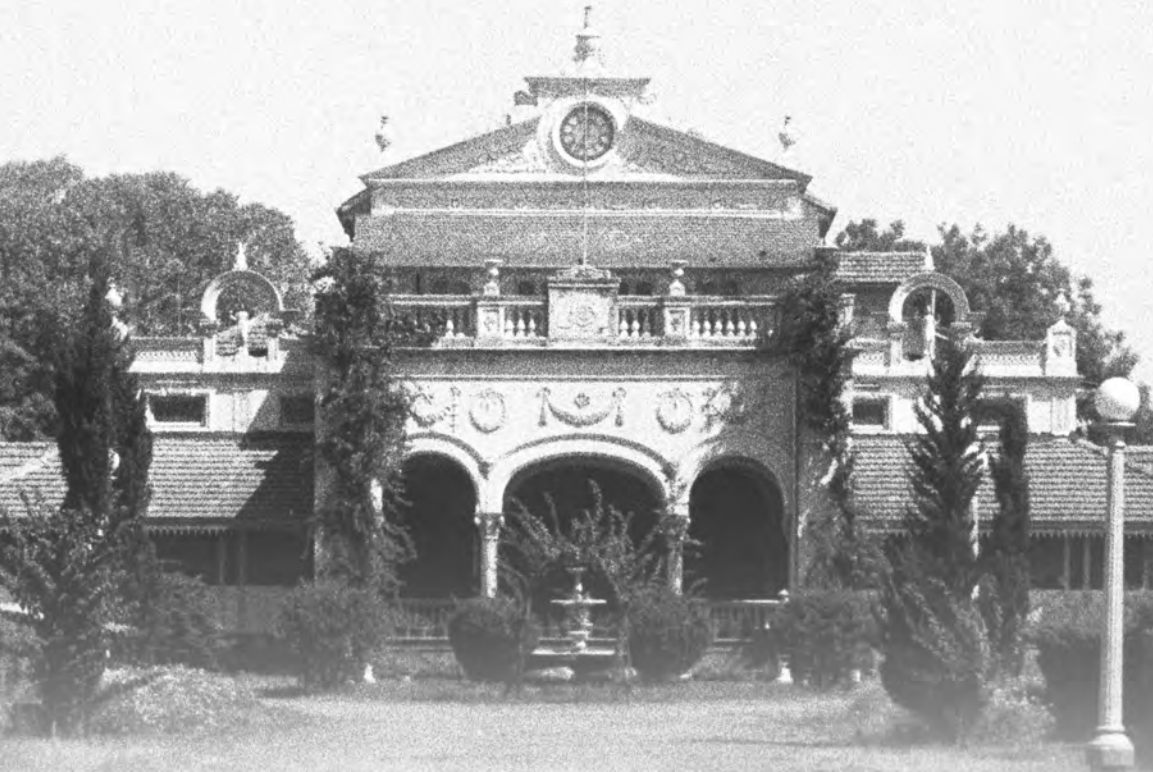
WITH

Meher Baba

GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN
AT GURU PRASAD



1951



*M*eher Baba, the Avatar of the Age, first stayed in Guru Prasad in March 1951. On October 16, 1949, Baba and a few of His close ones sold all their possessions, left Meherabad and Meherazad where they had been staying, and set out for a “New Life” of wandering, begging, and relying wholly on God. For the first three months they traveled quite a bit. During the next five they were stationed mainly in the north, mostly in the vicinity of Haridwar, Dehra Dun, and Delhi. They shifted to Satara in June and stayed there until September, at which point they moved to Mahabaleshwar.

It was here that Baba stepped out of the New Life for a day and gave some of His “old life” followers a chance to once again enjoy His divine company on October 16, 1950, the first anniversary of the beginning of the New Life. Shortly after this momentous meeting, Baba embarked on a series of whirlwind tours that took Him and His companions across the subcontinent and even into Nepal.

After about 45 days, they returned to Mahabaleshwar. In February 1951, Baba began a 100-day seclusion there. But after a while, He decided to go to Poona to stay there for a time. Baba sent a telegram to Adi Sr., His secretary and longtime follower, who had returned from the New Life and had been staying in Ahmednagar. The telegram contained Baba’s intention of going to Poona for one month.

Adi drove to Poona to see if he could, with the help of Eruch’s brother, Meherwan Jessawala, obtain a bungalow suitable for Baba and the companions. Although Meherwan had joined Baba in 1938, along with the rest of the Jessawala family, Baba had settled all of them in Poona in 1943 while keeping Eruch with Him. Because Meherwan had been living in Poona for the past eight years, Adi came to him for help. Meherwan remembers:

Adi asked if I would help him find a good bungalow for Baba and the companions. Early the next morning we both started out by bicycle, roaming the streets of Poona and its suburbs. It was not easy to come by a place that would be suitable for Baba. It had to be secluded yet close to the city, and there had to be sufficient separation of quarters for the men and women companions.

After two or three days of searching, Adi met up with an old classmate of his named Jamshed Irani. Adi told his friend

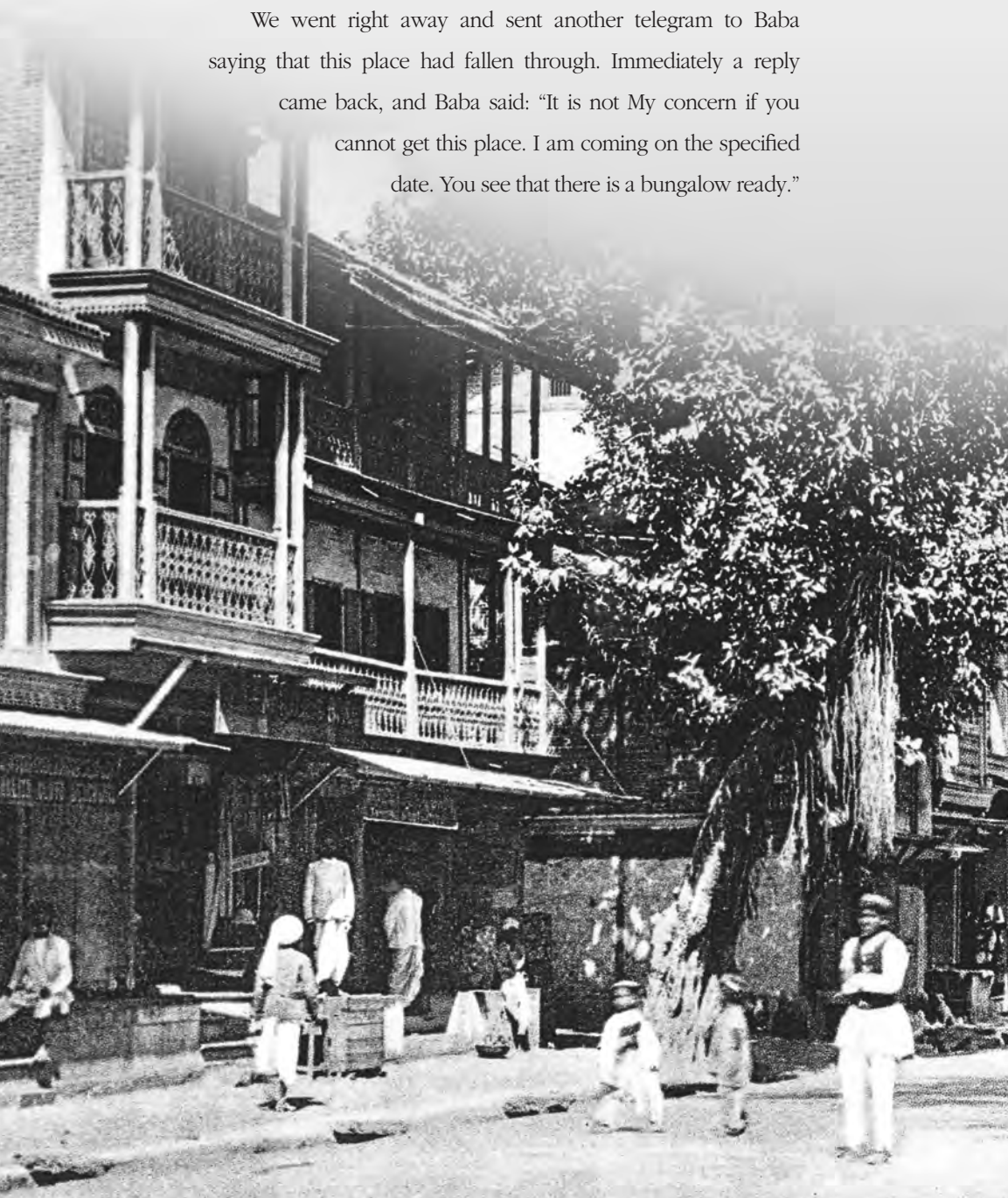
about the task at hand—to find lodging very quickly for Baba and His companions. Jamshed suggested that Adi go and talk with a Parsi fellow whom he knew, who worked in real estate. When Adi and I went to meet the Parsi man, they immediately recognized each other, as they had also been in school together. The man's name was Bobda Irani. The old friend had a stutter in his speech and was affectionately called Bobda, which means stammer in Gujarati.

Bobda explained to Adi that he had a bungalow that was fully furnished and ready to be occupied. The owner would not be able to move in for one month, so he offered it for Baba to stay in. Adi and I were amazed because this house was available for the exact span of time Baba had specified. He then took us in his car to show us the place. It was a lovely cottage, spanking new from the recent renovations, and in an exclusive and very secluded locality. In our excitement, we immediately went to send Baba a telegram about the place.

The next day, we went to Bobda's house to pick up the keys. I stayed outside with our bicycles while Adi went in. Within a few minutes, I heard shouting, and then Adi came rushing out. I asked him what had happened and he explained that the fellow wouldn't allow us to occupy the place after all. It turned out that his father, a very staunch Zoroastrian, found out that his son was going to rent a bungalow to Meher Baba and His companions, and he told Bobda he would disown him. Adi was very upset with his friend for going back on his word, and the conversation resulted in a very heated argument between them.

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

We went right away and sent another telegram to Baba saying that this place had fallen through. Immediately a reply came back, and Baba said: "It is not My concern if you cannot get this place. I am coming on the specified date. You see that there is a bungalow ready."



We were naturally feeling quite nervous. We had to redouble our efforts, and called Sarosh Irani (one of Baba's longtime mandali) from Ahmednagar to come and help us.

We urgently continued our search. During this time, I was also supposed to be studying for my upcoming exams to receive my final degree for a Bachelor of Science. I tried to study, but

Poona street scene during the time Adi was searching for a place for Baba to stay



(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

I was too concerned about finding accommodations for Baba. Having explored most of the city, one morning I decided to head down Bund Garden Road. I happened to notice a big sprawling estate with a compound wall. The large iron gate at the front entrance was locked. I went around to the side and saw another smaller gate, which was also locked. I shouted but no one came out. I looked around further, but there was no one in sight. In desperation, I climbed over the gate. I walked along the long driveway rather cautiously, and then entered the front portico, which led to beautiful marble steps.

Suddenly, a side door of the bungalow opened and a man came out. He looked at me with great surprise and said, "Who are you? What are you doing here? How dare you come inside!" There was a flurry of questions before I could answer any of them.

"How did you get inside here?" he asked vehemently.

"Listen, I am in search of a bungalow," I answered.

"But why did you come in here in the first place? How did you enter?"

"Let me explain..." I replied. "The whole place was locked so I had to jump in."

"Do you know you are trespassing on private property? You look like you come from a respectable family. Aren't you ashamed to do such disgraceful activities? Are you trying to pilfer something?" He berated me, getting redder and redder in the face.

"No. I am in search of a bungalow to rent," I tried to explain.

"This is not a place to be rented out. It is the palace of the Maharani of Baroda! We'd never rent out this place. Get out of

here, you scamp! Get lost! Otherwise I'll have you arrested by the police."

So, I just turned around and walked away, feeling very dejected and humiliated. The man did not budge from his spot, and so I had to let myself out by jumping back over the gate again. With every move I made, the caretaker suspiciously kept his eyes on me until I was completely out of the compound.

I came to another quiet lane off Bund Garden Road, where I saw a similar large house. It was a bit dilapidated, with a broken down compound wall, and hardly any gate. So, I just entered to have a look around. As I entered, I called out, "Is there anyone here?" The whole place seemed to be deserted. I was tempted just to go back, but I knew we had to find a place in very short time, so I ventured farther, now doubly cautious that I might meet a similar encounter as before.

I approached the house and began to climb the decrepit steps. There was a door ajar at the end of the hall, so I carefully pushed it open. To my surprise there was a man inside studying something through a microscope. He looked up and on realizing that somebody had barged in, he jumped up and shouted, "Who are you? How dare you come in here!" Again, the very same scene that I had just experienced was repeated! He started to abuse me saying, "Get out of here or I'll call the police!" I had learned my lesson this time, and so I hastily retreated. One has to undergo these sorts of situations for Baba's sake. That is the life with Baba. So, I just took my cycle and started off again.

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

Finally, we found a bungalow through a friend of Sarosh's in a suburb of the city that was large enough, though quite run down. It was just next to a leather tannery, however, and the stench was such that it drove all the residents from the house. So, for years it had remained unoccupied. But, what to do? Baba was coming very soon and we had to have somewhere for Him to stay, at least until we found something more suitable. So we began working on it right away, with the help of many of the Poona Baba lovers. We rented furniture and rugs to cover the floors. The house finally looked presentable, but the stench was horrible. In case this place was not acceptable to Baba, Sarosh also arranged two other cottages for Baba if He wished to move.

Meanwhile, we had also informed the Poona lovers to help in the search for a bungalow for Baba. So, they were out on the streets as well. One Baba lover, Gadekar, had mentioned to a friend, named Sardar Raste, that he was in search of a place to rent. Sardar, who came from a very wealthy family and was a prosperous landowner, explained that he had known the Maharani of Baroda since childhood and that she had a very beautiful palace in Poona. He offered to take us there to see if it would be suitable for Baba. So, Adi, Gadekar, and I all piled into Raste's car and went to Bund Garden Road.

As soon as we reached the gate, I realized that this was the same place where I had jumped over the fence and been unceremoniously thrown out. When Raste's car pulled up, he honked and the same man who had thrown me out, quickly came running. He opened the gate and saluted Sardar,

practically bending forward all the way to the ground in deference to him. What a different welcome from mine! As we got down from the car, the fellow looked right at me, paused with a funny expression on his face ... but said nothing. I just went along and didn't say a word either, as I think he was quite embarrassed by his earlier behavior.

We were shown around the bungalow. It was truly a palace; furnished with absolutely everything that one would want in a residence. Sardar sent a telegram to the Maharani right away saying, "Avatar Meher Baba wants to come and stay in Poona for a month and I would like you to give your place to Him. It is my personal request."

We thought Sardar was just making a wild sort of request. Since the Maharani had never heard of Baba, it was like asking if a total stranger could stay in her home. We had no hopes of ever gaining her permission. After sending the telegram to the Maharani, we just forgot about the whole thing.

In the meantime, we were busy preparing other possibilities for where Baba could stay. We sent a telegram to Baba explaining that the cottage near the leather tannery in Wanowri was ready. We also explained that there were one or two other places if the Wanowri residence was unsuitable. Even then, we made no mention to Baba of the Maharani's home.

Then, on the appointed day, March 27, 1951, only a few hours before Baba was to come, Gadekar came rushing to Bindra House, my family's home. I had just returned from the market with all the food for my family to prepare Baba's meal that day. Gadekar was shouting, "Meherwan! Meherwan! Look!"

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

He was waving a piece of paper in his hand. I rushed out quickly and saw that it was a telegram from the Maharani saying, "Permission granted for Avatar Meher Baba to come and stay."

We were thrilled! But then we wondered how to convey this news to Baba, who was already on His way. We decided to wait and let Baba and His companions arrive at the Wanowri cottage, and then we could send word that another place had opened up. Since Baba was still in the New Life at the time, we were not permitted to go and tell Baba ourselves. Our only way of communicating with Him was to pass messages along with the food that we sent from Bindra House at meal times.

So, along with Baba's lunch, Adi sent a message with directions and information on all the other accommodations Baba could move to if He wished. Due to the awful smell in the Wanowri house, Baba went immediately with a few of His companions to inspect the other options, including Guru Prasad. When Baba saw Guru Prasad, He was very happy and liked the atmosphere very much; everything was according to His needs. That same afternoon, Baba and His companions shifted to Guru Prasad to stay for the very first time.

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

As a reward for all of us who worked so hard to organize the accommodations, Baba called us to Him at Guru Prasad. This was the first time since Baba had entered the New Life that I could see Him. Adi, Gadekar, several others, and I excitedly

made our way there. When we were face to face with Baba our joy turned to utter dismay. The physical state that He was in left us completely aghast and shocked. I had never seen Baba so pale, so emaciated, and so completely exhausted. It was as if He had extracted the last ounce of energy from His body to complete the 100-day seclusion. For the duration of our visit, He remained standing, in the doorway; supporting Himself because of the pain He was experiencing from piles, which made sitting extremely painful.

Baba told us all that He was very happy with our efforts, and how especially pleased He was with Guru Prasad. He then asked about my studies, and I told Baba that I had to appear for my final exams very soon. He was quite concerned and asked if I had studied.

“Baba, I haven’t had much time to study.”

“Then how will you ever pass?” He gestured.

I don’t know what made me say it, but I replied, “I will, Baba.”

“You’ll pass without studying?”

“Yes.”

“Hmm, you’ll pass.... Fine.” Then Baba told me, “Now, go and study. You should study for the remaining days left. Your exams are close by.”

Then just to lighten our mood, because we were feeling so upset at seeing Baba in such a condition, He asked Dr. Nilu to recount a funny story about a disciple and his Master. It was very humorous and we were all temporarily distracted from

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

the somber atmosphere. After this we said our farewells to Baba and left.

During Baba's stay, I carried out the duty of purchasing the food from the market for Baba and His group at Guru Prasad. My mother Gaimai, my sister Manu, Naja, Rano, my aunt Gulamasi, and others cooked at Bindra House and sent the meals to Guru Prasad. Baba left Poona after a very restful and enjoyable stay for Him and His companions.

So, this is the story of how Baba first stepped into the grand palace of Guru Prasad, which was to become such an integral location in the concluding phase of His life and work. One can always glean a little lesson from this: that every bad thing has a good ending. So it was that Bobda Irani going back on his word resulted in a great benefit to the Maharani of Baroda. Otherwise, she would probably not have come in contact with the Lord. It also drives home the point for us that when we give our word, it behooves us to carry it out, regardless of the circumstances. Had Bobda done that, it would have turned his fate upside down to have that direct connection with Baba. He lost the opportunity of many lifetimes.

Of course, no one, apart from Baba, knew at that time the significant role that Guru Prasad would play in years to come. But it is just in such seemingly accidental ways that Baba plants the seeds of His future work.



Baba in
Guru Prasad,
1957

1952–1957

*I*t was my intention to come and live permanently with Baba in 1949 when I left my job, disburdened myself of my possessions, and came to Meherabad to join the New Life. As events unfolded, Baba subsequently decided that my frail health would not permit me to travel with Him. He took the circular of New Life Conditions that I had signed and had Abdulla (one of the New Life companions, who was a lawyer) write something to the effect that I would remain with Baba in His New Life to the very end. Then Baba signed the circular and told me that I was not to accompany Him physically on the New Life. He sent me back home and gave me other orders instead.

During the New Life, those who were not traveling with Him were told not to attempt to see Him or communicate with Him in any way. Indeed, if by chance any one were to happen to see Baba, they were supposed to immediately turn away without any attempt to establish contact. Because there was such a drastic break between Baba's New Life companions and everyone else, we all depended on the occasional circular to find out what Baba was doing and where He was.

Ever since first meeting Baba as an adult in 1943 (I had met him unknowingly as a child much before that), I found that my thoughts inevitably came back to Him. As a way of bridging the physical distance between us, I got into the habit of keeping track of where Baba was during the year, and what He was doing. If a circular were issued, or a pamphlet printed, or a message given out, I would collect it and keep it in a kind of scrapbook. I had no thought at the time that I was compiling an historical record; this was just something I did to keep myself occupied until that glorious time when I could be in Baba's physical presence again. Many years later, I found that this "chronology" that I had kept proved useful to me when I started writing *Glimpses of the God-Man*, but I had no such ulterior motive in mind when I started it. Included in Appendix B is a copy of my notes for the year 1952. You will notice that subsequently, when I found references to events that had happened during the year (such as articles in *The Awakener* magazine), I went back and included them. As it turns out, some of the dates I recorded were not correct, but they were as accurate as I could make them with the information I had available at the time.



Although Baba did not stay at Guru Prasad again until 1957, the years 1952 through 1956 were momentous ones in His ministry. Therefore, before taking up the story of Baba's later stays at Guru Prasad, I would like to briefly sketch an account of the intervening years.

Baba declared that the New Life was “endless,” but many people, in a more pragmatic mode, feel that that specific phase of His work ended on January 31, 1952, when Baba declared that the *Manonash* (Annihilation of Mind) work had been done 100% to His satisfaction and had a *dbuni* [a small fire pit used in religious ceremonies] lit at Meherazad. Into the fire of the dhuni Baba consigned the rites and rituals of all world religions.

A few months later, in April, Baba visited America again for the first time since the 1930s. While there, He suffered His first automobile accident, in Prague, Oklahoma.

Nevertheless, almost from the moment Baba arrived back in India near the end of August, He started making plans for extended darshan programs throughout India. It was during His visit to the Hamirpur region in November that so many hearts were set on fire with His love, although all but a handful were meeting Him for the first time. Baba later referred to Hamirpur as “His heart” and often spoke of the great love of His followers there.

Similarly, two months later, in January 1953, Baba toured Andhra for the first time and thousands had the opportunity for His darshan. It was during His visit to Eluru, in a small stone hut in Katta Suba Rao's garden [he was one of the four main organizers, the “K” of KDRM, of the Andhra visit], that Baba declared to a small group that He was God in human form. Two of the Andhra men present recounted that this statement was made with such force that they lost consciousness and fell to the ground. Baba graciously allowed me to travel with Him for some of this time. A much fuller account is given in *Glimpses of the God-Man, Volume III*.

Having spent most of the previous two decades incognito, in seclusion, or out of the public eye, Baba seemed to be alerting humanity to His presence and His status, both externally and internally.

In September 1953, in Dehra Dun, where Baba had stayed off and on for nine months since February, Baba gave out his “Highest of the High” message. In December, Baba shifted His headquarters to Mahabaleshwar, although He continued to travel. On February 8, 1954, during His second visit to the Hamirpur district, Baba publicly declared Himself the Avatar, in both Meherastan and Mahewa.

Immediately after this, Baba traveled through Andhra again. After this tour, Baba continued to stay mainly in Mahabaleshwar and nearby Satara. But in September, Baba returned to Meherazad and held a large darshan program at Wadia Park in Ahmednagar. It was during this time that some twenty Western men came to stay at Meherabad for what they termed “three incredible weeks.” Again, this period is detailed more fully in *Glimpses of the God-Man, Volumes IV and V*.

One month after the Wadia Park darshan, while in Satara once again, on October 7th, Baba abandoned His use of the alphabet board and began communicating through gestures. He created a sort of sign-language alphabet, as well as gestures for specific words and phrases.

The contradictions of Baba’s life and ministry continued. When He was most physically active and dynamic, during the 1930s and 1940s, He kept Himself mostly hidden from the world. But, after the first accident, when His body was broken and He was nearing His sixties, He started traveling throughout India, proclaiming Himself as God in human form, the Highest of the High, and then, finally, as the Avatar.

It was after mostly completing the work of dictating and supervising the preparation of the manuscript for *God Speaks*, which many

consider to be His most important literary work, that Baba gave up the alphabet board and seemingly limited His ability to communicate easily with the public. All of Baba's actions were determined by the exigencies of His work and, as such, are beyond our ability to understand. But it seems as if Baba's Avataric ministry entered a much more explicit and public phase in this period.

During 1955, Baba stayed mostly in Satara, although in October He returned to Meherazad for the four large sahasas programs that were held at Meherabad throughout November of that year.

A similar pattern was followed in 1956, with Baba staying mostly in Satara, although He traveled in India and gave darshan to large crowds. In July, Baba returned to America. This time He made it to California, where He had been scheduled to visit in 1952 but His plans had to be cancelled after the accident on the way there. Baba also visited Australia for the first time on His way back to India, which He reached in mid-August. Baba continued to travel, mostly in Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Andhra. On December 2, 1956, Baba suffered His second automobile accident, near Satara.

This accident seemed to precipitate two major changes in Baba's life. After an initial recovery period in Poona, Baba shifted to Meherazad in February 1957, which then became His home for the rest of His life. After this, Baba did not travel very much. He was almost always at Meherazad apart from three brief trips to Bombay, which He stopped visiting after 1959. A major exception was His visit to America and Australia (and His first and last visit to Avatar's Abode) in 1958. Otherwise, He stayed in Meherazad with His travels mostly limited to Ahmednagar, with one exception. Starting in April 1957, Baba began

visiting Guru Prasad and it became His summer residence, usually from March through June.

Although Poona, especially the Camp area, was still a quiet city, with many nice bungalows and gardens, it was quite cosmopolitan compared to Ahmednagar. It was closer to Bombay, and therefore easier to travel to. And once there, it was possible for people to find accommodations in the city. Additionally, the rains were usually more plentiful than in Ahmednagar, so there were not the water shortage problems that plagued Meherabad and Meherazad.

However, Baba never gave these as reasons for making the shift from Meherazad. It was the less-intense heat that was generally given as a reason for going to Poona during the summer. On April 18, still recuperating from the accident four months earlier, Baba came to Poona. He stayed at a cottage in Ganeshkhind Gardens in Poona, where Dadi Kerawala (Meherwan's cousin) was employed. His meals were prepared at Bindra House and sent to Him. But Baba again asked Meherwan to see whether Guru Prasad could be made available for His use as it had been in 1951.

So Meherwan and Gadekar approached Sardar Raste and asked him to write the Maharani and again request her permission for Baba to occupy Guru Prasad. She immediately granted it.

Meherwan and Jehangu Sukhadwalla (who had married Baba's niece, Gulnar, the daughter of Baba's brother, Behram) set to work to make the palace suitable for Baba. They supervised the Maharani's staff in cleaning everything thoroughly, even the fixtures. They also made sure that any extra furniture and crockery that Baba might want would be there and tested the electricity and plumbing to make sure that everything was in good working order. Additionally, they arranged for

an on-demand gas connection and gas stoves to be hooked up so that food or tea could be heated for breakfast.

On the 28th of April, Baba moved from Ganeshkhind to Guru Prasad, which was well situated, being near Bund Garden, the medical facilities Baba needed to visit, and not even that far a walk from Baba's boyhood home where His family still lived, and Bindra House, where the Jessawala family lived.

Set back from Bund Garden Road, the palace itself was surrounded by beautiful gardens and lawns. There was a majestic fountain in front, artistic stone statues, and a vast open ground at the back (which was used to host huge darshan programs like the East-West Gathering in 1962). It had a beautifully open and expansive main bungalow with a grand, central hall that was large enough to accommodate small darshan programs. At the back of the hall was a dining table and chairs where Baba had His meals with the women. Behind this was a sort of pantry and kitchen, separated from the dining "room" by partitions that went almost all the way across the hall, with an opening in the middle. The furniture would be rearranged when Baba was having a darshan program to make room for everybody, and usually a chair or a sofa would be placed where the dining table had been.

On either side of the main hall were three smaller rooms. The front left-hand room was used by Baba. This was the room He had used in 1951 when He had stayed there briefly during the New Life. The adjacent room was for the women mandali (which usually meant Meheru, as Rano and Goher tended to sleep on the verandah outside Baba's room), and the last room was Mehera and Mani's.

The first room on the right-hand side was known as Pendu's room and this is where most of the men mandali and those of us who were allowed to visit stayed. In 1957, only Aloba, Donkin, and Savak Kotwal

accompanied Baba to Guru Prasad as Pendu was still at Meherabad, recuperating from the accident four months' earlier. In later years, Pendu came and Savak and Donkin did not. Pendu was in charge of food for the men's side and would also do night watch.

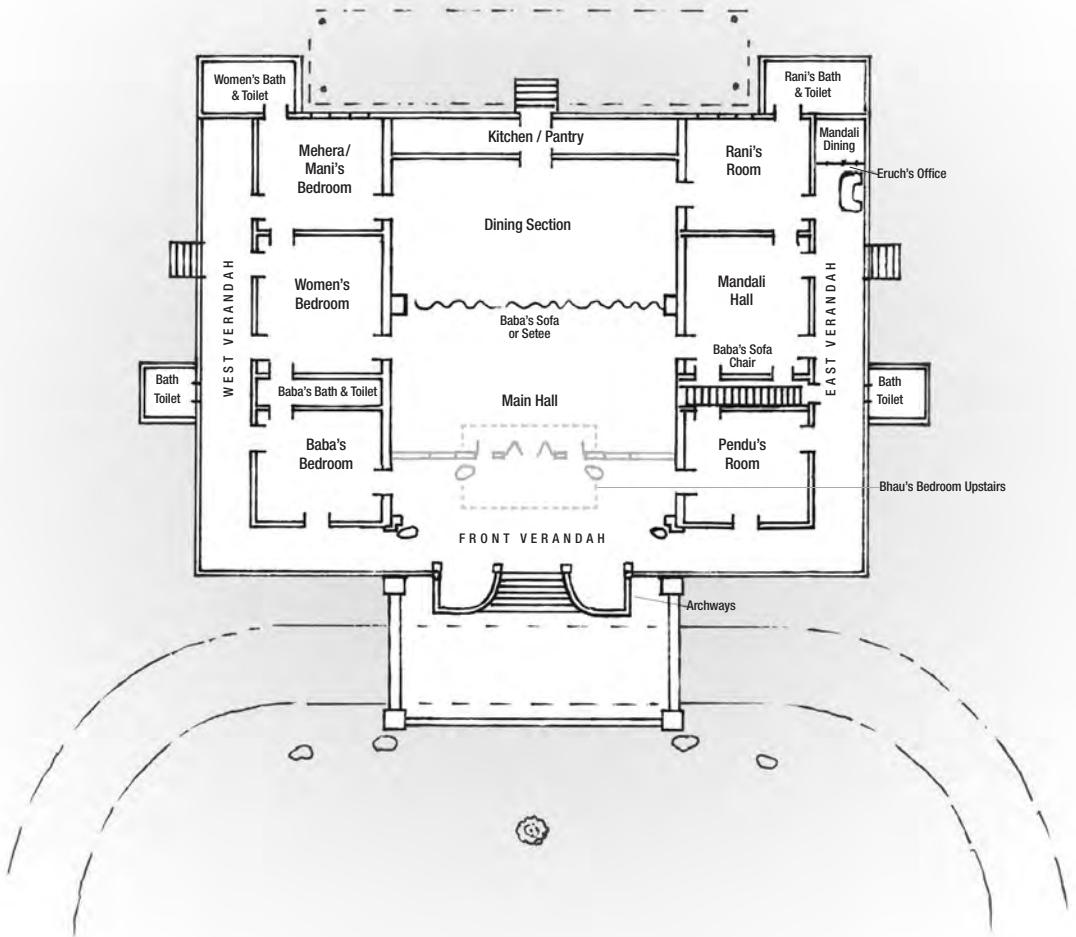
The second room was known as the mandali's room, and it was where Baba met with the men mandali during the day and also where He held small darshans or played cards with some of His close ones. I stayed there when I visited for six weeks during my summer holidays. Nana Kher, who often came and stayed for various lengths of time, would also sleep in the mandali's room if the weather was cool; otherwise he slept on the marble verandah that gracefully stretched around three sides of the building. Pukar and Kumar stayed at various times; Nariman Dadachanji and his brother-in-law, Jimmy Mistry, would often come on weekends. Nariman had a cot in Pendu's room, although he, too, often slept on the verandah where Jimmy would put a mattress on the floor.

Under the verandah on the men's side was a partition built at the far end outside the last room, which was the Maharani's (it was kept locked and was not used until some years later); this was used as our dining area. On the other side was Eruch's office, just an open space with a large wooden cabinet against the partition wall, and a small bench and set of drawers. Eruch would hang a large plastic shoe holder (he would use the individual slots to hold letters, supplies, mail clips and other things) against the wall or on the back of an unusual sofa that was obtained at some point during the stays. This sofa was in the shape of a half circle, with a seat back in the middle, which made it look like a chair surrounded by a sofa. This little area was Eruch's office by day and, when he was not going home to spend the night at Bindra House, his sleeping quarters by night. He would fold up all the pouches and

GURU PRASAD FLOORPLAN

Based on information from Bal Natu and Meherwan Jessawala.

Drawn by Elaine Cox (not to scale)



lock them in a cupboard at the end of the day and would put down his bedding roll on the floor beside the railing.

On the second floor was a small room over the verandah where Bhau stayed. Under the roof was a dropped ceiling so that there was a gap between it and the roof. This, the tall ceilings, and the verandah

kept the building cool in the summertime. As Meherwan put it, “You never felt the heat there, which is why Baba liked the place.”

Although at different times Baba had quite a few people staying with Him, usually during His Poona stays there were only a handful. Mehera, Mani, Goher, and Meheru would always be with Him. Naja and Rano would accompany Baba but would often spend most of their time at Bindra House to help them with the cooking. Khorshed would sometimes come for an extended stay, and Arnavaz and Katie were frequent visitors. [They were probably put up in Meheru’s room.]

My first visit to Guru Prasad, in 1957, came in a roundabout way. A friend of mine, a fellow Baba lover who lived in Bombay, came to stay with me in Kurduwadi. When he arrived, we stayed up most of the night talking. He was a simple, sincere man who had the habit of going to see any person he considered spiritual and bowing down to them. It so happened that he had gotten involved with a man who called himself a Master. He told me all about his experiences with this man. I wrote a letter to Baba and related what he had told me.

Baba had Eruch write a reply by return post. Baba wanted me to come to Poona that weekend to see Him at Guru Prasad. There He gave me a lengthy explanation of true Masters, false Masters, self-deluded Masters, and charlatans. Then I returned to Kurduwadi. I think it may interest some readers to mention that one of the false Masters Baba was referring to was Mirchandani, the person with whom Eruch’s wife, Khorshed, had become entangled. In Eruch’s letter to me of May 4, 1957, he wrote:

Poor [M. K.] and some more of his type—sincere and innocent—are drawn in perforce in the web, which Mirchandani

weaves so diligently to justify his newly created urge to find himself as one of the revered so-called saints of India. Baba said that neither Mirchandani nor Minoo and so many others are to be blamed; it is no one's fault. It was the Original WHIM and the Original Urge of God that has started this Divine Game which He alone can enjoy at His own cost.

Later, during my school holidays, when I rejoined Him in Poona, Baba brought up the subject again before all the mandali and some of the Poona Baba lovers. He asked me and Gadekar's son, Digambar, to take notes. We did so and eventually typed them up and they were read out to Baba. This work took some time, because I remember that when Baba shifted that summer to Ganeshkhind, He had another meeting there on the same subject, to which He called Baba lovers from Gujarat and elsewhere. Eventually our notes became the basis for the little booklet, "Baba's Warning."

A funny incident occurred during the typing of our notes. Dr. Deshmukh had a small portable typewriter and he was instructed to help me in typing up the notes. I was reading them out to him when I realized I had made a mistake and had read something out of order. I said:

"No, no, Dr. Sahib, that part doesn't belong there, it goes later. "

"I have already typed it," Dr. Deshmukh declared with authority. "It stays. Now tell me what else you want to say and I'll arrange it so that it fits in with what I've typed. "

Really, what rare gems were Baba's mandali. Each was a very strong personality in his own right, and only with Baba's grace were they all able to live with Him and He with them.



When Baba moved into Guru Prasad, His meals continued to be made for Him at Bindra House. Perhaps it is appropriate now to say a little bit about Bindra House and the Jessawala family.

Gaimai and “Pappa” and their four children, Eruch, Meheru, Manu, and Meherwan, joined Baba in August 1938. For a good portion of the next five years, Baba and His mandali traveled around India in what became known as the Blue Bus tours. Periodically, Baba would have the family stop traveling with Him and settle down, ostensibly so that Meherwan, who was only eight when the family came to Baba, could attend school. In 1943, Baba asked them to settle down once again, this time in Poona in a house He had arranged for them to rent. It was called Bindra House, named after the occupants of the top floor. The Jessawala family rented the bottom floor. As it turned out, Bindra House, near Quarter Gate in the Camp area of Poona, had been built where a toddy palm orchard had stood at the turn of the twentieth century. A swing had been hung from one of the trees and Baba used to play there as a child.

Once the family moved in, Baba would often spend the night there when He stayed in Poona, while passing through on *mast* trips or other travels. [*Masts* were people who seemed mad but were actually, according to Baba, “God-intoxicated.” Their ordinary consciousness was overthrown through an overpowering experience of God’s presence. Baba spent years traveling through India contacting these souls.]

Manu remembers:

Baba used Bindra House a long, long time. Sometimes He would come all of a sudden. During the *mast* trips, Eruch would cable and Baba would come as early as 4:00 a.m. Then quickly, quickly His things would have to be made ready. Somebody would make the bed, somebody [would set] the table,

somebody would get out the cup and saucer for Baba's tea. We were a big family, my mumma, my aunt, my sister, my sister-in-law, myself, and little Meherwan.

We had to keep everything ready for Baba every day. We kept a cupboard that was only for His things. Any day, any minute He might come, so we kept clean linen, separate good dishes and such, ready every day should He drop in.

In addition to these visits, Baba also asked the Jessawala family to receive His mandali as family whenever they passed through Poona. The mandali would laughingly remark that at times Bindra House seemed more like Grand Central Station than a private residence, and Baba Himself would call it the “junction,” because He so often halted there en route to Meherabad.

So, in the 1950s, when Baba started going to Guru Prasad, Gaimai, Pappa, Manu, and Meherwan were living at Bindra House. Meheru, the younger sister, had gotten married in 1946 in a double ceremony along with Eruch, and started living in Ahmednagar, in what is now the Trust Office. Just as Baba had food prepared for Him at Bindra House when He was at Guru Prasad, He had insisted that Meheru prepare His food when he was completing His Manonash work on Seclusion Hill near the end of the New Life, despite the fact that she was ill with pancreatic cancer at the time. Meheru died in September 1953.

Meanwhile, Gaimai's sister, Banumasi, and one of her sons, Dadi Kerawala, were living in Ganeshkhind Gardens where Dadi worked. Her other son, Sam, was a merchant marine and was therefore often at sea. His future bride, Roshan, stayed with Banumasi and Dadi. Her sisters, Dhun and Aloo, lived at Akbar Press in Ahmednagar but would come and stay at Bindra House for long visits, as would their father,



Baba during one of His many visits to Bindra House

Homimama, who was living and working in Andhra Pradesh. The reason for mentioning this is because Banumasi and Roshan also helped with much of Baba's food preparation.

Bindra House was only four or five kilometers away, so each day a few of the servants would come from Guru Prasad on their bicycles and take the food back with them in steel containers. If there was a large

group eating at Guru Prasad, then the car would come and the big pots would be loaded into it.

Manu recounts:

Dr. Goher would ask Baba what He would like to eat the following day, depending on His health. Then she would send a note to Bindra House. Naja, my mother Gaimai, Roshan, and I did the cooking. For the first few years, Rano would stay with us and she would help cook; then my aunty Gulamasi was called to fill her spot when she started staying with Baba at Guru Prasad. In the evenings, Baba mainly wanted *khitchree* [dal and rice], a little bit of spinach or *raita* [cucumber and yoghurt salad] and chutney. He loved chutney a lot, so every day we made fresh coconut chutney. The ingredients were a little raw ginger and garlic, coriander leaves, curry leaves, lemon, a little salt, and *jaggery* [raw sugar], and fresh ground coconut. That would all be ground together on the grinding stone, which is now in our home at Meherazad.

Baba also liked *papad* [crispy fried snack made from chickpea flour] and *patia*, which is made from coconut, sesame, poppy seeds, and peanuts all nicely toasted and then ground. There was no blender at that time so it was all done on the grinding stone, and coconut is very hard to grind. We would take out the milk from the coconut and make curry or chutney with that. Naja taught us everything, as she had been cooking for Baba since the early days. [Shireenmai had taught her how to make rice and dal for Baba when she was still a girl (Naja's mother had died early on), and she had decided at that point that it would be good to learn how to cook as this would

(MANU CONTINUES)

be useful to Baba.] The Bindra House servant and Roshan did most of the grinding.

The women mandali staying at Guru Prasad would see to Baba's breakfast. Sometimes Baba wanted something other than raita, so we would make *kuchumbar* [salad of cucumber and tomatoes]. Baba couldn't eat much onion, so we had to grind the onions very finely and add just a little. For His afternoon meal, Baba would sometimes call for curry and rice, or *masala* dal [dal with spices] and curry rice; sometimes He would call for khitchree patia, depending upon what He wanted. Baba didn't eat chapati but sometimes He wanted *broon bread* [crusty brown rolls]. He would eat the soft middle of the loaf, along with a meat soup or the like, because He could not chew well after the accident.

Meherwan was still in school in those days and his job was to go to the bazaar. Poor fellow, with all his college studies, he had to bring meat for Baba at five o'clock in the morning sometimes. If Baba asked for *dhansak* [a special Parsi meat and vegetable stew] then he would go.

If we made any little mistake, Baba would say, "This dish was not nice today." If it was the broon bread bought from Kayani's, He would not like it. If it was from the Imperial bakery, He would like it. One day, the Imperialwala said the broon was all gone; so we got it from Kayani's and Baba said, "No, this is not Imperial bread," because it was not as crispy. Baba liked to break the bread into two and put it into the curry and soak it.

When Baba told us that we had made a mistake, we would learn from it. I wouldn't cry, I would just think, "Today this mistake was done." One day He told us: "You know how I

remember you here? By poking you all; otherwise you wouldn't get a chance to see Me. How could I correct you on your mistakes if I didn't see you all and tell you?" So He would call us to Guru Prasad under the guise of making a comment on the cooking, just to give us His sahavas. It was our great fortune.

And of course, we did make mistakes and Baba might say, "Who made this chutney today? It was not tasty," or, "The rice was not properly salted," just to give a little jolt to us you see. All of our concentration used to be on Baba's food. And we had to taste everything, to decide whether the salt was perfect, chili perfect, spices perfect.

First we thought we shouldn't taste His food. Then Baba said, "How is it that you don't salt the food properly?" He started to teach us. We would get a note from Baba, "Today the salt was not right. Call Gaimama at once." Then He would ask my mom, "Who cooked this food? Did you taste it?" "Baba, how could I taste your food?" she responded. "What? You don't taste it? And you give it to Me just as it is? Every day you have to taste My food and see that everything is perfect." That was Baba's way.

At first Baba only asked us to cook for Him and the women mandali (Mehera, Mani, Goher, and Meheru), and then little by little He would call for food for the men mandali. At first it was only for Francis, whose food we had to cook separately because he couldn't eat spices. Then Pendu, Aloba, and Bhau's food was added. We did not send food for Eruch because he used to come home and eat his dinner and breakfast with us. We sent food for Bal Natu when he came at his vacation time, and also for Pukar and Kumar when they visited. Gadekar and

(MANU CONTINUES)

Baidul generally ate with their families in Poona. At first it was only four; that turned to five; and then before long it was six. As the months and years passed by, the number kept increasing. Gajwani, Gadekar—this one, that one. When the number came to fifty, Naja finally put up her hand: “No more, Baba.” Our brass pots could not fit any more food in them.

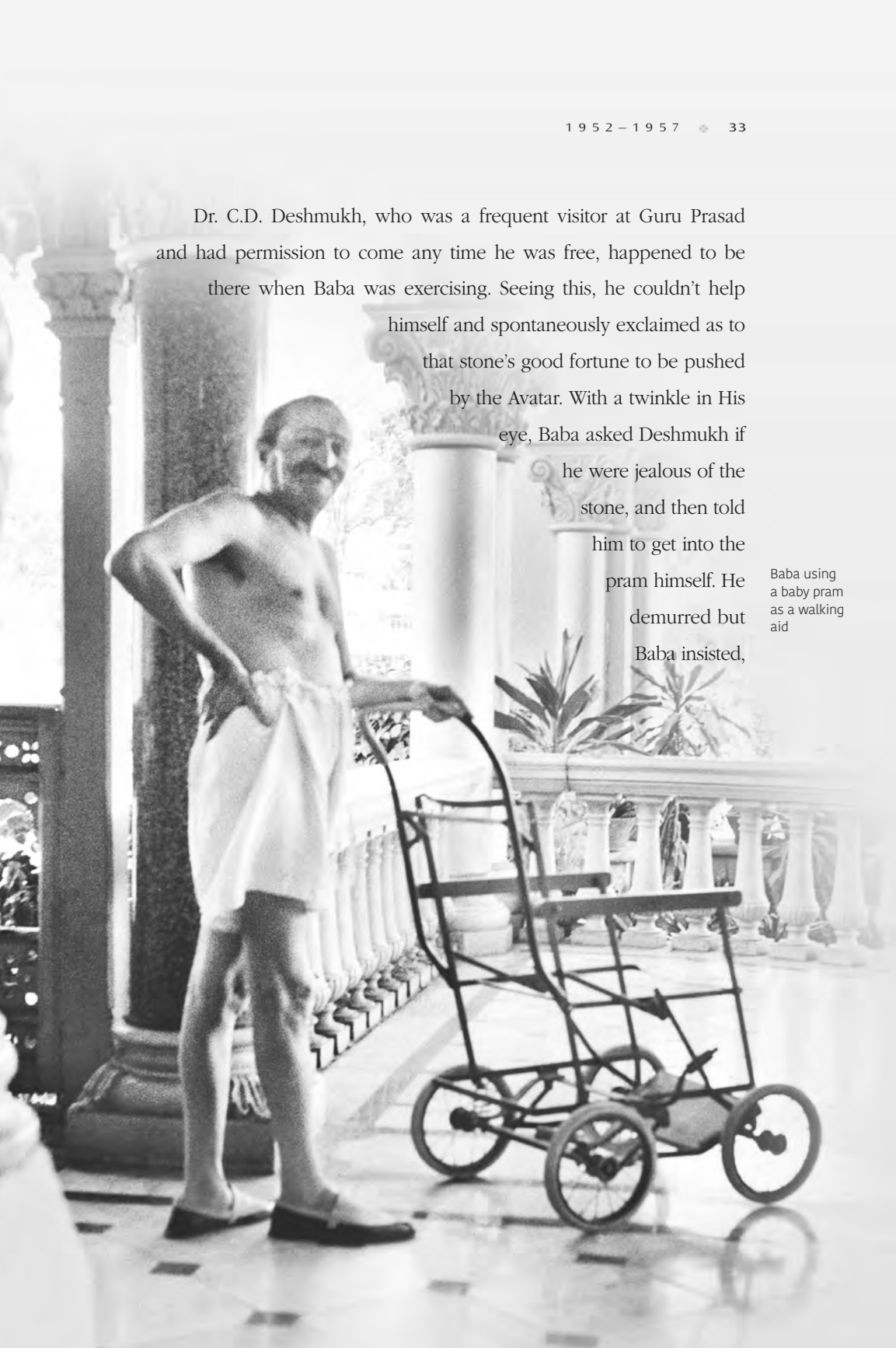
For many years the DeSoto car would come to pick up the food. Sheikh, a very old cautious Muslim, was the driver, and later Yousef. Every day we sent vegetables and chapatis for the men and women mandali for their lunch and supper. Later the servant Bapu was sent on a cycle to bring the food, to save on petrol costs.

Sometimes when the DeSoto would come to pick up the food in the morning, a message would have been sent saying that Baba wanted to see us. So we would have to get dressed up quickly, and also prepare Baba’s and Francis’s food quickly, so that we could be ready to go with the car by the time it left to take Baba His food. It might be that all had to be ready by 8:00 a.m. So on those occasions, we would bring His food to Him and then come back, sometimes in a horse-drawn carriage.

Baba was still recovering from the automobile accident He had had at Satara the previous year. As part of His rehabilitation, a small baby’s pram had been obtained and Baba used to push it along on the marbled verandah of Guru Prasad. To help maintain a proper balance, a large stone was put in the carriage for Baba to push around to exercise His leg and hip.

Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, who was a frequent visitor at Guru Prasad and had permission to come any time he was free, happened to be there when Baba was exercising. Seeing this, he couldn't help himself and spontaneously exclaimed as to that stone's good fortune to be pushed by the Avatar. With a twinkle in His eye, Baba asked Deshmukh if he were jealous of the stone, and then told him to get into the pram himself. He demurred but Baba insisted,

Baba using
a baby pram
as a walking
aid



and Deshmukh sat in the baby carriage and allowed himself to be pushed down the verandah by Baba to the great amusement of all the mandali.

Baba's plans were to spend the rest of the summer at Guru Prasad, but after they had been there a few weeks, the Maharani sent word asking if her relatives could come and stay in a portion of the palace. Not long after that, her brother came on a visit.

Meherwan recounts the rest of the story:

Suddenly, the Maharani's brother turned up. He was rather inquisitive of who these people were staying in his sister's home. He demanded that they open up the Maharani's room. He wanted to occupy this room that was at the back of the house that the manager always kept locked in the early years. One of Baba's conditions was that when He stayed anywhere, He did not want anyone else to occupy the same bungalow. So when Baba was informed, He said, "Allow him to come, but we will vacate immediately."

So Baba vacated that same afternoon, June 1st, and shifted to Ganeshkhind, a government horticulture garden with several cottages for the staff. This is where my cousin Dadi Kerawala worked and stayed. During that time, Baba occupied two cottages there: one was for the women and the other for the men. Meanwhile, Dadi came to stay with us at Bindra House.

When all this was brought to the notice of the Maharani of Baroda, she was devastated that Baba had to vacate Guru Prasad. She sent word that she was extremely sorry for this intrusion, and asked if He would please return and arrangements would be made that He would not be further disturbed. Baba lovingly declined and sent word back to her saying not to worry

and that He was fine where He was. He told her that He would surely visit Guru Prasad some time in the future. She then let all her friends and family know that they could not stay at Guru Prasad, under any circumstances, while Baba was staying there. What respect she showed for Baba, and she had not yet even met Him!

Just as Baba, in a very natural way, helped me to become more natural in His presence, so too he helped me become more relaxed around His mandali. One time when we were in Ganeshkhind, I had heard Baba's secretary Adi referred to as "Adi Baba."

When I first went to Bindra House, Pappa Jessawala said, "Have this papaya, it's been planted by Eruch Baba." This was entirely new to me. I thought, "Who is this Eruch Baba? I only know Meher Baba."

So in the early days, all my letters were addressed to Adi as Adi Baba. This I hadn't questioned. Maybe the early mandali I had met, Pandoba and others, referred to Adi this way and I adopted this form of address. It made sense to me as Adi's association with Baba went back so far. Also my first contact with Baba was, in a way, through Adi, and so I felt he deserved this title of respect. I had no idea it was a custom amongst Parsis to use the term "Baba" so freely.

One time, while at Ganeshkhind, Baba asked me to write Adi a personal letter about some mistakes he had made. As usual, Baba expressed Himself quite frankly, and I felt a bit awkward about writing such a letter as I was not a close friend of Adi's.

Adi himself, on at least one occasion, had been told by Baba to write quite harsh words to his own father; but, for me, when

Baba gave me this message to convey to Adi, I felt that I couldn't address him as "Adi Baba," which seemed very respectful, almost reverent, if I was then going to write a letter that only a superior or someone very close to him could write. So it was for the first time, maybe in 1957 or 1958, that I addressed Adi as *Adi Bhai* (a respectful term that means brother Adi), which I then continued to use until the end.

This is how Baba, in a very natural way, made it easier for me to talk to Adi more freely. Baba seldom "taught" us how to behave; rather He arranged events so that our understanding unfolded in the most natural manner and we came to behave as Baba wanted without His ever having to say anything to us about it.

At the bequest of His lovers, Baba agreed to give a one-day darshan program on December 8th, in Poona. He was driven down from Meherazad and, once again, Guru Prasad was procured and the program was held there. I was given permission to attend, along with Pukar and A.K. Hazra of Jabalpur, who was meeting Baba for the first time, and others. Naturally, there were many Baba lovers from Poona as well who came to be with their Beloved, and it was a full day in His company.

It was a typical darshan day in that all were introduced to Baba, who spontaneously gave several discourses. To help bring His lofty themes down to a level where we could understand them, Baba used Gadekar as an example when talking about types of obedience and whether Gadekar would be willing to cut his son's [Digambar] throat if Baba ordered it. Baba would often do this, putting His mandali or close ones into the discourse itself so that it was not just theoretical. It made the talks seem very relevant and also allowed Baba to interject

humor when, as an aside, He might joke about one of the mandali's idiosyncrasies.

In this instance, after explaining the different types of obedience, Baba hastened to assure Gadekar that He was not going to ask him to cut his son's throat, that this was just an example. After refreshments, which were served on the verandah, all went back inside and some *bhajans* [songs with a religious theme or spiritual ideas] were performed by the Poona "bhajan mandali" for Baba who would sometimes explain the deeper meaning behind some of the lines. The "bhajan mandali," as its name suggests, was a group of Baba musicians and singers in Poona who performed at their meetings. The main impetus for the group, and indeed for the Poona Baba group as a whole, were two of Baba's old time lovers, Gadekar and Dr. Ghani.

Dr. Ghani was one of Baba's schoolboy friends; as such he was referred to as *langoti-dost*, which might be translated as "friends since the time they were both in diapers." Dr. Ghani was a wonderful personality who had read widely and deeply in spiritual matters and possessed not only a great intellectual understanding of the ways of Masters but also the ability to express these truths in simple and accessible terms. He was also a treasure trove of stories about Baba as a youth and His early days as a Master. As such, when newer people joined the ashram, like Rano Gayley who came in 1937, or when I started to visit Baba in the 1940s, we loved to listen to Ghani tell stories.

On that day, there was also more general conversation, and Baba teased the Poona Centre workers about their attitude of loving Him, yet fighting amongst themselves. Dr. Ghani used to say that if you want to get closer to Baba, in no way try to understand Baba's dealings with His mandali and the mandali's ways of behaving with

each other. He used to call it “inner boxing.” He said: “When all come, they think that we are standing in line and obeying Baba but they don’t know about this inner boxing.” In a natural way, this led to more discussion about the Poona Centre, and what it means to work for Baba.

In the afternoon, for about two hours on the verandah there was a darshan program where all had the opportunity to file by before Baba. Baba left at around 6 p.m. to return to Meherazad, and left His lovers with their hearts full with everything they had experienced that day.



Baba with
Maharani of
Baroda in
Guru Prasad

1958

*T*he last year during which Baba traveled anywhere other than Poona and Bombay was 1958. In February, Baba held darshan programs at Meherabad for a Hindi-Marathi group and then a Telugu-Gujarati group. He came to Poona during March, after a quick visit to Bombay, and stayed at Ganeshkhind again for a few days. Then Baba proceeded to Mahabaleshwar. At the end of April, He returned to Poona, this time staying at Guru Prasad for two weeks before flying to America and Australia. When Baba arrived at Guru Prasad at the end of



Baba also invited Katie and Arnavaz to Guru Prasad



April, in addition to Mehera, Mani, Goher, and Meheru, Baba had Katie and Arnavaz with Him. Rano and Naja, as usual, stayed at Bindra House to help with the cooking. In a letter to Bili Eaton (an American Baba lover), Mehera wrote:

Dear Bili,

We arrived in Poona on the 30th [April]. We did not feel the heat much on the way as there had been a hailstorm in Mahabaleshwar. When we were nearing Poona, Baba, holding His hand out of the car window, was glad to find the air was not at all hot. Baba felt the journey. He patted His hip to say that it hurt Him. We are glad that Baba won't have to make a special trip to Bombay for His visa [for His visit to America]. Baba likes the atmosphere of this house (Guru Prasad in Poona). Baba will be giving darshan here on the fourth.¹

During this two-week stay at Guru Prasad, Baba held some small darshan programs, during which Shantadevi, the Maharani of Baroda, met Baba for the first time. Another person meeting Baba for the first time was Prem Khilnani. As a young man, Prem had been at his uncle's house in Sukkor (now in Pakistan), standing on a first-floor balcony when a tonga pulled up to a store in the street below. Prem heard the man ask in a loud voice for directions to find a certain *mast* in that area. Prem had met the *mast* and spoke Sindhi, his language, so he volunteered to be a guide for this gruff outsider, who turned out to be Baidul.

That meeting was in 1941. Over the years, Prem became a lawyer and then a judge. But he also started increasingly to think about the meaning of life and he decided he needed a guru; the person who attracted him the most was Sri Aurobindo. He toyed with the idea of renouncing the world and retiring to the Himalayas. His parents got him engaged in 1945; he resisted getting married because of his spiritual ambitions but, finally, in 1948 he gave in.

Prem's family lived in Poona and he was transferred there in 1958. His uncle also subsequently moved there. One day, while visiting his uncle, Prem found that Baidul, who was a friend of the uncle, was also there. He remembered him as the *mast* hunter from seventeen years earlier and they began talking. Baidul told him there was no point in going anywhere to find a Master, since God in the form of Meher Baba was in Poona. Prem wasn't all that impressed. He remembered seeing photos of Meher Baba in his uncle's office, but he had also read Paul Brunton's *In Search of Secret India* and had accepted Brunton's verdict that Baba was a fraud and so forgot about Him.

But some time after that, he happened to be at an ear, nose, and throat clinic and saw a cavalcade of cars parked outside. He was curious as to who the visiting VIP was; then he saw "a fair, bright gentleman stride towards the car. He walked like a king and very briskly." He went into the clinic to see who had just come out and was told that it was Meher Baba. Now his curiosity was aroused.

In the evening, after court, it was his habit to stroll in the Bund Garden. One evening, he noticed a banner there announcing that Avatar Meher Baba was going to give darshan the next day at Guru Prasad. So he walked over to Guru Prasad and sat down on a bench outside.

After a while, Eruch came out and told him to come the next morning. He did. He was called into Baba's room, where Baba told him to come again after He returned from His trip to America. Prem would have to wait a year before he saw Baba again.

After just two weeks at Guru Prasad, Baba left for America, and then Australia. After His return that summer, Baba spent various periods in seclusion. In December, after one such period, Baba expressed a wish for a change of scene and it was decided to shift to Guru Prasad. He left Meherazad and arrived on the 15th. As before, Baba's food was prepared at Bindra House. As the youngest member of the family, Roshan Kerawala did most of the grinding of the spices and coconut (which was hard work) even though she was now pregnant with her first daughter, Mehera. Manu recalled that Baba declared, "Roshan has to grind the masala [spice] while Mehera is in her stomach."

Manu continues:

So even when her stomach was quite big, she would sit on the ground and grind. Baba would come sometimes and ask Roshan how many months she had left. Then Baba told her, "Till the end you have to make My masala chutneys." Eruch used to tease her that she would give birth to a *bawarchi* [cook]. She had to make every chutney, and for curry and rice we had to make a large amount of masalas. Baba gave her that chance, you see. Baba had also given the instruction that when Roshan's labor started, we all had to go on repeating Baba's name continuously, in turns, and of course we did this.

Roshan herself remembers programs that winter at Guru Prasad:

He always used to make me sit on the ladies' side and, when I was pregnant, He would make me sit close to Him. With all the music, I would feel Mehera kicking and I would give a jump, and Baba said, "What happened?" I told Him and He made me sit closer and sometimes He would put His hand on my stomach to feel the kicks. It was so touching. I would feel so shy with that big belly of mine. [Mehera was born in February of 1959.]

Because I had school holidays, I was also able to join Baba at Guru Prasad during that December stay. I was eagerly anticipating this opportunity to spend some days in His divinely human company.

Baba was sitting with the mandali when I arrived. As I said, this tended to be a small group, consisting this time of Eruch, Bhau, Aloba, and Pendu. But some of the Poona lovers, like His brothers, Beheram and Jal, and Eruch's family, as well as old time mandali like Sadashiv Patil and Meherjee Karkaria, would come whenever they could, so they might have been there as well. Other local lovers like Gadekar, Ramakrishnan, Shinde, Kamble, Dhavle, and Dinkar would also come from time to time. I put my small bag in the adjacent room and went in to join the others.

Baba noted my arrival and gestured, "Good you have come. I have some work for you." Of course, I was very happy to hear this. It fit in very nicely with my notion of being able to stay near Baba and work under His instruction. So I was a bit taken aback when Baba informed me that the work He had for me was to travel to Baroda to give a message to the Maharani Shantadevi. As the discussion developed, one

of the mandali pointed out that there was a train via Bombay that left at noon.

I was not happy to hear this suggestion, but Baba snapped His fingers and, with a pleased look, gestured, “Perfect,” and asked me to catch that train. I hadn’t even unpacked my bag and already I had to leave Guru Prasad! So much for my dream to spend a happy time in Baba’s close physical proximity.

Baba told me in detail the message that He wanted me to convey to the Maharani. After carefully hearing all the points, it was time for me to leave. As Baba had entrusted this work to me, I didn’t dream of refusing, but I was a bit disappointed that my stay with Baba began with my leaving immediately. I headed for the station and prepared to catch the train.

Being brought up as a simple villager, my nature is such that I have always felt ill at ease with worldly or prosperous people. If Baba had not guided me to change, I would still be wearing my dhoti and Maharashtrian cap. I have also never learned “proper etiquette.” To this day, I do not know how to behave at a formal dinner or in what order food should be eaten. I have even been known to mix the dessert with my main course! When Baba had me collect information about some *masts*, I did not feel at all uncomfortable observing the squalor in which they lived. But the very idea of having to associate with the well-to-do made me feel uneasy. Yet, here I was, on my way to visit the Maharani of Baroda, who had just been listed that year as one of the richest people in India.

When I reached Bombay, I purchased a third-class ticket to Baroda on a train leaving that evening. I got on board, and here my problems began. My health has always been delicate and my constitution is not up to the vigorous pushing and shoving that often occurs in crowded

railway cars. On top of this, because I can't sit upright for very long, the thought of having to sit up all night was daunting. In third class there are no sleeping berths and I knew I had a long journey before me. I didn't see how I was going to manage. So when I got in the compartment, instead of trying to get a seat, I simply spread a small mat I had with me on the floor below the seat bench and crawled underneath. I curled up on the floor with people's feet dangling down in front of me. It would not have been everybody's idea of an ideal accommodation, but it suited me because it enabled me to avoid the jostling of the crowd and, to some extent, it allowed me to stretch out and rest my back.

Not being a very practical person and never having traveled beyond Bombay, I failed to ascertain when we would get there, so I stayed awake most of the night, asking fellow passengers each time we pulled into a station whether it was Baroda. Around four in the morning, they let me know that I had arrived.

I got down from the train and wondered what to do. My clothes had been fairly shabby to begin with, and their appearance was even worse after the long train ride curled up on the floor of the third-class compartment. For that matter, the rest of my physical appearance had suffered as well. I went to the bathroom where I splashed some water on my face and did what I could to make myself look at least partially presentable. I shaved, combed my hair, and changed into clean clothes, so I felt a little better. Still, there was no question that anyone would mistake me for the sort of person who was usually to be found in the Maharani's social circle.

I had to confront another problem as well. I had no idea where the Maharani lived. As I left the station I found that Baroda was a very big city. I was not a city bird. I didn't have any idea how I would go

about finding her residence. So I got a rickshaw and, with a great deal more assurance than I felt, ordered the driver in Hindi to take me to the Maharani's palace. To my relief the driver neither questioned why someone from the middle class like myself should want to see the Maharani, nor asked me for a specific address.

As we drove, I noticed that the bungalows were becoming more and more grand and the grounds surrounding them more and more spacious. Finally, we pulled up to the largest palace I had ever seen in my life. There was a kilometer-long driveway leading through beautifully kept gardens to the front of the palace. The rickshaw driver turned and asked me if I wanted him to take me inside. "Certainly," I replied, as if I were used to this, and I was taken to the part of the palace that housed the office of the Maharani's personal secretary.

Now what to do? An imposing figure in an impressive uniform came forward and asked me what I wanted. I announced that I was there to see the Maharani Shantadevi. When he heard that I was there to meet with her directly and give her a special message, he became very deferential and ushered me in. There was red carpet spread everywhere. I had entered a world of opulence and grandeur such as I had never seen.

Another servant came to inquire what I wanted and again I announced confidently that I had come to see the Maharani Shantadevi. I was told that I would have to see her personal secretary first and he was busy having his bath so I would have to wait. I agreed to wait. When the secretary was free, he asked what I wanted, and I told him the purpose of my visit. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he replied, "but she left last night for Bombay."

I could not tell him how greatly relieved I was to hear this. The interview that I had been dreading for the last 24 hours did not have to take place! I went back into town and cabled Baba that the Maharani

had left for Bombay and that I was headed there. I must have added that I would visit Ashiana, the home of Arnavaz and Nariman Dadachanji, to get further instructions.

I bought another third-class ticket and headed back to Bombay. As it was around noon when I left, it was evening by the time I arrived. Then, I had another problem because I had no idea where to stay. I did not know the city at all, nor did I know anyone in it. I had never before spent a night in a hotel. Someone guided me to a cheap Marathi lodging and I stayed there. The place, really speaking, was much like a stationary third-class railway compartment. I won't attempt to describe the crowded squalor or the state of the restroom.

The conditions did not distress me as much as they might have, because I was preoccupied with trying to write down all the points Baba had given me. At first I had felt fairly confident that I could convey Baba's message to the Maharani, but because time had passed, I wanted to make sure that I didn't forget a single thing. So I got some paper and ended up writing about two pages of notes. This focus helped me get through the night, and the next morning I decided to try to find my way to Ashiana.

I knew that it was in the locality of Breach Candy, but I didn't know where that was or have any understanding about what bus or tram to take to get there. I was completely out of my element, but once again Baba helped me. I had been to Ashiana once before in 1957 for a darshan program, so I had a vague idea of what it looked like. I got on a tram and eventually thought the surroundings I was passing through looked somewhat like the locality I remembered. I got down and began walking and, to my surprise, actually found the building and went to the apartment.

At the sound of my knock, a little peephole in the door was opened and someone surveyed me. I said I had come to see Nariman Dadachanji, and the person disappeared. A little while later Arnavaz came to the door. I introduced myself and she immediately invited me in.

“What? You’re in Bombay?” she exclaimed. “A telegram came for you from Poona, but Nariman thought it must have been misdirected, and as he was going to Guru Prasad himself, he took the telegram with him. He left just this morning.”

Again I was greatly relieved to hear this. Perhaps I would not have to see the Maharani after all. Certainly I had done my best, I told myself. Now there were no further instructions to follow, so I could return to Poona and be with Baba again. I suggested to Arnavaz that I would now head back, but she said no, I should wait for instructions. Perhaps to entice me, she prepared a small tray with tea and cookies and then went into the other room to phone Poona to find out what Baba wanted.

Here, unexpectedly, was yet another dilemma for me. I didn’t have any idea of how to serve myself the tea. Not wishing to offend Arnavaz, however, I picked up the teapot and poured a cup for myself. I did not know that one was supposed to pour the tea through the metal strainer. So when I poured it into my cup, many tea leaves came along as well.

Not knowing any better, I thought this was the way tea was made, and I proceeded to add some milk and sugar. When I drank the tea I got a mouth full of leaves. Now what to do? I looked around the spotless room and could see no place where I could spit out the leaves. Having no other choice, I decided to simply swallow them and be done with it.

Soon Arnavaz returned. She had gotten through to Eruch, who repeated the instructions that had been given in the telegram: “Complete

the work entrusted to you and then come.” Arnavaz relayed this to me, and so once more I had to face the prospect of meeting the Maharani, which I dreaded just as much as when I had first been given the task.

I knew the name of the Maharani’s Bombay palace, Jai Mahal, and Arnavaz was able to direct me there. I set out once more to deliver Baba’s message. Eventually, I made my way to the gates of another enormous palace. Another impressive servant in gilded uniform asked me what I wanted, and I said I had come to see the Maharani Shantadevi. He escorted me inside the compound to a small building where I was handed over to yet another servant and the whole routine was repeated. This time the servant phoned to the main building and received the message that I could be shown to the palace itself to meet her personal secretary. I was escorted inside. Again I was surrounded by an opulence to which I was unaccustomed. The personal secretary met me and asked me what I wanted. I said, “Give me a piece of paper.” He did so and I quickly scribbled, “Bal Natu with a message from Meher Baba. Requests meeting for a few minutes.” The secretary went off with my note and left me sitting alone.

The seconds ticked by and then the minutes. I felt in my pocket for the two pages of notes I had written down concerning the points Baba wanted me to deliver, and reassured myself that they were still there. Soon the secretary returned to tell me that the Maharani would see me. A servant arrived to lead me up some stairs to a spacious hall on the first floor. Pointing to a chair in the corner at the far end, he asked me to wait there. I nervously walked into the hall and noticed the spectacular view of the sea through the windows along one wall and the rich furniture which adorned the room.

As I waited, I thought how Baba had paved the way for this interview by sending me with Eruch a year earlier, when he delivered

a message to Shantadevi at Mahabaleshwar. Later, Baba had me go to her residence in Koregaon Park, Poona, to give her a framed picture of Him. Since Shantadevi had some idea of who I was, this made me feel less anxious about the whole affair.

As it turned out, she was most gracious, and when she came into the room she immediately asked me to sit and be comfortable. Then she asked me about Baba and His message. I replied, "It is better if I simply read it." And so I reached into my pocket and took out the two sheets I had written the previous night and read off all the points. Baba wanted her to confirm her willingness to have no one else stay at Guru Prasad while He was there. This was the gist of the message I had to deliver, and I was supposed to inform the Maharani about Baba's work, both in India and in the West.

When I was finished, Maharani Shantadevi expressed her willingness to happily comply with every condition Baba had made concerning His staying at Guru Prasad for the summer months. She was more than grateful that Baba was staying there. Then she called for a glass of sherbet [a drink of lime, sugar, and water] for me and our interview was over.

Leaving the palace, I walked down the steep slope of the hill on which it was situated and made my way down to the road by the sea. I sat down on a parapet nearby and silently gave thanks to Baba that my ordeal was over. I sat there for a few minutes, savoring my relief that this task had been accomplished by His grace, and with pleasing results.

I was then free to return to Baba, which I did as soon as possible. I reached Guru Prasad that evening, after Baba had retired, and I told Eruch what had happened. The next morning, even as Baba was coming through the door into the mandali's room, He was gesturing to me, "Well, what news? What happened?"

“Wait a minute, Baba,” Eruch counseled, as he led Baba to His chair, offering Him a glass of water and getting Him comfortably settled. At that point, as if He had completely forgotten all about me, Baba immersed Himself in His usual morning routine of inquiring after the mandali, attending to the mail, and so on. Only after all this was done, did Baba turn to me and again ask, “What news?”

I told Baba that I had seen the Maharani and she had willingly agreed to all of Baba’s conditions. “Did you convey to her all that I asked you to?” Baba asked.

“Yes, Baba,” I replied. “I told her everything.”

But Baba shook His head. “No, you did not tell her all that I had asked you to.”

“I did,” I insisted, but again Baba shook His head and repeated that I had not told the Maharani everything as He had wished.

“But Baba,” I exclaimed, “I wrote it all down. You can hear for yourself,” and I took out the two pages of notes that I had read out to the Maharani. Baba gestured that He had no interest in my two pages of notes and that I should put them back in my pocket. “You did not tell her everything as I wanted,” He gestured.

And then it suddenly dawned on me that in my excitement at having completed a task that, given my nature, had been unusually daunting, I was now taking credit for having accomplished some great feat. Actually, I had done nothing but simply be the messenger, and a not very efficient one at that. I realized that I was emphasizing the “I” in my declaration that “I told her everything.” Really it was Baba who did the work and merely let me play a role in it. As soon as this thought struck me, Baba stopped insisting that I hadn’t told the Maharani everything that I should have.

I have learned over the years with Baba that any time He gives one an order, no matter how “impossible” it may seem, He has already done the work. One merely has to play one’s part to carry it out. What a unique way of helping us to learn our relationship with the Master.

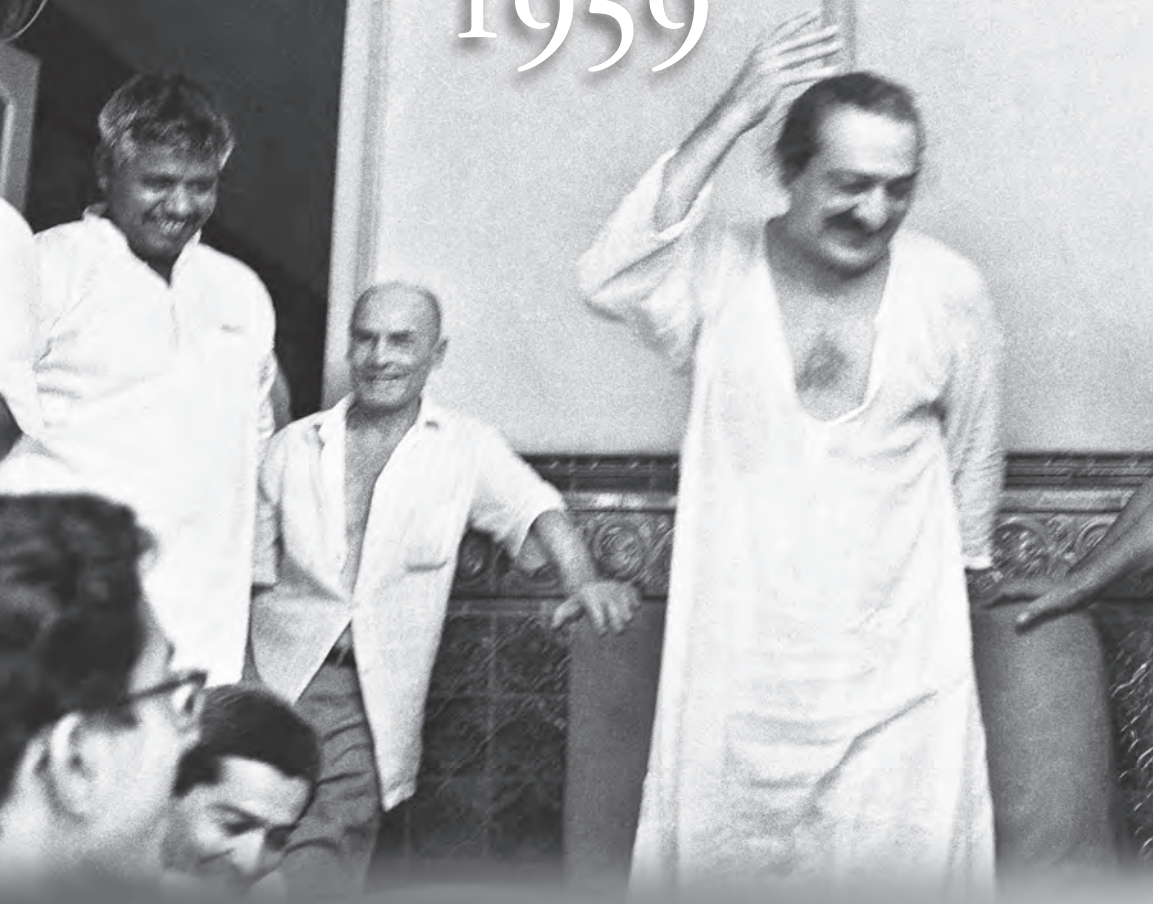
It was also during this time, or possibly during His two-week visit earlier that year, that Baba continued the process He had begun of helping me learn to write for Him. In retrospect, I can see that this began with Baba occasionally having me translate a message He had given into Marathi. The previous year, in 1957, He had me work in English on “Baba’s Warning.” This time, Baba asked me whether I had seen the list of questions from Ivy Duce

Ivy Duce was the head of Sufism Reoriented and had been involved with the publishing of *God Speaks*. I said, “No, Baba.” Baba sent for her letter and had me read it. I didn’t know why then, but now I think Baba may have been watering the seed He had planted of my participation in writing projects for Him. (The answers to Ivy’s questions were later printed as *Beams from Meher Baba On the Spiritual Panorama*.)

At the time, I simply accepted Baba’s question as an expression of intimacy. Like the time, years earlier, when after being with Baba in Madras, He asked, “Did you know I went to Surat?” Before I could respond, Baba looked chagrined and gestured, “I should have informed you.” I can’t explain how deeply I felt His intimacy with me—as if Baba truly wanted me to be present with Him as much as possible.

In such small ways, Baba made me feel there was a place for me in His heart.

1959



*I*n her Family Letter of 11th January 1959, Mani wrote:

We're once again at Guruprasad, the place often graced with the Beloved's presence, and once again offered with love by the Rani for His stay in Poona. It seems odd that we should feel so at home in this palatial house with its spacious rooms, high ceilings in white and gold, its marble statues and fountain—but perhaps that is because of the singularly light and bright

Baba watching a game of checkers at Guruprasad with Pukar, Francis, and Jal (seated in cap); person with glasses lower left unknown

(MANI CONTINUES)

atmosphere of this house where we continue to live our simple ashram life with astonishing ease. Once again there was *kavvali* [more often this word is spelled *qawwali*] singing and arti in the big drawing room where a restricted number of Baba lovers gathered at the feet of their Master. Very many more who were not allowed to seek His darshan till after 15th January, will be able to do so on the 17th—the day fixed by Baba to give His Poona lovers the longed-for opportunity of seeing Him before our leaving for Pimpalgaon on the 19th.

Soon our one month in Poona, for the intended change and rest after His long Seclusion, will be over. Though undoubtedly there was the “change,” there has been little evidence of the “rest” darling Baba talked of having, with some matter or another constantly cropping up and needing His attention and guidance. As He said the other day, with a tired sigh but not quite without a twinkle in His eye, “The poor Avatar can never have a holiday.”²

The same day Mani wrote her letter, a Christian man came to see Baba. He wanted to have a vision of Jesus and to be able to follow His life of service and love. Baba responded by giving a small discourse on “Your Real Want”:

Were you to really have that belief in him, would there be any need for you to worry about how you should carry out the teachings of Christ? Search your heart for the answer.

You long for a vision of Christ. It would no doubt help you to some extent to lead a life of love and service, but would it be enough by itself to help you attain the perfect life you yearn

for? You are imperfect. You want to be perfect so as to lead a perfect life. But all aspirants would want what you want. And who would not want a vision of Christ? Only you do not know that within yourself you already have what you want. Then why is it that you do not get what you want? If you look deep within yourself with complete honesty, you will find that you do not really want what you think and say you want.

You own so many things, and you feel you want to get rid of them and be free. If you really want to get rid of them, you can do so in an instant, for who binds you? It is your own self not really wanting to do so! If you want to be free, free you are; but you do not really want to be free, and therefore you continue to feel yourself bound. You want to lead a perfect life of love and service. When you really have that want, you will not need to worry how to lead the life—you will live it.

Jesus wanted all his followers to want what they really ought to have wanted from the innermost core of their hearts, but none, including the twelve apostles, could really want the real want. It is very difficult, so very difficult, but not impossible. Very rarely, one among a million can establish the real want. Only a man of God (*Mard-e-Khuda*) can dare want what one ought to want. What you must long for is the real want, and this real want alone must be your perennial want. Once this is established, a time comes when you are freed even from this singular want and attain the Freedom that is not bound by any form of freedom.

On January 17, Baba gave a fairly long darshan program, from eight in the morning until noon. It was during this program that an event occurred that Eruch would relate fairly often. A woman came who had been sightseeing in India and Baba asked her what she liked best. After a pause she said, "The Himalayas."

Baba agreed that the Himalayas were special but told her that when she came to that place where she saw Him as He really was, then all other sights in the world would be utterly without charm. And that place was within her own heart.

As Eruch would relate it, Baba then added that once she saw that sight, she wouldn't have to hesitate at all if someone asked her what was the best sight she had ever seen.

Later that day, when a man said he wanted to follow Baba, Baba gave another small discourse that I jotted down as best I could. Baba asked the man if he knew what following Him meant. And He then went on to explain that to follow Him was to leave everything. And to leave all meant leaving even your own self. But, Baba warned him:

It also means you have to follow Me and not run ahead of Me. This is so very simple, yet so very difficult.

If you walk ahead of Me, taking your will as supreme, you then become the obstruction in My way to lead you. Again, you do not know the ditches, and the pitfalls on the Way, so I have to keep a constant watch on you to save you, or else you will fall. What this amounts to is that instead of you following Me, I have to follow you.

I am not limited by form. I am within everyone and within you as the Real Guide. Following Me does not mean that you

have to leave everything and stay near Me. It does not mean you are to leave your worldly duties and responsibilities and become a burden to Me. It does not mean you are to use Me, to dump your worries on Me, or that you expect Me to fulfill your wants. It means that you must be completely resigned to my Will, and abide in a spirit of total surrender.

To follow Me is to obey Me, to do as I want. When My Will becomes your Way, you are then truly following Me. Then you are saved; then you are safe. I know the Way and its labyrinths, for I am the Way. I am God.



As it turned out, Baba did not leave on the 19th of January, but ended up visiting the Yeravda Reformatory School, at the request of B.S. Khare. Most of the boys there had committed thefts and were now learning trades so as to be able to support themselves honestly in the future.

Baba said that no flowers or garlands should be offered to Him and that He would let all there see Him for a few minutes and then He would leave.

But once He was there, Baba gave a brief message. Putting Himself on an equal level with the boys, Baba confessed that: "When I was a boy, I used to rob things and eatables from their safekeeping at home, and was full of boyish mischief. But when I grew up, I robbed God outright and became One with Him. You boys can now rob Me of My Love through your love and I bless you all for it."

B.S. Khare translated this into Marathi to the four hundred boys sitting there and Baba then caressed each and every boy, blessing them with His love.

Even though the women mandali seemed to like Guru Prasad, and even though Baba had received assurances from the Maharani that He would not be disturbed again during His stays there, He sent a message to Eruch's family at Bindra House that He wanted to return to Poona that summer but did not want to stay at Guru Prasad and wanted Meherwan to look for some other accommodation. Meherwan describes what happened next:

We found a sprawling bungalow with beautiful grounds, very similar to Guru Prasad, and only a block or two away, which had just been purchased by a businessman named Borade. He was renovating the place and wanted to eventually open it up as a hotel. Later it did become a hotel called Mobo's Hotel.

We approached Borade and asked him if we could rent the bungalow for a few months. While negotiating the cost, this fellow asked for a very high price and would not budge on it. I suppose he had to make back a lot of money from all the work he had put into the property. We informed Baba, and He said to pay only a certain amount, which was lower than Borade's asking price. We went back to Borade and said that this was all we could offer him. We tried to convince him that it would be of great benefit, far beyond the money, for him to rent the property to us. Alas, he refused, and Baba told us to get Guru Prasad again. That is how the Maharani's luck held out through all those years.



In March of that year, Baba made His last visit to Bombay, stopping at Guru Prasad on the way.

As Mani writes in the Family Letters:

On the morning of 7th March we waved a fond au revoir to Meherazad.... In Poona we stopped at Guruprasad for lunch (brought over by Eruch's adoring family)—but before taking any food or rest, Baba went with the mandali [the men] to the house of Gadekar, a very dear Baba lover who was seriously ill, and embraced him.³

Gadekar was one of the stalwarts of the Poona group. Baba once had the mandali hail him as the “crown jewel” of His followers. His father, a cobbler in Ahmednagar, had met Baba in the 1920s and fallen in love with Him. He made Baba a pair of sandals which He wore almost constantly in the early years and which are now in the museum at Meherabad.

Baba saw to it that Gadekar received a good education and paid for him to do his higher studies in England. He achieved a fairly high position in the government's department of education and Baba seemed to enjoy his company (and teasing him) tremendously. Although he had a high government rank, he remained completely unaffected and totally devoted to Baba in an enthusiastic yet innocent and guileless way. A few days after arriving in Bombay, Baba received news that Gadekar had died. Mani reported, “Baba told us only He knew how fortunate Gadekar was, who also with his last breath had called out Baba's Name and had come to Him forever.”



Gadekar

On March 15th, they returned from Bombay to Poona. At first, Baba was available for darshan during the days and would also make house visits to His lovers who lived in Poona. Mani writes:

Again Guruprasad has been rejuvenated with the life giving waters of Beloved's presence which the fortunate ones came to drink of at this given opportunity for the East. Our Poona stay began with the same daily rush of darshan seekers—including not only the Baba lovers and the many “new” ones of Poona, but groups of up to 70 from different parts of India and often from distances of 3 to 4 days' journey by train. The Calcutta party was headed by a High Court judge and his family who had not met Baba before and who are forming a Baba-Centre there. Their parting message said, “though we are going away from Poona, we are leaving the best part of ourselves at your feet.”... Sundays are more of a Sahavas, gathered around Beloved listening to the haunting rendering by His devoted young bhajan group—Baba looking as the Sun in His pink coat, with no trace of the tiredness that we know He must feel after the unbroken program of the morning which stretches sometimes into the afternoons as well....⁴

Perhaps one of the first visitors who came to see Baba that summer was Parichehr Saadi. I say “perhaps” because she wasn't sure whether it was in 1959 or 1960 that she made her first visit. She grew up in Karachi and her family knew about Baba and liked Him but did not consider Him to be God. The sentiment in the Zoroastrian community was one of respect and concern. “Poor Merog, wandering about,” people would say.



Parichehr

Parichehr grew up wondering why Baba wasn't listening to people and going to gurus instead of the Zoroastrian fire temple. "I was sort of feeling sorry for Him. While I was still young, I asked Minoo Kharas about Baba. I said I wanted to read Baba's books, but it took him ten years to give me one."

At that point, most of the community had turned against Baba for declaring Himself to be the same as Zoroaster. They didn't like Minoo, who was the leader of the Baba group, and as Parichehr became drawn to Baba and went to see Him at Meherabad, they started to hassle her as well:

They used to tell my mother, "Why are you sending your daughter to see Meher Baba; they will take money from her." But, what money did I have? My mother said, "No, that's not true. She wants to go. She loves Him. Let her go." And so that was that.

So I wrote to Baba and said, "I'm wanting to come to Guru Prasad." He was giving darshan and He said to come. So I went with a Parsi lady friend who worked with me; she was also a Baba lover. We went on the slow train in the night from Bombay so that we reached Poona in the morning. It was so tiring, sitting the whole night and not being able to sleep. Finally, we reached Poona at 7:30 in the morning. We went to the ladies' waiting room where we washed, changed, ate something, and then reached Guru Prasad at 10:30. Baba had said my darshan would start at 10:30.

When we arrived Eruch was at the gate and said, "Parichehr, where have you been? Baba made me wait here since seven in the morning and you're coming now?" I replied, "But Baba said

(PARICHEHR SAADI CONTINUES)

to come at 10:30. All the darshaners were to come at 10:30, so I also came now." Eruch said, "Come on, come on." He took my suitcase and we went running. He said that Baba had said, "Make her sit in front of Me." So I was made to sit in front of Baba's chair and as soon as I sat down, Baba came in. Eruch said, "Baba, she is Parichehr."

Baba said, "How was your journey?"

I said "Fine, Baba." So, I was sitting there, and every time He would look at me, Baba would gesture, asking if I was fine and I would say, "I am fine."

Then the program began. It was the very first darshan Baba gave at Guru Prasad, if I am not mistaken. After everybody had taken Baba's darshan, He said for me to wait. I said, "Okay, Baba," and I waited.

Baba called me inside, somewhere in another room, and He said, "Come tomorrow, and we'll talk alone, not with everybody here. You come alone and Eruch will be here, and we will talk."

"Okay, Baba."

"Where are you staying?"

"At the Parsi dharamshala [guest house for pilgrims]."

"Go straight there."

"Okay."

I went back to Guru Prasad in the morning at the appointed time. I told Baba that I had taken one month leave so that I could be with Him. He said, "You be here for one week and then go back home. Stay in Bombay for two to three days."

So I said, “Baba, I’ll change the flight.”

Baba also said, “At home only stay for three days, not more.” I was working in an office in Karachi, which meant He wanted me to return there.

“Baba, I have taken one month leave; what will people say?”

“No, you go back.”

I agreed. I continued to talk with Baba. He said, “Stay alone. Leave your parents’ house.”

“Baba, I am in a Parsi community, you know how they will talk about me, that I have loose morals.”

Eruch said, “Baba, she’s right. Better that she marry.”

Baba said, “I will see to it that you are not hassled. I will see what I can do. Now go straight back and come every day and see Me. And then you must go home.”

During my week’s stay, once when I went to Guru Prasad, Baba was in a meeting. As I came up someone said, “Go inside.” I did. But then there was a clap from Baba for me to go out. So, I immediately went out. Baba gestured for me to wait outside and that He would come and see me. He told me to sit in the garden, far away so I could not listen in. So I went and sat on one of the many benches in front of Guru Prasad. I was busy reading a book about Baba’s darshan when He came out toward me. I got up and Baba sat down saying, “Bow down.” So I bowed; then He said, “Come and sit.” Baba asked me several personal questions. I told Him everything, to which He replied, “I know, I know. Your mother said this, and that.”

(PARICHEHR SAADI CONTINUES)

I said, "Baba, people say a lot of negative things about You."

I was crying and Baba gave me a handkerchief and said, "I want you to love Me alone. I don't want you to love anybody else. You are not to go to this or that place of worship." Because I used to go to churches and mosques, searching for God. But I was never satisfied, until I found Baba.

Then Baba said, "For you there is only Me. Now, you must not go anywhere. Only Me. I am there for you."

"I won't go anywhere."

"Very good."

Then the time came for my return to Pakistan. I told people in the office that I didn't have any money and that's why I came back. I didn't tell them I had gone to Baba, because they were not Baba lovers and most of them would not have understood.

Minoo Kharas, the leader of the Baba group in Karachi, asked me, "What happened?" I explained and he said, "Oh, you lucky person. You obeyed Baba's order."

My mother asked, "What happened?" And I told her, "What to do? I had to listen to Baba's orders." She was not interested whether I believed in Baba or not, but she was happy that I did just as Baba ordered.

There had been an inquiry from Baba whether I had reached Karachi safely or not. So I wrote saying, "As per Your orders I was two days in Bombay."

His reply came saying, "I am very pleased that you obeyed My order. I love you. Baba sends His blessing to His Pari."

March 21st was Jamshed Navroz, the Persian New Year, and Baba would generally visit Bindra House on that day to celebrate. The year before, Mehera had written Bili Eaton about it and Baba's observance of it:

I think you would be interested to know about the Persian New Year feast which takes place on the 21st of March. It inaugurates spring. In olden days, the monarchs of Persia were crowned on this day; it also signifies prosperity. Neighbors visit neighbors to wish each other a happy and prosperous year. They sprinkle a little rosewater from a silver container on the person's hand whom they are greeting and offer them fruit and sweets, green leaves and flowers. A table is decorated for this occasion with flowers, fresh and dried fruits, a variety of sweet-meats. A small mirror is placed on the table and lighted by little oil lights at evening time. The custom is to hold up the mirror to the person who then smiles at her reflection; it signifies friendship and happiness.⁵

This year at Bindra House, Baba also invited the Kishinchand Gajwani family, Gadekar's family, and Beheram's (Baba's brother) family to come as well. On February 21st of that year, Roshan Kerawala had given birth to her first daughter, whom Baba had named "Mehera" and, as was the Parsi custom, she had stayed at home after the birth. Roshan was not particularly keen to follow this tradition, but Pappa Jessawala had insisted upon it. Now, although she couldn't go to Guru Prasad, Baba came to her, which made her very happy. As Manu says:

Baba would arrange for us to prepare ice cream and *falooda* [Irani drink traditionally made for New Year's] in a *bagula*, [large cooking vessel]. Baba would sit at the table stirring, saying, "Come

(MANU CONTINUES)

on, drink as much as you like.” He would serve us with a big mug out of the bagula, and it was our prasad [gift from the Master] for the New Year. How lucky we were!

But it was not just on New Year’s that Baba would visit. He would come often, sometimes with just a few of the mandali and sometimes with four cars full of people. Because it was summertime, cold treats were always welcome.

We had to supply plain cold *thak* [a buttermilk mixture] to put on rice, and sherbet for dessert. It was a special treat when Baba would serve everybody Himself.

We had two big ice cream molds in which we made ice cream by hand. Baba would sometimes make it as well. So in the summer, when Baba was staying at Guru Prasad, we kept ice cream ready for Him. He loved mango ice cream. There are even films of Baba eating ice cream.

As always, with Baba, one had to be prepared for the unexpected. On one visit to Bindra House, Baba brought so many people with him that Manu and the others became fearful there would not be enough to eat. Baba told them that they didn’t have to make anything more, but Manu quickly put on a big pot of dal because she knew that the quantity they had prepared wouldn’t be sufficient. As she says:

While I was cooking, Baba called me to sit near Him. Then I started to smell something burning. Baba also smelled it and said, “You put something on the stove?” We all looked down with guilt. Then one of us admitted that we thought we wouldn’t have enough, so we had put on more. “With whose

permission did you make more dal?" Baba asked. "Didn't I tell you not to make anything more, that there would be enough?"

"Yes, Baba," we answered.

"Nothing more, means nothing more." And it was so, that after serving almost sixty people, the food didn't come to an end. That is how it is when God serves. But that dal burnt so badly that even the goats didn't eat it. And we idiots, not having faith in Baba, had put it on to cook.



Starting in 1959, I was permitted to stay with Baba under the same roof throughout my summer vacation of six weeks. For some reason I was able to be in Poona on March 25th that year (my summer holidays usually started later), which also happened to be Holi, a religious festival in India associated with Krishna. Mostly, Holi is an occasion for great merriment and is marked by people throwing colored powders on each other. There was a darshan program, and I wrote and recited the following poem to Baba at Guru Prasad:

The Impossible Made Possible

Man celebrates Holi festival year after year
 Men and women, young and old, boys and girls—
 All are colored with mirth and merriment.
 But this year's Holi at Guru Prasad Bungalow at Poona is
 UNIQUE.
 Men and women have not as usual embraced men and
 women;

They have physically embraced GOD.
 Something which happened 5,000 years ago during Lord
 Krishna's time.
 Today, we little lovers of Baba,
 Have the fortune to sit at HIS FEET—
 A sight for gods to be jealous of and say,
 "Oh! The impossible has been made possible."

I still wonder at how I managed to be in Poona on that day and have the fortune to recite my novice poems—the Hindi version was also recited. Baba was gracious to listen and showed with His gestures that it was a good composition both in English and Hindi. As it so happened, this was my last Holi with Baba because I could never be in His presence on any Holi Day thereafter.

During those two weeks in March, like the previous year, there was a constant stream of people flocking to Guru Prasad to see Baba. One new visitor was Francis Brabazon, who had come from Australia to stay as one of the men mandali earlier in the year. Initially, Francis was not housed at Guru Prasad but was told to stay with Ramakrishnan, one of the main Poona Centre workers, in his house in Kirkee, a suburb about three miles from Guru Prasad.

Francis would cycle to Guru Prasad each morning to join Baba, and even though he would get there before the time Baba had told him to arrive, Baba would accuse him of being late. So the next day Francis would arrive even earlier, but again Baba would be waiting for him and would tell him he



was late. This went on for some days until Francis left Kirkee and moved into Guru Prasad. But because Francis's main work was to write for Baba, he needed quiet so he could concentrate. This is why he had been told to stay in Kirkee to begin with. Now that he was moving to Guru Prasad, he was put up in a small room underneath the water tank that was on the property, not all that far from the main bungalow. This then became Francis's room for the rest of his time at Guru Prasad.

Depending on the size of the crowd, Baba would either see them in the mandali's room or in the main hall itself. Baba's brothers and nephews could come anytime and were often regular members of the card games that were routinely held in the afternoons. Baba's close ones from Poona were also frequent visitors, and quite a large contingent from Bombay would come every weekend as well.

Baba met
with large
and small
groups
often



Every moment spent in Baba's company was precious and filled with spiritual significance even if, outwardly, we were only playing cards or cracking jokes. Yet so delightful was Baba in those light hearted moments, so intimate and casual with us all, that at times He would feel the need to remind those around Him that even though it appeared He was relaxing and having fun, nonetheless, He was continuously engaged in His inner work.

The general routine while I was there was as follows: Each morning, Baba would walk down the spacious hall to the men mandali's room. There He would sit in His armchair and attend to the day's mail. First, Eruch read out the correspondence in English, and my job was to read to myself that which was written in Marathi or Hindi (if Bhau wasn't free to do this) and convey the gist of each letter to Beloved Baba. Once the correspondence was finished, Baba usually would gesture with a twinkle in His eye, "Now, let's 'work'!" meaning, "Let's play cards." If it was not a darshan day, we would generally play a game called La Risque for about half an hour in the mandali's room. Later on, Baba tended to play in the afternoons, mostly with His family and close ones from Poona.

The card playing was something I enjoyed, but it had taken me a little while to get used to it. Before Meher Baba drew me to Him, I had been greatly influenced by the lives of Maharashtrian Hindu Masters. When I started coming into contact with Baba, I carefully observed both how He dealt with people as well as the personal habits of those He kept near Him. Having come from an orthodox Hindu family, I was baffled and a little put off by the mixture of customs around Baba. Inwardly, I was holding onto my Brahmin traditions. But Baba, through His inimitably graceful ways, changed my inner outlook and helped me to focus only on my personal relationship with Him, rather than what was



Jal and Kumar playing checkers

happening around Him. For instance, I never dreamt that a Master would ever be interested in newspapers, movies, sports, or games. So when I first saw Baba playing cards, it was a mild, sweet shock for me.

As an aside I should mention that after coming to Baba, one need not change one's personality traits, but one should act naturally. It is not what we do, but the motivation behind it that Baba cares about. He likes all action to blossom from our real natures. For Baba it is only the love in the heart that counts, not the outer characteristics of one's personality. Although Meher Baba is the Highest of the High, I like to call Him the Most Intimate One and also the Most Natural One.

Because Baba was so natural, it was easy for others to have trouble understanding His simultaneous Divinity. It is against the traditional Indian concept of God to think of Him playing cards or going to movies. Having been raised in a rather traditional manner, I confess that I had a bit of a prejudice against such entertainment. I thought that movies were too worldly, and some small part of my mind took pride in the fact that I didn't indulge in such things. Baba, the All-Knowing One, usually doesn't openly say anything when one comes to Him with such pride and pre-conceptions. But He breaks one's conditioning by simply arranging events so that in a very natural way one is forced to reconsider one's position.

In my case, it happened in this way. During one of my stays at Guru Prasad, Baba told me that He had asked Arnavaz to buy two tickets to a movie and He wanted Pendu and me to go. The movie we were sent to was *Chitralekha*, about a famous leader of a dancing group who entertains a king living in great opulence. Some scenes consisted almost entirely of half-dressed dancing girls cavorting on the tops of gigantic drums, which I didn't like.

After leaving the movie, I realized that the significance of my watching it was to teach me that I should be aloof from my judgments about the people watching such movies. I didn't have to enjoy this entertainment, but because Baba had sent me to this movie, I thought it had a special purpose. And indeed my strong criticism against movie-goers gradually changed. Preferences differ and depend upon people's impressions.

Even now I have no interest in going to movies. But, thanks to Baba's compassion, I no longer try to separate myself as someone superior by judging those who do. In such ways, Baba helped me slowly to become a little more natural in His love.



Baba was not attached to the world, but He was able to take great enjoyment from it, as Mani noted in her Family Letter of that summer, writing about Guru Prasad's caretaker's animals:

Sometimes we have seen the dog and one of the goats playing together in the most unique manner, each respecting the method and rules of the other animal and each determined to outwit the other. After breakfast one morning, Beloved watched this four-legged sport with huge delight—and perhaps the fair contestants sensed who their Audience was, for they put up an unusually lively show....⁶

Just as I had summer holidays and was able to come, Dr. Deshmukh also used to come and stay in a hotel in Poona and then visit Guru Prasad every chance he could. Deshmukh, who is perhaps best known for his work in editing Baba's original set of *Discourses*, was a brilliant philosopher, but also very childlike and innocent in many ways. On April 1st, Baba decided to play a joke on him. The way Eruch would tell the story, someone had given Baba a present in a fancy basket. Baba had the basket brought to Him and then took a stone and wrapped it in seven layers of different colored paper, put it into the basket, and presented it to Deshmukh when he came into the hall.

Deshmukh thanked Baba and put down the basket to give his attention to Baba. Knowing what Baba wanted, Eruch turned to Deshmukh and asked in surprise, "Doctor, aren't you going to open the present?" "There will be plenty of time for that once Baba leaves for lunch," Deshmukh replied. "Why worry about a present when Baba is here before me?"

Although the men mandali were touched by the love evident in Deshmukh's answer, Baba kept secretly gesturing to them to get him

to open the present. So Eruch persisted in nagging Deshmukh and pointing out that it was rude of him to ignore a present that Baba, Himself, had given him. Finally, Deshmukh relented and opened up the wrapping paper to reveal a rather ordinary stone.

The mandali expected to have a good laugh at Deshmukh's disappointment. Instead, Deshmukh seemed delighted, even overjoyed at the present, holding it up in wonder and appreciation. "This is the greatest gift Baba could have given," he exclaimed. "But Doctor," Eruch pointed out, still trying to salvage something of the joke, "it looks like an ordinary rock." "Yes," Deshmukh agreed. "But if Baba had given me prasad, I would eat it and then it would be gone. An ordinary gift too would not last. But this stone will last forever so that I will always have it and thus it is the perfect gift."

As Eruch would relate, the joke turned out to be on them.

I admired Deshmukh's love for Baba and his conviction in Baba's divinity. At some point, I mentioned this to him. Some time later, we happened to be traveling together. While on the train, Deshmukh would periodically ask me to do something for him—to fetch him a glass, to give him some water, or some such thing. These requests, however, tended to be given more as orders than as polite entreaties. I complied at first but, at some point, it seemed to me that Deshmukh had gone too far and so I simply said, "Doctor, you can do that yourself."

Deshmukh was taken aback. "What, you won't do this for me? But I thought you said you admired my conviction in Baba?"

"I do," I replied, "but that has nothing to do with me doing whatever you want. I have the greatest respect for your love for Baba, but I am not your servant."

I think this attitude surprised Deshmukh who, for all his brilliance, didn't seem to see as clearly as I did that one's recognition of another's love for Baba does not automatically mean accepting that other's authority in matters not pertaining to love.

In April, Baba started giving darshan only on the weekends, although He made an exception for the Indian cricket team. Several members of the team were Baba lovers and Baba, Himself, loved the game of cricket. In a letter, Mehera wrote:

The Beloved was very happy the day the cricketeers came. He told them of His love for this game and that He was particularly very good behind the wickets.... Baba said He loves children. When He meets children, He becomes like a child. He loves to play marbles with them, fly kites, and play cricket. Often when He is driving in a car and if time permits, and He finds small children playing cricket with a plank as a bat and a rubber ball, Baba would ask the car to be stopped and watch the game with interest.⁷

Baba embraced all the players and gave out a "message" for the occasion:

In going to England to represent India in the field of sport, you have also the unique opportunity of yourselves practicing, and of conveying to the people there, the great spiritual lessons of concentration and love. When you take the field, if you play as eleven men with one heart, each enjoying excellence of performance in another player as he would in himself, whether that player is on your side, or on the side of the opposing team, and so eliminating feelings of jealousy, anger and pride which so often

(BABA CONTINUES)

mar sport—you will not only be entertaining the spectators, but demonstrating the real spirit of sportsmanship. True sportsmanship is concentrated ability, enlivened with appreciation of the performance of others. And when this is manifested, everyone, both players and spectators, receives spiritual upliftment as well as good entertainment.

Some of you are “all-rounders.” I am the greatest spiritual “all-rounder” of all times, because I feel equally at home with saints, yogis, philosophers and cricketers, as well as with so-called sinners and scoundrels. I give you my blessing that in all your actions you show forth the spirit of love.

People from Bombay would come to Poona every weekend to take advantage of this darshan opportunity. One of them was Jimmy Mistry, a Bombay printer and Nariman’s brother-in-law (he married Roda Dadachanji, Arnavaz’s sister, in 1948). Although he had been born into an orthodox Zoroastrian family, he didn’t have much use for religion or its rituals.

To please his family he wore the *sadra-kusti* [sacred shirt, some times spelled *sudreh*, and thread] but rather than go through the elaborate ritual of saying the prayers and tying the knots in the prescribed manner, at bath time he would slide down his properly tied, but loosened, kusti to the floor. He would then have his bath and then pull up the kusti around his waist without having to redo the knots or say any of the prayers.

As a young man he was handsome and athletic, winning many tournament championships in badminton and table tennis. He owned an American-made motorcycle, ironically called an Indian, and had many girlfriends. He had no interest in getting married, until he met Roda in early 1948.

Jimmy knew, as did all the residents of the Dadar Parsi colony, that the Dadachanji family were followers of Meher Baba, but he didn't care; he had no interest in religion or spirituality. But when he asked Roda to marry him, she said she loved him, but would first have to ask Meher Baba's permission. This took Jimmy by surprise. Asking for the consent of one's parents he could understand, but needing the consent of someone Jimmy thought of as a family guru was something he did not expect.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "If Baba says 'no' does that mean that you will not marry me?" Without the slightest hesitation, Roda responded, "Yes, then of course, I will not marry you!" From that moment, it dawned upon Jimmy where exactly he would stand in his relationship with Roda and Meher Baba. But he very graciously accepted it without any reservation.

Earlier, when Baba had been told about Roda dating Jimmy, He had declared, "He's a very good boy." And when Baba's permission was sought for the marriage, Baba approved and asked, "When are they planning to get married?" Baba was informed that the couple had only met a few months previously and it would be some time before the marriage could take place. Baba brushed this aside and said, "They should get married in August. They may select any day of their choice but they must get married in August." Then he added this warning, "If they do not get married in August then, I don't know, it may not work out."



Jimmy Mistry
with Padri
and the men
mandali
playing games
with Baba

Hearing this, Roda was now in a hurry to get married and explained to Jimmy why, and he accepted this too. His family didn't understand the rush (and Jimmy didn't tell them the real reason for it as they were devout Zoroastrians and were not interested in this Irani guru, Meher Baba). Nor did August seem like a good idea to them as it was in the middle of the monsoon season. Since weddings were usually outdoor affairs, no one got married in August. On the other hand, they were very much relieved and happy that Jimmy, now 34, was finally planning to get married and settle down in life, so they gave in to his demands. An indoor function at the Greens Hotel in Bombay was held on August 6, 1948.

For their honeymoon they went to Mahabaleshwar, but it was the monsoon season and it poured every day; soon they decided to go to Poona. There they received an invitation to attend the Meherazad house-warming ceremony on August 27, 1948.

Jimmy met Baba in Meherazad. The very first thing Baba asked him was, "Do you love me?" Jimmy was taken aback, wondering why a stranger he was meeting for the first time would ask him such an intimate question. Although it was his nature to say exactly what he honestly felt without mincing words or being pleasantly evasive, there was something about Baba that made him say very respectfully, "Baba, this is the very first time that I am meeting You, so I honestly cannot say that I love You. But with time as I get to know You better then I may be able to love You." Baba was pleased and happy with his reply and gave him an approving smile.

During the following years, Jimmy started to get more and more attracted and drawn to Baba; he started following His instructions and orders, and he also began to love Him.

Returning now to April 1959: Baba enjoyed Jimmy's humor and quick wit and he was a frequent visitor. After two weeks, Baba rescinded His order that He would only give darshan on weekends and started giving darshan daily once more. Lovers started swarming to Poona to take advantage of this. Minoo Kharas and the Dubash family (Rhoda, Adi, and their son, Merwan) from Karachi came and stayed in a hotel in Poona so they could be near Baba and visit whenever the opportunity arose.

Most of the time was spent in "small talk." Baba would ask people how they were, how their family members were, how they had eaten or slept. Because these were smaller group settings, there was also plenty of opportunity for individuals to talk to Baba, to ask questions, to sing songs, to joke with Baba, or to resolve conflicts that had arisen in their groups.

Many have remarked on how they would be fascinated just staring at Baba's face. Not only because each expression on it was captivating, but also because the expressions changed with incredible rapidity. Baba's moods were almost as protean. Baba would touch someone's heart one moment, and in the next instant, He would have everyone in the hall laughing uproariously at some good-natured joke. And then, even before the laughter had died down, Baba might launch into a mini-discourse. Although these little explanations or comments were profound, they also seemed very natural and not at all solemn. For example, Baba might tease someone who seemed on the verge of falling asleep and then turn this into an illustration of the difference between being awake and the Real Awake state.

And if the atmosphere did get heavy, possibly due to some discussion of a serious family problem someone was having, or because someone hadn't obeyed Baba properly, He might suddenly ask someone to do something that was hard for them, like asking a tone-deaf person to sing a song, or a shy person to give a speech. Invariably

this caused much merriment in the group and sometimes Baba would then bring home to everyone there the meaning and significance of obedience from a spiritual perspective.

As I have written, the first order of business most days was the reading out of the mail. Often, even when circulars had been issued that no one was to correspond with Baba, His lovers, when they were facing difficulties, would still send telegrams to Him. So you can imagine how much correspondence there was when Baba allowed it. When Baba was at Meherazad, sometimes a boy would be sent on a cycle from Adi's office two or three times a day to bring telegrams, aerograms, and what not.

Sometimes, if the letters were more or less routine, Baba would have us write an answer, which we would read out to Him. Other times, He would gesture to us what our replies should say. Many replies were sent by telegram. Just a short telegram from Baba conveying His love and blessings often worked wonders with many people.

I remember several amusing incidents came about because of letters written to Baba. One day someone had sent a poem or song to Baba. In the letter he said that he would like it if someone could dance before Baba while it was being read out. As it so happened, Pukar was the reader.

For whatever reason (perhaps the letter had come from someone from Hamirpur) Pukar was reading it out. So Baba said, "Well, this is the wish of My lover, so while you read the letter you will have to dance before Me."

Pukar was not at all the sort one would think of as a dancer but, at Baba's request, he did his best to dance as he read. Poor Pukar. But it turned out to be his good fortune because Baba was greatly amused at this sight, and we all enjoyed the fun as well.

Pukar's full name was Parmeshwari Dayal Nigam; he was from the Hamirpur area. A revolutionary, he had been working to free India and was against all "holy" people who distracted Indians from their duty to fight the British. Hearing of Baba, he wanted to denounce Him and openly expressed his views against His divinity. But several of his close friends and relatives had begun to worship Baba as God in human form and loved Him deeply. He wrote letters to Baba challenging His authority and criticizing His ways, but never received any reply. This made Pukar denounce Him all the more; yet his own relatives continued to love Baba and he became more and more perplexed.

After years of this, and failed attempts to meet Baba, he heard that He was going to step out of the New Life and hold a meeting in Mahabaleshwar on October 16, 1950. He decided to go.

Pukar watched Baba lovingly embrace each of the visitors. He was greatly moved. As he approached Baba he broke down, and the tears that flowed from his eyes washed away the doubts he had harbored about Baba's divinity.

The meeting was then shifted to a large enclosure. After all were inside, Baba asked Vishnu to close the gate. Vishnu went to do so but noticed that Gustadji, one of the close companions, was just approaching and so he waited for him before closing the gate. But this delay allowed a few people who had not been invited to enter. They bowed down to Baba, which was counter to His injunction that none should do that. This displeased Baba and they were asked to leave. Then Baba asked Vishnu why he hadn't obeyed promptly. Vishnu explained but Baba severely admonished him. "Even if you had seen 'God' approaching the gate, you were not supposed to wait for Him to enter!"

Vishnu, as was his way, stood there quietly, in total surrender to Baba's rebuke. Then, declaring that He should not have lost His temper, Baba

asked someone there to slap Him. That person was so taken aback that he barely hit Baba's cheek. Baba was not pleased with this tender touch. "Is that the way you slap when you punish someone?" He then asked Minoo Kharas, who had been a policeman, to slap Him. He at once stood and gave a harsh sounding slap to Baba that left a red mark on His cheek.

Pukar, who was used to ordering people about as a revolutionary leader, was astonished at this. He had taken others to task when they disobeyed, but he had never before seen a leader order others to punish him. This was a different sort of leadership and authority than any he had ever known.

Later, Baba gave those present an opportunity to make donations for His work with the poor and the *masts*. Pukar, overpowered by the love he now felt for Baba, hurriedly scribbled a note that he placed in the pocket of his shirt, along with whatever money he had. He then took off all of his clothes, except for his underpants, made a pile of them, and stood on top of it. His note read that he wished to surrender his money, body, and mind at the feet of Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, all in the service of the poor. Then, sobbing uncontrollably, he prostrated himself before Baba.

Baba called Pukar forward. He looked intently at the bundle of clothes, kissed it, and then returned it to Pukar: "Put your clothes back on. When this meeting is over, go back to Hamirpur. Continue the work that you have been doing. But remember one thing, that formerly you were doing it for yourself, now think that you will be doing it for Baba."

At that time, there was a Hindi weekly called *Pukar*, which means *The Call*, that dealt mostly with political and social issues of the time. This later became a monthly called *Meher Pukar*, which was totally devoted to Avatar Meher Baba and His message of Love and Truth. This became Baba's nickname for Pukar.

Around Baba, Pukar was a lion who had been turned into a lamb. He was a big man; not just full height, but very broad and stout like a wrestler. In one of the films taken of Baba at Guru Prasad, you can see Baba have Pukar get down on his hands and knees to make a “chair” of himself, letting Baba sit on his back.

Many of Baba’s close ones would never make any kind of major decision without first consulting Him. And whenever there was some serious problem in the family they would also write to inform Him. One time, one of his lovers in Calcutta had fallen and broken his arm very badly. His wife sent telegrams keeping Baba informed about his health. We don’t know what happened, but after a while we got a telegram from someone else saying that this man had started abusing Baba.

Baba sent off a telegram to the man saying that abuses from His lovers were far more acceptable than praise from those who hypocritically admire Him. I don’t know how this was received, but Baba’s messages always had a special and specific effect on the person concerned. Baba told us that those people who came to Him so that they could get some material benefit, or wrote Him hoping to have some mundane need fulfilled, were hypocritical lovers. Baba said they were not for Him, but were just for the world.

Once Eruch had read out a certain number of letters, Baba would turn to me, meaning that it was my time to read. I rarely reached the bottom of my pile of mail before Baba would gesture that I should stop.

After the mail, if we didn’t have a few hands of cards, I might be asked to write a reply to one of the letters and others of the mandali might have other duties to see to. As the morning session ended, Baba would send us out to have our lunch. At first, Bindra House provided

the meal and, later on, Jal Dorabjee, but it was usually very simple, often just rice, dal, and chapatis. Francis, Pendu, Nana, Aloba, and I (and many times others), would eat together in a small “dining room” (which was a partitioned section at the end of the men’s verandah) while Baba remained in the mandali’s room with Eruch, who didn’t eat lunch. Then Baba would leave to have lunch with the women. After finishing lunch, He would usually return to the mandali’s room.

By the time we returned from our lunch, Baba and Eruch would generally both be there. Though, if Baba was longer in staying with the women, we men might nap in the mandali’s room until Baba returned.

In the afternoons, sometimes there were more gatherings, but often Baba would be taken out for a drive, or a walk in one of the parks, or to visit one of His lover’s homes. Bindra House was frequently visited. And of course there were often card games.

In the evening, the pattern repeated itself with Baba leaving us and having His meal with the women. Generally, our lunch leftovers would be our evening supper. Bhau and Pendu drank only milk to avoid becoming sleepy during night watch. Sometimes Baba might send us to see a movie, but generally Baba retired early and so did we.

I was given the freedom to use my discretion in deciding what letters were of importance and should be read out first. One day I found a letter in my pile written by a photographer (D.D. Rege) from Poona. My reaction to its contents was not favorable. In it, the man expressed his wish to photograph Baba, saying that Baba should pose for him, and that the photographer himself should be allowed to have his picture taken with Baba. The man also mentioned a list of dignitaries whom he had previously photographed. To me, it did not appear to be a letter of request, but more of a demand. I judged for myself that the attitude of the photographer

was not right, because I felt it was not fitting to place expectations on the Highest of the High in this way. So I put this letter in the bottom of my mail pile, thinking that I would not have to read it to Baba for days, since He generally listened to only four or five letters before asking me to stop.

To my surprise, on that particular day Baba allotted Eruch less time than usual. He then pointed to me, indicating it was my turn. I was sure that He would tell me to stop reading after a few letters, but, to my further surprise, He did not. After each letter, I thought, "Now He will surely tell me to stop." He continued to listen, and as I continued reading, I wondered if I would have to read out the photographer's letter. Baba still did not stop me, and, in time, I reached the bottom of the pile, and the only letter left was the one I had so carefully avoided.

Instead of reading out the letter, I only told Baba the gist, and even expressed my resentment and my opinion that its writer did not make his request to Baba in the way he should have. I felt confident that Baba would agree with my views. Instead, He beamed a smile and gestured that from the credentials, it seemed that the photographer must be a good one. He then asked me to read out the letter in its entirety, which I did with some reluctance. After I finished, Baba instructed me to write to the man and ask him to visit the following week. As if this were not ironic enough, I was told I would be the one to receive him and attend to his needs. Of course, I obeyed. I wrote the photographer that his request to Baba would be granted in full, and gave him the specific time and date when he could come.

The man replied to me directly confirming the date and requesting Baba's permission to arrive a day early to set up the shoot. Baba agreed. When the day came, I was on the verandah, ready to receive the man,

inwardly feeling how nice it would be if he didn't come. However, he arrived on time, had a look around, and then left.

The next day, he came armed with a large camera and other accessories necessary in those years—cables, plugs, and special lights intended for the photography session. After greeting him, I showed him the location of the electrical outlets, and as soon as the wires and spotlights were arranged, Baba entered the room. The photographer offered his salutations; Baba smiled in return and inquired if everything was as it should be for the session. He then sat down in His cushioned armchair.

Before the photos were taken, Baba deferentially asked the photographer what direction He should face, and if His hands were in the right position or not. To my amazement, the photographer did suggest some changes, and continued to do so before every new pose. He even touched Baba's hands once to demonstrate the way in which he thought they should be placed. As Baba agreed to each suggestion, He would give me a look. With His glance, I felt Baba was emphasizing the silent lesson that I should not judge others. In all, the photographer took photos of Baba in four different poses, then stood alongside Him for a fifth one. Once the session was complete, I felt relieved.

The next Sunday, the photographer visited Guru Prasad again, bringing copies of the photos, all of which were very good. Rege wanted Baba to say which He liked the best and finally Baba chose the photo of the pose in which Baba had allowed him to reposition His hands. Rege then went home and printed the largest copy that he could and hand-colored it. Then he presented it to Baba. I should, perhaps, add a little aside here. This picture is now kept at Meherazad in the Blue Bus on Baba's hospital bed. In the 1970s, when I began staying at Meherazad, I noticed the colored photograph, and the entire story behind



The photo taken by D.D. Rege in Guru Prasad that Baba liked best

it returned to me. It was then, in a very natural way, I remembered the words from the Holy Bible: "Judge not that ye be not judged." Now I visit the bus every day, reminding myself that Beloved Baba is the only real Judge, and that I should not argue with or comment on what others express in their love for the Avatar, the Emperor of all hearts.

Over the years, another photograph of Baba that was taken by this Poona photographer came to be appreciated so much by Baba lovers that many display it in their respective centers. In it, Baba truly looks like an emperor, blessing His dear ones with a benevolent, yet authoritative, smile. Because of this, it has come to be known as the “darbar pose,” for in it, Baba is the emperor appearing before His darbar, or royal court.

Right after this was Manu Jessawala’s birthday. As usual, Baba and the women went to Bindra House to celebrate. There would usually be a treat of some kind, mango ice cream, or sherbet, or something special, which would be served by Baba to all present. On this particular birthday, they had mango ice cream. Bindra House had two big molds and they would make the ice cream ahead of time and then Baba served it to each with His own hands. As always, even though there were men in the house, care was taken so that they didn’t see Mehera and she didn’t see them. So Manu and her family were sitting with Baba in one room while Mehera and the other women were in another room. Baba told Manu to go fetch Mehera and bring her there. Manu was surprised because Pappa was in the room and Mehera hadn’t seen men for years. So Manu asked, “Should I call Mehera now?”

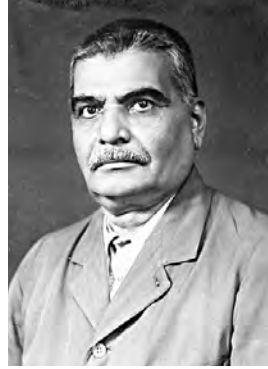
Baba said, “Didn’t I tell you to call her? Go and call her now. I want her to greet Pappa.”

So Manu went and told Mehera that Baba wanted her to come into the room and greet Pappa. Mehera couldn’t believe that Baba had really ordered this and refused to go. She even got upset with Manu for playing such a silly prank.

Manu went back to Baba, who wondered where Mehera was. “She wouldn’t come, Baba,” Manu explained. “She didn’t believe me that you wanted her to see Pappa.” Baba told Manu to go back and tell Mehera

again that it was His order that she come. He added, “Tell her not to worry, I’ll be with her the whole time.”

So Manu went back and repeated Baba’s order. Mehera still found it hard to believe. She asked Manu to hold her hand as she was very nervous. As soon as they entered the room, Pappa stood up and respectfully said “Sahibji” (in those days people hadn’t started



Pappa Jessawala

saying, “Jai Baba”). Mehera said “Sahibji” to Pappa and then, at Baba’s bidding, went back to join the other women.

Pappa was almost as surprised as Mehera at this turn of events. But afterwards, he repeated to his family with a certain sense of pride that he alone, of all the men, had been allowed to be seen by Mehera. “See how pure I am. Mehera has not seen a man in so many years, but Baba had her greet me. You all tell me that I am this and that. But look, Mehera came and saw me.” Although this was an unusual event, Manu and her family simply accepted it without trying to figure out what it might mean.

Not long after this, a conference on yoga was being held in Poona on the premises of Deccan College. One day a man who had come for that conference decided to visit Guru Prasad to see Baba. Baba had been giving darshan, but the actual program was over and people were leaving when the man arrived. He made his way through those departing and approached Baba. The man explained that he had come to Poona for the yoga seminar and humbly asked Baba if He would say something about the nature of yoga. As He was leaving for His room, Baba casually replied through gestures, “Yoga is when *you* go, and God comes.” Only Baba could make such profound truth seem so utterly simple.

A few days after this incident, another unusual event took place. A wedding of two of Baba's lovers was performed in His presence. This was the marriage of Madhusudan Pund—the renowned lead singer of the Poona bhajan mandali and composer of many, many beautiful songs written for Baba—and Subhadra Bundellu.

Madhusudan had first met Baba in August 1949, just as Baba was preparing to leave on the New Life. He was only sixteen at the time and had come with a group of other young seekers from Poona on the off chance that they might be allowed to see Baba even though a circular had been issued that no darshan would be possible. They had gone to Adi K. Irani's office and he had told them very forcefully that they were breaking Baba's orders and that it would be impossible for them to see Baba. But there was something about their humility and their genuine desire to see Baba that melted Adi's heart. He took pity on them and told them to stand on the road near the bus station in Ahmednagar. As he passed, on the way from Meherabad to Meherazad, he would drive by slowly and with luck they might get a glimpse of Baba.

This glimpse was enough to make Madhusudan lose consciousness and he fell to the ground. Baba had Adi stop the car and the group all ran to it (with some of them helping Madhusudan to walk) and Baba gave them a brief greeting. After this Madhusudan became a stalwart of the Poona Baba group, especially those known as the bhajan mandali, and wrote many, many songs for Baba, including the Arti, "Meher mana." He was a frequent visitor to Guru Prasad and all enjoyed his rhythmic songs and melodious voice.

He was a Brahmin from a very high caste in India, and he had fallen in love with Subhadra, who was from one of the lowest castes. Their families were not at all happy about their wish to marry. In fact, they tried to

encourage their children to each find a spouse from members of their own caste. Most often in India, particularly in those days, the parents arranged the marriage of their children. It was almost always to someone from a similar background and caste, knowing that their upbringing and beliefs would be alike. But the young couple persisted and there was quite an uproar, especially in the Brahmin community. Madhusudan's family feared the repercussions that might come down on their family for their son's actions.

Baba, however, was very supportive of Madhusudan and Subhadra. So much so, that He permitted them to hold their wedding in His presence in the main hall of Guru Prasad on May 14, 1959. After garlanding Baba, the couple lovingly placed garlands around each other's neck before their Beloved Lord.

Meherwan recalls:

On this special day, Baba asked Madhusudan to compose a song, on the spot, just for the occasion. I recall seeing Madhusudan hurriedly jotting down lyrics. What a master of his craft that he could compose something beautiful at His Beloved's spontaneous request. He and Subhadra then sang this song as a wedding gift for Baba.

Pratap Ahir, who was a member of the Poona bhajan mandali, remembers this event slightly differently. He recalls that Baba had asked Madhusudan the previous day to compose a song, which he did that night. So, possibly what Meherwan saw was Madhusudan making last-minute corrections.

At any rate, Madhusudan recounted that Baba liked this song so much that He asked him to open each weekly meeting of the Poona

Centre with it:

(MADHUSUDAN SINGS)

Lord, may I never let go of Your feet
Apart from that which brings You joy, I want nothing else
(chorus)

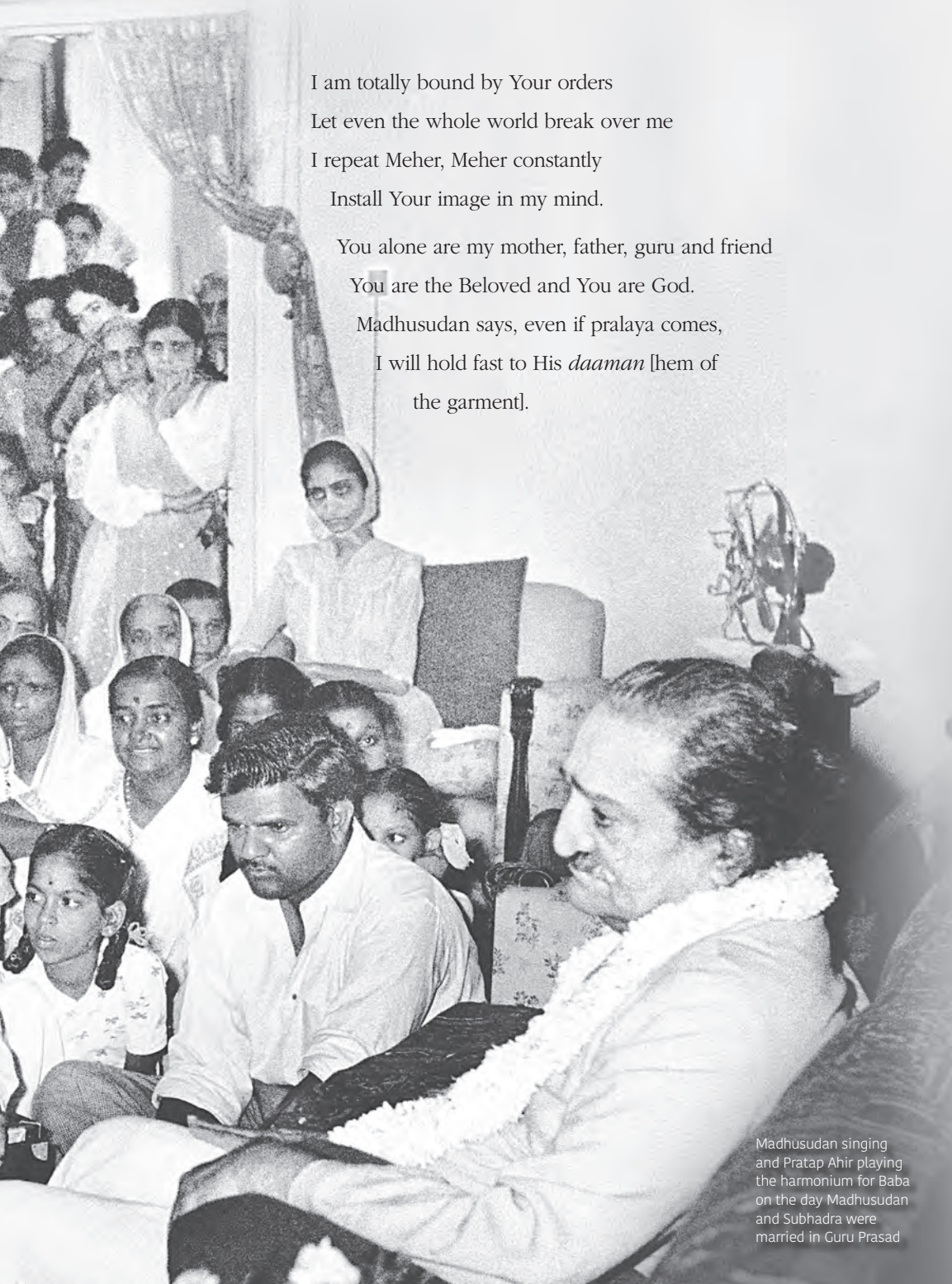
I will stay in whatever state pleases You
I desire nothing but You
May I see You, sing of You,
Sacrifice myself over and over for You



I am totally bound by Your orders
 Let even the whole world break over me
 I repeat Meher, Meher constantly
 Install Your image in my mind.

You alone are my mother, father, guru and friend
 You are the Beloved and You are God.

Madhusudan says, even if pralaya comes,
 I will hold fast to His *daaman* [hem of
 the garment].



Madhusudan singing
 and Pratap Ahir playing
 the harmonium for Baba
 on the day Madhusudan
 and Subhadra were
 married in Guru Prasad

Meherwan concludes:

The wonderful event ended with a grand feast where all partook in the lovely atmosphere of the Lord. Madhusudan and Subhadra were sent off to the city registrar to officially join in union. What a blessing to have joined their lives in the presence of the Lord.

Baba said it was the first wedding He had performed as Baba. As Krishna, He had personally helped in bringing about the marriage of His sister, Subedra, and His most-loved disciple, Arjuna.

Meherwan adds:

And what an occasion it was, where Beloved Baba supported these two people who came together in love across caste distinctions and despite social stigma. For Baba, there was no such thing as caste. He had come to do away with such divisions in the world and to awaken us to the reality that we are all one.

Naosherwan Satha, one of Eruch's uncles, who was a member of Gandhi's Congress Party, and worked for years for India's independence, once remarked that while Gandhi was against the caste system, for Baba caste simply did not exist.

Although not many people were allowed to see Baba that May of 1959, one exception was Marvin Campen. His account of the visit was printed in *The Awakener*:

About 8:30 a.m. [on Friday] Meherjee ushered me to Baba. He was seated in a large chair against the wall of a pleasant room opening off the side porch. In His pink coat and white

sadra [long, thin white cotton garment], He was as radiant as at Myrtle Beach last year. But His face looked more tired. After welcoming me warmly, Baba called attention to the others in the room. Adi was at Baba's right. Several ladies were on the floor at His left. Seated all around were about 15 other mandali and devotees known to many in the West—Eruch, Nariman, Vishnu, Pendu, Ramjoo. Baba introduced Dr. Deshmukh. Francis Brabazon was beside me. He read some fine concluding sections from his newest book, *Stay With God*.

Several exceptional visitors were allowed to see Baba that glorious morning. The Maharani came in and sat near Baba's feet with glowing adoration. A woman from Madras, who was in charge of a large girls' school there, brought her niece in to meet Baba. There was a man from Bengal and his friends. All brought garlands, notes or similar tokens of love for Baba, as did several other admirers who joined the group as the morning quickly passed.

Baba greeted all with dynamic and vibrant love. He particularly noted the visitors and gave them a feeling of belonging. He emphasized that He was accepting no gifts other than small tokens or remembrances. "You must stop wanting," Baba reminded us. When He remarked that Westerners did not ask Him for as many things as Easterners, one could not help thinking that a reason might be the greater abundance of material possessions in the West. And even Westerners realize that Baba's love is present without asking....

A few minutes before 8 a.m. on Sunday, Meherjee, his daughters, and Eruch's brother came by the hotel. We drove straight to Guruprasad, where throngs had already gathered.

(MARVIN CAMPEN CONTINUES)

Going into the side room, we found Baba as the day before. He asked what I had seen and how I had slept; then arranged my return to the airport that afternoon. With all the activity and so many things to be done, I regretted taking Baba's time for such affairs. Baba talked briefly about the Westerners who loved Him and asked if I remembered the play at Myrtle Beach at which He had laughed so much [I think Baba had just received Mike's "Remember Alligator Day" card].

[When Baba had been visiting the Myrtle Beach Center the previous year, the men had initiated Him into the "Supreme and Ancient Order of Alligator Watchers." He was given a toy alligator that beat a drum and a larger stuffed alligator. The men performed a humorous skit for Baba that made Him laugh so much that He said He had never laughed like that in this incarnation. When the men finished their performance, Baba announced: "Today's performance is one of the few things I shall miss in my next incarnation!"]

Marvin continues:

Then Baba told a story about a winking man, the moral of which was, don't wink at people. The sweetest words to me were when Baba told the group, "Marvin loves me."

By now it was nearly 9 o'clock and time for the darshan to start. Baba dismissed the group and walked through a door into the central room where the main event of the day was to take place.

Except for an aisle down the center, the room was packed with people sitting on the floor. Outside and on the front porch, hundreds were standing awaiting their turn to greet the Master.

Baba was seated in the center of a large couch facing the crowd. Behind Baba was Eruch; also, Meherjee, Adi, and other mandali stood there to help. I was permitted to sit on the floor at the left end of Baba's couch. A hushed and expectant air prevailed as the musicians started their first artis. Darshan was about to begin.

Baba stopped the music and signaled the women and children to come to Him. In bright saris, single file, they took their happy turns. Each knelt, prostrated or bowed to Baba, offered their tokens, and embraced Him. All had a garland, fruit, nut, message, or other token. The children clamored gleefully around Baba's legs and lap. About every 15 minutes, Baba would stop the line, have the devotees sit down, and direct the musicians to play for 10–15 minutes. Baba seemed enraptured in the music, which He directed like a symphony with His lightning, hummingbird-like finger motions. The voices of the singers rose in ecstatic songs. But the happiest person in the room was the person first in the stopped line. She or he had an extra dividend of a period to sit at the feet of the Master!

After the arti, Baba usually translated the message. Obedience to Baba, love, service, honesty were the main themes. The line of devotees would arise and proceed past Baba. At frequent intervals, Eruch had to remove the pile of garlands from around Baba's neck to save Him from being smothered in flowers. Also, he wiped the perspiration from Baba's brow. (The flowers and other gifts were passed through a curtain to other mandali.)

(MARVIN CAMPEN CONTINUES)

At nearly 11 o'clock the approximately 500 devotees had paid their respects to Baba. They left the room with fond last looks at the Avatar. Some small groups had the privilege of one more moment with Baba.

My last moment was also special. With Adi and Meherjee beside Him, Baba looked full into my eyes and told me to take His love to all.⁸

Meanwhile, Rano was not well. She was staying in Bindra House and became very ill after eating a mango. Meherwan writes:

She was vomiting and could not keep anything down. As a result she was growing very weak and frail. We called a local doctor to try and treat her condition, but she did not improve. My father, who was called Pappa by everyone, was also not keeping good health at the time. He was not going out on his usual outings and complained of general weakness and heaviness in his chest. I tried to encourage him to have some tests done, but he refused, saying it was a waste of money. Pappa had a very tough exterior, but he was very devoted to the family, and of course to Baba. He told me that he did not want to waste money on himself when it could go to the rest of the family. He then told me, "Son, my time is now very near." I brushed his comment aside because I did not think it could be true.

One evening, Baba came to Bindra House to check on Rano and Pappa. Pappa was seated on a chair in his room, when Baba went to see him. Baba brought him a glass of sherbet and told

him to drink it. Pappa said to Baba, "I am feeling nervous about Rano. She is a foreigner and supposing something happens to her, there will be a lot of queries and problems."

Baba responded, "Don't think about anything. Just repeat My name. This is the time for you to stop worrying. Just repeat My name and everything will be fine." After Pappa felt reassured, he drank the sherbet Baba gave him. Baba then went to Rano to check on her and console her.

That night, Rano's condition became very serious. She could not stop vomiting and became very dehydrated. I went out in the middle of the night, trying to find a doctor who would come and examine her at such an hour. Finally I found a doctor who agreed to come. The doctor gave Rano some medicine to stop the vomiting, and then he left. But the vomiting continued through the rest of the night and we were all very distressed about what to do.

Baba came the next morning and Manu told Baba straight away, "Rano is on the point of passing away. It's up to You, Baba." Baba asked Manu to fetch Him a big glass of fresh lime sherbet and He went right to Rano's room. Rano was so weak that she could barely open her eyes or speak. With a spoon in His hand, Baba said to Rano, "I am going to pour this spoonful in your mouth. Try to retain it." He then fed Rano a spoonful of the drink, which with great effort she was able to keep down. Baba was very pleased and said there was nothing to worry about. He instructed Manu to feed her a few spoonfuls every five or ten minutes until the sherbet was all finished. Baba then

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

went to Pappa's room, on the other end of the verandah, to meet him before leaving. Pappa again nervously exclaimed about Rano to Baba, "What is going on?" Baba encouraged him to not worry and leave everything to Him.

The next day, Baba came to Bindra House again to check on Rano and Pappa. That day Rano slowly began to get better. Baba instructed me that that night I was to go to bed at ten o'clock because I had been out late the night before trying to find a doctor. Baba didn't want me to spoil my health.

In the afternoon, while I was at the office, one of the mandali came to find me, saying that Baba was outside and He wanted to see me. I went down to the car where Baba was sitting. Baba again reminded me, "At ten you have to go to bed. I have come to remind you about it."

I replied, "Yes, Baba. I will do it." As Baba drove off, He made the sign for ten through the car window.

Eruch and Goher were sent by Baba to Bindra House at nine o'clock that night. Goher examined Pappa and found nothing serious. Eruch fed him a little bit of soup and then they returned to Guru Prasad. At five minutes to ten, I quickly laid down on my bedding, making sure I followed Baba's order. At ten o'clock sharp, Pappa called me from his room to come quick. What to do! Baba had ordered me to be in bed by ten, yet Pappa was calling me. Since I had laid down at ten, I got up and went right to Pappa. I discovered him in his bed, hardly able to breathe and no longer able to speak. He had had a pulmonary embolism—a big blood clot in his lung. I called my mother and

the others. As soon as they saw Pappa wheezing and listened to his labored breathing, they told me to get a doctor as fast as possible. By the time I got back with a doctor, Pappa was breathing his last. We all said Baba's name in his ear as he passed away, soon after 10:00 p.m.

I immediately called Guru Prasad to tell Eruch and then proceeded to arrange the funeral. Eruch went to Baba's bedroom where He was resting, facing the wall. Baba turned to inquire who had come in and Eruch told Him about Pappa's passing. Baba, without commenting, turned away again and Eruch left.

The next day when Baba came into the mandali's room in the early morning He asked Eruch, "Do you want to attend the funeral?"

Eruch replied, "Whatever You say, Baba." So, Baba suggested that Meherjee help me with all the arrangements so that Eruch could stay with Him.

Baba then told Eruch that He wanted to go to Bindra House. So they went in the car early in the morning. Baba went inside and asked Manu to prepare Him some food. So, Manu and Naja hurriedly prepared Him some rice and dal.

Baba then said to Eruch that He wanted to go to the nearby bakery for some bread to have with the dal. Eruch and Baba were driven to the bakery, which was on the same road where Pappa's funeral ceremony was taking place. As the place where Pappa's body was being readied to be taken to the Tower of Silence was only a block or two down the road, they drove a little further and parked on the road. Baba asked Eruch again, "Do you want to attend the funeral?"

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

“Whatever You say, Baba,” Eruch replied.

“Go pay your respects and come back quickly,” Baba told him. So Eruch went hurriedly, bowed down to Pappa’s body, and rushed back. He sat with Baba in the car on the roadside until Pappa’s body was brought out of the Prayer Hall. Baba and Eruch then watched as Pappa’s body was carried out. What a great fortune to have Baba cast His glance on Pappa’s body! Baba then asked Eruch, “What do you see?”

“I see Pappa’s dead body,” Eruch responded.

“What is a dead body?” Baba questioned.

“It is a corpse, Baba.”

“What is that?” After pausing a moment Baba continued, “The dead body is the excreta of the soul. Just as when you eat food, you absorb the nutrients and then excrete it; similarly the body is like food to the soul and after its work is done the soul excretes the dead body.”

Eruch, when he told this story, would usually add that Baba then asked him how he felt after going to the bathroom in the morning. Eruch replied, “Good, Baba. Fresh.” Baba said the soul feels the same lightness and happiness after sloughing off the body.

Baba then asked Eruch to drive back, saying, “My work is finished now.”

After returning to Bindra House, Baba saw Rano and told her it had been a toss-up between her and Pappa. Rano laughed. Baba asked her if she knew that Pappa had died the previous night and she hadn’t known. She had been so ill that she was only vaguely conscious of lots of activity in the house and

people coming and going. But when she asked Naja about it, Naja hadn't told her the reason because she was afraid that, in her precarious health, she wouldn't be able to handle the news and might die herself. But Rano continued to recuperate until she was finally back to normal.

After Pappa's passing, my family experienced the loss very intensely and missed him very much.

Mani wrote a few days later:

Afternoon drives with the mandali to Bindra House (home of Eruch's family) have been a regular Baba-item until recently. And though the main attraction seemed to be the littlest newcomer named Mehera, Baba smilingly said one day that He came only for "Pappa" (His affectionate nickname for Eruch's father). We didn't fully realize this until after Pappa's unexpected demise recently (of heart failure), and were full of wonderment as we recalled the many little ways in which Baba had expressed His love for him, giving him every opportunity for His intimate sahavas. Dear Pappa's "last words" were but one word: BABA.⁹

It was only now that the family thought back to Baba's surprising decision to have Mehera greet Pappa a few weeks earlier and begin to think that this was perhaps a parting gift from Baba, an expression of His love for Pappa. Manu, herself, years later, felt that perhaps Baba had done this because He knew that Pappa wouldn't be alive when He had all the men greet Mehera on January 31, 1968.

Manu remembers another visit to Bindra House by Baba and the women:

(MANU RECOLLECTS)

Mehera said, “Do you know what day it is today? It is Good Friday.” I nodded and listened. She said, “Hopefully we won’t see that day come about with our Beloved Baba.” She of course did not want Baba to live through what Christ did when He was crucified and all of His suffering.

Baba came over and seeing us look solemn asked what we were talking about. We told him that today is Good Friday and that we were hoping that this would never happen to our Baba. He looked at me and said, “Why did you bring this topic up and worry My Mehera!” He gave me a good pinch on the ear that felt like a little bee sting.

He then told us, “Do not worry. It will not be like that. I will live to be very old.” Baba acted as if He were an old man in His nineties hobbling along with His cane. We smiled and felt reassured. Baba then said again to me, “Why did you bring up this thing to Mehera and make her worry? And on a party day when we are all enjoying and having ice cream together.”

Mehera jumped in and said, “Baba, I brought it up. It was not Manu.”

Baba said again, “All right. Don’t worry though.”

Once Francis and I accompanied Baba on one of His many visits to Bindra House, which had become a “Grand Central Station” in Baba’s love. Not only would He visit, or members of the mandali might visit while passing through town, but Baba would also periodically send people to stay with the family. Taking care of the house and all of their

frequent visitors became difficult for Gaimai, especially as she was getting older. So Baba took great interest in arranging for them to get a servant. Years earlier, Pendu was instructed to be on the lookout for likely candidates from Ahmednagar and he would periodically send someone to Poona. Baba never approved of any of them. One time Pendu had selected a very attractive young woman and Baba took him to task, asking him what he was thinking. During this period, a woman, Kesar, arrived on her own. She was fleeing an abusive marriage and took refuge at Bindra House.

She was a good-hearted woman but had some emotional and mental problems that made her less than an ideal servant. Nonetheless, when Baba was told about her, He not only approved of her being hired but said that the family should never fire her but keep her no matter what. This was not always easy and, at times, the family felt that, instead of reducing their burden, Kesar only made it heavier.

Her most striking idiosyncrasy was her kleptomania. She was in the habit of picking up items that were left lying about and hiding them, or even giving them away. She never actually stole anything for herself. Once she had taken an object, not only would she refuse to reveal where she had hidden it, but she would flatly deny that she had ever taken it in the first place. She was especially stubborn when Pappa, in his gruff way, demanded that she tell them what she had done.

Perhaps the most alarming instance of this occurred just before the New Life, when Nariman inadvertently left behind thousands of rupees when he had stopped there on his way to Bombay. This was the money he was to use as an “Arrangementwala” during the New Life. When he reached Bombay and discovered he had left the money behind, he was frantic. He called Bindra House, but they couldn’t find the

money. Naturally, it occurred to them that Kesar must have taken it, but she insisted that she hadn't. They searched everywhere and finally, more as a means of being thorough than because they felt there was any hope in it, they searched the outdoor garage where they found, buried in the ashes of an old charcoal-burning water heater, the roll of money "safely" tucked away. Needless to say, all were greatly relieved at this.

No matter what the family tried, they could not change this habit of hers, even though Baba had Himself admonished her to change her ways on several occasions. On this visit, as usual, Baba made loving inquiries after all the family members. Their responses showed that each member of the family clearly lived just for Baba. When it was Kesar's turn, Baba asked her if she was continuing to take things. She vehemently shook her head to deny it. Baba asked her several questions about this but she refused to admit anything. Then He called Gaimai and asked her if Kesar's behavior had improved.

Gaimai did not like to criticize anyone, so she assured Baba that everything was fine. "But has she taken anything?" Baba wanted to know.

"It's better, Baba. It's better than it used to be."

"So she has taken something?"

What could Gaimai do at that point but confess that the servant's behavior had not changed much. Baba's face, which could assume with perfect clarity any expression, now became very serious and stern as He looked at Kesar. "You must not do this," He gestured. "If you do this again, then in your next life you will be born as a pig."

In India, pigs are considered to be the filthiest of animals. Baba's expression now seemed to change again as He permitted those of us with Him to observe a twinkle in His eye as He proceeded to add, "And you won't be born in India, but in the West where pigs are eaten."

And then, with a certain gusto, Baba described the way pigs are put on spits and roasted and eaten in the West.

The maidservant was quite terrified by this time and promised she would mend her ways. As this was going on, I wondered what Francis would make of this. He had just completed and published *Stay With God*, a poetical reworking of *God Speaks*. He was obviously familiar with the fact that in *God Speaks* Baba declares that, with rare exceptions, once one attains human form, one continues to take human birth until the end. But after Kesar left, Baba turned to Francis and quickly gestured, “Once you get a human body, there is no retrogression, no returning to the animal form.”

Two things struck me about this incident. One was the natural way in which Baba would respond to one’s thoughts; the other was how different people could come away with entirely different impressions of the “truth.” In this instance, depending on whether they had heard only Baba’s warning to Kesar, or whether they had also heard Baba’s further explanation to Francis, each would feel convinced, and rightfully so, that they had heard Baba very authoritatively declare the exact opposite information. How often we insist that we know something, when possibly we haven’t heard Baba’s further explanation, which would put our “knowledge” in a more revealing context.

Moreover, who is to say that Baba’s further explanations are not continuing to be revealed all the time in our lives? Our “knowledge,” such as it is, is always partial, incomplete, and taken out of context. This has strengthened me in my resolve not to judge the opinions, beliefs, thoughts, or behavior of others.

Francis wrote a letter to the Baba lovers in Australia that summer in which he refers to this stay at Guru Prasad. He captures nicely Baba’s inimitable way of mixing the profound and the humorous:

(FRANCIS RECOUNTS)

Baba takes time off from His work to play with us and often reminds us in the play that He is God, and that God is playing with us: that we should be careful not to allow His familiarity with us to become the cause of our slackness in obedience to Him. A few weeks ago, Baba took us to see Charlie Chaplin's film, "Limelight" and He enjoyed it. Afterwards He said, "How fortunate Charlie is that I have seen HIS film and enjoyed it." Since that time most mornings we have seen films. These films consist of Eruch reading out selected pieces of newspaper articles—both tragic and comic. Baba particularly enjoyed one little article about two married partners traveling in a railroad carriage when an argument developed into a free-for-all fight about which way an electric fan should be directed—each party wanting it. Just at the height of it a man appeared with a gun and threatened to shoot them all. Baba, Himself, enacted the "tough with the gun" perfectly.

Baba uses the films to show us the "unreality of the world." We go to see the films and if we enjoy it we get so much absorbed into it that we imagine real men and women are doing it. When it ends we recognize the unreality of it—no actual existence—appearance only. Creation itself is only a "film" with each individual life just one "little film"—all within a great film. Our little joys and sorrows, successes and failures, our likes and dislikes—in short—all our personal preoccupations with ourselves and others—in relation to ourselves seems so real. Eventually the film must end and we pass away. So on until we awaken to the fact that we are all only acting in a little film. As the film unrolls we then realize

ourselves as the one eternal Infinite existence. So long as we identify ourselves with it, it continues to keep unrolling along.

Baba is not only a “perfect mimic” but His mimicry of others is perfect also. He often entertains us mimicking our peculiarities of manner.

We take turns entertaining, also when Baba orders us to do so—command performance—either to whistle a tune or make some other sort of noise, after which Baba singles out the very weakest performer and has them perform singly. It may be making a speech in an unfamiliar tongue (Beidel’s *[sic]* lecture on New York in English was excellent) [Baidul, of course, had never been to New York.—Eds.] or we tell stories, etc. I am ordered sometimes to do a piece of “mimicry,” other times rhymed verses on the different mandali.

These command performances are a wonderful idea of what Baba means by obedience. We usually think of obedience as doing some job, or not doing it as ordered. But He does mean to start immediately to do whatever He asks them to do—even bursting out with laughter or simulating tears.¹⁰

Sometimes Baba would send certain of the mandali or the women to see a specific film. Sometimes, He went Himself. When I was invited to go along with Baba, I welcomed the chance to spend more time with Him, though seeing movies was not of interest to me. I would not go to movies of my own accord, but only when it was an opportunity to be in His company.

Another film we saw was *The African Lion*. As we were getting ready to go, Baba, with a smile, made a sign for women (pointing to His nose where a nose ring would be) and dancing (rhythmically moving His arms and shoulders) and conveyed to us, “There will be no dancing girls in this movie.” Personally, I could not have cared less what the movie was about.

For this outing Baba was wearing a bright, flashy pink jacket. His face was radiant and as He pulled down the ends of His coat, He turned to Eruch and gestured, “How do I look? How is the coat?” Eruch, who was able to speak candidly with Baba replied, “You look like a movie star!” Baba gave him a pleased look and gestured, “It’s all right. I’m not going to change,” and then we were off.

When we arrived at the movie theater, Baba directed where each of us would sit and we sat as one group around Him. I personally enjoyed the company of Baba more than the pranks of the lion cubs.

Meherwan also happens to remember seeing this particular film:

I joined Baba on this outing in the dead heat of summer in mid-afternoon and the theatre had a tin roof with just a few fans here and there and, to save power, the manager switched off the fans when the film started. Baba kept watching the whole length of the film, which was not Baba’s usual habit, and was bathed in sweat by the end of it. But He seemed to like the film and we all enjoyed it too despite the heat. It was shown at the Limaye Theatre, which has since been dismantled.

When I came to Guru Prasad, I usually stayed there, as I was not much interested in visiting the city itself. However, my brother lived in Poona

and Baba gave me permission to visit him. Many people were blessed with the opportunity of having Baba's darshan during these months. Some came frequently. One of these was a local doctor who, while leaving Guru Prasad, volunteered to take me to my brother's on his scooter on the way back to his own house. I happily agreed and we set off.

After a while, we started taking some odd turns, and it soon became apparent to me that we were not headed directly to my brother's. Sure enough, we pulled up before an unfamiliar house, and my friend got down and invited me in.

I followed him into an upstairs room where a stately looking man sat on a bed. There was something about the way he sat, the serenity he projected, which made me feel that he was a spiritually minded man. Indeed, my friend thought so, which was why he visited him. This stately man had his own Master, and he freely shared what he had learned from him with those who came to visit.

My friend introduced me as a follower of Meher Baba, and I politely paid my respects, but I had little interest in prolonging the visit. In fact, I was wondering what I was doing there. I felt a bit uncomfortable, especially as I had taken part in preparing Baba's pamphlet in which He explicitly warned against going to visit other spiritual personages.

After the man finished his conversation with my friend, he began to ask me about Meher Baba. "You are a follower? What is His philosophy?" he asked me.

I didn't know what to say. How to explain Baba's philosophy briefly? Purdom's edited version of Baba's *Discourses, God to Man and Man to God*, which had recently been published, came to mind. So I said, "I can't tell you anything about philosophy, much less Meher Baba's philosophy. I can only say: 'God to man, and man back to God.'"

The saintly person seemed pleased and appreciative at this entirely novel summation of cosmology. As we left, thanks to Baba's grace, the thought came to me that since I had not had any intention of visiting this man, surely Baba would not mind, and all vestiges of guilt vanished.



Although Baba had already limited the darshan programs to Sundays, He decided in June to end them altogether. As Mani wrote in her Family Letter of the 13th of June:

To Baba lovers in many parts of India, and very particularly to those in Poona and in Bombay, Sundays have come to mean a wonderful "holy-day" in the true sense of the word, when they could come (usually with garlands, children and friends) to see their Beloved, touch His feet and receive His embrace. The 7th of June was the last such Sunday during our present stay at Guruprasad, Baba wishing to remain undisturbed from 8th June till we leave for Meherazad beginning of August. So you can imagine how every one who possibly could, grabbed the "last opportunity," many coming from great distances for a morning with Him. As we saw them pour in towards where Baba was seated at the far end of the big hall, someone remarked that it seemed like a tidal-wave—and so indeed it did, which only the Ocean of Love could receive, drop by drop, as He did; blessing each with an embrace, greeting, smile....

About no more darshan or any programs, Baba said "I will stay at Guruprasad till beginning August. But I have decided to stop giving darshan, even on Sundays, from 8th June onwards. I

want to be completely free for one month. None should disturb Me during this period by bringing insignificant things to My notice, and none should try to see Me unless called for by Me. Continue your work at the Centres and outside, spreading My message of love. Be unmindful of the results of your efforts—those who are to come will come. Just do your best, with love and sincerity.”¹¹

Of course, many people continued to come to Guru Prasad to see Baba. Baba’s family and close ones would still come whenever they could. Certain workers from the Poona Centre would come every Sunday to play cards. In addition, Meherwan, Sadashiv, Meherjee, brothers Beheram and Jal, nephews Sheroo, Rustom, and Sohrab had permission to visit every day, and Jehangu (who married Beheram’s daughter, Gulnar) had permission to visit whenever he had a day off from his job.

When we played cards with Baba, we usually played *La Risque*. The game required four, six, or eight people, and the group was divided into two teams, with members seated alternately in a circle. Each player held an even number of cards, and the excess lower cards were discarded. The joker was always purposely included. Sometimes as many as 50 players were accommodated. With such a large number playing, you might only have two or even one trick in a hand.

Although the game was simple, when many were playing, a hand could be over very quickly and if you didn’t already know the rules, the game could be confusing. This was how it was for Hoshang Bharucha, who happened to be visiting Meherazad once when Baba and the men started playing this game. Bharucha had no idea how to play. He had barely looked at his hand when someone called out, “*La Risque*,” and the next thing he knew, someone had seized him by the neck and was

pushing him forward so that his nose was rubbing on the ground. You can imagine his astonishment.

For this was another feature of the game. The losing team, which was usually Baba's opponents, had to rub their noses on the carpet before Baba—hard enough to cause them to redden. Perhaps this was Baba's compassion for His close ones who were not allowed to bow down at His feet. If Baba's team lost, Francis Brabazon was asked to rub his nose an extra time for Baba.

Meherwan Mistry, one of Jimmy and Roda's three children, remembers the games vividly. He says that Baba's teams won more often than not, but sometimes there would be a losing streak, and they would lose game after game. His teammates would then implore Baba to have pity on their well-rubbed and sore pink noses and so then He would exercise His prerogative to call for any card He wanted.

After the next deal (and Baba often had the boys who were there, like Jimmy Khan, shuffle the cards for Him), Baba would look at His hand, decide what card was needed to win, and would then say, "Who's got the joker [or whatever card was required]?" Whoever had the card, even if they were on the other team, would then have to hand it to Baba. Baba would inspect His hand with a look of great calculation to select its most worthless card and would then throw it to the player who had given Him the card. With many people playing, there were often very few cards in one's hands so that having the joker was usually enough to ensure that you would win.

Meherwan recalls:

Baba would then, with a wide, beaming, happy smile on His face, toss His cards face up in the center of the circle with a

flourish and raise His hand making an “L” sign [for *La Risque*—meaning Baba’s team was going to win all the tricks], with His index finger vertical and at a right angle to the thumb, indicating His victory. Now the victory call “*Gbee-so*” [meaning “rub”] would be shouted out by the victors and it would be “rubbing the noses” for the losing team members. Baba would watch with a happy smile and childlike delight.

Baba was so endearingly sweet even in His “cheating” when He would ask for a card He required to win, that many were the times that all players patiently waited upon His pleasure to ask again. It was so much fun just watching Him play this game. Everyone enjoyed it, even the losers.

Meherwan recalls that his grandfather, Naoroji (Chanji’s brother, who helped Baba with the construction of His *Samadhi* [tomb] as its dome was too complicated for Pendu to handle), used to always make sure he was sitting in a position that would put him on the opposite team to Baba. The players would sit in a circle before Baba. Those on either side of His chair would be on the opposite team, and the people sitting next to them would be on Baba’s team and so on. Naoroji didn’t think anyone had noticed him doing this and was taken aback when his young grandson asked him about it. But then he explained that although being on the opposite team meant that he lost more often, in this game, the losers were really the winners because they got the opportunity to bow down and rub their noses before Baba.

Because the game was played so quickly, and because Baba could ask for cards, there were often loud accusations of cheating flying from player to player. It might be too much to say that the players became

rowdy, but they were certainly noisy and boisterous and there was a lot of laughing and good-natured arguing.

As I had many occasions to play La Risque with Baba, I became familiar with His special signs for the four honor cards. He would touch His heart for hearts. He would point to His index finger where a ring is worn to represent diamonds. He made a fist for a club, and He held His palm out and moved His hand like a spade digging in the ground for spades. Even these simple gestures were graceful and appealing.

Baba once mentioned that from two to ten, the cards represent evolution with the jack being the human form. For a king, He would point His index finger upward on both sides of His head indicating a crown. For a queen, He would move His hand forward in a straight line, signifying the spiritual path in which love (the female role) is essential. He would twirl His mustache to indicate a jack, and for an ace, He put one thumb up (which was also His sign for God or Highest of the High or the letter “A” depending on the context).

The king represented the Perfect Master, the ace, Paramatma. Baba once casually conveyed to the men mandali that the joker was the Avatar who jokes and juggles with all and is above all. That is why the joker, who can be on anyone’s level, can substitute for any card.

While playing cards, Baba would ask people to tell jokes. Once Harry Kenmore, a blind chiropractor from New York, who heard about Baba from Adele Wolkin, shared the following joke: Life is a game of cards—hearts when we meet, diamonds when engaged, clubs when married, and spades when we are gone. Baba laughed heartily and patted Harry on the knee to indicate His appreciation of the joke. It was really a great privilege to join Baba in these card games with moments of indescribable joy.

Sometimes, when there were large groups playing, it was even hard to tell who was on which side and almost everyone ended up rubbing their noses before Baba. When Kumar was there, he often would resist as Baba's twin nephews would try to physically force him to do it. Although Kumar was small, he was quite strong and his tussle with the hefty twins added to the general merriment.

His full name was Shatrughna Kumar Ghildial but Baba always referred to him simply as Kumar. He happened to live next door to a plot of land in Manjri Mafi, near Dehra Dun, which Baba had purchased in 1949. Kaikobad Dastur was sent to stay there in October of that year, and Kumar was asked to supervise the construction of the house being erected there as well as to provide meals for Kaikobad during his stay. Thus Kumar learned of Baba through this contact. When Baba and His companions arrived there during the New Life, Kumar had been asked to provide them with food as well.

As Eruch related the story, Kumar took longer than expected to bring the food from his home to the railway station where he had gone to meet Baba. Baba casually asked him, "Why late?" Kumar told Him that it was due to a slight misunderstanding on the part of his dear wife, Subhadra. She thought that the guests would want their food at Manjri Mafi, not at the train station, so with the intention of serving them steaming hot food, especially the rice, she hadn't started the food in time.

Baba expressed His happiness over the preparation of the rice but very casually He asked, "Did you feel perturbed over the delay? I hope you did not get angry with your wife." Kumar was surprised at such a personal question from someone he was meeting for the first time, but he already felt drawn to Baba and replied, "Yes, Baba, I did feel annoyed that the food was not ready in time." With a suggestive smile Baba

added, "Right. One should be particular about time. Did you admonish your wife for this? I hope you didn't hit her?" Kumar admitted, "In that mood of impatience I did strike her though very slightly." Hearing this, Baba pushed aside the plate of rice and conveyed with a grave look, "How can I eat food associated with ill feelings?"

Kumar was so taken aback that Baba wouldn't eat the food that he apologized and asked forgiveness. This was perhaps the first time in Kumar's life that he unhesitatingly expressed his regrets over a personal affair before a "stranger."

But this did not satisfy Baba. He said that only if Kumar promised never to hit his wife again would He partake of the food. He stretched out His hand, inviting Kumar to promise. Things were moving so speedily that Kumar's rebellious spirit had no chance to think. He placed his hand in Baba's as a token of affirmation. Baba looked pleased and started eating the food. A little later He took a morsel from His plate and offered it to Kumar, indicating that he should eat it. To the politically minded Kumar, such an act of intimacy was totally new, but he did not refuse it. Later Baba made Kumar promise not to hit anyone.

Kumar confirmed this story but suggested it had happened at a later date, not the very first time he was meeting Baba. But it has an interesting sequel and prequel. During the Second World War, when India was still ruled by the British, Kumar had been a revolutionary, fighting for his country's independence. He was imprisoned by the British. Considered a terrorist, he was not released when the war was over, as were many of the Congress Party who had cooperated with the British.

It seemed that Kumar was destined to languish in jail. So, although he was a staunch atheist who would laugh caustically at those who

prayed, one night the thought came to him that he should experiment with prayer and test God's existence. So he said to God:

Oh Mr. God, they say you are omnipresent and omnipotent. If you are really that, hear what I have to say, You can call it what you may, a request or a challenge. You know I am in jail for no fault of mine except my love for the motherland, India. I am a married person and my dear wife and family members have to suffer for nothing. If you are compassionate, or at least reasonable, I sincerely agree to abide by the following terms: if you effect my release from prison by tomorrow early morning, I shall accept your omnipresence. In that case, I assure you I will dedicate the rest of my life in your service. This is my promise to you. And, Mr. God, if I am freed any time after tomorrow morning, I shall treat this as chance or anything but your doing. In that case, I shall not be bound to you or to anyone to keep this promise.

Kumar knew that the jail office opened at 10 a.m. and that prisoners couldn't be discharged before that. However, since he had made an honest challenge, he felt he must play "fair" and started packing his belongings so that he would be ready to leave if called.

In the early hours, much before dawn, an officer came to his cell and handed him a note saying he must be ready to leave the prison shortly. He was immediately taken to the office where the superintendent was present. Kumar was surprised to see him there at such an unusual hour. The superintendent rifled through some papers and told Kumar he would be released immediately and he would have to wait outside the gates to collect his railway warrant, etc. No more explanation was given.

“What a humorist God must be,” Kumar thought. This release from prison before sunrise changed his outlook on life. And yet, with his return home, and the resumption of family life, he completely forgot about his promise to Mr. God. Some years later, Kumar met Baba and began to spend time with Him whenever he could. In 1954, Kumar was staying with Baba in Satara. While he was there, he was not supposed to leave the compound and Kumar began to feel as if he were in prison and that this life with Baba was not to his liking. One day, while walking with Baba (his job was to hold an umbrella over Baba’s head) Baba suddenly turned to Kumar and gestured, “Do you recall the promise that you gave Me?”

Kumar did not and Baba gestured that he was referring to Kumar’s promise to never hit his wife. Kumar assured Baba that he was keeping that promise. Baba looked pleased and said, “You have kept your promise. Good. I also kept my promise.”

Kumar didn’t understand what Baba meant. Baba gave Kumar a meaningful look and all of a sudden the incident that had remained dormant in his subconscious for about a decade flashed vividly before his mind as he recalled his challenge to God. He recounted the story to Baba and Baba smilingly gestured, “I am Mr. God.”

Kumar suddenly realized that he had promised God he would serve Him for the rest of his life, so to complain about being restricted to the compound in Satara was the height of hypocrisy. Kumar’s faith in Baba never wavered after that.

After my summer holidays were over, I would come to Guru Prasad on the weekends. Once, while I was there in July, Kumar was also staying at Guru Prasad with Baba. Kumar’s eldest son, Prashant, who was very

intelligent and was working in a mine near Belgaum, had come to visit Baba while his father was there. During his stay in Poona, Prashant unexpectedly fell sick. He was rushed to the hospital and received the best medical care possible. However, they found out that he had leukemia.

I knew that Prashant had come to see Baba, but I was not aware of his illness. One morning as I came in to the mandali's room, I greeted Kumar and he returned my greeting with a smile in his usual jovial manner. A little while later I learned from Nana Kher that Kumar's son had died the previous day, and Kumar had returned from the cremation in the evening. This was the first I knew about it. I was amazed that there was no outward expression on Kumar's face of what had transpired.

That morning, Baba came in to the mandali's room through the small slit of the door to the Hall. He would generally enter after opening the door only part way so that we would not see the women and the women would not see us. As He was walking over to His chair He looked at Kumar and asked, "How are you?"

Kumar replied, "Okay Baba."

By the time Baba had taken His seat He started gesturing, "You are saying 'Just fine.' I thought I would see you with a wreath of leaves around your head dancing like the tribal people with joy."

I could not understand what Baba meant. Then Baba continued, "Do you know how fortunate your son is?" Kumar just nodded. Then through gestures that Eruch translated, Baba explained that a day before He had kissed Eruch on his forehead and instructed him to visit the hospital and to kiss Prashant on his forehead. Baba had told Eruch, "Give My kiss to Kumar's son." After explaining all of this Baba ges-

tured, “What fortune for him to receive My kiss! I thought this would make you so happy that you would be dancing with joy.”

Kumar with a low voice said, “Baba you are right, but still I am a human being.”

Baba went on: “How will Subhadra, your wife, take this news? If you were to write her that your son was selected for a course in London and that he has gone there, would she feel happy? Would she not also feel his absence while he was away in London? But now when you send her a telegram of Prashant’s death, she will come and weep. You too feel the loss. It’s all in the mind. The mind plays us like toys.”

This was a lesson for not only Kumar, but for all those in the room. Once one comes into contact with Meher Baba, He holds one’s destiny in His hands and does what is best for that person. But because we are so limited, we cannot see this, nor can we see the larger ramifications of even small actions of Baba’s. So many thousands came to see Baba at Guru Prasad that summer. Each one, no doubt, has a story to tell about it, a story whose true meaning they might not even understand for years or, in some cases, lifetimes. As an example of this, I am including a story that Rama Rao wrote about one of the darshan programs that he and friends of his attended that summer in Guru Prasad:

In 1959, when Baba gave darshan in Guru Prasad, Raghavulu, Santosh Gosh and I, who all worked together, came, along with Gosh’s mother. Like many Bengalis, she had the firm conviction that God could only be in the form of Ramakrishna Paramhansa, or Aurobindo or some other saintly person from Bengal. Her son was devoted to Baba but the whole time we were traveling she was thinking, “Baba isn’t a Bengali, and he isn’t even a Hindu. He’s a Parsi. He cannot give me *diksha* [spiritual initiation].”

But after Baba embraced her, she was filled with so much happiness that she declared, “My life’s aim is fulfilled.” Two years later, Baba again was giving darshan but this time she couldn’t come because of health problems. Gosh told his mother, “Ma, Baba will be with you here,” and then he left for Guru Prasad. He had Baba’s darshan at 5:30 p.m. and at that same time his mother experienced Baba coming to where she was sitting and saying in Bengali, “I am the slave of My lovers.” When Gosh returned, his mother told him, “Baba came here and Baba was with me. I don’t want anything more, but I want diksha.”

She died three years later and Baba sent Gosh a letter saying: “Those who breathe their last with Baba’s name in their heart, never die, but live forever in the Beloved. Your mother is blessed to have come to Baba.” And because she was from Bengal, Baba added a reference to Rabindranath Tagore: “I stand under the golden canopy of thine evening and lift my eager eyes to thy face. I have come to the brink of eternity from which nothing can vanish—no hope, no happiness, no vision of a face seen through tears.”

On July 16th, when Baba was alone with His mandali, He told us:

Now I feel so tired that I feel like going to sleep for 700 years. What do you understand when I say that I am tired? It is beyond human understanding. How tiresome would it be for the wisest of all, to be the most foolish of all. This may give you some idea of how much I feel tired. There is no wiser being in the whole world and in all the worlds than Me and the act that I personally perform is one which no fool would ever do. What’s

(BABA CONTINUES)

that foolish act? The Creation. When I see you, gems and pearls, My lovers and devotees, simultaneously I see the world and the planes, I tell Myself, "What a fool You are!"

Also during July, Prem Khilnani came back to see Baba again. He had seen Baba right before Baba left for the States in 1958 and Baba had told him to come back the next year. He told Baba about his search for the Truth and his attraction to Aurobindo. As his wife recounts:

Meher Baba looked at him with compassionate eyes and a beautiful smile spread across His face. He told Prem that he was aware of Prem's eternal quest and told him that he had now reached his destination. During that darshan when Prem asked if he should proceed to Pondicherry, Baba said, "Now that you have got what you are looking for, there is no need to go elsewhere." Baba told him to come often.

Thus began Prem's and his family's many years of association with the Avatar.

Whenever Baba's stay at Guru Prasad came to an end (this year on August 8th), the Jessawala family would be called to help clean up.

Manu says:

On the last day of Baba's Guru Prasad stay that summer, my family and I were called as usual to help pack up the bungalow. After Baba and the mandali left we would generally pack up everything and hand over the bungalow to the manager. It was

quite a big task to move the household back to Meherazad again, not to mention packing away all the crockery, furniture and things of the Maharani's that were used during Baba's stay. Early that morning, Baba was in the mandali's room and called my family to see Him. He embraced my mother and said to her, "Don't worry." Suddenly Mumma burst out crying. She began to weep, and kneeling before Baba she put her head in His lap, as He caressed her very sweetly. Baba then asked her, "What is on your mind?"

"Baba, Eruch is behaving very strangely these days. He is so brusque with You and I can't bear the sight of it. I feel he will become Your Judas." Mumma was under a lot of strain from Pappa's passing and now Baba's departure to Meherazad was making her very sad and low. Eruch was so busy that she hardly saw him.

Baba then called Eruch into the room to hear what Mumma was saying. Eruch was very exasperated because he had so much work to do to pack up his office and many other things. He said to Baba, "This is not the time for this, Baba. I do not know what has come over Mumma. I have so many things to do."

"Light a match to all those other things. This is more important than anything else. Let it go and come here." In obedience to Baba, Eruch came closer. Baba had Mumma repeat again what she told Baba.

Baba then said to Mumma, "You mustn't feel like that. Eruch is My Peter—he is my right hand. Don't worry about him. How fortunate you are to have such a son." Baba, continuing to console her, said, "Be brave and know I am always with you.

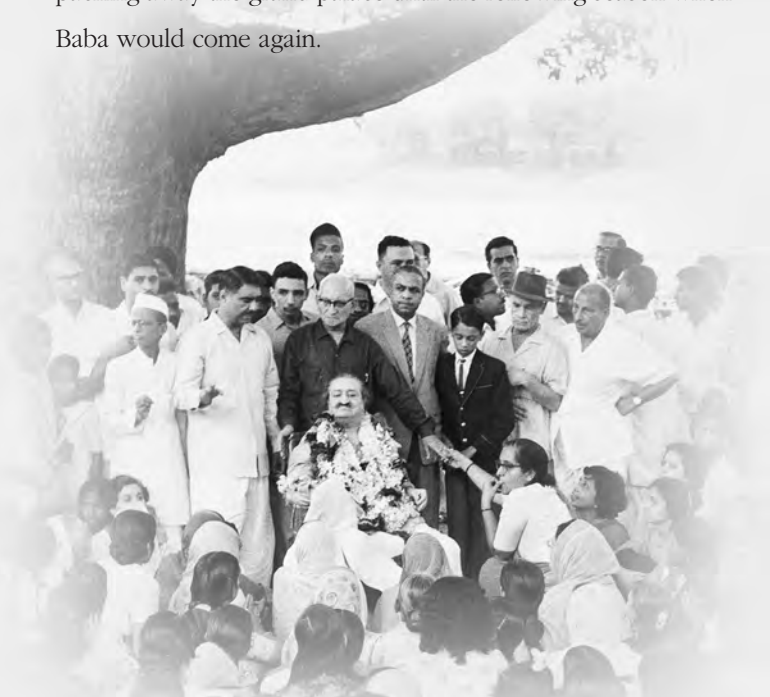
(MANU CONTINUES)

I will soon call you to Meherazad, so do not worry or be sad in the least." That consoled Mumma and soon all her sadness left her.

Once all was packed and ready to go, Baba and the mandali got into the blue Chevy, driven by Adi, and headed out of Poona toward Meherazad. As they would often do before leaving, Baba stopped at Bund Garden with a few of the men. The women went ahead in another car to the other side of the bridge to wait for Baba there. Baba sat underneath the big mango tree in the garden, where Babajan used to sit. Many of the Poona lovers were allowed to come and bid Baba farewell. We all gathered round, singing Baba's artis and savoring those last moments with Him until the next summer.

Baba then got back into the Chevy, lovingly waving to us all as He drove off over the bridge. He then got into the car with the women mandali and headed on to Meherazad. My family and I would return to Guru Prasad and finish the last bit of packing away the grand palace until the following season when Baba would come again.

Gathering in
Bund Garden
before leaving
Poona





1960

Baba resting in
the vestibule of
Guru Prasad

In November 1959, I had come to visit Baba at Meherazad. As I was leaving, I heard someone call my name. It was Rano who said that Baba wanted to know whether I would be able to come for a ten-day stay at the end of January. Naturally, I said I would come.

In early January 1960, I received a letter from Meherazad in which Beloved Baba asked me again if I could conveniently come. This latter condition was not unusual for Baba to add. He often invited people to attend darshan or sahavas programs but only if they could do so conveniently, without it interfering with their work or family responsibilities or without forcing them to incur financial burdens. In my case, none of these obstacles was present so I immediately conveyed my acceptance and gratitude to Baba for His compassionate call.

I stayed at Meherazad in the second half of January. While I was there, I learned that Francis Brabazon's birthday was on the twenty-fourth. I happened to mention that my birthday was on the same day. I decided that if Beloved Baba celebrated Francis's birthday, I would take the opportunity to re-dedicate my life to Him on that day as well. I also decided to write some free verses to be offered to Him. I composed them on the evening of the twenty-third. Feramji Workingboxwala generously agreed to type them up for me. Feram was an early disciple who was also a stenographer. He lived in the Trust Compound for many years and did a lot of work for Adi. He also was the one who helped translate and typed Bhau's original Hindi biography of Baba, *Meher Prabhu*, into English.

The next morning, on the twenty-fourth, when I entered the hall, I asked Baba if I could read out what I had written on the occasion of my birthday.

"Oh, is it your birthday?" Baba asked innocently. Then He said, "Yes, read them out."

Dedication

This is the day, O Baba!
 When I got this body from You.
 This is the day, O Beloved!
 When I dedicate this body to You.

In Baba's "NOW"
 The wave of my mind once surged;
 Now to the Divine Ocean
 It moves on to merge.

What a tragedy, so long
 I did not feel the Intimate One;
 What a comedy of life;
 How I meet the Infinite One.

Age after age
 This earth as You trod;
 This body and mind
 Ever placed at Your Call.

Salutations to Thee! With all my heart
 Confer courage, to play my part.
 In You I was born, in You I must live;
 Enough of this drift, from hive to hive.

Just a place in some corner
 Whenever You come;
 Yes I beg of You
 A little space, from the Spaceless One.

May I be honored,
 May I be stoned;
 Will hold on to Thy Daaman
 Till the very end.

I put my entire being at Your Feet,
 To the extent I understand what keeping is!
 You invite participation from one and all;
 Without anyone's response,
 On goes Your Call.

This is just a beginning;
 A prelude to beginning;
 A journey that will end,
 In the endless Beginning.

To ask anything of You
 Is to express ingratitude.
 To withhold anything from You
 Is the hypocritical attitude.

Call me anything, call me a fool!
 It is all well, whatever You choose.
 Everything is possible, if You will so:
 Anything is impossible if You wish so.

On your Infinite Self
 The three worlds appear just as a dot;
 Of what use this “faltu” be
 Who is next to naught?

Your wish be my life,
 Your Life my song;
 Just a look, that I am Yours;
 Nothing more I long.

After I read out these lines, Baba embraced me. Then Baba turned in His chair and gave me a copy of “The Master’s Prayer” as a birthday present. I stood to receive it and was very touched by the gift. It was signed by Mani with the inscription, “From the mandali to Bal.” Mani

* “Faltu” means something or someone who is good-for-nothing. Worthless. Baba would sometimes use this term to refer to people and it made a nice play on my name, Bal Natu.

must have come up with this gift on the spur of the moment, but it was a real treat because Baba gave it to me. The prayers have been very important to me ever since. During my times at Meherazad and Guru Prasad I had the good fortune to be present when Baba stood and participated in the prayers as Eruch read them out.

Once, the thought came to me, "I wonder if I will ever get a chance to say the prayers for Baba." Of course, I never mentioned this to Baba, nor did He ever bring up the subject. But, as usual, He arranged events so that the pure longing in one's heart can be fulfilled in a very natural way. So, one time while I was staying at Meherazad, Baba was in Kaka Baria's room when He suddenly decided He wanted to perform the prayers. Eruch was not around at the moment and Baba wondered, "But who will read out the prayers?"

"I know the prayers, Baba," I volunteered. "I can say them out."

"Good," Baba gestured. "Do so."

And thus, my unspoken wish was fulfilled. In such little ways, Baba would bring me closer and closer to Him.

During this visit, Eruch had to attend to some important Baba work in Poona. Thus, it fell to me to read out and respond to the English correspondence. Two letters I read out have stayed with me. They give an indication of the sort of correspondence Baba would attend to.

In one, a young man wrote that he had been invited for lunch by the wife of a friend. When he sat at the table, the woman astonished and distressed him by closing the door and asking him to have promiscuous relations with her. She said if the man refused, she would claim that he had molested her. The man didn't know what to do. He thought of Baba and then fell at the woman's feet, addressed her as "Mother" and begged her forgiveness for not being able to comply with

her request. This mollified her and she let him go without making accusations. Baba seemed very happy to hear that this man had remembered Him in the midst of his crisis and He asked me to write a letter to that effect.

Another young man wrote a letter confessing to his many failings. He drank, smoked, and went with women. In fact, he practically sent a list of sins he was committing. When I finished reading the letter, I noticed a compassionate glow on Baba's face. He pointed to His ear, signifying, "I've heard." Then Baba rubbed one hand over the other indicating, "The slate has been wiped clean." Baba gestured, "Tell him I have heard his letter and that he shouldn't worry about the past. But now he should not repeat any of those actions."

As I jotted this down, the thought came to me that it would be almost impossible for such a man to break all his habits at once. Knowing human weakness, Baba added, "Tell him to try, and I will help him."

Also during this time, I read out to Baba a draft of the discourse on the "Purposelessness of the Infinite" from *The Everything and The Nothing*. Baba also dictated to me another discourse for inclusion in that book entitled "Three Types of Knowledge." I then typed it up and read it out to Baba for corrections. I also remember reading out a letter from Eruch to Baba, and writing a reply as well. This struck me as funny since it was such a reversal of our more usual roles.

It was also during this time that Baba one day recited some couplets from the poet Dagh. A very loose translation renders those lines as:

*Since coming to you, I have become a good-for-nothing fellow.
The first lesson you taught me
has made me forget everything else I had learned.*

*But one thing you have given me
is more precious than anything else,
for you have awakened in me the longing for God.*

Although I didn't think of it then, these experiences gave me a little more practice in writing in English. I think it was also during this time that I wrote my first article for Baba, which was published in *The Awakener* (Vol. 7, No. 1). It was about the Hamirpur Fair and I read it out to Baba. I chose to include in it Baba's quote, "I have only love to give and all I want is love." Baba was pleased with it.

As had now become the custom, Baba came to Guru Prasad for the summer, arriving this year on March 20th. In addition to the usual mandali, Elcha Mistry accompanied Baba as well. Elcha was from Simla and was affectionately known as Baba's "court jester" because of his unending supply of jokes and tall tales, which amused Baba greatly. Harry Dedolchow appeared that same day with a suitcase full of gifts for Baba. Harry was a merchant marine who had found out about Baba in 1955 in San Francisco. Around that time he started attending Sufism Reoriented meetings and became acquainted with Ivy Duce, Don Stevens, and the Harbs.

Harry's boat often docked in Calcutta, and he would write to see if he could travel across India to see Baba. Finally, in 1959, Baba said that he could come to Meherazad to see Him, but only for five minutes. Naturally, Harry jumped at the opportunity. He returned a few months later, bringing two suitcases of gifts, mostly medicine, whiskey, and cigarettes for the mandali. This became his habit, bringing gifts each time he came to visit.

Harry's gifts figured prominently in a story Eruch would often tell about himself. As a Zoroastrian, he never smoked. But Baba had always told the mandali to keep *masts* in good humor and to honor any gift they gave you. So when a *mast* gave Eruch a cigarette, he took a few puffs on it to please him. Over time, he developed the habit of smoking and became, in his words, "a chimney."

When pilgrims would flock around Eruch and express their envy of the fact that he got to be by Baba's side so often, he would often deflect this by observing the irony that often he was only thinking about when he could get away from Baba so he could go have a cigarette. One day Meherwan Mistry, when he was still a small boy, asked Eruch when he was going to stop smoking. Eruch looked up from what he was doing and saw Meherwan with both his knees scabbed as usual from his non-stop roughhousing, and spontaneously said something to the effect of, "When you grow up and stop playing mischief all the time."

This seemed to satisfy Meherwan who went off to play, which satisfied Eruch who had, as always, a lot of work to attend to. The years passed and Eruch continued to smoke. Then one day Meherwan came to visit as a young man, nicely dressed and all grown up. He had remembered the conversation and said, something to the effect of, "Well, I'm not playing mischief anymore." This brought back the conversation to Eruch, who took the cigarette out of his mouth, and stubbed it out with the intention of never smoking again.

But not long after that, who should arrive but Harry with a suitcase full of cartons of different brands of cigarettes which he had picked up as he sailed from port to port in different countries. With a twinkle in His eye, as if He didn't have any idea of what was going on, Baba called Eruch to come and admire Harry's presents. Eruch's heart sank because he would

have loved to try the different brands but now he couldn't have any of them. Baba seemed surprised at Eruch's lack of enthusiasm and kept prodding him until he blurted out the whole story about his having given up smoking. This was "news" to Baba but was probably one of the reasons He took such delight in having Harry display his gifts in the first place.

Roshan Kerawala recalls Harry would come before baby Mehera was born (which would have made it before he had met Baba):

He used to bring me a jar of raspberry jam. In India it was very difficult to find raspberry jam so one summer I made raspberry jam ice cream [for Baba] but I didn't know they would freeze up, and He spit those little raspberries out which had become hard as stone and said, "What kind of ice cream is this?"

It was delicious no doubt, but it obviously didn't appeal to Baba. Baba ate ice cream in a nice big mug; it shouldn't be transparent so you could see how much was in it. He wouldn't have much Himself and after having what he wanted, he would say for us to share it and so the whole household would get a teaspoon, which I put on each one's hand like prasad. Even the food, he would take a nice quantity but eat little and with what was left over, he would say, "Have it as My prasad."

I arrived for my six-week stay at Guru Prasad in May as usual. Generally, if the hall happened to be full of people, I would quietly slip into the back. Baba would continue with His conversation and wouldn't seem to notice or acknowledge my arrival. But what few others were aware of was that when I entered the hall, Baba would quickly touch His left arm (His sign for Pendu), jerk a thumb towards the door and then

make a quick gesture as for milking a cow. The whole sequence took a second or two at most, and I am sure that few in the hall even noticed these gestures or understood them. But the meaning was quite clear to me. Baba was saying, “Pendū, Bal has arrived; order milk for him.” In this quiet, almost secretive fashion, Baba made me feel welcomed and close to Him.

Almost immediately upon arriving, Baba asked me to take notes of the things He said during the small darshan programs, which were being held almost every weekend. Baba said that He might have the *bukki* [whim] to give some explanations and that I should write them down as much as I could.

This was hard to do because I was not trained as a stenographer and Baba’s conversations took place very quickly. In addition, I knew that Baba often used Gujarati words as well as English, Marathi, and Hindi during such programs. But I did my best, jotting things down as fast and completely as I could. Each evening, I would try to decipher my notes and write them up more fully. Though I was writing at Baba’s instruction, I did not read out my notes to Him. My best recollection is that He might have heard one or two days’ entries and told me, “You and Francis work on them.” I never did work on them with Francis, but I gave my notes to Eruch, and he and Francis edited them further. A title for these notes came to me, which Francis liked, and it was used years later when they published the greater portion of the edited notes as *Darshan Hours*, some of which are repeated here. As always, if there are mistakes, they are my errors.

The following stories and fragments are taken directly from my diary, and from the notes Pukar took in April before I arrived. [See Editors’ Preface for information about Bal’s diaries.] It should be

noted that even though there are dates given throughout, sometimes fragments from different days were combined to make a more complete discourse. It was typical of Baba that certain themes would come up, and Baba might refer to a certain subject over a period of days, sometimes repeating what had been said earlier, sometimes modifying or extending previous remarks.

This is one reason why some of the discourses seem so much more polished than others. But even when Baba was spontaneously giving a mini discourse and the end result seemed fragmentary or confusing, in Baba's presence the ambiguity of the language was dissolved, and with the help of His incredibly vivid facial expressions, much more meaning was conveyed at the time than can be apprehended by merely reading the hastily scribbled notes.

Part of this was because of Baba's undeniable authority. With Baba, it seemed there was no such thing as thinking about what to say. Rather Baba merely expressed Knowledge. In 1958, when reporters in the United States asked Baba a question about what He thought about a certain subject, Baba responded, "I don't think, I know."

Baba was active Infinite Consciousness and, as such, every spontaneous utterance was imbued with Knowledge, or Truth that transcend language. Even Baba's gestures were profoundly eloquent.

Because Baba had asked me to take notes, I put much more emphasis on Baba's talks rather than on the lively and intimate give and take which occurred to a far greater extent. This might give the wrong impression because it was not Baba's way at all to simply sit and give out discourses. But I think that even though the following account is largely filled with Baba's talks, nonetheless something of the general flavor of these gatherings comes through.

Of course, it is impossible to adequately convey what it was like to be in Baba's company at any time. The atmosphere around Baba was so charged with His presence that even the most ordinary and mundane events seemed filled with significance. At Guru Prasad, we had the rare opportunity to be with Baba in a variety of settings, listening to a spiritual explanation, hearing stories and jokes, seeing Baba's concern for individuals, dealing with groups, playing cards, etc. Things changed so rapidly that each moment tended to stand out, like a single frame of a movie.

Mani, in her inimitable way, captures something of this kaleidoscopic nature in her Family Letter of April:

Greetings to you from Guruprasad, which has reawakened to throbbing life after its winter sleep of Baba's absence....

The hours from 9 to 11 each morning are devoted to the devoted ones coming from "out-stations," i.e., from places other than Poona and Bombay. And so it is a daily familiar sight to see groups of men, women and children sitting by the gate, having arrived impatiently early but happy to patiently wait for the signal to come in to Baba. These Baba-pilgrims wend their way from all parts and distances, their focus being their beloved Guru at Guruprasad. Now it is a batch from Calcutta (Bengal), about fifty strong including toddlers and babes in arms; and a group from Jubbulpore (Central India) and from Hamirpur in the north where Baba's name is a perennial prayer in many a heart and home. It includes a bride and groom to whom the reality of His darshan had been a cherished dream, and who have used their hard-earned savings to come to Baba for the honeymoon stay. Baba told us He was touched by the simplicity of their hearts filled with His Love. He asked them how long they intended to stay in Poona, and they replied simply "As long as our last penny lasts." At times one

can make a long journey without knowing the actual goal one is destined for. This is what happened in the case of a pundit of Badrinarayan Temple in the Himalayas, who came with his wife and son to Bombay to obtain the best medical treatment for his boy who has polio. Stopping at the Dharmashala (Inn) by the Poona Station, he met some Baba lovers from Hamirpur who were putting up at that Inn during their stay in Poona. Hearing Baba's Name he felt drawn and asked them who He was. "The Avatar of the Age," they told him. He wanted to hear more and more about Him, and begged to accompany them during "Guruprasad time" next morning. When he took Baba's darshan Baba said, "I am in everyone and in everything. I am everywhere and everything. For years you have worshipped Me in the Badrinarayan Temple—worshipping the image of stone. Today you are blessed to have the opportunity of My darshan in this physical form." The pundit seemed deeply touched, and left with Baba in his heart and a number of Baba-books and photos in his trunk. Incidentally, later while out in the crowded area of the city, his wad of currency notes (his entire travelling store of money) was stolen by a pickpocket, leaving him desperately stranded. Baba lovers helped him thru his embarrassing predicament, financially and otherwise....

The "locals" (i.e., those from Poona and Bombay) have their day too. Every other Sunday the majestic capacity of Guruprasad is tested and found wanting in accommodating the thousands that file in to place their heads on Baba's feet and receive His blessings of Love and prasad. As usual the children were seldom deprived of this opportunity, and it never failed to fascinate us to see a babe-in-arms placed at (or even on) His feet for its share of the darshan—sometimes a mother placing

(MANI CONTINUES)

the baby on Baba's lap so she could untangle the skein in her garland of fresh flowers to be placed round His neck and receive His embrace unencumbered by her fair burden. Baba, the universal Father and Mother, seemed to enjoy thus finding Himself Baby-sitter of the moment, and His smile would pour great tenderness on these tiny darshaners. ...

As usual at these strenuous occasions, Baba was looking beautifully radiant. I don't think we will ever get used to the wonder of seeing Him give so abundantly of Himself, whatever the state of His health, whatever the consequent strain. But then of course He has come to "give," and perhaps some day we will learn to take what He has come to give, instead of eternally asking of Him that which we think we need and want—and which, sadly, He often gives us until at long last we may be ready to receive the only thing that matters, from the only One who can give.

During our Poona stay this summer, there were also two other important anniversaries, of special significance to us at Guruprasad: the First Birthday of two baby Baba lovers at Bindra House, the home of Eruch's deeply devoted family. [The two babies Mani refers to were Mehera Kerawalla and Merwan Mehta.—Eds.] The part best enjoyed by each birthday-child was the sweet drink and savoury that they sucked from the end of Baba's proffered finger, and Baba was hugely delighted at their puckered up faces when they felt the prick of His moustache on their cheeks where He had implanted a firm kiss.¹²

In a small group, just after I arrived for my visit, Baba referred to some lines of the Sufi poet Bidal: "It is not easy to come out of the self-created labyrinth of Maya. It is like a heavy *mabemil* [saddle or seat] of stone



Baba at Bindra House with Roshan and baby Mehera Kerawalla, young Merwan Mehta and his mother, Meheru Mehta; Banumasi looks on

on the back of the camel, which he is unable to throw off. So also a huge load of ignorance [heavy *sanskaras* (impressions)] is placed on the shoulder of the tiny spark (self). YOU are the tiny spark. But how can you remove the load? Only the Perfect Master can throw off the load and the tiny spark bursts into flames.”

Pointing to His navel, Baba said:

Consider this as the creation point. Out of this came forth the entire creation. Here the stomach may be represented as the Infinite Godhood in God's beyond beyond state. The navel may represent the creation point. The entire universe came forth through this creation point. To stretch the simile, it descends through the left leg. There are seven steps in the descent—stone, metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird, animal and at the left toe manifests the human form. In between the legs is the jumble and fumble. Ignorance, illusion, Maya—all are here in between the legs.

Pointing to the sex organ, Baba said:

Here is the entire world of illusion. These central human parts are the Mayavic centers, coming in the way of the ascent process. After innumerable incarnations in illusion, the human being catches hold of the right toe—the first step to the ladder of ascent. There are seven steps of ascent. Here in the symbolic explanation, the hip joint of the right leg is the sixth step, the sixth plane of consciousness. When the seventh step is reached, the state of infinite Godhood represented by the stomach, the spark gets blown off and becomes an ocean of fire.

In another discussion later, Baba said, in relation to the Sufi term *guman* [suspense: lit. supposition, conjecture, doubt, or suspicion]:

You say, “I am a man.” Your belief, “I am a man,” is ignorance because in reality you are God. The actual experience of “I am God,” is real Knowledge. Ignorance is a belief in something that does not exist. Heresay is ignorance.

What is suspense? If there was only ignorance, there would have been no problem. In between ignorance and knowledge there is suspense—suspense is necessary. [Suspense here means an inclination or desire to understand.] Ignorance linked with suspense is misery (guman). But had there been no suspense there would not have been knowledge of ignorance. Because of suspense, ignorance gets wiped off.

Literally there is no burden save of ignorance. So your attitude towards Mayavic ignorance should be to “laugh it out” and remember Me.

On the following day, Baba told us, “When I hear a piece of exquisite music the burden of Universal work gets a wee bit lightened.”

Baba asked one of His lovers what he had had for breakfast and lunch. The lover listed out the items. Baba said:

If you were able to have a taste of Me you would find that real enjoyment lies in a drop gulping the Ocean Itself. I am the Ocean of Love. It is not a matter of whitewashing the mind. The mind itself has to be washed off—annihilated. Love also can accomplish this. What makes this possible? Merging in God through continual wholehearted remembrance of God. The other alternative is My Grace. You have tasted so many things, but you have not yet tasted Me as Love.

A few days later, we were all sitting around in the mandali’s room with Baba. There was a man who had come for Baba’s darshan, who was in the

habit of practicing some *sadhana* [spiritual discipline]. While sitting there, he told Baba about his dreams wherein he found himself flying in the air. He asked Baba very inquisitively, “Has this any special meaning spiritually?”

Baba replied, “What meaning! Only that of a dream! We see the birds flying. What does that mean spiritually? In ancient times some yogis were so powerful that they could fly like birds. For the lovers of God such things are neither important nor essential.”

Baba asked if those sitting before Him had had such dreams. Some hands were raised. Baba then said to us all, “Such dreams are not uncommon.” Pointing to Pukar, Baba smilingly remarked, “Even such a plump person can fly in a dream! What a wonder!”

Baba continued:

Whether you walk on water or fly in the air, may it be in a dream as you had, or in the normal awake state as the ancient yogis did, give these things no spiritual meaning, or very little meaning—worth ignoring.

Before the Real Seeing is revealed, one gets many experiences on the Path. If not rightly valued, these experiences prove very alluring and deceptive too. If one starts feeling proud about one’s flight in a dream, how much pride will the experiences on the Path nourish! One has to be very watchful about the tricks of the ego which tries to maintain its separateness from others. One thing is certain, the more importance and attention you pay to such experiences, the more you get bound! Don’t run after these experiences, but remain steadfast in your love for God. Continue with your *sadhana*! Pay no heed to anything except love. Try honestly to love God and you will realize that, except love, all other things are meaningless.

Baba's explanation had a deep impact on all present. I, too, had previously been impressed by such dreams of my own, and Baba thus helped me to understand their correct place in spiritual life. I later learned that dreams in which the Master or the God-Man appears, however, belong to a different category altogether and have a special importance. It is said that some spirits can assume any form in order to trick people. However, a God-realized Master revealed to one of His lovers in a dream that it is beyond the power of any spirit, good or bad, to assume the form of the Master, even in a dream. Nor is the Master or Avatar's appearance a product of the dreamer's thoughts; rather, it is a gift of His unbounded grace.

Avatar Meher Baba's appearance in the dreams of His lovers holds its own significance. It purifies all levels of the mind, even those not necessarily known to the dreamer, and guides one to be more receptive to what He wishes to give us in our lives with Him. I still find dreams fascinating, but after Baba's explanation, I no longer try to interpret them.

Later, on this same day, Baba asked, "Where is God?" Someone replied, "God is in everyone and everything—in every particle of dust." Baba said:

Is not this mere book knowledge? Is this your experience? Perhaps even a child can make such statements. So unless you have the experience, it is useless to make such statements. If you are really keen about the Truth, begin to try to meditate with love on the Divine Form of your choice, or remember the Name of God wholeheartedly. Then, with the Master's Grace, a fortunate one sees God face to face, in everyone and everything, far more clearly and intimately than you see the things in this room now with your physical eyes.

Around this time, while giving darshan Baba allowed a sculptor to take a cast of His feet. There is an interesting story behind this event. When Baba had visited Andhra in 1953 and 1954, He had touched the heart of Kodury Krishna Rao. Kodury Krishna Rao was a well-off businessman who believed in doing charitable deeds such as feeding the poor. This sort of generalized spirituality was given a more direct focus after he met Baba. His daughter-in-law convinced him that he should build a temple for Meher Baba in Kovvur where he lived. Being wealthy, he had hired B.V. Talim to sculpt a statue of Baba to grace the inner sanctum of the temple. Talim was well known in Maharashtra and had created the statue of Sai Baba that was above his tomb in Shirdi. There had been a lot of correspondence about this temple, and Baba, through Eruch, had tried gently to dissuade them from building it.

When such efforts proved futile, Baba finally consented but only upon certain conditions being met. One of these was the installation of messages, similar to the ones Baba had insisted upon at Meher Dham in Nauranga. [See Appendix C, page 750] Once Baba's approval had been given, and the okay for a statue was granted, it behooved Kodury Krishna Rao to see to it that the statue was as lifelike as possible. To this end, he had engaged Talim, and it was further suggested that a cast of Baba's feet and hands be made.

Talim's son, Harish, arrived at Guru Prasad to undertake this task. Baba ended up sitting on the verandah for several hours while the casts of His feet were made. Baba also permitted many measurements of His head to be taken so that the representation would be realistic.

Baba once remarked that He was the slave of the love of His lovers. For the sake of their love, He permitted all this. Not only that, but when it

came time to inaugurate the temple in 1963, Baba sent a number of people to represent Him, including Shantadevi, the Maharani of Baroda, Adi K. Irani, and me. He also encouraged his Bombay lovers to attend as well.

Only one or two went. That summer when they came to Guru Prasad for their annual visit, Baba called them to Him as soon as they arrived and greeted them in a fiery mood. He demanded to know why they hadn't gone to the inauguration as He had suggested.

The Bombay lovers were taken aback. Nargish Dadachanji (Roda and Arnavaz's sister) said something about not being well as she had a heart condition, and she didn't think she could have undertaken the journey. Baba told her curtly that it would have been better for her if she had died following His orders. Another said, "But Baba, we knew you weren't going to be there so why should we have gone?" Baba replied, "It's because I was so much there that I wanted all of you to be there as well."

Then Baba turned to Roda Mistry. Roda had, naturally, wanted to go once Baba had suggested it, but she had three small boys to take care of and didn't see how she could leave Jimmy, who worked all day, to take care of them alone. She also knew that in a few months Baba would be in Poona and then she would be able to see him frequently. Baba said, "And you," gesturing to Roda, "were afraid of your husband."

All Roda could do was fold her hands, bow her head and confess it was her mistake. When Baba suggested that the Bombay group attend the celebrations of His 1952 and 1954 visits to Hamirpur, so many from Bombay went that they ended up renting an entire railway carriage for the group.

5TH & 6TH APRIL

During the 5th and 6th of April, Baba went into a detailed explanation about His silence and knowledge and ignorance:

(BABA EXPLAINS)

When an atom is split great energy is released. Likewise the breaking of My Silence may be remotely likened to the splitting of the Word. So when the Word is split through utterance, infinite wisdom will be released.

The moment an atom bomb strikes the earth, great upheaval takes place through devastation in a vast area. So when that WORD will strike the universe as I break My Silence, there will be material destruction but along with it, a great upheaval will occur through spiritual upliftment.

I play a dual role of knowledge and ignorance simultaneously being at both the levels of high and low. So even when I know that certain things will happen in a month, I chalk out plans as if that thing will not occur for years to come and vice versa.

In knowledge there is ignorance: I am Infinite Knowledge, as such I know what is to happen after hundreds of years and yet I say, "It will happen within a few years." And that which is to happen definitely within a few years I say, "It will happen after a hundred years." Why? How? Such is the ignorance of the All-Knowing One. I promise a person God-realization tomorrow but simultaneously I know that he requires hundreds more births. In the act of promising, ignorance is manifested. It is difficult to grasp how I, as the Highest of the High, can be so ignorant! How can you imagine My state of being simultaneously on and between the highest and lowest levels of consciousness? From the highest level I know everything, but on the rest of the levels I do not "know" anything. I am just as one of you. Being Avatar, I do not act but become everything as every thing.

When you say, “I do not know swimming,” the implication is, “I know that I do not know swimming.” Were I not to know that I do not know swimming, how else could I have this understanding? I know that I do not know; this is knowledge of ignorance. So even on the gross plane and in ordinary circumstances, knowledge and ignorance are simultaneously manifested.

Dnyan (Knowledge) is beyond the mind (and it permeates even through the limitations of the mind). In Knowledge is included ignorance, as the knowledge of ignorance. But not vice versa. So, a *dnyani* can also be an *adnyani* [ignorant] but not vice versa. I am God and man as the Eternal God-Man and as such I am the supreme *Dnyani* and the first rate *Adnyani* simultaneously. I step down to all levels of consciousness to make Myself available to all saints and sinners, so that they may become Me (Knowledge Itself).

Baba then explained a chart He had made. I drew a diagram of this chart in my diary and it is reproduced on the next page.

- A. Drops with three layers of covering:
 - 1. Physical body
 - 2. Energy body
 - 3. Mental Body
- B. Drops with two layers of covering:
 - 1. Energy body
 - 2. Mental body
- C. Drops with one layer of covering:
 - 1. Mental body

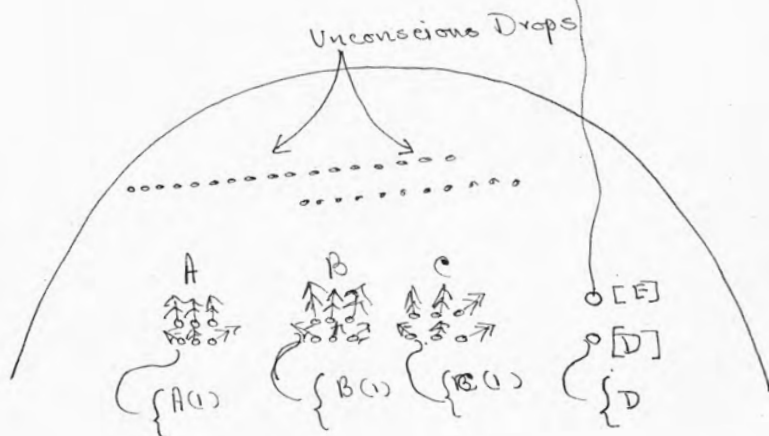
(E) Perfect Master.

Universal body of ^{the} Perfect Master in which all physical bodies are.

Body of Energy of the Perfect Master in which all energy bodies are.

Universal mental body of the Perfect Master in which all mental bodies are.

Universal Physical Body
Body of Energy
Universal Mental Body



21st April
Kashmir '60

D. Drop which sees Itself as Ocean

E. Universal Physical Body, Body of Energy, Universal Mental body

A. Such a drop sees only its physical body and the physical bodies of others. It cannot see its own energy body or mental body, or those of others. It cannot see the Ocean.

B. Such a drop sees only its own energy body and the energy bodies of others. It cannot see its own physical body or mental body, or those of others. It cannot see the Ocean.

C. Such a drop sees only its own mental body and the mental bodies of others. It cannot see its own physical body or energy body, or those of others. It cannot see the Ocean. But at its full development it also sees the Ocean.

D. Such a drop sees itself as Ocean and cannot see its own physical, energy or mental bodies, or those of others. A God-absorbed one who does not revert to gross consciousness.

E. Perfect Master has a Universal body in which are all physical bodies. Perfect Master has a Body of Energy in which are all energy bodies. Perfect Master has a Universal Mental body in which are all mental bodies.

7TH APRIL

To a group of lovers from Andhra, Baba said:

Why do you bring these fruit baskets and chocolate tins? Better you come with empty hands but, of course, not with empty hearts. The garlands and other offerings are not necessary. Now you sit in My living presence, there is a possibility that your thoughts are diverted towards the garlands and other offerings

(BABA CONTINUES)

you have brought. I have to sign, “Garland Baba and be free of the botheration.”

You bring these things, but rarely do I taste them and, if so, just a little. So I have to distribute the things, sweets, etc. amongst the mandali.

With a twinkle in His eye and with His typical sense of humor Baba continued: “When the mandali eat these things, I get a stomachache. So why not come without any offerings except the love you have in your hearts?”

The topic changed and some lovers expressed a desire that while meeting them during darshan hours, Baba should wear a coat of some color other than pink, since they only ever saw Baba wearing a pink coat. Baba replied, “I am the slave of your love, but not of your whims.”

Two graduate students interested in yoga came to see Baba. In the course of the conversation, Baba said:

The only obstacle on the Path is the ego. Volumes have been written on the nature of the ego. But book knowledge helps very little and by one’s own efforts, the ego remains insurmountable. It is so disguised that even when you express humility, it is the ego. It feeds on it. Whether you fast or feast, whether you become aggressive or humble, the ego is nourished. Hypocrisy is the food of the ego. Even the natural tendencies of the ego such as, “I eat,” “I sleep,” create bindings. So, night and day, in the very act of spending sanskaras you get bound.

A false sense of advancement in spirituality is liable to be created when you try to lead a spiritual life in ways other than of the common people. If you put on sadhu’s clothes, you court respect. Others begin to look upon you with respect and you

begin to accept the homage, albeit, unauthoritatively. The ego feels proud. Outwardly, in the service of God, but deep within, for your self-gratification. This is a dangerous pitfall.

To know Me, you have to become Me. You get innumerable experiences on the Path. But the real experience is to become Me.

In a God-realized Master, the Real Ego is established. He has the authority to accept homage for He sees Himself in everyone and everything. The Master has not to meditate upon anything but Himself, which becomes the object of meditation for all. So He has the authority to accept homage. All His actions are non-actions and are not binding.

As for the rest of the people, all actions create bindings. What is the way to come out of this sanskaric maze? The intercession of the Master is necessary. The awakening of love is the remedy. One rare being, after cycles of time, gets released through the grace of the Perfect Master.

At another point, Nari Contractor, the captain of India's national cricket team, came for Baba's darshan. Baba said to him, "Don't love me through fear, but through love itself."

To someone else Baba commented, "When I break My silence, the whole world will know about Me. It is difficult to know Me unless I make you know."

10TH APRIL

One of Baba's lovers was an officer in the Air Force and he had managed to rush to Poona by plane but hadn't been able to bring his wife, though

she had a keen longing to be in Baba's sahavas. Baba said to him, "Tell her I am not only here but there, too. I am everywhere." Baba asked someone to recite the following lines in Urdu:

*The Master says: My Light stretches right from here to
the Beyond.*

*I just watch as to what extent the lover may succeed in
seeing Me.*

Baba continued: "*La makan'* means the Beyond. I am on your level, on all planes and beyond all planes too. Some see up to the first plane, some up to the second plane and so on."

Perviz Kelkar, the daughter of Dina and Nawal Talati, grew up in a staunch Baba household in Bombay. To help give a fuller picture of what it was like during these mini-darshan programs at Guru Prasad, let me quote Perviz's account:

I was sitting amongst the crowd during a weekend darshan program at Guru Prasad and on the spur of the moment, thought to jot down something Baba had just said. Though I was not right in front of Baba, He noticed what I was doing and asked, "What are you writing?" I answered, "Baba, writing down whatever You have just been saying." Baba gestured, "Don't write. Look at Me and absorb Me." From that moment on, I engrossed myself in what was going on while it was taking place but the minute I stepped out of Guru Prasad, I could not recall the discourses Baba had given or which person had sung for Baba. All the details had vanished from my mind.

I also recall how Baba would strum His hands on His arm-rest, moving to two completely different rhythms at the same time. This is something I have witnessed no other human able to do.

During the Sunday programs ghazals would be performed for Baba. Baba would give a line-by-line explanation of the deeper spiritual meaning of each ghazal. Usually He would face the women mandali who sat just inside the doorway to Baba's right. Sometimes Mehera would say she hadn't gotten the meaning of a certain line, so He would turn around to look at her and explain it all to her. I would sit inside the hall but just near that door, so I got to see Baba's face as He gave the explanation. After that, He would ask the singer to sing the ghazal once more for all to fully enjoy it.

Some of us noticed that after several programs an entire hall full of people, who had all sorts of questions in their heads that they didn't ask, would have had their questions satisfied by one sentence or a discourse that Baba had given on a very different topic. I overheard people saying that their questions had been answered. But the answer they felt they had gotten was something completely contradictory to the answer another person had gotten from the very same thing that Baba had said. This perhaps was one aspect of His divinity.

11TH APRIL

A young medical graduate, who had met Baba in his teens, came for darshan with his two children. Baba said:

Once you were a child and now you have two children. As one grows in age there is a nonstop flow of positive desires,

(BABA CONTINUES)

“I want this, I want that. I want a wife. I want children. I want position.” Whether you become successful or unsuccessful in fulfilling these desires, at a later age there surges a wave of negative reaction, such as “I do not want this. I do not want that.... I am fed up with my wife, fed up with my position.” The real thing is that you should neither feel overenthusiastic nor bored. You have to remain nonchalant. Whether likes in the form of wanting, or dislikes in the form of not-wanting things or situations, they are equally binding.

You have to leave wanting and not-wanting that emerge from self-interest, but try ever and ever to accept life as it comes, welcoming it as the will of God. Then when life changes, you will not become bound by so-called plans. The feeling of boredom will fail to bore you.

Baba then spelled out a few Persian words using the English alphabet. Eruch read the board, in this case phonetically, and Aloba, hearing the Persian would then recite the whole ghazal by heart. When he was finished, Baba would translate the couplet into English:

Hafiz says:

*Oh ignorant one, try, so that one day you
become master of wisdom. Unless you yourself
have traversed the Path how can you guide others!*

Referring to the above couplet, Baba said:

This is a masterpiece of Hafiz on which the Sufi law is built up. No one knows the depth of meaning that Hafiz had in mind:

In the divine school, in the presence of the Perfect Master, Oh Son, try, try, try to obey so that one day you may also become the Father. Like the brave men on the Path wash off from your hands this copper-like existence; so that one day you gain the alchemy of love and become gold. Wants of the body, sleep and food, have kept you away from the threshold of love. You will attain union with the Beloved when you become free from all wants.

It is very difficult to free oneself from all wants. "I want to sleep," "I must not sleep," "I don't want to sleep," but each of these is a want. It is, rather, impossible to be free from all wants. What is the solution? Hafiz says:

Only the grace of the Perfect Master can make you free from all wants. Even if a wee bit of the effulgent Glory of God were to be revealed, you will become millions of times brighter than the earth's sun.

Maybe for one slight moment if you have the fortune to drown yourself in the ocean of love, don't hesitate. The moment does not come frequently. As soon as the Master says, "Drown!" do not hesitate. Drown the moment the Master commands. Don't think what will the world think of me. The world will call me mad. One must not hesitate.

Even if one hair of yours is dipped in the Ocean of Love you become wet eternally. In that bliss of union with the

(BABA CONTINUES)

Beloved you enjoy, there is no break; it is continuous. From foot to head you become God and His effulgent glory, if you, in this path, become footless and headless.

How to become footless and headless? I tell you to sit down and you must sit down. And you must go on sitting continually. You must not use your mind. Do whatever I tell you. You will become headless. The will of the Beloved becomes your beloved. Then you are headless and footless. All this is impossible for the very desire for union with God is madness. There is only one solution, that is, to become dust at the feet of the Perfect Master.

Later that day Baba added:

Beauty and love are linked. There is always a sweet tussle between God's Beauty and the love of its captive. God's Beauty demands sacrifice, surrender; and the lover has to do whatever the Beloved wants. *Naaz* [whim of the Divine Beloved] and *niaz* [supplication; in response to the beloved's naaz] are linked with Beauty and love.

13TH APRIL

Reading the discourses Baba gave out is fascinating but it cannot begin to capture the experience of being there in Baba's presence when He gave them. This is because Baba's presence was so all-encompassing. Many have commented on how remarkable it was during a sahasvas program to have hundreds, even thousands, of people sitting in rapt attention, just staring at Baba sitting silently on the dais. This was only possible because people were caught up in the atmosphere of love that enveloped and enlivened them.

In these smaller intimate settings, people were even more swept up by Baba's moods. Meherwan Mistry captures this very well:

In His presence, Baba would put one completely at ease, regardless of one's position in life—be it a queen, a businessman, a humble servant, totally devoid of any artificiality or show, radiant in its utter simplicity and naturalness—suffused with peace in His presence. In itself this was quite remarkable and amazing. There was an equal sense of one's rightful belonging in the house of their One Father. When Meher Baba said that He was the One amongst the many, it was literally and palpably made manifest amongst those in His presence.

One thing I did not feel or experience was any feeling of awe when in the presence of Meher Baba. People imagine that being in the presence of God is awesome. Well, indeed, it is most certainly awe-inspiring, but it is His true greatness that in His humility and utter childlike simplicity that the God-Man veils His own awesomeness to make us feel at ease and comfortable in His presence. God's grandeur and majesty are veiled in the very Divinity of the God-Man. To me just God's human form was stunningly resplendent and radiant, enchantingly charming and irresistibly attractive. For me, His form alone is even more than super-awesome.

Meher Baba had a delightful sense of humor and He enjoyed music, playing the card game *La Risque*, jokes and simple enjoyments and treats like ice cream or sweet syrup drinks that He himself would serve. Such light entertainment that He allowed us to participate in was most enjoyable and which He said lightened His Universal work. I remember those times

(MEHERWAN MISTRY CONTINUES)

vividly with great fondness. He did not quite like to give explanations or answer individual questions and would often put them off saying, "This will give Me a headache," or "I have a headache." But then there were times when He would spontaneously give forth a most beautiful and profound explanation or a short discourse and everyone would listen with rapt attention even as someone sitting in the rear would be dutifully taking notes for posterity's benefit. Mainly, I remember the person being Bal Natu.

During the after-lunch sessions at Guru Prasad at times I would tend to doze while seated on the carpet facing Baba in His chair about eight feet away. Suddenly, Baba would throw a small, pink, hollow plastic ball with deadly accuracy at my slightly drooping forehead and it would startle me to wakefulness. Baba would, with a smile, gesture for me to keep my eyes open and to remain awake. I did get quite a few of those hits from Baba's plastic ball and how much I miss them. Others who would be caught catnapping also found themselves the target of His unwavering aim.

Such was the beauty of Baba's moods that would be reflected in His facial expressions and which would instantaneously affect everyone present. If He was having a fun time or expressed happiness all would feel this just as they would when enjoying a bright, warm, sunny day. If He was displeased or off mood for any reason that too they would perceptibly feel just as they would feel miserable on a cold, damp, gloomy day. If someone was the cause of His displeasure, Baba, the most merciful One, would always be there to forgive in His compassion, but the wrath aroused in those around Him could not be expected to be as generously and readily forgiven.

14TH APRIL

Continuing the discourse He started the day before, Baba explained:

Mahakaran sharir [the Universal Body] is the medium of *sarvavyapi man* [the Universal Mind, literally, All-pervading mind]. Every mind is in the Universal Mind. Every mind has its *karan sharir* [mental body] and all karan sharirs are in Mahakaran sharir. Universal Mind has the Universal Body as its coat. Individual mind has individual body as its coat. Your mind is a drop in My Universal Mind. But your mind has a karan sharir. From where do you get thoughts? Mind is a perpetual, perennial flow of thoughts. You call them imaginary thoughts, but where do they come from? The root of all thoughts is *sanskar* [impressions]. There are millions of minds. How many thoughts are there in every mind? I know all.

Not to believe in God is not a sin. But to be a hypocrite is the greatest sin. Not to believe in Me is not a sin. I am the Lord of the Universe. I love all. If you do not believe in Me, if you do not love Me, if you do not obey Me, these will not bring Me down. Your coming to Me, your loving Me, your obeying Me, your bowing down to Me, these will not enhance Me. I am the Lord of the Universe, I remain so, whether you believe in Me or not. I am not angry with you if you do not believe in Me, or if you do not love and obey Me. But I am angry with hypocrisy and hypocrites who not only deceive themselves, but deceive others.

Baba then had a diagram drawn showing blocks of individual mind and the following six points:

(BABA EXPLAINS)

A–D Universal Mind

Universal Energy

Universal Body

Individual Mind

Individual Energy

Individual Body

Baba gave the following explanation:

Universal Mind, Energy, Body exist. Individual mind, energy, body do not exist. They [seem to] exist because of our imagination.

Individual minds are like drops in the ocean of Universal Mind. Individual energy is like foam on the ocean of Universal Energy. Individual body is like a bubble in the ocean of Universal Body. So Universal Mind, Universal Energy and Universal Body are like oceans. But these three oceans are not shoreless oceans. Individual *atmas* [souls] are like drops in the ocean—Paramatma. This ocean of Paramatma is shoreless, limitless and indivisible. Universal Mind is also shoreless but not indivisible. Universal Energy and Universal Body are also like oceans.

The individual mind in America is also in India at the same time. Not so with energy and body. When the scientists reach the limit of science, they may come to know, at the most, that Mars can be here and Earth can be there, in a twinkling of an eye. This will be possible when they can find Universal Energy and Universal Body.

When a man stands on the shore of an ocean and looks at its vastness, what he sees is a fringe of the ocean. He cannot see

the complete ocean, but by seeing the fringe of the ocean he gets an idea of the vastness of the ocean.

Mind is next to Soul.

In the mental plane one sees God. In the mental plane you find the mind of one in America is in your mind and your mind is in the one in America. In the physical plane your mind is here and the mind of one in America is in America. In the mental plane, one in America's mind is in your mind and your mind is in the mind of one in America. Now, where is your mind? Do you feel it? It is generally believed that mind is only in the head. But thoughts come and go. We know and we feel thoughts are flowing continuously. But where do they come from? So your mind is spread out everywhere.

Because of your being in the gross plane you identify yourself with grossness. In the mental plane there is no grossness. All is mind.

Atma is different. Mind cannot know. When thoughts come and go you feel through your mind, but you cannot feel atma. You can see the body, you can feel energy, you can have some idea of mind, but to know atma, there is no clue. Atma is known through atma. So for atma to know atma, mind must go. Anything you know is through your mind. Atma cannot know atma through mind. Mind itself is the obstacle. So mind must go for atma to know it is atma.

Scientists can at the most know matter and energy. Real saints can know about mind. Only God can know about atma. Scientists will have to use 100% of their mind to know of physical energy. You are on the gross plane. So your mind can probe at the most, matter and energy.

(BABA CONTINUES)

A *Majzoob* [soul on the 7th plane, merged in God] has no mind. His physical body is sustained by atma and his atma knows atma [Itself], but is sustained without mind. A *Majzoob* does not feel heat or cold. He is sustained by atma. When he comes down [to normal consciousness], he is so to say, within reach, he can be handled, he can be served, garlanded and he also feels his limitations like others. But he has the Universal Mind, Universal Energy and Universal Body. The infinite bliss he enjoys is altogether different.

A *Majzoob* has crossed the boundary of the mind. There is no individual mind, energy, body. He says, "I am God." If his individual mind, energy, body remain, it is because of momentum. And if he comes to normal consciousness then he has Universal Mind, Universal Energy and Universal Body, because he had individual mind, energy, body before realization.

Now when he comes back, he has Universal Mind, Energy, Body. The consciousness of having Universal Mind, Energy, Body is because of his having had individual mind, energy, body. Himself being in Universal Mind he has conscious experience of individual mind. But there is no block. So Universal Mind, Energy, Body act like individual mind, energy, body without a partition. This is the key point. He experiences the individual mind, energy, body and also Universal Mind, Energy, Body with no separateness because of Knowledge [dnyan].

A Perfect Master has Universal Mind, Universal Energy and Universal Body. A Perfect Master, it is said, has a trinity of states and functions, He has infinite bliss, knowledge and power. He also has

individual mind, energy and body. Others have only individual mind, energy and body. The Perfect Master has both simultaneously.

In the physical plane, He uses His individual body, mind and energy and there is no question of sustenance. But His individual mind sustains His individual energy and body. And His Universal Mind and Universal Energy through the Universal Body controls everything. Because He has individual body, mind and energy He feels hunger, thirst; He is conscious of His health and age. His Universal Mind works for 24 hours without a break.

Even when I am on your level I have the experience of the Universal Mind, Energy, Body and also individual mind, energy, body. If a Perfect Master or Avatar says, as Krishna said, “I know everything,” it is because He knows. I have Universal Mind, Energy, Body. So when I come down on your level, I have fever, hunger, I walk, I sleep, etc., because of individual mind, energy, body. Through my Universal Mind I know that you are in Me. There is no partition or break between Universal Mind, Energy, Body and individual mind, energy, body. It is continuous.

Three functions: 1. Consciously experiences God; 2. Universal Mind, Energy, Body consciously experiences God; 3. Individual mind, energy, body consciously experiences the mental, subtle or gross body as the case may be and have no experience of the *Satchitananda* [Truth, Knowledge, Bliss] state.

Although your individual mind is in the Universal Mind, you do not experience it, because of the partition [of ignorance] between the individual and the Universal. Bear this in mind.



As I said before, Baba's explanations, as written, may seem complicated, or dry and abstract, but at the time Baba gave them, they were compellingly vibrant. Somehow, with just a simple gesture, Baba was able to make one visualize the subject under discussion with a clarity that words cannot reproduce. At the same time, in Baba's atmosphere, the authority of His words could not be doubted and the combination made these explanations exciting. It was not so much as if Baba were a teacher giving a lecture, but much more as if Baba were opening a window onto the Truth and letting those present glimpse something they had never seen before, in a way that they would never forget.

One became convinced of Baba's words, and understood them in a deep sense even if one could not always convey it to others in words.

Although I am putting it here, I don't really know if it occurred in April. I do know that at some point during 1960 while I was at Guru Prasad a small group of us were sitting in the mandali's room with Baba. It was probably a weekend, as Jimmy Mistry was there.

Baba suddenly turned to Dr. Deshmukh and asked him to whistle. Deshmukh tried with all his might, but he did not know how to whistle. Despite his best efforts, all he could produce was a sound that was more like hissing than whistling.

Baba then turned to Jimmy with a serious expression and asked him, "Can you whistle?" Jimmy smiled, readied his mouth and cheeks, and whistled very loudly. Baba's expression changed and He looked very happy and pleased. Baba gestured, "Very good," to Jimmy. Then he turned to Deshmukh and said, "Now, whistle like that."

With a smile, Deshmukh tried again, attempting to mimic Jimmy's facial posture. He blew hard but, again, only a hissing sound came out. Looking surprised, Baba asked how Deshmukh could be a Ph.D. and

yet not know how to whistle. Many laughed in the good humor of the activity that Baba was orchestrating. Such fun was a familiar aspect of Baba's interaction with His close ones in the familial atmosphere at Guru Prasad.

After a moment, one of the mandali whistled very loudly to show off his own ability. Baba looked surprised and said: "I know you can whistle, but I only want you to when I ask you to. I come down to your level to amuse you. You don't understand the significance of this whistling."

I found that in Baba's company, one was only supposed to do things that Baba asked. He did not like unnecessary interruptions—it was a sort of disturbance to His work. Baba would often remind us at times like this, "Remember, I am God."

16TH APRIL

One of the mandali told Baba that he could not give a satisfactory answer to his friend when the latter asked him, "What is God?" Baba smiled and said, "The answer is simple. You should have put him a counter question, 'What is not God?'"

While playing cards, Baba said to a judge playing for the first time:

I play cards for three things:

1. The burden of the Universal work gets lightened;
2. The minds of the players are focused on Me, in a very natural way;
3. Those who lose the game have the opportunity to rub their noses on the carpet before Me, the Highest of the High. Is it not a rare privilege?

Baba then referred to a line in Urdu which means, “This is that game in which the winner feels ashamed and the loser rejoices.” One of the mandali echoed this sentiment saying what a great fortune it was to lose and get to rub one’s nose before Baba.

With reference to the conversation two boys from a Baba family had with their friends comparing the greatness of Christ and Baba, Baba said, “Christ was great; Baba is great.”

Baba quoted Hafiz to indicate the helplessness of the lover...

*In loving my Beloved, I have become like
an ant under the foot of an elephant.*

To a despairing lover, Hafiz says:

*Even taking it for granted that you have lost
the goal, be brave. Plunge! Don’t doubt till you
become lost to your self.*

When a man takes a little wine, he becomes intoxicated. A feeling of “don’t care” develops and he challenges anyone to a duel. But this feeling of intoxication is not permanent. It lasts for a short time and as soon as the intoxication is over he feels ashamed of his behavior. He suffers from severe headache or, as it is called, a feeling of “hangover.”

I am burning so much in your love that, O Beloved, pray I cool down the burning with the flower of Union. [We think Baba is quoting a poet here.—Eds.]

REAL DARSHAN: 26TH & 27TH APRIL

One Baba lover from Nagpur came for Baba’s darshan. He placed his head on Baba’s feet. As he returned to his seat he requested Baba

to give him darshan. One of the mandali said, “You just had Baba’s darshan.”

Still, with folded hands the lover continued, “Baba, I pray You for darshan.”

Baba said, “You mean Real Darshan. A rare one is fortunate enough to have that darshan—seeing Me as I should be seen.”

The lover said, “If You bless Me as Lord Krishna blessed Arjuna, I will have *vishwaroop* darshan.”

Baba said, “Darshan of vishwaroop, which Arjuna had, was just darshan of the Universal Body. In ‘viratshwaroop’ or ‘vishwaroop darshan’ there is fear. That is why Arjuna felt afraid at the sight.”

One of the mandali said, “That is why Arjuna repeatedly prayed to Krishna to withdraw the cosmic vision and begged Him to reappear in His usual, lovely form. So, now you should also feel content to have Baba’s darshan in this physical form.”

The lover said, “But my mind remains unsatisfied and the heart craves for real darshan.”

Baba said:

Real Darshan is something quite different from viratshwaroop or vishwaroop darshan. In Real Darshan there is no fear; there is bliss. The only way to have such darshan lies through love. And to love Me is not easy. To follow love is to get oneself prepared for greater and greater sacrifice. In leading the life of love, you have to be in readiness to cheerfully leave everything at My signal or retain willingly your connections with the family, business or society, if so desired by Me. You cannot glue your eye on Me and mammon at one and the same time. I am a jealous God. It is easier to obey Me than to love Me.

(BABA CONTINUES)

If you are sincere enough to have My Real Darshan, this is not easy. Try to love Me in your own way and obey the instructions as and when they are given. Don't ask for instructions now. I like you.

After some time Baba gave the following explanation:

I appear in the highest sphere and at the same time I appear not to see even what is happening just near my leg. Highest level of knowledge and the lowest pitch of ignorance—simultaneously I have to play such a dual role. I am the Lord of the Universe. I have given you this body and I ask you about your health! It is all transpiring in the dream of Creation. I want you to be healthy so that I can powder you in My Love. I give and I demand. Whether Creator, Preserver or Dissolver—all three are equally based on ignorance. There is no such thing as Creation. Then how can there be presence or distance? The very answer has no base, save of illusion. This is the dual role. So whatever you see or feel is but a dream born of ignorance. Ignorance says: Cosmos is the Reality. You feel that birth, death, old age, wealth, honor are real. Knowledge says: Cosmos is a dream in ignorance. The very cosmos has no base, no stand save of ignorance. Everything except God is illusion.

The explanation was discontinued as a new group was ushered in for Baba's darshan.

Later, Baba continued:

In one of his couplets Hafiz says:

*The emperor and the angels stand in adoration
with folded hands at the feet of the real Dervish (Qutub).*

This is said of the Perfect Master because He is Knowledge Itself, Infinite Power too. Real knowledge is comprised of knowledge of ignorance as ignorance. So in this sense, in knowledge there is implied ignorance but not vice versa. So in My knowledge there is ignorance too. Such a state is possible because in My Universal Body there are infinite bodies of an infinite number of individuals on different planes of consciousness [things and beings]. The energy body and the mental body of every individual form a part and parcel of My Energy Body and My Universal Mental Body, respectively. There is no distance in space. What is there is here. Also there is no division in energy. There is no division in mind. There is no division in Atma [Oversoul]. So a drop here and a drop there, at infinite distance [from each other] does not make any difference. To stretch the simile, it is only the bubble here and a bubble there that creates distinction. [But in Reality], it is one indivisible Ocean.

As I have already said: There is no distance in space. Now I say: There is no division in energy. What is there is here. How? That which is broadcast in London is received here instantaneously. Why? Because there is no distance in space. There is no division in Mind. There is no division in Atma. There are many drops in the ocean. It is all one Ocean which is indivisible.

Fragments from that same day:

☞ “If one embrace cannot satisfy you, how can thousands of embraces satisfy you.”

☞ A letter was read wherein some personal experiences were recorded. Baba commented:

To experience Me as I am is quite different. I am much above these [so-called] experiences. Of course, such experiences of seeing Me in everything and everywhere are not bad. Even those little experiences, although only a seed, give such great joy! No one can see Me as I am, till I open Myself to him.

☞ “One who burns in the fire of Divine Love experiences blissful agony. For him, peacefulness is death and restlessness is life and he does not wish that the Fire of Love be cooled down.”

☞ “This is the end of a Cycle of Cycles so I observe silence. It is not for the first time that I am observing silence. Such observance, and the subsequent breaking, of silence is an occurrence repeated in the immeasurable span of time that has come to pass.”

☞ Referring to hypocritical saints, Baba said, “They have increased in such numbers that though I am the Ocean of Compassion, this has become nauseating to Me.”

☞ At a singing program, Baba said, “If you were to receive just a vibration of that *Adi Nad* [Original Sound], you would lose body consciousness. I am that Oceanic sound or *Paramnad*. On your level, I appear pleased to hear the 7th shadow vibrations of that ‘nad.’ When I hear a piece of exquisite music, being on your level too, I appear pleased.”

On May 1st, Baba held a darshan program. Again I will let Mani's account in her Family Letter of May 2nd describe the affair:

The Darshan yesterday was as great as the last such D-day, except that despite its being a "working Sunday" (when offices, banks, etc. were declared open half-day to "actively" inaugurate the birth of Maharashtra) the darshan attendance was bigger than ever. Baba sat thru till long after the announced closing hour so that all who attended could have their turn.

Among today's visiting group were a fair number from Andhra, including the Baba lover [Kodury Krishna Rao] who had a life-size statue of Baba made in bronze, having inaugurated on 25th February the foundation of the "temple" that will hold it. One of the party was a happy bearded little fellow [Bapiraju] who always wears a pink coat and has his boys do the same, because it is Baba's favourite colour. Wedged firmly on his head is a sola topee which he never seems to remove (was never seen without it during his week's stay at Meherabad sahas), the topee having once been worn by Baba during a visit to Andhra. One of his small sons, accompanying him to Poona, looks a delightful replica of Daddy, with his pink bush-shirt and little sola topee which his father had Baba bless with His touch during an earlier visit. He (I mean the father), full of simple-hearted devotion and unconscious wit, contributed more than once to the lighter moments of the morning and surpassed himself at [as] a conversation piece that had Baba and the entire assembly just about doubled up with laughter. At the end of it Baba

(MANI CONTINUES)

remarked, "In five minutes he has lessened the weight of my universal burden."

At times during these morning conclaves, when Baba is in the mood for it, a trivial remark or incident will lead to a beautiful discourse from Him. At other times, as at all times, His Presence alone is all-sufficing. To one of the group...concerning her peace of mind, Baba said, "Shut the trap of your mind and end all your worries. Open the trap of your heart and release Love." I'd also like to quote a little anecdote Baba gave the gathering on Easter morning: "Once an inquisitive and doubtful man went to Bayazid (the Perfect Master) and said, 'You being Perfect, ought to know the thoughts of others. What am I thinking of just now?' Bayazid replied, 'You are thinking that which you ought not to have thought of, and asking that which you ought not to have asked. Had you come with an open mind and curbed tongue, you would have received that which you ought to have received, instead of this well-deserved rebuke.'"

...One young Baba lover of Poona [Jehangir Sukhadwalla, commonly known as Jehangu]...recently emerged unscathed from what might have been a nasty accident. Riding home on his Lambretta from the aerodrome where he works, he went over a pothole which caused the sudden jamming of brakes and he found himself flung to the far side of the road with his machine flung in the opposite direction. He cried out Baba's Name at the time; and when next afternoon he recounted to Baba the incident of his miraculous escape, saying it was He who had saved him, Baba said, "Do not attribute the miracle to Me; the miracle was of My Name."¹³

Some time in early May, Amar Singh Saigal, a member of India's Parliament, came to visit Guru Prasad for the first time. He had seen Baba's photo three years before and had been waiting ever since to meet Him in person. Baba called me to Him that morning. As Eruch and the other men were busy, He wanted me to go and receive him. I happily agreed, and when I was about to leave, Baba asked me how I would go. "In a rickshaw," I answered. "No, no," Baba gestured and then instructed me to go in His DeSoto car instead. Amar Singh had had to wait three long years for this darshan and Baba was taking all care to prepare for his visit.

I felt blessed by Baba to be in His car at His instruction and was practically in a state of bliss as I rode to the station. This was the first time I was alone in the car with the driver. I was so extremely happy, that it was like being a child who gets a wonderful reward from his dad. Such small incidents in my life made me aware of the graceful intimacy that Beloved Baba had for me.

The visit went well and Baba seemed pleased to meet Amar Singh and his friends. In later years, the prime minister selected him as a delegate to Iran. Although the Iranian government had made arrangements for his stay, he preferred to stay in the house of a Baba lover there.

His position as a humble worker was indeed unique and his untiring efforts to carry the banner of Baba's message of Love and Truth by precept and practice won him popularity and made him a revered colleague among the few sincere souls in public life. His trust in Baba as the Avatar of the Age was Baba's real gift to him. He never felt shy to tell others about Him, and he would openly declare Meher Baba's

status as the Avatar of the Age in public meetings. He was the one who presented *God Speaks* to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Saigal considered running for his last election in 1967 at the behest of others, though he was not at all interested in continuing as a parliament member. When Beloved Baba ordered him to contest the elections, he readily agreed. This was not a simple order to carry out because Saigal had no money with which to campaign. Also, because of some split in the local body politic, he couldn't devote much time for his own canvassing. In addition, Baba had put a restriction on Saigal that he should not talk of Him in public. Saigal asked Beloved Baba to revoke the restriction, saying he preferred to withdraw than to keep mum about the God-Man. Baba then gave him permission to talk about Him only to individuals. And so the time neared for election day.

Rama Rao, who was the officially deputed Counting Supervisor (and Presiding Officer) in the Tanakhar constituency of Bilaspur where Saigal was running for office, narrates the following:

It was I who would first know the final result of the election. I began counting the votes at 8 a.m. and by 11:30 a.m. it was clear that Saigal was losing the battle by about 27,900 votes! Saigal was present, watching the ballots as they were being counted and he came to me quietly and said, "Baba in His own way has fulfilled my wish—I don't want any more politics!" Then he went home, as the result of the race appeared to be decided, though all the ballot boxes had not been gone through.

We later learned that Beloved Baba had asked one of His mandali about Saigal's election results the day before. But

Pendu had been unable to answer, as the results were not yet in. On election day, our Lord of Love and the destiny maker of all was at His home at Meherazad and casually asked Adi Sr. the same question about Saigal's election. Adi had heard something about it that morning on the radio and told Baba that Saigal would lose the election. Adi Sr. wondered aloud to Baba about how the loss would greatly upset Saigal, as he had never in his life lost an election. Adi beseeched Baba, who had insisted that Saigal run for office in the first place, to please do something. After listening to Adi, Baba dictated a telegram to Saigal that was to be sent to him that same afternoon, as follows:

“Worry not what the result will be as you have won the heart of the Ancient One in whose hands rest the rise and fall of human empires.”

As soon as Saigal returned home from the counting office, he received this cable from Baba and was so overjoyed by this message that he rushed back to show me. The telegram surprised me and I wondered what it meant. Amazingly, as though Baba had turned the key for Saigal, the remaining ballot boxes were almost entirely “yes” votes for him. And by the end of the counting he had won by a margin of 3,456 votes! In this way, Beloved Baba revealed to his dear Saigal that the results of all our actions are governed by His divine will.

I feel fortunate that through Beloved Baba's grace I came in contact with some of His dear ones with rock-like faith in His Avatarhood. Amar Singh was one of them.

5TH & 6TH MAY

“My lovers from Hamirpur could not come due to poverty. Their love brings tears to My eyes.” [Some lovers from Hamirpur had come, but, it would seem from this note that originally more had planned to.]

An engineer from Poona, Mr. Neurgaonkar, came to see Baba. Baba said:

You have read much of spiritual literature. You are well known for your lucid exposition. Spiritual understanding takes one nearer the Path. But remember well, that the experiences on the Path are quite different from the experience of becoming God. The higher states of consciousness cannot be imagined through knowledge derived from words.

As one traverses the spiritual path one comes across varied experiences such as enticing visions. Lights of different and changing colors and varieties are seen. Exquisitely sweet notes of music are heard and scents are smelt. In a more advanced stage, one can detachedly watch his own subtle body moving about.

There are many experiences on the Path but they are not lasting, they have only a passing value. The Real Experience is of Becoming what you already are—God. This Experience in which you become what “You Are” is perennial, without any break. Once that experience is had, Maya cannot touch you, though you may outwardly appear to be fully immersed in Maya. In that state there is no scope for *dhyan* [meditation] and everything is experienced in its infinite intensity. It is endless as it is beyond the bounds of time. How can spiritual understanding developed from books imagine this state? Intellect is bound to fail to fathom this Experience.

God is everlasting. "God ever was" means what? You may say that billions and trillions of years ago God was. But how far will you take a backward sweep in the span of time? The result will ever be that God was before the time you imagine. How can you succeed to bring the One who is beyond time into the bounds of time?

To experience that timeless Experience of becoming God, infinite amounts of patience and forbearance are necessary. How can these be achieved? How can the one urge to have that timeless Experience be awakened?

The first step towards this can be taken by an ardent aspiration to become like dust at the feet of a Perfect Master. The more lightweight you become, the higher you get wafted by the ever-blowing breeze of His compassion.

Pointing at a plump and bulky person at His side, Baba said:

Here is a fatty, weighty person and he wants to fly high up in the air, not in an airplane. I am giving you a simile. What should he do? What should he become? If he becomes light like a dry leaf then just a little breeze blowing will lift him high up in the air. Egoism makes your life infinitely heavy and bulky. The ego is the obstacle. The false ego must be effaced. But it is almost impossible to remove the false ego. Effacing of the false ego means the end of separate existence. Ego has two sides. One is generally referred to as pride. "I alone did that work. It is me who could work that way." This is pride which nourishes the ego.

The other side of the ego is still more subtle. It is connected with your so-called inalienable identification with body and mind. You feel that it is perfectly natural for you to say, "I am so and

(BABA CONTINUES)

so. I see, I touch, I smell, I speak, I taste, I dream, I am awake, I sleep, etc., etc.” To have the Real Experience, the false “I” has to be transformed into Real “I”.

The hard shell of the ego becomes softer and softer as one gets opportunities to be in the company of saints and Masters. This is not an easy transformation. One has to face [this] self-created oddity. In this process, ego with all its subtlety wages a guerrilla warfare. It tries to deceive you at every step. Honesty is the only remedy. By leading a fearless and honest life, hypocrisy gradually gets weakened. When the heart becomes absolutely clean and clear, hypocrisy is completely wiped off. This is a long process, not only in terms of years but in terms of reincarnations.

When the false “I” is effaced, God manifests and plurality is merged in unity forever. That is the state of a Perfect One, the One who is real and infinite in experience. If such a One lives among men as man and lives a life of God, he is called Sadguru.

Try to get a glimpse of the Master within you. But for that you have to leave all and follow him. Such dedication is not easy. Mind stands in the way. The mind says, “Is it good to surrender to the Master? Are you sure that he is the Real One? What are his credentials, he may be a fake.” The heart steps in and says, “Do you not feel peaceful and happy in his company? Have not those who go to him become ‘changed persons?’ Is such a loving atmosphere experienced elsewhere? Is he not Love Itself?”

On goes the conflict between mind and heart. Particularly when you are away from the Master, the mind begins to play its

tricks more powerfully and the voice of the heart becomes feeble. That is why it is difficult to have an unswerving faith in the Master and to become like dust at His feet. Unless I help you, you cannot surrender. The moment your surrender is complete, My grace descends and in less than a fraction of a second the goal of becoming “conscious infinite” is realized.

Baba then quoted Tukaram. He was a Maharashtrian Perfect Master who lived in the first half of the 17th century, making him a contemporary of Ramdas and Shivaji. He was one of Baba’s favorite poets. In fact, sometimes Baba would gesture in Gujarati, *Tuke maro dil no tukdo chhe*, meaning, “Tuka is a piece of My heart”:

Tukaram says in one of his *abhangs* [a form of devotional poetry]:

*The Master, with His Grace, in no time makes the
disciple “like Himself.”*

Then someone may ask, “Why this long period of tests and trials? Why delay in bestowing Grace?” On the Master’s part actually there is no delay. His is the state beyond time. In relation to the creation, only the present moment exists for Him. To the illusion-bound beings, Tukaram says the following:

*Undue haste is of no avail, unless and until the
opportune moment arrives. So ages and ages have to roll
on for the arrival of that opportune moment when by the
Master’s Grace, one is established in the Reality as the
Reality of God.*

Mr. Neurgaonkar, who was about to retire from service, told Baba about his resolve to observe silence for some days. He asked Baba whether during that period he could make “exceptions,” to break his silence just to speak about God.

Baba did not approve of this and said:

Silence means silence. If you want to observe it, observe it thoroughly. Don't give room for the mind to play its tricks. Mind always creates obstacles in your one-pointed resolve. Its tricks are very elusive. In the beginning you will speak on God or spiritual subjects but soon mind will make you feel fed up with your silence and you will go on expecting others to come to you and converse with you on God. It is not impossible for the tricky nature of the mind to induce you to create such situations.

While observing silence let the mind remain silent. Try to make the mind observe silence through constant remembrance of God. It is this silence for which the outer silence has to be helpful. Else we find dumb children but of what avail is their silence? Put your heart and soul in your anticipated meditation and observance of silence and I am there, there in you to help.



Later that day, after the groups had left there were only a few of us with Him—Baba's nephews, Rustom, Sohrab, and Sheroo, Baba's brother, Jal, and Aloba, Bhau, Vishnu, Meherwan, myself and Pukar and Meherdas. Baba gave the following explanation:

I have placed myself under the veil of Maya and so although I am Effulgence, all cannot see Me as I am. Why has God three

Infinite aspects, viz. power, knowledge and bliss? The answer is because man has three aspects of mind, energy and body. Is it not simple? In ignorance the three infinite aspects are represented by body, energy and mind.

For instance, Eruch is one who has all three aspects but these are finite aspects. You as man are one homogeneous entity of the three finite aspects, which are the shadows of the infinite aspects of God.

Baba then hurriedly explained the aspect of ego:

Matter (body) depends on energy and energy in turn depends on mind; and all these three are interdependent. Mind cannot be separated from energy nor energy from matter. In the same way bliss depends upon power, and power on knowledge and yet these three-in-one aspects are inseparable.

On the following day, Baba gave this explanation:

Man uper niche thay to kai nabi.

Pan bath uper niche nabi jave joia.

If your mind wavers, that is of no consequence,

But let not your hand waver.

Hold on to My daaman even if it amounts to the earth and heaven becoming one. Worry not about the conflicting thoughts but beware that the hands that have clasped firmly My daaman do not for any reason loosen their grip.



Jagjivan Ram, a prominent political figure in the Congress Party came to see Baba. Baba told him, “One should keep calm, you should not feel disturbed, putting complete trust in God.” Jagjivan replied, “Buddha died, Gandhi, too. Now you are Baba.” Baba said, “Gandhi was a Divine gem. I am God incarnate. I will help you internally.” After he left, Baba commented that he was a very sincere man.

Anant Rao Patil, the editor of *Visbal Sahyadri*, had come for Baba’s darshan several times and Baba also visited the newspaper office and gave the following message: “The Avatar does not establish any religion. He comes to establish the religion of love. One who establishes religion is not the Avatar at all. Despite ridicule or praise, I remain what I really am, for nothing enhances or diminishes My status.”

Dolly Dastur visited from Bombay frequently throughout the years when Baba was at Poona. She recounts:

When I first visited Guru Prasad it was Navroze Day [Persian New Year]. At that time it was not a gathering but we just said, “Let’s go to Guru Prasad if we have a chance.” I was there with Nargis Dadachanji; she and I were very close.



Dolly Dastur

Arnavaz, and the other women mandali, had invited us to lunch with them. So we met them in the dining room, at the back of the hall. I still remember that long table where they were sitting. They had not yet taken their lunch. They said, “Today we have fish.” Then Baba came and asked me, “Today

you had fish?" I said, "No, Baba," because at that time I was a vegetarian. Baba said, "Give her some fish." So I had a little. That's why I remember it so well. You see, if Baba said we should have it, we just had it. It was the same thing when we had a little beer, and I never used to like to drink alcohol; but Baba gave us all a little, so I had it.

Later on, when the weekend programs began at Guru Prasad, I always tried to go. At that time Katie and I had a big tussle because we were working in the same office and we couldn't both get leave at the same time. So if she wanted to go to see Baba, I would never say no. Sundays were not a problem because we could both go Saturday and come back Sunday night after having Baba's darshan and attending the programs. But sometimes there were very important programs that we both had to attend like the East-West Gathering. For such occasions Baba wanted us both to come, so it was difficult. Katie would take leave and I would "fall sick," so we would manage it in that way. I had to make that sacrifice because I knew that Katie had been with Baba since the Meherabad ashram days and I felt that she had to be with Baba, whether I got to go or not.

On one occasion both Katie and I were at Guru Prasad on a Sunday, and on Monday morning, I returned to Guru Prasad. Baba asked me, "How is it that you are here?" I replied, "Baba, I have taken leave for a week and I wanted to be here with You." That time Katie had not taken leave, so I could.

Baba said, "Are you sure? Did you apply properly?"

"Yes."

(DOLLY DASTUR CONTINUES)

“They will not throw you out?”

“No, Baba.”

Then He said, “Remember, I am always with you; you don’t have to come to Poona. You have to be very practical.”

On another occasion when I had taken special leave, Baba told me, “Okay, good, I’m happy. Enjoy My company; take My sahavas.” We were happy that He was happy. Otherwise He would have said, “Why did you come? You should have stayed at the office.”

Baba called us many times and it was an open darshan for Bombay people. We came as a group. My mother, brother, sister, aunts (Freiny Kaki, Homi Merchant and her mother) always wanted to travel together, because they felt that they needed someone to arrive with. Because I was working, we went by the night train. When we arrived we waited at the gate and we would see Bal Natu and Nana Kher outside on the verandah. Baba would tell Aloba, “Go and open the gate, they are here,” and Aloba would let us in. I don’t know how He knew; someone would inform Him possibly.

It was a real joy to be in Baba’s company at Guru Prasad. When the programs were going on we never paid any attention to who was singing. We knew someone was singing, but we would be watching Baba. Sometimes there was a play going on, and I would say, “What is this play about? We are here in Baba’s company; that’s more important.” Who was sitting next to me I wouldn’t even notice. Frankly, I never even noticed the mandali, not even Mehera and Mani. I was engrossed in His beauty—His presence was so powerful.

Once, when Begum Akhtar came, to make room, Baba told me and a few others to stand behind the sofa that He was sitting on. I could see Baba's braid, and I thought, "Baba wanted me to see Him from the back, too." I wanted to go near Him and touch Him. It was wonderful to see Him from the back, and from that time onwards whenever I see a picture of Baba's braid, I love it, and I remember that time.

One year Baba said that no one could come to Guru Prasad, yet some people went to Poona and just passed by Guru Prasad. So the next year Baba gave another order, "Nobody should even come to Poona." So we never went after that unless called.

After every program Baba would say, "Go and meet the mandali," He would make a sign for women, indicating He wanted the ladies from our group to meet the women. Then we would be enamored of them; we would love to be with them also. But when Baba was with us, we just wanted to sit near Baba.

During the programs I would sit on the women's side, facing Baba. To His right was a wide open door with four chairs near the threshold between the two rooms. Meheru, Mani, Naja and Goher would sit there with Mehera in the second row holding a fan, so she could look at Baba but no one else should see her. The men mandali would sit at Baba's left.

Often we would arrive at the Poona train station by 5:00 in the morning. So we would have a bath, dress up, have our tea and breakfast at the station and then take the bus to Guru

(DOLLY DASTUR CONTINUES)

Prasad. It was only three or four bus stops, but we just wanted to rush there. So, in the early hours before the program would start, we used to come and sit in the mandali's room where Baba would be sitting with His men mandali. Baba would say, "Oh, you have come; I am so happy to see you. I didn't sleep the whole night, I'm so tired." And then our own Baba people would say, "Baba, we didn't sleep the whole night either. We were on the train and we had hardly any space to sit even."

You see we were so free with Baba to say such things. The interactions were very natural. Baba responded, "Ah." We said, "They were pushing us from this side and we hardly had any space and some of us were sitting on newspaper on the floor, because it was not a reserved compartment and it was the last train from Bombay." It was the local train, so it would stop at every station and people would get in. It was smelly. I tell you I don't know how we did it. I wouldn't do it now. So we would tell Baba this and about the arguments about pushing here or pushing there. Sometimes someone would say, "When you are traveling like this, why don't you go first class?" But we never wanted to spend money unnecessarily, so we traveled third class.

Then Baba would have a chat with us, inquiring about our families and such: "What have you eaten? How is your health?" He would ask us so many things. "How is your office work going on?" "Everything is fine, Baba," we would answer. We were so happy to be there, and sometimes someone else would visit and we would listen to what they talked about with Baba.

It was very informal. Then Baba would say, “Now, it is almost nine o’clock, so go and sit in the hall.”

On one occasion, the people of Hamirpur had come. I was sitting with the others from Baba’s Bombay Parsi group, near Baba’s sofa, waiting for Him to come when somebody came and said, “Today this big group from Hamirpur has come. Why don’t you allow them to sit in the front and be with Baba?” We said, “Sure.” When somebody asked us, we did it. We went to the back and sat there. When Baba came in and sat down, He looked around and said, “Where are My Bombay Parsis?” Someone said, “They have been asked to sit at the back.” “No, no,” Baba gestured, “Tell them to come to the front.” And then Baba said, “You don’t know; take the chance right now. You will never get such a chance later. When the new wave will come, you all will be thrown out. So take the chance now.”

So He made us come and sit again nearby, which was very sweet of Baba. And when He said, “My Bombay Parsis,” we felt so good about it. It gave us joy in our hearts that Baba was thinking of us. We never felt proud to be Bombay Parsis, but that Baba wanted us to be near Him. People may have wondered, “Why do they always have the privilege of sitting so near Him like that?” But Baba wanted us there, and because of what He told us, we knew to take every opportunity we had to be close to Him.

Those years at Guru Prasad afforded us these very beautiful occasions when we could go for Baba’s darshan. We could fill up our hearts. We never expected anything. Just to be with Him was the only thing that mattered to us.

8TH MAY

Today a bank manager, Mr. Wagh, who is a student of the *Bhagavad Gita*, came to meet Baba. He had some questions. In response, Baba said:

God is not to be argued about. Arguing will take you nowhere. In love, arguments and discussions have no place. When the argumentative attitude slackens, it paves the way for love. One goes on arguing till one finds himself dead to arguments, mere discussions. Then love begins. Then in the course of life, if fortunately one gets an opportunity to meet the Beloved, a God-realized Master, the heart rejoices.

The love-filled heart longs to dedicate its life to the Beloved. It says: "Let the Beloved's will be foremost." It is always the mind that doubts. Mind says: "Is He the Beloved worth loving? Will I be right in sacrificing for this Beloved?" Heart says: "Why argue; take a plunge in the Beloved's Divinity. Place your life at His Feet. Surrender." Mind says: "What about my capability to judge and argue? Am I good for nothing? Am I blind? Why should I plunge, why should I follow the dictates of the heart?" Thus goes on the tussle between the intellect and the inner call.

Later on, during darshan hours someone asked Baba for His blessing. Baba said:

It is very easy for Me to give blessings. It is very difficult for Me to give Love. It is very very rare for Me to bestow Grace. Why? In the case of blessings, one is ready to receive. Receptivity is there, owing to the intensity of desires which are eagerly awaiting fulfillment. I am eager to give Love but there is no one to receive

it in the way it should be received. The warmth of My Love being unbearable, your whole being gets blistered. If you withstand this, your heart becomes clean. Then it is filled with love. The one who receives love is in the eyes of the world completely ruined. To receive love you have to lose everything, even your own self. In love, you have to give up all desires to such an extent that you have to be dead to yourself and the world. Then you are eligible to receive Love. A rare one achieves that eligibility. One rare one is worthy. Then he is in the condition of being like a fish out of water. I am the Ocean of Love. I am ready to give Love to such a one, but where is the one to receive it?

Now Grace. Grace is perfectly independent. I bestow it when I get the Whim. I just have a Whim and the Grace descends, and instantaneously you become what you ever are—God. But this is very rare.

(This reminds me of one of my favorite quotes, “God does not look for merit; He only looks for an excuse for His Grace to pour out.”)

Mr. Darabshah Umrigar, one of Baba’s lovers from Bhavnagar, told about an extraordinarily miraculous incident that had saved him from a horrible accident. Baba replied:

It is not My miracle. I do not perform miracles. At the time of the accident you say that you were remembering Me wholeheartedly. So call it the miracle of My Name. When everything goes wrong the mind becomes helpless and it has to rely entirely on the heart. These are the moments when you resign [yourself] to Me. So rely on My help. When you leave all to Me, I dare not care not, and you are relieved. The breeze of compassion is received. When you come out of the situation,

(BABA CONTINUES)

mind restarts its doubting role and the intellect turns the help received into a mere coincidence. And that wholehearted remembrance becomes a past incident. If there is no wavering of faith and you entrust everything entirely to Me, the results are amazing.

Later Baba explained, “Whatever is to happen, happens. It is because of sanskaras only. Nobody is at fault; everyone is God.”

To a newly arrived visitor, Baba remarked, “It is good that you have come with empty hands so that you can go with your heart full of love.” At this point someone told Baba that the person wished Baba to answer the questions that he had in his mind. Baba turned to the man, who said, “I want You to answer my questions without my asking them.” Baba smiled and said:

What a bargain with the Master! The moment you expect an answer you do not get it. Expecting intellectual answers to the various questions amounts to very little. The one real answer is to be experienced.

From the beginning, the question that confronts everyone is “Who am I?” This is the first original question which gets expressed in infinite ways. It is answered in many ways such as, “I am stone, metal, vegetable, fish, animal. I am man!” This question is the driving force that brought about the evolution of consciousness and, after innumerable reincarnations, eventually through the involution process the real answer to the original question is arrived at as: “I am God.” So eventually you get the right answer to your original question—I am God.

By studying Vedanta, you are intellectually convinced about the logical deduction of the statements “I am God”

and “Everyone is God.” I may be lower than these, or I may be so high that even these cannot know Me as I am.” But of what avail is such dry knowledge! It is only the experience of the “I am God” state that solves all questions once and for all. And that experience is not a child’s play! Cycles and cycles of time have to roll on before one becomes eligible to experience the Real answer which comes unawares and when least expected.

I like you. I am pleased to see you. That is why I spoke with you in a familiar way.

These fragments of Baba’s statements were recorded that day:

☞ “I had a full head of hair but garlanding has thinned my hair. In Andhra, they put vermilion and turmeric powder on My head. Still I keep a smile.”

☞ “We like the cinema a lot. Last year, I went with the mandali to see a movie. Today also we are going to see *The African Lion*. There are no actors or actresses; only wild animals. That [jungle] is a different world. Every little thing has come out of the depth in Me. Not the depth of this body you see.”

9TH & 10TH MAY

On this day, among others, Raj Rolkar was present. During his visit, Baba explained:

Simplicity and greatness are akin. Greatness cannot be separated from simplicity. Raj Rolkar, you are 65. I am 67 years old. I am ageless and nothing can be compared to “seva”—service without self-interest, the real and selfless service. There

(BABA CONTINUES)

should not be any pride in the service, otherwise it will be a waste.

The daughter of Gunjoti described how she saw Baba and what she had felt. While describing her experience to Baba, Baba cautioned that if such experiences come in normal course they are good, but there shouldn't be any exaggeration. Baba clarified, "Because miracles are many and this world itself is My miracle, I don't find these experiences as miracles."

While talking to two lovers, one of whom was named Parkhe, Baba said:

Yog-sadhana [the practice of yoga] is good. You get different experiences in stages but I am beyond all of them. To gain Me you must lose yourself in Me, because I am beyond you all. In yoga you feel satisfaction slowly. You get *samadhi* [temporary trance state]. Sometimes you see colored lights. Sometimes a vast ocean but I am beyond all. Has everyone received *prasad*?

One of Baba's lovers who was visiting began to give a very detailed account of one of his family members who had fallen in love with a girl and had then run away with her. I often observed that for many, in Baba's presence, everyone else in the room disappeared and they willingly discussed intimate details of their lives with Baba in a way which, ordinarily, they never would have done. Such was the all-encompassing nature of Baba's presence.

10TH & 11TH MAY

To a famous singer, Shri Bhargavram Achrekar, who sang some bhajans before Him, Baba said:

It is emphatically mentioned in all the holy books that God exists. The mystics and the realized ones from all faiths wholeheartedly confirm that God alone Is. So it clearly follows that God can be seen and that you are duty bound to see Him. This becomes possible only when you carry your life in the palm of your hand. Then you can aspire to see God, far more clearly than the things you see now in this room. It is immaterial whether you visit temples, mosques, churches, fire temples, or whether you follow or do not follow the various rituals and ceremonies. What is needed is an insatiable longing to see God, like a fish out of water longs for the sea. This becomes possible if you have an unswerving fidelity and an undaunted courage.

In My presence a few days ago you sang a song the burden of which was, “My Master hath told me this ...” and all that I have just now told you today is the real thing worth telling, hearing and practicing.

To a Parsi visitor, Baba said:

Zoroaster laid stress on good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Zoroastrians of today lay stress on sadra-kusti. If they fail to perform the daily kusti ritual, they feel much annoyed. They do not bother much about the precious precept of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. That is the tragedy of religion—when ceremonies dominate, the truth of religion is left uncared for. The same is the case with the average religious minded Hindu or Muslim.

Deshmukh's family arrived and garlanded Baba. Baba gestured, "What a small garland you have brought!"

Deshmukh was notoriously frugal and Baba often would tease him about his unwillingness to spend money. Some of his reluctance did stem from the fact that Deshmukh's wife used to give him a very hard time about spending money on Baba.

This exchange reminded me of the time I was in Satara with Baba for the "Die Is Cast" meeting in April of 1955. At some point during the meeting, Baba had read out the list of names of the men mandali with Him with the designation of whether they preferred to be cremated or buried at Meherabad. They had to choose. Dr. Deshmukh, who was there, noticed that his name was not included on the list. And when the opportunity arose, he mentioned to Baba, "I too would like to be buried at Meherabad with the other mandali members."

Baba seemed to consider Deshmukh's request seriously, but replied that it was not up to Him since He did not own the land. He explained to Deshmukh that he would have to buy space from Meherjee so that his body could be interred there. Then Baba turned to Meherjee, as the land was in his name, and asked how much this would cost, as Deshmukh would have to pay according to how many feet tall he was. Baba gestured, "If you are willing to pay the amount he sets, then very well."

Meherjee realized, with a look from Baba, that Baba did not really want to change the plans that had already been drafted but wished to have some fun with the situation. So, with a completely straight face, Meherjee quoted Deshmukh a fantastically high sum. This gave Deshmukh pause. After balancing his desire to be interred at Meherabad with the other men mandali with his desire to not spend such an exorbitant amount, he decided that all in all, he did not really need to have Meherabad be his final resting place.

Baba, as usual, enjoyed this whole exchange.

At the same time, there was no denying Deshmukh's absolute conviction in Baba and wholehearted love for him. It seems lovers retain individual characteristics in spite of their love. Baba would get good-natured enjoyment out of these quirks of His lovers.

In answer to a question, one couple told Baba that they both had earned their MA. Baba quickly replied, "But in My love they are MAD. This is really a great degree. It is beyond any university degree. The threshold of love is infinitely above and beyond the threshold of intellect. Only that one who carries his heart on his sleeve has a right to kiss the threshold of love. Then what a degree MAD is."

Later that day, Baba paid a visit to the bungalow of Mrs. Maisaheb Patwardhan, the dowager (Queen mother) of Kurandwad. Baba felt very at home. Coconut water and sherbet were served. Maisaheb requested Baba to give some *upadesh* [spiritual discourse]. Baba said, "Today I have visited My house so let the family atmosphere prevail." One of the ladies present asked for Baba's blessings. Baba said, "No sooner you came for My darshan than you had My blessings, for darshan itself is a blessing." On leaving the house, Baba said, "I love Kumar [Mrs. Maisaheb's grandson]." Kumar's father requested Baba to bless Kumar. Baba replied, "I love him' means that I have given My blessings too."

There was a letter from a lover from Jhansi whose son had died, so Baba asked for Pukar to write a consolation letter to him, giving one of Gustadji's favorite couplets:

*Dhire dbire re man, dbire subkuchh boy, mali sinche
soughada rut aye fal joy.*

*Take it easy Oh mind, Everything happens in due course
of time.*

*Though the gardener saturates the soil with hundreds of
buckets of water,*

Fruit will only appear in the due season.

In short, patience yields the results at a proper time.

12TH MAY

Father Anthony, from Bombay, came to see Baba. He edited the quarterly, *Basic Education*, and had sent a copy in advance.

Baba said:

I am pleased with your work, the work for the destitute and the abandoned. Fulfill your promise to such a stratum of humanity. I will be with you and in you to help you. It is good that you do not depend on subscriptions for running the quarterly, but on the hearts who willingly contribute.

Baba then gave a special message for the quarterly:

By serving the abandoned you serve Jesus the Christ because He was also abandoned, even by His own apostle. The emblem of abandonment is the cross. By serving the abandoned, you will be serving the Christ and I am He undoubtedly.

Baba had read out Hafiz's "Oh ignorant one" (which He had explained in English on 14th April). Baba asked Sanjeevani Deshmukh,

one of those present, to translate the same into Marathi. She said that although she was good at English, she couldn't translate this particular piece as it dealt with philosophy.

Baba said:

This is not philosophy. It depicts Life Perennial. This is the Life expected of a Real Man. The life you lead is the life of an animal. It depicts nothing but animality.

One may be an intellectual genius but unless he realizes the Truth his so-called knowledge is but a play in ignorance. His interpretations about life and commentaries on Truth can be likened to the picture of the blind leading the blind. What is life in general? Once you were a child absorbed in games and care-free life. Then you grow young, pretty, lost [engrossed] in the youthful reveries and in course get married. You have children and as you grow older the worries pile up and get multiplied. Old age with all its inevitable weaknesses draws near and a day comes when with an unsatisfying feeling you leave the gross body. Is not this the life of a common man?

I know your innumerable incarnations wherein the self-same story is repeated. It is all a dream, but a significant dream. Its purpose is to make you aware of the nothingness of the Dream itself. But you are so much overpowered by the self-sown illusory worries that you do not find the way out. Can you call this a Real life? Is it much different from the life of an animal?

In the couplet Hafiz makes an indication towards Life Perennial. That is the Life one should aim at. It is for this life that you have a human form. And until you decide to achieve Life Perennial, the

(BABA CONTINUES)

previous forms, so to say, were similar to that of animals living in human form. Only the life of Love is worth living.

One who loves God has only one longing, one worry, which is to become one with God. This is life which leads the lover to Life Perennial.

13TH MAY

Baba asked one of His lovers if she had read *Stay with God*. She gave the excuse of “no time.” Baba said, “Is it really so? Are you being honest in your reply? Hypocrisy is the worst thing and in every walk of life it consciously or unconsciously persists.” To another excuse of “pending work,” Baba continued, “It is good to be frank and honest. With every breath be honest and do not let hypocrisy persist.”

To one more excuse: “I have no interest in philosophy,” Baba answered, “There is no philosophy in the book, it contains food for the brain and a feast for the heart. In philosophy, a simple thing is made difficult.”

Someone interrupted saying, “Philosophy is the expounding of a certain principle of existence.” Baba responded, “Statement of facts and philosophy are not the same. Can you call Gita a philosophy?” The reply was, “It may be called so.” Baba continued, “If Gita is philosophy, then here is My philosophy: I am in Everything. I am Everything. I am beyond Everything. To know Me as I am, you must lose your all in Me. I am the Ancient One. And again, this is not mere philosophy, but a statement of facts.”

One of Baba’s lovers, Turekar, a police officer who had to face constant and agonizing family troubles of one sort or the other, bowed down to Beloved Baba with tear-filled eyes. Baba said, “Be courageous.

Think more and more of Me. Don't wear yourself out. I know your love for Me and the circumstances you are put in. Thank Me for the pains." Here Baba quoted the couplet:

*I cause My enemies to flourish and kill my friends. This I do,
and no one has the right to demand the why and wherefore of Me.*

A Baba lover who was a scholar, referring to Baba's biography in Sanskrit, said that quoting Baba's words was preferable to a biography because Baba's biography was His silence. He quoted a Sanskrit shloka to the effect, "The Master's silence is an answer to the questions in the minds of His disciples and clears all their doubts."

Baba said:

My silence is not that silence first mentioned in the shloka. It is quite different. Unless you have an idea of the Word of words, you cannot understand My silence.



On the 13th of May a large group arrived from Hamirpur. Judging from Baba's comment on the 6th, it seems they had been due a week earlier, but whatever obstacles had been before them had been overcome and Baba went to see them at the dharamshala where they were lodging, which was unusual.

Keshav Nigam, considered the "group head" for Hamirpur, had first heard about Baba from Shripat Sahai. He didn't meet Him, however, until August 30, 1949, when he, Shripat, Babu Ramprasad and Vrindavan Nigam, came to Meherabad to invite Baba to visit Hamirpur. This was just before Baba embarked on the New Life and therefore His visit

was delayed. In the spring of 1952, while Baba was in America, Pendu and Eruch traveled throughout Hamirpur, telling people about Baba and seeing who was willing to obey Him in His Fiery Free Life. [A phase of Baba's work just after the New Life. See *Glimpses, Volume III, Lord Meher Vol XI*.] To this end, they were given a special letter that asked if they would be willing to donate their property, their money, their service, or their life to Meher Baba.

When Baba returned from the United States after His accident, He had Eruch and Pendu show Him a large chart they had prepared of all the places they had visited, as well as the list of people who had been given the special letter and their responses. Baba then chalked out a program of which places He would visit in November.

Keshav was one of the main organizers for this tour of Hamirpur. In his own words he relates a little of the background history of his work for Baba in Hamirpur, as well as the group's visit to Guru Prasad:

During the latter half of 1959 Baba lovers in Hamirpur had drunk deeply of Baba through the nonstop *japa* [repetition] of His Name. Every lover was flowing in a strong wave of happiness and was aspiring for Beloved Baba's darshan, because Baba had come out of His seclusion at the end of 1959. He had declared He would give His darshan to all His lovers at Guru Prasad in Poona from April to June 1960. So we lovers in Hamirpur district began to prepare to go.

In the meantime, as the chief worker for Baba in Hamirpur, I convened another historical gathering of Baba lovers in the district. That program was a great test of their faith and courage to put Baba's love and His teachings into practice. One strong Baba lover, Bhagwan Das, was a [toilet-]sweeper by caste from

Sarsai [Rath] village. He had been asking me for many years to call a special gathering of Baba lovers at his residence to perform Baba's *kirtan* [devotional song] and to spread His message. But I had been avoiding it purposely, thinking that the time for such a program in the district was not yet ripe.

In India, sweepers had been regarded for centuries as quite untouchable and they had been deprived of all human rights. The curse of Untouchability kept them absolutely segregated in all respects from the so-called upper caste people and also from the whole society. So the upper caste people could not go to the houses of sweepers, nor would they otherwise associate with them. It was beyond their imagination to stay with sweepers, or to take food touched or cooked by them. This had been coming down to us for centuries, and it would require the greatest courage from Baba's lovers to break this rigid tradition by staying at the residence of the sweeper Bhagwan Das, by living with the sweepers in their huts which stood outside of the village, and by eating and drinking with them without reserve.

Seeing the high discipline and faith of Baba's dear ones in Hamirpur district, I decided to challenge this inhuman tradition and declared to the lovers in a gathering that was held at Meher Dham in Nauranga in January 1960 that a special gathering of all Baba lovers of the district would be held at the residence of Baba's dear lover, Bhagwan Das on 3rd and 4th April, 1960, on the occasion of *Ram Navami* [Ram's birthday]. I warned everyone that this gathering would be a great test of their faith and love for Baba. All who were present there cheerfully agreed to face that test bravely in Baba's love.

(KESHAV NIGAM CONTINUES)

A very happy program was carried out at the residence of Bhagwan Das on the appointed days in the midst of opposition and resentful murmurs. Baba's deep love and blessings had been received by all those who attended that historical function; Baba had sent His love blessings separately to Bhagwan Das to cheer and encourage him on this great program he had arranged at his own cost in Baba's love, in spite of his poverty. People were astonished to see the courage of Meher Baba's lovers; the wise gave unprecedented credit to them for breaking with this centuries-old inhuman tradition, while others, of narrow views, reacted against it for many years afterwards.

After this gathering, the Baba lovers of Hamirpur immediately turned their attention to Beloved Baba's darshan, and I led a caravan of about two hundred men, women and children to Poona. Even with such a crowd, the lovers traveled happily for thirty hours to reach Poona on 13th May 1960. And lo! As soon as they reached the high school building where they were to lodge, Baba arrived there with His mandali to greet them. Baba was deeply touched with their love for Him and with the labor of love that they had undertaken for His darshan. Such a greeting by Baba was very unusual, for He did not do this with any other group.

14TH MAY

Keshav continues his account:

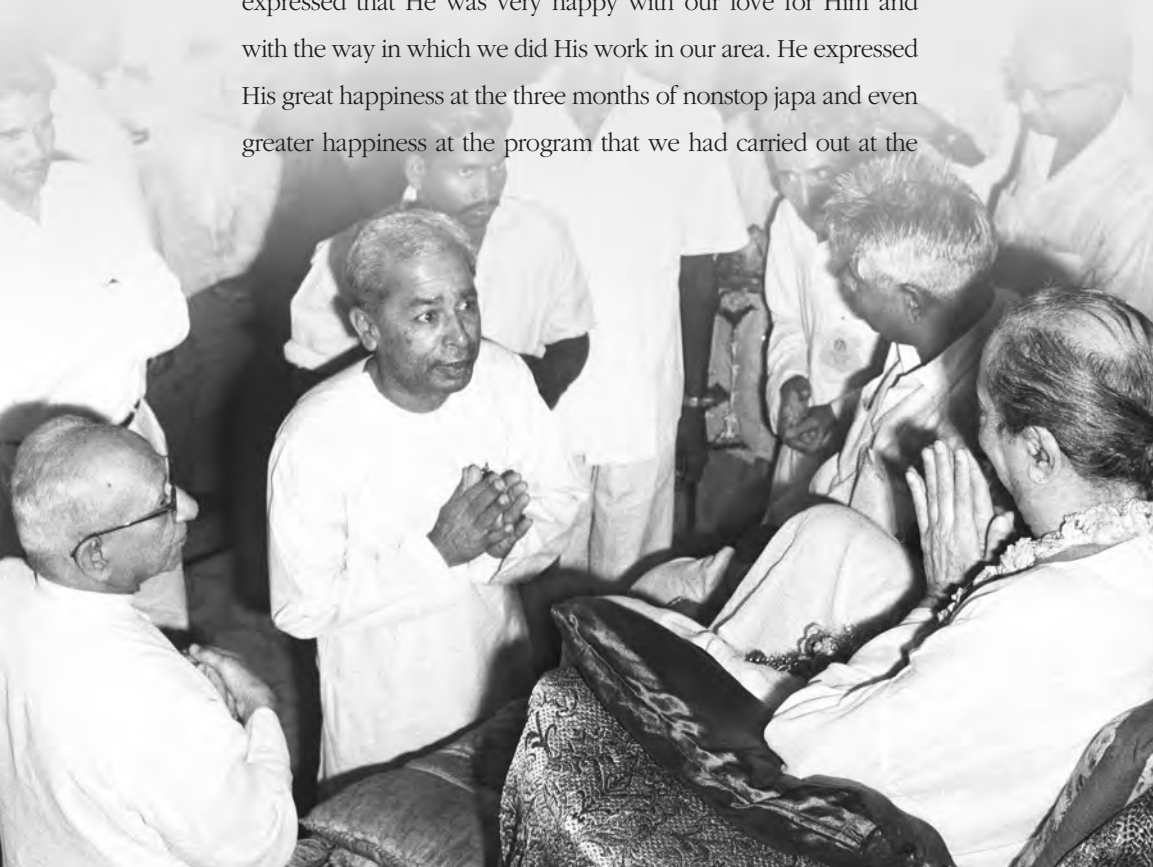
On the morning of 14th May, as the Hamirpur group were standing in line in the courtyard of Guru Prasad awaiting entry for

His darshan, Baba Himself came out, along with His mandali, and exchanged greetings with us. This also was unusual for Baba:

See how much Baba loves you. Even being a *Rasool* [Avatar] I went to receive you at the gate by walking. You may not know, but I have not walked even once [outside] after coming to Guru Prasad. Why? It is your love that makes Me do this. Today is not a day for Poona and Bombay lovers. Still Baba is meeting you today and giving you His prasad.

During His darshan Baba told us that it was because of our love for Him that He had gone to our lodgings to be with us and also had come to the gate of Guru Prasad to walk with us. Baba expressed that He was very happy with our love for Him and with the way in which we did His work in our area. He expressed His great happiness at the three months of nonstop japa and even greater happiness at the program that we had carried out at the

Keshav Nigam
taking Baba's
Darshan a
few years
later (1962)



(KESHAV NIGAM CONTINUES)

residence of Bhagwan Das, [the] sweeper at Sarsai village. Baba spoke very highly of the Sarsai gathering to all those who were present. Baba assured us that His *Nazar* [literally, glance] was on us and warned us to hold fast to His daaman.

Baba continued to meet workers of Hamirpur in groups and distributed prasad, *puri bhaji* [an Indian vegetable dish], and *shira* [sweets] to them.

To the chief organizer [of a program for the poor], Naosherwan Satha, Eruch's uncle, and Shri Ramchandra Kajrolkar of the Depressed (Oppressed) Class Mission, Baba said:

One who dedicates his life for the downtrodden serves God. God manifests in the abandoned ones. And the so-named depressed class is very dear to Me.

About 35 years ago, when at Meherabad I used to bathe, dress and feed the Harijan boys. I even used to clean their latrines. Recently, one very good thing happened at Sarsai in Hamirpur district. All Baba lovers irrespective of caste, color or creed gathered at the place, at the invitation of Bhagwan Das, a sweeper, and lived there as one Baba-family. They achieved through their love for Me what the dry propagandists could not achieve in years.

15TH MAY

The 15th was again a large darshan day. Dolly Dastur attended the program and writes:

In 1960, my sister was expecting a child. Baba had sent a circular stating: "You can come for My darshan, but only during

the fifteen days from 15th May to 31st May. You can come any day but only once.” We Bombay Parsis went on the 15th of May. Suppose Baba were to say the next day, “No more darshan?” To avoid missing the chance to see Baba if He changed his plans, my mother and I and the others went on the 15th. After bowing down to Baba, He gestured, “Where is your sister?”

“Baba, she is expecting anytime.”

“Hm? Good. When is the baby due?”

“Baba, maybe in a few days.”

“Bring her.”

So on the 16th we returned to Bombay and that night she had pains. On the morning of the May 17th a baby girl was born. We had to keep her in the hospital for eight days. The day after she was released from the hospital, as Baba had directed, we took my sister and her child straight to the railway platform and to Guru Prasad. The baby was hardly ten days old.

In this way we all got a second chance to be with Baba! When we arrived, Baba was very happy and took the baby in His arms. He said, “Come again tomorrow.” Eventually, Baba let us stay there until the 31st, so one day became four days. What great fortune!

16TH MAY

Baba again held a darshan program during which He performed the *navjote* ceremony for Meherwan, Sarosh, and Falu, Jimmy and Roda Mistry’s three sons. Navjote is a ritual in which the child is initiated into the Zoroastrian religion and begins to wear the sadra and kusti. It is similar to the thread ceremony in the Hindu religion or the bar mitzvah of the Jewish faith. Baba remarked, “At the time of the navjote ceremony, two things will

happen. For people it will be a navjote but for Me it will be *Mabadarshan* [Great Darshan]. Presently it seems like a season in Poona of saints and walis [advanced souls], who are abounding. Hold fast to My daaman.”

Falu, with help from his mother, gives the following account:

My dad, Jamshed (Jim was what he was commonly called) on a visit to Meherazad had asked Baba whether He would perform our navjote; I was 7, Meherwan was 10, and Sarosh was 5. Baba said, “*Jaroor, kai nahi*” [Sure, why not].

We were staying in a hotel called Mobo’s, a short walking distance from Guruprasad. It is where we spent our summers from 1959 onwards during the period Baba spent His at Guruprasad. Baba selected 16th May 1960 for the ceremony. It happened to be Meherwan’s birthday. A few weeks prior to the navjote, Sarosh got the mumps, and as his symptoms were gradually abating I developed a pain in my throat. The day of the navjote was fast approaching and my dad thought best to inform Baba, though I was yet undiagnosed, about the possibility that I was infected.

The same morning my mum, Rodi, as Baba called her affectionately, received a call from Goher: “Baba wants to know why you allowed Falu to meet Him yesterday when he had the mumps. Baba is saying that His throat is hurting and that He has the mumps.” The thought of being neglectful and causing Baba to be infected with mumps made Roda miserable. The tone of Goher’s voice made the impact even more intense and she began to choke up while talking to Goher on the phone. Apparently, Goher must have sensed her distraught state, and presumably told Baba about it.

No sooner after the first call ended, Goher rang again and said, “Baba wants you to come over to Guruprasad right now.” Mum immediately walked over to Guruprasad. Baba looked casual and happy to meet Rodi and said, “Feel my throat. I have no swelling. It does not hurt. I am fine. Why are you upset?” Mum insisted that Baba cancel the navjote ceremony as I could be infectious. Baba replied, “There is no need to cancel but keep Falu at a distance from Me during the navjote.”

I had full-blown mumps that day. Everyone left for Guruprasad early that morning, and I was told to stay behind until called, just when Baba was ready. Baba’s DeSoto car came to pick me up. Everyone gathered there were dressed in their best and seated in the main hall at Guruprasad. Mani had prepared three wooden *patlas* [low wooden platforms] decorated with *rangoli* [designs in colored powder, rice, flour, or petals usually on the ground], on which the three of us stood, in pants and shirtless, in front of Baba, who was seated on a long sofa. The women mandali were seated behind the door to the right of Baba’s divan, where they would always be seated during a program, giving Mehera the vantage point of seeing Baba and the program and not be seen by anyone.

Baba was beaming and said that He would hand out the sadras and kustis to the boys and let someone else put them on.

There were two boxes next to Baba—one containing the sadras with a Baba locket pinned on them and kustis, the other contained the *topis* [a hat, but in this case a Parsi skull-cap]. Baba held the sadras and kustis and handed a set to each of us in turn. Mum, Arnavaz and Nargis helped us put them on, as I doubt we knew how to tie a kustis. Then Baba

(FALU MISTRY CONTINUES)

embraced the three of us, including me, though I was told earlier I should not get close to Him, and we garlanded Him with fragrant *mogra* [jasmine] and roses.

Baba said through Eruch: "I have not come to perform ceremonies; I have come to do away with them."



He had Eruch read out a message that was dictated by Baba for the occasion:

May Ahuramazda, Zoroaster, Meher Baba free you of the bindings of *shariat* [religious rules governing external behavior], and help you to lead a life of good thoughts, good words and good deeds and bestow on you the grace of loving Baba. I have given you this emblem of superficial binding, to make you free from this binding, and to give you the real binding of Love.

Meherwan, Falu, and Sarosh Mistry during their navjote ceremony, with Roda, Arnavaz, and Nargis standing behind them



(FALU MISTRY CONTINUES)

Naja then handed to my mother a *thali* [a large flat circular plate with a raised lip around its edge] of milk mixed with some honey and told Roda to bathe Baba's feet. This was something unplanned and unexpected. Roda knelt on the floor and Baba placed His left foot in the thali. After bathing Baba's foot in milk and honey Roda lifted the leg, which seemed incredibly heavy, and placed it on her lap to dry it. There was no towel, so Roda improvised using the end of the sari thrown over her shoulder. Baba then placed His right foot in the thali. Again, after she bathed His foot and tried lifting it out of the thali, she struggled under its inexplicable weight. Throughout, Mum recalls, her heart was "churning" as she bathed, wiped and placed His feet on the foot cushion.

Baba suddenly noticed an unopened box at his side and inquired, "What is this?" It was the box containing the topis that were supposed to be given along with the sadra and kustis. In the confusion of the moment everybody had forgotten about them. Nothing was choreographed about the occasion, everything just happened naturally. Baba put the box on his lap, took out one topi and put it on His head, and handed it to Meherwan. Baba then wore the second topi and gave it to me. Finally Baba took the smallest one, which belonged to Sarosh, and put it on His head. A teeny skullcap of a five year old placed precariously on His head brought spontaneous gales of laughter in the hall. Baba looked cute. It was a delightful sight, and Baba too was amused as He handed it to Sarosh.

Roda, Arnavaz and Nargis joined the women mandali for lunch and the rest were served lunch outside on the large verandah.

I was told earlier to return to the hotel immediately after the navjote, much to my disappointment. However, Baba must have reversed His decision as I continued to stay at Guruprasad and returned with the rest.

Later in the afternoon, after lunch, Baba addressed everybody gesturing in earnest to all gathered, “Hold on to My daaman.”

We wore the sadra and kustis for the first and last time on that day. These emblems of superficial bindings are now put aside; our fortune and destiny, by the Grace of our Master, is bound to loving Him.

[The Hamirpur group left on the 17th.]

17TH MAY

Katie used to come to Guru Prasad from Bombay whenever she could get away. Years later, at Meherazad, I asked her to tell me about some of her Guru Prasad experiences, and this is what she recorded:

In my life with Baba I was always coming and going—always having to say goodbye. Right from the beginning, when Baba would visit my family home in Quetta and then go back to Meherabad, I learned to say goodbye to Baba. This continued throughout my life with Him. When He disbanded His ashram on Meherabad Hill in 1949, Baba sent me to Bombay; for 27 years I worked there for the Japanese Consulate General. Baba had given me permission to come anytime I could get leave from work.

(KATIE CONTINUES)

We always had Sundays off, but to get special leave was very difficult. Every Sunday from the summer of 1959 through the early sixties, Baba would hold a big darshan program. I would look forward to all my Sundays, because it was wonderful being there with Baba. Sometimes when there were holidays on the calendar, I would take those red-letter days and add them to my Sunday so I could spend two or three days with Baba. We only had twenty days of leave in a year, so I saved them all for Baba.

I worked a half-day on Saturdays, so after leaving the office I would head straight for the train station and try to catch the Deccan Queen from Bori Bunder headed for Poona, which left at 5 p.m.

Years earlier, Mani had written a funny skit in which Katie played “Sadarji Nushli,” a Parsi gentleman who would travel on the *Deccan Queen* from Bori Bunder. As Katie writes:

My own mother wouldn't have recognized me! I had a tooth missing, a mustache, and I kept my eyes cocked. Mani even composed original tunes for her skits. My song was about wishing to win the lottery so that I could pay for passage on “The Deccan Queen” from Bombay.* This I sang with full gusto. Baba and Mehera were the only audience and they always enjoyed these performances. Actually it was the mishaps that really tickled Baba. In this particular play, as I was exiting the stage, I slipped and did a complete slide across the entire stage with umbrella and Parsi cap flying! Baba had a good laugh. So you see, our lives with Baba were a mix of devotional and spiritual along with good-natured fun.

* See Appendix D for the lyrics to “The Deccan Queen.”

As with everything Baba did, these skits served more than one purpose. Not only did they lighten the burden of Baba's work, but they also helped Katie overcome her shyness. Most Westerners who met her remember her as being quite outgoing, but she was so shy when first joining the ashram in 1938 that when Baba asked her to sing a song for Him, she had to go into the next room and sing it from there with the door open so that Baba could hear. Katie continues:

One day I was running late to catch the train. When I reached the station I ran down the platform and managed to catch hold of the last bogey, and holding on I ran along side it until a kind stranger hoisted me in. Of course, I had to pay double to the ticket collector for not having a pre-purchased ticket. It was always a little hair-raising trying to get on that train, for it was inevitably completely packed and one had to struggle to find a place. Often I would have to just push my belongings through a window and then demand that someone pull me in. With that forceful tone I managed to find a space, but usually I would have to sit on someone's bedding roll—almost never would a seat be available.

I would reach Poona by 9:00 p.m. and walk from the station to Guru Prasad, where I was permitted to stay with the women mandali. The next morning, I always looked forward to the program when Baba would give the big darshan. Crowds of people came from many different parts of India and a few came from the West. The bhajan mandali from the Poona Centre and those from the Bombay Centre sang. Sometimes famous singers from All India Radio

(KATIE CONTINUES)

would come and sing for Baba. Baba especially enjoyed qawwali music. We would enjoy sitting through the program with Him.

Everybody looked forward to these program months and the mandali also enjoyed coming to Guru Prasad because it is so hot at Meherazad in the summer. I remember Mehera, Mani and all the ladies would go for walks on the grounds, or outside the compound around Guru Prasad bungalow, sometimes down Boat Club Road near the river. But of course, most of the time we were with Baba. Sometimes Baba would send us to the movies if His twin nephews or His brother Jal had recommended a good one. Baba would say, "You can all go and see the movie." And when we returned, we would tell Baba the story.

During the Sunday programs, Baba would occasionally ask us women to sing. So along with Mehera, Mani, Goher, Naja, Manu, Roda, Meheru and others, I would sing one of the songs that He had written in the early 1920s using the pen name of "Huma," a Persian word meaning phoenix. Baba composed songs using a mixture of Persian, Urdu and Hindi. One song in particular I recall singing in Guru Prasad was "Meher Raj." This was composed by Meheru's father, Rustom, in 1927, and Baba added a word or two of His own to the composition. My English translation is given here, though it was written in Gujarati:

*Lord Meher, this reign of yours is in the three
worlds now
We have tied all our hopes on You, leaving
aside all other causes*

Ocean of joy, beautiful in form, store of

Knowledge

For the sake of Creation You have taken on

Yourself infinite suffering (chorus)

Your banner makes all the Gods tremble

You bestow infinite joy and peace on all saints

Getting all us disciples together, You showed

us the meaning of spirituality

You taught us the saintly path, Divine

Avatarhood

Taking away differences of race, You made us

all equal

You bestowed the true thought of God, O

benevolent One

Conquering our mind, You cut away countless

sins

You have done these favors at the cost of all

Your comforts

Surrendered to You are all those who stay

close to You

Those who don't know You will talk nonsense

in their ignorance

You create plays of all kinds with one thought

To save souls, break the chains by teaching Love

(KATIE CONTINUES)

*Please accept our entreaty by taking us across
the sea of illusion
You are the Lord of all Heavens and the Savior
of the world*

*All thirst for You, saints and lovers
Make it our good fortune to serve You, O
Divine Avatar*

While staying on the women's side, I would help the other women see to Baba's needs when He came for His lunch and rest. We assisted Mehera in bringing the food for Baba or a wash basin and water for Baba's use. After His rest, Baba would sit with us and Rano might read aloud headlines from the newspaper to Him. At other times, Mani might read aloud from an Agatha Christie novel, which Baba enjoyed hearing.

I did no specific work at Guru Prasad, nor did I cook except on special occasions because the food was prepared at Bindra House. Once in a while I would think of a nice Iranian/Persian dish and bring from the market all the necessary ingredients and cook it at Guru Prasad. Baba and everyone else would enjoy it. I remember once making *osb-e-brinj*, a special Iranian dish of lentils and mutton, for Baba. By that time, Baba was allowing His mandali to eat a little meat, whereas in the Meherabad Hill ashram days we did not even eat eggs. I only learned to cook meat, chicken, and fish dishes when I moved to Bombay at the time of the New Life, when Baba had given us full permission to eat everything. And after the New Life, Baba

continued to allow His mandali and Himself to enjoy occasional meat, chicken, and fish dishes as a treat.

On Sunday, after the darshan program ended, I had to leave to catch my return train to Bombay at 5:00 p.m. I had to be back at the office at 9:00 a.m. Monday. I would say goodbye to Baba and take His leave, and Baba would say, “Go, go quick and catch your train.” Naturally, I would run to the bus stop; I just carried a small handbag. On one occasion, I was waiting at the bus stop and I was very anxious, as it was nearing time for the train to leave. It was my habit to leave Guru Prasad at the last possible minute so that I could be with Baba for a few moments longer. But that only worked if the bus was on time! We had been given orders not to travel alone in a taxi (or rickshaw) anywhere, so I couldn’t even take a taxi. I couldn’t take anything! As I waited, I began praying to Baba. As it neared 5:00 p.m., I was quite frantic thinking, “I know I’ll miss my train; I will not reach the office tomorrow, and I haven’t taken leave for Monday. My employers will shout at me. What can I do?” Inwardly I was praying so hard, “What shall I do, Baba; what shall I do?” Suddenly from Guru Prasad, I saw Baba coming in the car and headed straight toward me. He pulled up at the bus stop and said, “You’re still here? What are you doing, the train will go. Jump in.” And so I jumped in and Baba rushed to the railway station and told one of the mandali, “Get her on the train quickly.” So without buying a ticket or anything, I just ran onto the train as it was beginning to leave the platform. In the nick of time!

(KATIE CONTINUES)

This incident has remained very vivid in my mind because it shows how Baba comes to our aid whenever we need it. I was frantic and Baba knew I had to be at work the next morning and I could not get leave very easily, so He did not want me to miss work. This is how Baba comes to our rescue. When we remember Him, He is always there to help us.

Baba took an interest in my work for the Japanese, and whenever I would visit Him, He would ask about my job. Sometimes He would inquire if there was a new consul general, and I would give Him all the details. Sometimes He would ask me to do a rendition of the kabuki or Noh dances and I would do the whole thing and I must have been a very funny sight, because I would always get Baba and the women laughing.

Whenever it came time to return home to Bombay, I would go to Baba and bid Him farewell. It was always very difficult for me to leave His company and sometimes tears would well up in my eyes. Baba would gesture for me not to cry. He would tell me, "Go with a smile and be happy." And I tried my best to obey Him.

18TH & 19TH MAY

During this darshan opportunity, Shastri Pandurang Goswami and Darabshah were talking. Darabshah asked Shastri if Baba was happy. Baba said:

If the world is happy, I am happy. But even if the world is unhappy then I am still happy. If nobody loves Me I get unhappy. My happiness is not relevant to your happiness, because I know I am the only One worthy of being loved. Even

then, if you do not love Me, I get unhappy. I am delighted when I see somebody is loving Me. Do you follow?”

Baba asked Darabshah who he loved more: Baba or his wife. Darabshah answered that he loved both equally. Then Baba asked Darabshah's wife the same question. She said that she loved Baba more than her husband.



I don't know exactly how Shastri came to Baba. All I know is that one day, he dropped in at Guru Prasad when it was open to the public. He was drawn to Baba and started stopping by more frequently, to the point that he would come by even on those days when there were not large gatherings, just a few of the close ones meeting with Baba.

Baba came to know of this man's presence and called him forward. On finding out that he was a Sanskrit scholar, Baba asked him to repeat some of the *stotras* or hymns of the Perfect Master Shankaracharya. In particular, Baba liked him to recite the famous hymn, “Atma Shatakam,” which contains the essence of Vedanta.

It seemed almost each time he came, Baba would have him recite this. Or sometimes Baba would have Shastri's son recite the hymn, since the son too developed the habit of visiting.

One time, while the hymn was being recited, Baba casually gestured, “I was Shankaracharya.” When Shri Goswami published a book of Shankaracharya's hymns translated from Sanskrit into Marathi, he included in it a picture of Baba on nice art paper. Baba even sent him a message for this book through Adi, which he included. The message was, “Those who lose their all in Me, find their all in Me, ever after.”

This reminds me of some other incidents which happened at Guru Prasad. Although they occurred at a later date, it seems relevant to insert them here.

Frequently, Madhusudan of Poona, who was regarded by Baba lovers in India as their song-laureate, would visit Guru Prasad. He had composed many songs dedicated to Baba, which He enjoyed hearing. The lively tunes made the words of praise even more appealing and Baba would often have Madhusudan, accompanied by others, sing for Him and the assembled group.

One of his songs that was well received was “Meher Ekam” (Meher, the Only One). An interesting feature of this song was that all the lines, as far as I remember, ended with the letter “m.” This struck Baba’s fancy. So much so that for a while He took to adding an “m” to the names of those residing with Him at Guru Prasad. For example, Pendu became Pendu-em (not the same as in the earlier years when Baba had nicknamed him Pendulum), Vishnu-em, Meherjee-em, and so on.

One weekend, the group of lovers who had assembled included a high court judge, a Mr. Mukerjee from Calcutta, along with his wife. After he returned home after the darshan, he wrote Baba a letter in which he said that he had been so taken with “Meher Ekam” that he and his wife now sang it every day.

Eruch read out the letter to Baba with the other daily correspondence. When Baba heard that Mukerjee and his wife sang this song each day, He suddenly looked concerned. “What kind of impression will people get,” Baba wondered, “if they hear this song being sung? It is a mixture of languages,” Baba gestured, “Marathi, Sanskrit, and

Hindi. When people hear this song with its unusual combination of words, what will they think of Me? Will it give them the wrong impression?”

Baba in His divinity would sometimes act almost innocent and even ignorant, or as I like to say, “Omni-ignorant.”

Baba turned to me and asked me what I thought. I said, “Personally, I like the song, Baba. It has a nice tune and the words touch the heart, and I think people will understand that it's only a song.”

“Is it grammatically correct?”

“Baba, it seems okay to me,” I replied again, but Baba was not satisfied.

“Do you know Shastri Pandurang Goswami?” He asked me. Of course I knew of him as he was a frequent visitor to Guru Prasad and, even apart from that, he was a well-known Sanskrit scholar working at the Deccan College Research Institute of Languages.

“Do you know where he lives?”

“I don't have his address, but I know he is living somewhere on the Deccan College campus.”

Baba seemed pleased. “Go and ask him his opinion of this song.” I accepted this command, and to my surprise Baba gestured, “Don't wait until tomorrow. Go now.”

So, after getting the book that contained that song I quickly took a rickshaw to nearby Deccan College. I searched the campus for Shastri Pandurang's residence and, after asking a few people, finally found his house. He was surprised to see me, and we made casual conversation for a while before I came to the point of my visit. I showed him the song and explained Baba's concerns about such use of Marathi, Hindi and Sanskrit words mixed together. He replied that he also liked the song and thought it was a good one.

“Yes,” I agreed, “but what about the use of words from different languages all in one song?”

“It is written in the language of the heart,” he replied, “so ordinary rules of composition don’t apply.”

I was happy to receive a verdict that I could relay to Baba. I stayed for a short time, as he offered me some refreshment. Then, as soon as I could politely take my leave, I hurried back to Guru Prasad.

When I entered the mandali’s room, it was as if Baba had been waiting for my return. As soon as He saw me He gestured, “Well, what did he say?”

“Baba,” I replied. “He says it is written in the language of the heart awakened by Your Love; and ordinary rules of language don’t apply.”

Baba appeared to be very relieved to hear this. He smiled and gestured, “Then it’s okay if the judge and his wife continue to sing the song.” He then asked Eruch to reply to Mukerjee’s letter. Baba seemed pleased with the end result and gestured to me to come closer. He reached into a bowl on the table beside Him and gave me a fresh sumptuous grape, symbolizing for me His divine bounty.

On another occasion, when a group of Telugu Baba lovers came to visit Baba, I was on the front portico. They arrived a little early for their meeting and Eruch was attending to some work, so no one was there to greet them. Baba was already seated on His long sofa in the main hall. I was worried that there was no one to welcome and interpret for them. I tried to converse with them but they did not understand me, as I do not know Telugu. Baba gestured that they should come in and sit down. The group went in and sat around Baba. Baba did not speak Telugu and none of them spoke

English, but they began talking to him in their language anyway. The secretary was standing and saying a great many things that I didn't understand. I wondered how they could understand Baba, but He continued to gesture comments and questions to them.

Just then a man from their group, who spoke English and Telugu, entered at the back of the hall and I rushed over to him. I explained my concern that there was no one to translate so that they could communicate with Baba, so this man began translating for the group, and Baba very naturally went on conversing with them as He had before. I realized then that there had been nothing for me to worry about.

It was as though the words they exchanged with Baba were conveyed through the feelings they expressed and thus no language was necessary. It was the language of the heart inspired by love, which is truly beyond all rules, and all comprehension!

This reminds me of an incident with some of Baba's lovers from Andhra. Once Baba was meeting with a group of His Bombay lovers and Chinta Sarvarao and his business partner, Majety, showed up. Baba then asked Eruch to stop translating in Gujarati and speak in Hindi instead so that the two from Andhra could understand what was being said.

Naturally, Eruch did this. But the Bombay lovers would speak in Gujarati and Baba would either answer them in Gujarati or would throw Gujarati words into His English replies and, invariably, Eruch would end up slipping back into Gujarati. Baba would then stop him and ask him to go back to using Hindi. This happened a couple of times and then Baba turned to Chinta Sarvarao and said, "Don't worry. It doesn't matter if you can follow the words or not. The important thing is your sitting here before Me."

Along those same lines, Beloved Baba once conveyed to His lovers:

The prayer God hears is the prayer from the heart.... God does not listen to the language of the tongue, nor to the language of the mind, but He responds to the language of the heart.

On another occasion, Baba said:

The language of the heart is the song of love for the Beloved. The Beloved can only be found within you, for His only abode is the heart.

Returning to the events of the 18th and 19th of May: To a doctor devotee who was visiting, Baba said, “Doctor, you are a wonderful person. You will say that you are My servant. In this your humility is expressed. There is a defect in you, you immediately get agitated and exasperated. Then you say, ‘Baba, I am a humble human. There are bound to be defects in me.’ Ego is within, and outside expression is something different. Therefore, it is impossible to destroy ego fully, for it is like being fully conscious in unconscious sound sleep—the destruction of ego is impossible.”

Shastri asked, “Even after realization, ego remains?”

Baba replied:

That is different. I have already discussed it enough. Have you read *God Speaks*? If you do not understand or even if you do understand, in both cases you have to die. To know God is to unlearn yourself. This is very difficult, not easy. And one who says he understands has not understood anything. One who has understood this, he knows that he understood. Who is that one who has not understood it? When everybody is one and the same then

where does ignorance come from? When God is in everyone, indivisible, and when one person knows Truth, why does not everybody know this? Why do we see the divisions? Where has the ignorance come from?

Eruch then said to the doctor, “This is all Gita. Just as in the *Bhagavad Gita*—Baba tells the same truth. Suppose you are in a dream. Then the dream is there and yet it does not exist in reality.”

Baba further explained, “Even renunciation is bondage. It also creates bindings. So eat, drink and enjoy yourselves. Only when renunciation is renounced is there no binding.”

Then Baba called in the Andhra group. One of them said, “We cannot convince people that Baba is the Avatar.”

Baba said, “Don’t worry about others. It is the duty of you people to live ever in happiness. This is your duty.”

Another devotee said to Baba, “I will perform Your special *puja* [prayers] every day. Are there any specific instructions for this?”

Baba replied, “Whenever you find time remember Me from the heart, that’s all.”

One person said that he wanted to publish Baba’s biography in Telugu. He was willing to contribute 500 rupees. Baba gestured, “Please ask Adi for any details. I only know that you love Me.”

Doctor Kanakadandi introduced the people from the town of Eluru. Baba said, “Do you know this person? Is he a pandit [religious scholar]?”

“Yes, Baba. He is a pandit.”

“Is he a pandit in loving Me?”

“Yes, Baba.”

“Then he is a real pandit.” Baba then asked the pandit to read his poems. Baba appeared pleased to hear them. Baba asked him, “Have

you read *God Speaks*?" The man responded and Baba continued, "Try to put into Telugu poetry what I have explained in *God Speaks*."

Then about Shastri, Baba said, "He is very dear to me. I like him." Then Baba asked him to give Him a prayer booklet.

Baba asked P.N. Limkar about his family and welfare. Baba gestured, "When have you come?" Limkar replied, "Whenever you come here, I come." Baba responded, "I will not bring you until after a hundred years."

Limkar said, "As you wish." Then he expressed his desire to read a poem composed by him in English.

After hearing it, Baba said, "That is why I said I will not bring you until after a hundred years. The English poem is good, but there is no poetry in it. It is written with love, that's all."

Limkar responded, "Baba there is feeling in it."

"Agreed," Baba said, "but there is no poetry in it. Wherever there is expression/love [there] is poetry."

Perhaps it is appropriate here to say something about my friend P.N. Limkar. I have noticed that sometimes when one is absolutely and totally dedicated to Meher Baba, it is difficult for the other members of one's family to adjust to this. Such persons always put Baba first, before the family, and sometimes their devotion is so intense that their behavior may even seem a bit odd. The family members, instead of being drawn to Baba, seem to be repelled, and even when they are blessed to have Baba's contact, they often seem to have little interest.

This is not a hard and fast rule, but it was so with Limkar, who lived in my hometown, Solapur, where I met him in 1944. He worked as a schoolteacher for years. He was a post-graduate in Physical Education.

When not in the classroom, Limkar enjoyed the company of *masts*. He would often be found with them on the street smoking bidis and drinking chai. He was a little *mast*-like in his absolute devotion and one-pointed focus on Baba.

The school staff and others in the community were shocked by his unusual behavior. Although he was very well educated and qualified, the school principal eventually had to ask him to leave.

In 1952, after the New Life, Baba sent a circular to all His lovers. They had to fill in the necessary information, expressing their willingness to offer their lives, property, money, or service in Baba's cause. Each response was read out to Baba, and Adi K. Irani filed them all in his office. I had completed and sent in my own circular soon after I received it. Sometime later, Baba asked Adi about those who had not returned their forms. He seemed to be quite serious about each response. Soon thereafter, I received a telegram from Baba instructing me to go and see Limkar, as his form had not been returned. I was surprised and wondered why Baba would put such importance on this man. Although I couldn't understand, I knew I had to carry out Baba's request.

Locating Limkar was quite a challenge. Though he had a wonderful wife and three well-educated sons, he did not live with his family. Instead, he would wander from school to school and from town to town. At last I learned that he was staying in a very secluded and rural village called Gunjoti. So, I headed out by train to reach the place where Limkar lived. Since it was in the interior part of the state, I had to catch two different buses and a bullock cart over a road so muddy that I have yet to see its like again. It was the rainy season and the road was black alluvial soil.

When I arrived at the address I had been given, I found that it was the house of the headmaster for the school in that village. I then

discovered that Limkar stayed with the headmaster and his family, who were close friends of his. Limkar had received the circular, but had completely forgotten about it. So I helped him fill it out and mail it to Adi. The principal and his family were followers of Aurobindo Ghose, and because of the God-loving atmosphere in their home, I stayed with them for a few days. When I returned to Solapur I sent a letter to Adi giving him all the details of my visit to Gunjoti and informing him that I had carried out Baba's order with positive results. Later, this principal and his whole family came to Baba.

I expected a message back from Baba in a few days, expressing His appreciation for the work I had done. But no word came, even after two weeks. I began to wonder why Baba would have sent me on such an apparently important task and then not reply to my message that the important work had been completed.

I had the opportunity to visit Baba soon thereafter, in the beginning of November 1952. There was a meeting to be held on the 7th, 8th and 9th of November. Baba was staying at Meherazad, and every day He would come in the morning to Meherabad to discuss with the mandali the arrangements for the Fiery Free Life meeting and to attend to the mail. One day, when the letters were being taken from Baba's important letters pouch, my letter fell out on the carpet, just inches in front of where I sat.

I was astounded that my letter could have been in Baba's important letters pouch for months. Without mentioning anything about it, Baba asked Eruch to pick it up and Baba put it back in His pouch. This was a revelation to me of how important He considered the work entrusted to me of contacting Limkar and getting his form signed. Nothing Baba does or asks anyone to do is insignificant. That was one of the great lessons of my life that Baba in His compassion demonstrated to me

through a silent apparent accident. He had orchestrated all of it, just to answer my unspoken query.

On the morning of the 19th, Baba called the Dharmarao group of Andhra first. Baba explained in regard to someone's question: "To replace Ram's idol with Baba's idol would be the same as removing Baba's idol. Baba is both *nirakar* [formless] and *sakar* [with form]."

Baba said, "You people go now and come back at 9 o'clock. Even if you can't come, there is no problem. I am in everyone and I Myself am everything."

Some followers of Ma Anand Mai [a saint who was then living in Poona] had come to see Baba who said to them, "Every heart is Baba's house and the one whom you are with there is a wonderful soul. I am in everyone. I am everyone. I am happy to see you here. Keep on sincerely following the one whom you are following now." This typically was Baba's advice to those who followed other "Masters" whenever they came to see Him.

Baba had asked one of His admirers, Shri Govind Joshi, a lecturer in a college, to come on a certain date, which he missed. When he arrived today Baba asked him why he had not come on the fifteenth as arranged. "You had told Me you would come," Baba said. The man answered that he had had no time. Baba replied, "You missed an opportunity, which was wasted. Why did you act like a stranger?"

Then there was some talk of Joshi translating *God Speaks* and *God to Man and Man to God* into Marathi. Baba asked Joshi if he had read His books. Shri Joshi replied, “Yes, Baba. They are really a blessing to the world.” Baba said, “Had you read the books as they should have been read, you would have left the work in hand to keep your appointment on the expected date. It was for your good. My love is unconditional and in spite of your failing to come, I like you.”

About His books Baba said, “I know you have grasped them. Attempt to translate them.” Joshi then recounted two experiences: one was about a mantra he had been repeating and the other was about repetition of God’s name. He told of some experiences that he had had in a dream. Baba instructed him to keep doing as he had been doing and added, “You are blessed.” Baba seemed pleased and further said, “Since the first day you came you have been behaving familiarly with Me.”

Joshi asked if Baba was coming to Poona next May. Baba said:

To Me there is no tomorrow, and you talk of next May! I know what is going to happen at any moment in the seemingly endless time, including next May! Past and future exist for you, I live in the present moment which has eternity within it. There is no time there. In fact, because you are here now, that is the reason why you were, ever were, and you ever will be—both the past and the future are incredibly inconceivable through any stretch of imagination. Retaining the timelessness of the present moment, I am simultaneously conscious of the *anna bhumika* [the gross plane] also. From that plane I say that I will leave Poona on 20th June for Meherazad and will stay there in seclusion for six months, i.e., from 1st July to December end.

One of Baba's lovers from Gujarat, Mr. Rawal, said, "Baba, I see You everywhere." Baba replied:

Good. Try wholeheartedly to see Me all the time. But remember well that your present "seeing Me" is not the "real seeing." It is very difficult even to have an intellectual conviction [the first type of conviction] about God's existence. This requires a rock-like faith in God's Omnipresence. When you cross the hurdle of intellect you have the "conviction by sight" [the second type]. This requires intense one-pointedness in your longing for nothing save God. Then God is seen as He should be seen—every moment, everywhere. This is "real seeing," but this yet implies duality. As you cross the hurdle of seeing, by tearing off the last vestige of separate existence, there dawns unaware the third type of conviction—conviction by becoming God—that you already were and for which the whole creation has sprung up. This is a very, very rare occasion, a gift of Grace from the Perfect Master.

Baba had someone read out from *God Speaks*, and Baba explained more about the fifth and sixth planes:

Here there is that continual longing, a fire, for that divine Love. The person is not realized but feels, "I cannot live without God. I must be one with God. I don't want this body nor the awareness of my surroundings." Then, with such longing, there are chances of Union. Because longing attracts My Grace and without Grace there is no certainty in attaining Union.

One must respect the wish of the Master. If the Master says that it is night then you must [actually] experience it, but it does

(BABA CONTINUES)

not happen. One should be like the earth. Earth says that you may make an idol of worship out of it or just walk on it.

If you are a saint, say, “I am a saint.” If you are not, then say you are not. If you do not do this, your conscience will play hell with you. Whatever is there within should be visibly displayed outwardly. Live in society and keep your intellect calm.

One of the visitors said to Baba, “Give us your blessings.” Baba replied, “Don’t ask even for My blessings, just love. If you go on asking Me question after question, I will go on replying, which will make you more and more puzzled. So don’t do that, just love Me more and more.”

Baba then remarked, “The Pophali family is connected with Me for twenty years and their love for Me is different. To ask for love is to insult love.” Shastri, the Sanskrit scholar asked, “Who demands? Definitely *nishkam* [pure] love is better than love that is *sabakam* [love with desire]. Isn’t it?” Baba replied, “Love gives. It gives one’s body, mind and heart to the Beloved—even to the wish of the Beloved.” Shastri reiterated, “Love gives everything.”

Shastri Pandurang was translating the Shivoham and Hastamalak stotras [Vedic hymns], but Baba directed him to stop. Baba remarked, “The Shivoham stotra [Prayer of God praising Him] and Hastamalak stotra are My own creation and therefore they are very pleasant to hear at all times. What is the meaning of Hastamalak? I would like to hear *nad* [melody] and *swar* [vocals] of the hymns. So just read the verse composition, no need of any translations.”

Vinoo [possibly Vinoo Kher, Nana’s brother] said to another devotee in the group, “Don’t bother about following other gods, just consider Baba as all deities in one as do Soman and Chavan [two Baba lovers in the hall].”

Baba replied:

You are full of unknown treasures of God. The only drawback in you is that you do not see within but without. This has been an age-old habit. When you start observing the inner self, you see many precious treasures within you and you go on traveling on the Path. When you reach the last boundary, you cannot cross it on your own. For that, you have to have the grace of the Perfect Master. That you yourself cannot cross the last boundary is a fact, for this there is no remedy. But you go on advancing on the Path till you reach the last boundary.

To be one with God is madness. This is a thing of madness. To have the grace of a Perfect Master, you should become the dust under the feet of a Perfect Master, but it is most impossible to become dust. Therefore, the Sufis say that it is the whim of the Perfect Master which can give you the experience. Therefore, you should never leave the feet of the Perfect Master. Do you know how difficult it is to become the dust at the feet of the Perfect Master? Only the grace of God gives you that.

A lecturer, Mr. Rajendra Bhatnagar, read out his poems before Baba. Baba gestured satisfaction and asked him if he was married. When he said no, Baba humorously asked him if he was ready to get married with Baba Himself. The lecturer said, "Then I shall not be of any use in this world. I will only go on doing Your work." Baba added humorously, "While doing so, you will be dead tired."

About another lover, Nashin, Baba explained, "Nashin is very happy. Throughout his life he talked about Baba only. He was trying to make people understand Him, but people took him as a madman."

Merwan Dubash, son of Adi and Rhoda Dubash, was a young boy when he came to Poona that summer. He writes:

In May and June 1960, I spent the first of my three long stays with Baba. My family and I were in Poona about six weeks and went to Baba at Guru Prasad every day. First my mother and I went only in the mornings and my father alone went back after lunch in the afternoons.

I was only thirteen and started to get bored after a week or so of this and was agitating to go to Panchgani. At the right opportunity my parents asked Baba if it was okay for me to go to Panchgani. In His usual fashion Baba asked, "Why does he want to go? Doesn't he like it here?" and because Baba asked, my parents said, "Baba, he is getting restless and a little bored." Baba said, "In that case let him come with Adi (my father) in the afternoons to Guru Prasad." You notice He didn't say no to my going to Panchgani. So I started going to Guru Prasad with my dad in the afternoons as well, thinking that I was now going to be doubly bored. Of course, what I didn't know was that the afternoons were more fun.

This was also the first time I met the twins, Rustom and Sohrab, as well as Meherwan Mistry. In the afternoons the four of us would amuse ourselves before Baba came back from the women mandali. We must have been making quite a racket doing this because Baba got word that we were disturbing Pendu, who would take a nap every afternoon before Baba returned to the men's side. Others told us to keep the noise down

and I guess we didn't, because one day Baba told us that we were making too much noise and disturbing Pendu's sleep. Therefore, between twelve and two all four of us were told to keep silence in Guru Prasad, which I did for the rest of my stay.

Of course in the afternoons Baba also played His famous card game of La Risque. Initially I did not play but picked up the cards and dealt them after each game and after a while Baba let me graduate to the player level. In the afternoons we also had Aloba's famous tea (it was much better than it was in later years because in those days it was strong Indian tea with milk). Also very often Baba would receive baskets of mangoes from His lovers as a gift and there were so many that He would regularly distribute them to us to eat. Baba would sit on a stool on the side verandah or kitchen and give the mangoes individually to each one.

Then there were also the house visits, when Baba would go to a lover's house in Poona at their invitation. Obviously, He got quite a few invitations and when Baba went on these visits He didn't only take the men mandali but took two or three car-loads of people with Him. In typical fashion, Baba would make sure everyone got a chance to go. He would take an interest in making the selection as to who was going on which visit and in which car, etc. House visits were great fun to go on and we tucked in heartily to the goodies that were laid out for Baba. Baba Himself would only have a cup of tea and very little to eat but His entourage did justice to the rest!

Of course all this was great fun for a boy of thirteen and now that I was spending all day with Baba the desire to go to Panchgani was no longer there. However, there were still, let's say,

(MERWAN DUBASH CONTINUES)

a few moments that were less fun. For example, every Sunday Baba would allow the local people from Poona and Bombay to have His darshan. Inevitably these lovers would sing songs for Baba. Quite a few of them sang classical Indian songs and played classical music, and not being a fan of such music, I was not particularly enthralled. I would survive the morning session but halfway through the afternoon session it would be a struggle to stay awake!

With hindsight, it is fascinating to note how Baba kept me there. There was no coercion at all; He simply came down to my level and kept me interested in activities around Him. Truly a demonstration of His humanness.

23RD MAY

Today a famous film director, D.D. Kashyap, specially came to see Baba. Baba said, "I know everything. Even then I want you to introduce yourself to Me, it is all to meet you on your level. I am happy to see you. Are you happy? Have you any worries?"

"Nothing special."

"When one gets a human form, worries become inevitable, but one should not succumb to them either in good or bad times."

D.D. Kashyap said, "Formerly I was well placed in life and in the film world as well. However, during some past years, I had to experience many ups and downs in life. And today, as I have the fortune to sit at your holy feet, I all the more realize that whatever had happened was worthwhile and that it was all the will of God."

Baba replied:

This is a better way of understanding the events in life. Read *God Speaks*. You can grasp it and if you understand it properly, you will find that there is nothing to worry about; whatever happens is due to the impressions or sanskaras. Sanskaras make the dream of Creation appear as real and lasting and create unending worries.

The so-called “good times” are like happy dreams. Owing to the congenial atmosphere, it becomes a long pleasant sight and you want to see and enjoy it more and more. But when you awake from sleep, you find that the “world of happy surroundings” has no value. Bad times are like “fearful dreams.” You crave to get yourself relieved from the situation as early as possible. And, if in addition to this a tiger jumps right on you, instantaneously you awake.

It is in God’s plan to awaken everyone from the dream of Creation and make one live in Him as Infinite Bliss, and the compassionate law of opposites through the so-called good or bad times leads everyone and everything towards God who is beyond good and bad. So there is really nothing to worry about, save love for God. I am Eternal Bliss; I eternally suffer too as I am in everything as everything.

The director told Baba a part of the story of his recent film which depicts love for God through service to the poor.

Baba said:

If you read *God Speaks* you will have a wider outlook of the spiritual panorama of God and the creation. The entire creation

(BABA CONTINUES)

is a “game of love” or a “divine sport” which God enjoys at His own cost. In motion pictures you have to introduce the spiritual truths but only gradually. It is the need of the times. If you become successful in this, it will be in both ways profitable to you—materially and spiritually. However, while directing or producing such films, keep at the back of your mind that except for God, the Infinite, everything else is illusion. Then the “works” will not bind you. You will be more and more receptive to God’s love. The heart will become more and more pliant for God’s work.

A Persian couplet says:

God, the Beloved, says to the lover, “Evict the millions of strangers from your abode, only then will I enter. I feel shy of strangers!”

And who are the strangers? Wants, desires, thoughts. They are all so compressed within you that they practically leave no room for God the Beloved, whom they want to invite in. As the strangers [impressions] leave, or get expended, the heart becomes clean and pure. Then God peeps in and His loving look wipes away all worries. The glimpse of God leaves no scope to doubt. The purpose of creation is to enable everyone to consciously enjoy the infinitude of God.

The God-realized One lives in the world but the world does not and cannot touch Him. But to become God-realized is not child’s play. For this, one has to surrender all—body, mind and heart—to the Perfect Master.

One should not be distracted by fleeting visions or “minor experiences.”

At this juncture, the director quoted some lines with reference to intense longing for union with God. Baba liked the lines and said:

It is a nice quotation. The difficulty lies in having such an honest feeling. One must feel from the core of his heart that it is impossible for him to live without God,

His should be the condition of a fish taken out of water. When such intense longing continues unceasingly night and day, one sees God, the Ocean of Effulgence. That marks the beginning of “real seeing”—then real longing to become one with God, the Beloved, commences. That is a real romance. The intensity of longing for becoming one with God can never be imagined by gross standards, however high they may be. It is altogether a rare experience.

I am pleased with you and you can contribute good things to the film world by introducing God and love for God through films. Be honest. Let not hypocrisy creep in. Try to respond to the dictates of your conscience without playing with it. I am with you; I am within you but take Me with you. My blessings.

Baba’s final message to Mr. Kashyap was, “I will help you 100%, but you must believe Me 100%. You must keep in mind that you must be honest in all circumstances.”

Later that day, Baba explained:

The untold infinite Treasure is within you. The only drawback is that you do not seek it within you. You look without. This has been your habit from your apparent birth in the Beginningless Beyond. The moment you get up from sleep, you start looking

(BABA CONTINUES)

“outside” of you. On the Path, as you begin to look within, you have the opportunity to see some pieces from the Treasure. But these too are just the “shadows” of the Real Treasure.

The Perfect Master has the key that opens the last gate which holds His infinite Treasure. To have a look at, or to become one with the Treasure—God—is “madness.” It has to be “madness” of such intensity that it remains unaffected during the most alluring pleasures or the most sorrowful pains. It is not the way of the worldly wise. Such madness presupposes infinite patience and forbearance. The only remedy is just the infinitely independent and affectionate look—whim—of the Perfect Master. This leads to fulfillment. But for this, you have to lead your life as per the Master’s instructions with complete resignation to His Will—whether you are physically near or far from Him.

At the end of the discourse, one lover put a new question to Baba, who remarked, “When in My sahavas, be all attentive and receptive to what I say, but no questioning.”

The lover said, “Baba, bless me for this.” Baba continued:

Do not ask even for such blessings. Love Me and be silent. Pampering of the intellect brings forth innumerable questions. All these questions can be answered, but it is not spiritually indispensable. Mere intellectual explanation will not take you out of the internal muddle, but will, all the more, puzzle you. Very rare persons have the necessary acumen. Try to grasp what I have already said. The more you love Me, the less you question.

Love answers all questions, including the question of questions, “Who am I,” for it ignores questioning itself.

To demand anything from the Beloved is to insult love. Love gives and goes on giving till the Beloved’s Will alone manifests through the lover.

When Meher Baba opened the gates wide at Guru Prasad, all sorts of people came to have His darshan. Especially on weekends there was always a crowd that included old-time Baba lovers, business people, social workers, the curious, passersby, sincere seekers and not-so-sincere seekers of the Path as well.

Baba always responded to each individual in a way that was appropriate to that person. None were made to feel inferior, or unfit for His company or the spiritual path. Baba’s love was unconditional and all-embracing. Coming into Baba’s presence was like stepping into gentle healing sunshine, which shone regardless of the individual’s failings or weaknesses.

One time [this may have occurred later than 1960], a gentleman, who happened to be passing by, noticed people entering the mansion, and inquiring, found out that Meher Baba was giving darshan. Although he was not a Baba follower, he was interested in spirituality and so he decided to attend. He entered and met Baba, and when the crowd thinned out, he stayed. An informal discussion began with some remaining Baba lovers, and the gentleman emboldened himself to address Baba, especially to express his complaints about most people’s lack of civic spirit. With great earnestness he decried the lack of social consciousness in others. “People just don’t seem to see or work for the common

good. They never think of anyone else,” he exclaimed. Baba looked sympathetic and listened to him patiently. He encouraged the man by gesturing, “Oh, really? What do you mean?”

“Well, today for example, I was in a hurry and some thoughtless fool had simply thrown his banana peel into the road, instead of disposing of it properly. I didn’t see it and I slipped on it.”

Baba considered this matter, as if this were a problem that required God’s full attention. “You’re right. That is a problem,” He declared. And then, His face lighting up as if the solution had just come to Him, Baba snapped His fingers and gestured, with a twinkle in His eye, “So from now on, anytime you see a banana peel in the street, you should pick it up and dispose of it properly. That will be a service to the people.”

In this way, Baba would stoop to the level of those who met Him and make them feel comfortable without belittling their thoughts or views. Not only that, but Baba gave this man a way to remember Him and to feel that He was doing “Baba’s work,” through this simple exchange.

One day I noticed Datta Bal approaching Baba for darshan. He was a well-known personality in the area, and many considered him to be a saintly person. He was the son of a principal of one of the colleges in Maharashtra and was a sort of a prodigy. He was a robust man and an inspiring speaker on spiritual topics. Although I didn’t know it at the time, he apparently also had a gift for healing.

As he walked away from Baba, after taking darshan, Baba caught my eye and signaled that I should go talk to him. So I went over to Datta Bal on the verandah and engaged him in conversation. While we were talking, he asked me what Baba had to say about healing. I replied that I couldn’t speak for Baba, but what little I had gathered from Him made me feel that any psychic manipulation should be avoided. I expressed,

however, “There are certain people, who in a selfless spirit and with a love of God, help people. If this is treated as a gift from God it doesn’t bind them, but this is rare. In many cases, healing can become a cage for egotistic feelings of the healers.”

When I finished speaking I noticed that a small crowd of wealthy people had gathered on the verandah and were waiting for Datta Bal to be free. They wanted him to visit their homes. It was then that I learned from others that Datta Bal was a healer.

The next morning when Baba came as usual to the mandali’s room, He asked me about my talk with Datta Bal, and I gave Him the gist. On that very day, Eruch read out Evelyn Blackshaw’s letter to Baba in which she described her visions and experiences of Him. Evelyn was an American who, after reading *The Perfect Master* and *Avatar* in 1947, had a vision of Baba. When she woke, she still felt blissful and saw Baba everywhere. When she met Baba at Myrtle Beach, five years later, she saw Him as a divine young boy floating on a pink cloud, although at the time He was 58 and sitting in a chair in the Lagoon Cabin. Baba casually remarked that although such experiences have a significant place in one’s spiritual journey, one has to go beyond them, and not get caught up in them. Baba then told me that if Datta Bal came again, I was to tell him about the experiences of Evelyn Blackshaw, without mentioning her name or the fact that Baba had asked me to do this.

Datta Bal came the following weekend. Afterwards, according to Baba’s instructions, I approached him and greeted him. As casually as I could, I brought up the subject of Evelyn’s experiences, as per Baba’s instructions. I commented that I had gathered in my time with Baba that occult experiences tend to bind one and may present obstacles to one’s spiritual advancement.

As we conversed, I told him a little more about Baba's life. Datta Bal seemed appreciative of this information and asked me if he could have a private interview with Baba. I said that it wasn't possible, as He was only giving public darshans at the time.

The next morning, Baba asked me about our conversation. He said that if Datta Bal came again the next weekend, I should continue to maintain my contact with him. I told Baba that Datta Bal had wanted to have a private interview, but I had explained that this wasn't possible.

The next weekend, Datta Bal did come once again. Perhaps he had been hoping for a private interview, but with such a large crowd, there was no time. The program ended as usual with Baba's arti, and then everyone started to leave.

When all had gone out of the Hall, Baba asked me if Datta Bal had been there. I said, "Yes," and Baba gestured for me to go see if he was still on the premises and to call him if he was. I rushed out, and saw that Datta Bal was still on the verandah. I told him that Baba would see him. He was joyous to hear this and gladly went back inside. Thus he got a brief private interview with Baba after all, though Eruch and I were present. Baba was happy to see him, and Datta Bal seemed even more pleased at this unexpected boon. During his conversation he asked Baba if he would realize God in this lifetime. Baba replied that he should just continue to love God more and more and assured him that at the opportune time, with God's grace, he would realize Him.

I have learned that when healers come in contact with a Perfect Master or the Avatar, if they approach with sincerity and humility, either they get the right perspective or their power of healing leaves them, having been naturally absorbed into the divinity of the Master.

As for Datta Bal, I didn't see him again, but obviously this interview made a lasting impression on him, because in later years

when he happened to be in Mahabaleshwar, he told a Baba lover that he should never leave Baba, but should hold onto Him at all costs. What sound advice!

24TH MAY

At one point, when Mani happened to be in the room, Baba said to her, “Jesting is My old habit. And that has caused Me the great botheration of this creation.” Baba said to Agrawal, a lover from Agra who had to constantly face difficulties:

Don't worry over bodily sufferings. Even if the body is to be cut in pieces, it matters little in comparison to the heart getting stained or scratched. Let your love-filled heart remain unadulterated. Through the body you have the scope to suffer, but gradually a time comes, and it must come, when all suffering is over. Then you leave the body for good and become eternal bliss.

An *abbang* (a form of devotional poetry) by Tukaram was read out wherein he stated that the act of slapping a hypocritical saint is not counted as a sin.

Baba then said:

The only sin that God does not forgive is hypocrisy. The hypocrite deceives others and himself too. Hafiz says:

*He is the hypocrite who shouts from the pulpit
and asks people to do this and that; he asks them
to repent but he himself does not act according
to his own words of advice. These rogues are in a
way courageous who try to deceive God, but they
should be flogged.*

In the end Hafiz says:

*As for myself, I am the slave of the real Master
whose slaves see the treasures of the world as dust.*

There is an interesting footnote to the mention of Tukaram's abhangs. Baba liked this one so much that someone painted it on a board and it was hung on the wall of Mandali Hall at Meherazad. In 1964, Eruch wrote Kumar about a person who was posing as a saint and pretending that he was following Baba's orders. Eruch asked Kumar to see this man and to bring home to him that he should stop such nonsense. Kumar was a fiery person. Earlier Baba had made him promise that he wouldn't hit his wife, and then that he wouldn't hit anyone. But when Kumar went to see this person in Delhi, he slapped him several times. When Baba asked him why he had done this, Kumar said he thought it was all right because of the Tukaram quote which was hanging in Mandali Hall. Baba seemed amused at this reply but again instructed Kumar that in the future he was to refrain from hitting anyone.

26TH & 27TH MAY

On the twenty-sixth Baba had declared, "One must love God, see God and become God."

On the twenty-seventh Baba gave the following description about experiences:

Experiences are of two types: (a) real; (b) imitation. Unless you are a pearl expert, it is difficult for you to distinguish an imitation pearl from a real one, so also it is difficult to distinguish between an imitation and a real spiritual experience.

The One Real Experience ever remains beyond mind. Real Experience, once gained, is never lost. Then worldly things

cannot affect you. To get Real Experience, Hafiz says, “become footless and headless.” How to become footless and headless? Obey the Master implicitly. As far as His orders are concerned, don’t use your mind or your head. Do what the Master commands you to do. Let your foot move as per His instructions, for the Master’s work. This is as good as becoming footless and headless.

In reference to the agonies of a lover, Baba quoted Hafiz:

In love a stage is reached when pangs of separation gnaw your heart, but every gnawing is experienced as a blissful agony.

29TH MAY

Baba again was in the mood to give a discourse:

God creates, sustains and destroys the Creation of His infinite imagination. Man is the image of God. Man also creates, sustains and destroys. How? As man wakes up he becomes the creator of a particular illusion, which he sustains during the day and destroys when he goes to sleep. If man can imagine so much with his infinitely finite capacity, how much more can God imagine with His infinite imagination?

God is infinite and eternal. So His imagination must be infinite and eternal. Being eternal, His imagination is unending and the creation goes on expanding. How can you imagine this? Man with his finite imagination can never, never get even a faint idea of God’s imagination. When imagination of the infinite is so vast then how can you imagine that imagination, let alone the understanding of the Reality!

(BABA CONTINUES)

In fact, there is no such thing as space and yet in the domain of imagination there seems to be no end to space. In this seemingly infinite space, numberless universes are created, sustained and destroyed. Where is the end in infinite space? How many universes are there? Where are they going? How are they moving? As long as God goes on imagining, there is no end to this process. However, just as man's imagination rests in the sound sleep state, so also in God's sound sleep state, the infinite imagination stops functioning. Like space, time too, in its origin and futurity, is endless and yet eternity lies in the present moment.

One reason why it is impossible to even begin to capture something of the flavor of time spent with Baba was because so much of what was significant was happening inside of people, unbeknownst to any outside observer. Although Baba's discourses were eloquent and profound, His humor inimitable, and His face an ever changing, endlessly fascinating succession of entrancing expressions, even greater were the silent dialogues He conducted in His lovers' hearts, answering their questions, calming their doubts, and filling them with His love.

One such example, out of the thousands that occurred, concerned the Dadachanji family. Arnavaz had met Baba as a young girl in the late 1920s, and Nariman, who was living in Karachi at the time, had also first met Baba in 1929. They both loved Baba deeply and He had them marry in 1944. Nariman had several brothers and it was a source of disappointment to him that none of them seemed drawn to Baba.

Periodically, Nariman or Arnavaz would mention this to Baba; He would point to the back of His wrist, as if pointing to a watch, indicating that the family would come to Baba when it was the right time.

The years passed and although the brothers and their wives had many opportunities to see Baba and the mandali, the fact remained that they visited Baba only because Nariman wanted them to. As the elder brother in the family, his wishes would have been respected but, in fact, in many ways he seemed more like a father to them, yet their hearts were not touched.

In 1960, as with many of the Bombay group, they came to Poona on the weekends and would visit Baba at Guru Prasad. One afternoon, the last weekend in May, Nariman came to the dharamshala where they were staying and stomped in, looking and sounding really upset, and he pulled his brother, Hoshang, aside and told him that Baba had said that everyone had bowed to Him as He had directed, but that Hoshang hadn't. The others knew this wasn't true because they had been in the line and had seen Hoshang bow, but Nariman was having none of it.

Feeling very upset at this unjust accusation, Havovi, Hoshang's wife, remembers that they drove back to Bombay with their infant son, Rayomand, her brother Pesi and his wife, and Dolly and Nari Contractor all squeezed into their little Fiat. It seemed especially unfair, since they had been going to Guru Prasad at Nariman's request. And Havovi didn't know how they would deal with this situation as it now seemed as if Baba, whom Nariman took as God, was lying! Still, since Nariman ordered it, they returned the next weekend to Guru Prasad. Nariman told them that come rain or shine, like it or not, they had to go.

So Freny and Rustom (Nariman and Hoshang's brother) and Hoshang and Havovi returned. When they were leaving, Eruch came and gave them little booklets that had the "Master's Prayer" and the "Prayer of Repentance" printed inside. Baba had told him, "Give these to Freny and Havovi with My love."

On the ride back to Bombay, they decided that that weekend session had been "nice" and the love that had been dormant in their hearts started to come alive. From that moment on, they began to realize that they were His, and to love Him more and more.

They went from going to Guru Prasad only to please Nariman to not wanting to miss any opportunity and even repenting their earlier attitudes. Eruch would often say that regret is one of the ways Baba brings His lovers closer to Him. And in this instance, the regret of not having availed themselves more fully of being with Baba intensified their newfound determination to be with Him, to serve Him and to love him from that moment on.

Mehera was always very loving to Havovi and Freny. Each time they visited, she would show them her Baba treasures and would pull out from under the mattress some beautiful paintings or drawings by 3B (Diane Cobb). Havovi always felt she should tell this lovely and remarkably loving woman, "I don't love your Baba." It made her feel like a hypocrite but she just couldn't bring herself to tell Mehera that.

Later, after 1960, Mehera would tease Havovi by saying, "At first, you didn't love Baba, but came to please Hoshang." But the fact of the matter was that Havovi came at first to please Nariman and because she felt that if she were there, Hoshang wouldn't fall for Baba like his brother and start loving Him. As she was to write, years later, "What a joke!"

30TH MAY

Dr. Hoshang Bharucha had come with others from Navsari. His close friend, Cowas Vesuna, wrote about Hoshang:

In his early life, he had been very much influenced by his uncle Nusservan Bharucha, who was a close devotee of Upasni Maharaj of Sakori. Relinquishing a high position in life, his uncle had chosen to stay at the Sakori Ashram, leading a frugal life of a recluse. Hoshang had often visited him and imbibed a deep religious fervor from this pious man, which culminated in Hoshang becoming a firm devotee of Upasni Maharaj and his female disciple Sati Godavari Mataji.

When Hoshang first met Meher Baba at a 1955 sahavas, he was overwhelmed by the downpour of love he received from Baba. Baba had filled him with such love during the sahavas, that Hoshang played a prominent part in the preparations for Baba's visit to Navsari in 1956. In spite of all this, the thought continued to trouble him as to whom to follow. In the 1960s he continued to be a staunch devotee of Sati Godavari Mai whom he respected as his guru and guide.

As the importance of Baba increased in his life, Hoshang still could not decide whom to follow. So I wrote to Brother Adi K. Irani for help. Thereupon Hoshang was called to Guru Prasad by Baba. When he was sitting there with Baba and Eruch, Baba pointed to Eruch and said, "Suppose Eruch is Godavari Mai; the devotion and love you direct towards Godavari Mai ultimately comes to Me, as she loves Me. So instead of sending your devotion through her, it would be easier to do so directly to Me." From that day onwards he became a staunch devotee of Meher Baba.

Perhaps what follows below is the incident Cowas was referring to, or perhaps Baba just brought up this subject to bring home the point to Hoshang (and everyone else in the hall). Seemingly without reference to anything, Baba gave this talk:

When are sanskaras most infectious [harmful]? I often warn My lovers not to visit any saints. Why? It is because in that case there is likelihood of breaking the orders I have given you. Such incidents are most undesirable for your personal spiritual upliftment and to Me, as I take you to be Mine, it becomes an added suffering. If you have faith in Me as the Ancient One, it is not necessary for you to visit any saint or other or promise to obey him.

For instance, suppose I have ordered Eruch to observe fast for some days and during this period if Eruch visits a certain saint and the saint offers him prasad; what will be his position? He will be in a dilemma. If Eruch eats prasad he breaks Baba's order and if he does not eat he insults the saint. Such incidents have already happened and so to save you from such a situation or predicament I have to warn you again. For instance: I had ordered Hoshang to keep seven days fast and remain secluded in one room. After a fast of five days, two days only in seclusion, I asked him to remain in seclusion for two more days. During that period, he came out of his room as he had to obey someone else. [Dr. Bharucha had gone to Sakori to do his fast and seclusion. While he was there Godavari Mai had sent for him. He felt he could not disobey and came out of his room in answer to her summons.—Eds.] That is why one should keep away from saints.

It is best that you stick to Me alone. You will be benefited most by your unflinching devotion to Me. If you go on running

hither and thither you get involved unnecessarily. This is My advice to My dear lovers only and not to the visitors.

My advice to the followers of other saints—whether counterfeit or genuine—is this: it is not necessary for them to come to Me, unless they are ready to follow My instructions implicitly. No one should come to me for help unless he is ready to obey Me.

Do not keep company with saints. You are likely to acquire his good and bad habits. Then there will be no remedy for these habits because you lose the advantage of good fortune. Tukaram says one must bow down to a saint from a distance keeping their divinity in the heart.

Be careful in your dealings and contacts with saints, for if you disobey them there is a possibility of your best sanskaras being wiped off in no time or that you would contract such types of sanskaras that are extremely difficult to be effaced. So it is better to respect them and remember them from a respectful distance.

I am not a saint. I am the Avatar. Tukaram, the Perfect Master, has warned people about their dealings, attitude and contacts with the saints, so how much more careful one must be about one's contacts with the Avatar and especially about His specific instructions. The case of purposeful [conscious] disobedience shall create a very tragic situation for the person concerned.

The best course for My lovers is to remember Me wholeheartedly and remain happy. So try to love Me and leave the rest to Me.

Expanding on this theme a little later, Baba said, “But to experience Me as I really am is quite different. I am beyond. I am much above. This [gesturing to His body] is absolutely nothing when compared with Baba as Reality.”

31ST MAY

Today, many people from Andhra as well as the north of India came for Baba's darshan. Among them was Niranjan Singh, a principal from Delhi. Niranjan was an intellectual person and asked Baba many questions. Many of the following messages that Baba gave were addressed to him, answering a question he asked, or following up on a previous discussion. Later on, many of the notes I took were reworked and eventually printed as *The Everything and The Nothing*.

To this group Baba said, "You are leaving on the sixth so it will be the 'goodbye day.' But there is no goodbye to Baba at anytime. When you realize Me you will bid goodbye to the three worlds for good. Hafiz said:

Oh Master, help me to achieve absolute forgetfulness."

Later, Baba continued:

Nowhere is absolute honesty needed more than on the Path. The slightest hypocrisy washes you off the Path. Ego keeps you aloof from your own Self; in the guise of honesty it deceives itself. The subtleties of the Path are thinner than a hair. For instance, your ego asserts, "I love Baba." The fact is, if you were really to love Baba, you would have lost body consciousness. See the fun! The ego which ought to have merged in Baba goes on asserting, "I love Baba." Isn't it hypocrisy! However, such assertions have become so natural because of the age-old habit of limiting "I-amness" in the unlimited and indivisible Existence of God. But how to give up this shadowy "I-amness" and get established in the "I alone AM" state? Hafiz provided a solution, when he says:

*Oh lover, separation and Union are none
of your business—seek only to resign yourself
utterly to the will of the Beloved!*

*For even the craving for Union with the Beloved cre-
ates binding. So bother not about Union or separation.*

Thus only when you try to resign to the will of the Beloved, life gradually changes and the ego asserts less and less. Then whatever the Master commands, you obey. In the beginning the mind grumbles. It says: “Why should I try to obey someone?” But Hafiz consoles the mind by saying:

*O Mind, this slavery [to the Master] alone can
give you eternal Freedom.*

Obedience as obedience is almost impossible because mind comes in the way. The heart that holds love wants to go beyond mind. Love says, “Even in your dreaming, do not ask for why and wherefore of the Master’s doings.” Those who are lovers must obey the Master implicitly and with all willingness. The slave of the Master whose obedience is perfect becomes the Master.

After hearing a piece of *shenai* [Indian flute] music Baba said:

This musical program is just a dream. Call it an awake dream. The spiritual path is a journey, in which at a certain stage you hear such sweet melodious sounds that you get enchanted. At another stage you see wonderful visions in which you get lost. All this is a dream. These experiences on the Path, too, form a part and parcel of the dream. Call it a super dream or real dream. In other words, only when you achieve conscious sound sleep state, the dream with all its aspects disappears.

(BABA CONTINUES)

When you sleep, you go to your original state but unconsciously. In sound sleep you have no consciousness of the body, not even of yourself. You are, yet you are not conscious of yourself or the breath, which represents your existence. The state of God-realization is similar to this state, but with full consciousness. In that state you eternally exist as Infinite Consciousness. Then, heaven and hell and all the planes are contained in you. They are at your feet. There is no scope for anything else besides your Self.

This is the only Experience worth aspiring to and experiencing. To get this experience you have to become like dust at the feet of the Master. And when you become absolutely nothing you become Everything. In a sense it is an infinitely long journey wherein you have to pass through evolution, reincarnation and the six planes until you reach and merge in your own self as Self. The journey by itself is nothing. It is meant to wake you from the dream and establish you in Infinite Consciousness.

The journey appears to be interminable and the destination ever remains entirely out of view. But where do you go? Nowhere. You think: "I have become lame and limp. There is no end to my trying to reach the destination." But the fun is when you reach the destination you find that you have never traveled at all. It was a journey from "Here" to "Here." Hence, one of the Realized poets says:

When I plucked the date I found that it was within Me.

[The date, usually found high up in a tree and, therefore, out of reach and difficult to attain, was used by some poets to symbolize realization.—Eds.]

You find yourself within you. It is both difficult and easy because it is infinitely simple.

Better to deny God than to make a show of saintliness. You may be extraordinarily clever in the eyes of the world, but if you have hypocrisy, your acumen has no value. You may be an unlearned person but if you have no trace of hypocrisy you become the wisest in the eyes of God. When no trace of you remains, however unlearned you may be, you become the wisest.

When you go on saying, “I know this. I know that,” be sure that you do not know. Real Knowing is different. You say, “I see the sun. I see the stars,” but real seeing is quite different from what you see now. Remember that which is to be seen is not seen with the physical eyes, and that which is to be known is not known by the mind, but is to be felt as your own Self.

There is no such thing as a veil. You are the veil. How can you remove your “self?” It is so infinitely simple that it has become infinitely impossible to lift the veil. The only exception is by the grace of the Perfect Master.

This is the endless beginning and end of the journey. This is the only experience worth having. It is for this you have to pass through the evolution, reincarnation and realization process. In reality, all this is nothing. It was all in order for you to have Infinite Consciousness. This journey is long, not only in terms

(BABA CONTINUES)

of billions and trillions of years but in terms of apparent cycles of birth and death.

To a student, Baba said, "Learn to love Me."

At some point during this month, I didn't record the date, Baba asked me to keep silence, beginning at 7 p.m. I wrote in my diary, "I am not sure when to break it in the morning."

Perhaps I should add here that Baba, periodically, would ask different members of the mandali to keep silence for different periods of time, though it was rare for Him to ask this of me. It was not hard for me to keep silent and I relished such opportunities to obey Baba. Baba didn't tell me why He was asking this of me and I did not ask.

1ST JUNE

Baba gave the following discourse:

How do I know everything? It is because of the infinitely simple nature of the infinitely complicated phenomena of the universe. When you know what is Universal Mind, Universal Energy and Universal Body and what connections these have with individual mind, individual energy and individual body, you will know how the Master knows everything, every moment. Then nothing is impossible. But for one to know everything in a flash takes one almost an eternity. You have to lose your self in God to know your Self as God. This is not easy. Even the raising of corpses to life appears too simple

in comparison with dying to self. Perfect Masters have even raised to life hundred-year-old corpses. But raising such dead bodies is so simple in comparison with dying to self.

Illusion is infinitely vast but it is governed by Law. In existence there are two things: Truth and Law. Truth belongs to God. Law belongs to Illusion. The law of cause and effect, which no one can escape, belongs to this Law. It is difficult for one to escape from the operation of the Law of Karma created by nothingness. These nothings ever bind you. Only those who are one with God are beyond the Law and can take anyone beyond the domain of the Law and merge them in the Truth.

From the Original Real Nothing came out this nothingness. As Everything is Infinite and Eternal, so also this Original Nothing is infinite and eternal. Being in the infinitude of Original Nothing all that has come out of this Nothingness must be infinite and eternal too. All this creation that has come out of this Original Nothing must be infinite and eternal. If the Substance is Eternal and Infinite, the shadow must also be infinite and eternal. But the shadow at times appears small, at times stretches ad infinitum. At a time it appears to have disappeared completely, but still it is latent in the Substance. So this Original Nothing is in the Original Everything. We term God as Everything and so everything must have Nothing too, and out of this Nothing has come this paraphernalia, this false everything. The Real Everything is One, Infinite, Eternal but this false everything is comprised of innumerable, temporary nothings. This false everything is infinitely dual. That Original Everything is infinite in which Original Nothing is also infinite,

(BABA CONTINUES)

otherwise Everything, so to say, is insulted. Original Nothing is one, infinite, and eternal. In this Original Nothing are innumerable temporary false nothings. What did you eat? Nothing. What's wrong with your health? Nothing. So there are countless nothings in that infinite Original Nothing.

Conclusion: Real Original Everything is One—Infinite and Eternal. In it is Original Eternal Nothing. Many nothings exist in the Original Nothing. There is a continuous flow of innumerable nothings from the Original Nothing. That is, there are “nothings” and “nothings” into One Nothing.

Original Real Everything

Original Real Nothing

Innumerable Temporary Nothings

False Everything

Tomorrow we will establish that Original Nothing is Real and these “nothings” (I ate nothing, etc.) are false.

2ND JUNE

Irwin Luck had arrived in Bombay after midnight on 1st June, spent the night there and was then driven to Poona the following day where he was put up in the Napier. He came to Guru Prasad in the morning of the 2nd. Irwin had found out about Baba in the late 1950s. In 1959, he had written Baba telling Him that he was planning on coming to India to see Him. Baba sent a reply giving Irwin permission to see Him for one hour only.

Irwin spent the next several months trying to raise enough money to pay for a plane ticket, but without success. He continued to correspond with Baba and asked if his younger brother Eddie could come as well.

Baba cabled on 5th April that both brothers could come in May for two or three days if their father agreed to bear the expenses.

Their father was adamantly opposed to Baba and was not about to pay for them to go to India. Irwin was unable to raise the money himself and in May he read that Baba was about to go into seclusion and then he wouldn't be able to see him. Irwin wrote Baba again, explaining that he wanted to come but that he didn't have the money. Baba responded by telling him: "Don't worry. Circumstances will adjust themselves."

And they did. Somehow Irwin got the money and left for India. Eddie had planned to go with him but as he was still a minor, his father was able to have the police stop him at the airport and prevent him from leaving. Irwin flew on and finally got to meet Meher Baba on 2nd June. Baba asked him to come every day to Guru Prasad and instructed Meherjee to see to his lunch and to show him the Baba sights in Poona after the day's program at Guru Prasad was over.

Baba in Poona,
1960, with
K.N. Soman,
Meherjee, Eruch,
Irwin Luck, and
Kutumba Sastry



Irwin was totally baffled by the game of La Risque, so Francis tried to explain it to him, although apparently without success. Francis seems to have been the one Baba appointed to talk to Irwin because He said at one point to Irwin, “Talk with Francis. He will make you 100% happy. I will make you 100% miserable. However, be certain that I am definitely the Ocean of Love.”

During the morning session, Baba repeated:

I am the Ocean of Love. Whatever you do with love pleases Me. When Love draws you to Me, don't ask for anything. Love. If you have to ask Me questions, you could have done so through correspondence. But now that you have come here, be a silent recipient.

Ask, and you lose. Love has no questions and hence expects no answers. Love is ever eager to respond to the wish of the Beloved Master. There is no scope for why and wherefore while obeying the Master. To those who want to follow the Master, Hafiz says:

*What you hear from the Master, never say it is wrong
because, my dear, the fault lies in your own incapacity
to understand Him.*

In another couplet Hafiz says:

*Oh dear, separation and Union are none of your
business—seek only to resign yourself utterly to the will
of the Beloved!*

Later, the topic of love came up again. Irwin said that everyone has Love within them, but there are many obstacles in between. Baba commented, “Irwin has a very deep understanding of love and he is

prepared to do anything to experience it.” Baba then asked those around Him, “Do you experience My Love?”

Eruch said, “Not as the Ocean of love.”

Judge Khilnani replied, “A fraction of love,” and Ramjoo said, “Not even a fraction.”

So Baba asked Ramjoo, “And do you believe that I am the Ocean of Love?” Ramjoo replied, “Something more than belief!”

Baba then explained, “Rarely is one given that Love.” Irwin interjected, “But you are the Ocean of Love. Everyone should get that Love, the Ocean.”

Baba replied, “Why should I give the Ocean to everyone? When I see it is worth giving, I give.” Baba pointed to an empty jar that was lying in His lap on His sadra. He had just finished distributing chocolates to the mandali and to bring the point home to Irwin, He said:

Here is a jar with a closed lid on My lap. Now, even though I am the Ocean, and though it is right in My lap, the jar does not get filled. In My inalienable oneness of love, you cannot expect Me to do two things—open *and* pour. Likewise, it is left to you to open your heart to Me to receive Love.

And again, why should I give you or a particular individual the Ocean of Love which I am, and not to others, or the whole of creation! Why not a thief, a tramp, or any other person? Why only you? It is a gift, and it ever remains as the gift of Grace.



This reminds me of a qawwali program that was being held for Baba, where the singer sang a line to the effect of, “You are the Ocean, won’t you even give me a drop?” Whether it was the atmosphere which always pervaded the hall at such times when singing programs were

held for Baba, or whether the singer felt that this was his chance, sitting before the Ocean personified, he repeated the line, and then repeated it again. He sang it over and over. Just then Aloha appeared with tea and Baba pointed to the singer and gestured, "Give him two cups, he is very thirsty."

Baba often said that loving Him in a most natural way through whatever one does, thinks, and feels is the best path to Him, the Ocean of unconditional love. This reminds me of the following story.

One weekend, there was a fairly large group of lovers who were happily taking advantage of the opportunity Baba was giving to have His darshan. As usual, the mood of the gathering was quite lighthearted and informal. Several bhajan singers were pouring out their hearts to their Beloved in song. Baba was enjoying the music, and the atmosphere that developed was deeply intimate.

In between songs, Baba emphasized that the only thing that mattered was love. Baba's love for us, in that room, was not an abstract philosophical proposition, but was palpably real and something we all, to varying degrees, experienced.

Once a group from Navsari was visiting, and one young man, who was relatively new to Baba, felt so moved that he spoke up and said, "Baba, when I go home, would it be all right if I keep silence for one day a week."

Baba gestured, "Very good," and there may even have followed some discussion as to what day of the week would be best.

Then the general program continued as before. After some time, this exuberant young man spoke up again. "Baba, would it be all right, when I go home, if I keep fast one day a week?"

Again Baba seemed pleased and gestured that this was a good idea. Baba patted his stomach and indicated that keeping fast could be very

helpful for one's health and that one's digestion could benefit from this discipline.

After a few more minutes, the group's time to be with Baba was over, so paying their loving respects, they left Guru Prasad. Once they had gone, Baba turned to us and gestured, "Here I've been telling them to just love me, and that man, on his own, has added two more bindings on himself. Now he is bound to do that," and Baba brought His wrists together as if He had become shackled. Then Baba smiled a rueful smile and added, "It's good that they didn't stay longer or that man would have bound himself even further!"

Various disciplines have their place, but we should not overvalue them or make a demonstration of them; and we must be ready even to leave them behind, if necessary. These profound, yet succinct replies from Baba reveal His spontaneity and ease in answering questions regarding the spiritual path. These answers also demonstrate how He helps His lovers to gain a true perspective on the place of spirituality in each one's life.

Those times I spent with Beloved Baba in Guru Prasad offered me a delightful kaleidoscope of heart-touching moments. Some brought a smile to my lips, others a tear to my eye. All contributed to bringing me ever closer to abandoning my mental prejudices, and to understanding that the only thing that matters is wholehearted love for Baba, the Awakener of Hearts.



Once, when someone commented that they would try to receive Baba's love, He said:

Don't try. The more you try, the less is the chance to receive Love, though it is simple. It is said that those who want

(BABA CONTINUES)

Love should, in the midst of life, become deaf, dumb and blind. This will gradually force you from the wants that you like and those too which you dislike. In the end you have to free yourself even from the want, “I want Love,” or “I want to be One with the Beloved.” Although such a want frees you from all other wants, even this singular want becomes a burden to the Beloved.

This means the blending of infinite eagerness with infinite patience. An unconditional surrender to the Beloved is indispensable. If this is not possible, at the most you can desire to become like dust at the feet of the beloved Master. This want frees you from all wants. In the end, you find that even this want becomes a burden to the beloved Master.

For this you have to obey Me implicitly. The following Persian line depicts how impossible it is to obey the Beloved. The disciple says:

Oh, Beloved. You have tied my hands and feet to a plank and have thrown me in the midst of a stormy ocean and You command me that my clothes should not get wet.

This means that unless I help you to obey Me, it is not possible for you to obey Me 100%. I am God in human form. Be prepared to obey Me with all willingness. Now you are Mine. I will bestow the gift of Love as and when I like. Leave it to My will and pleasure. Don't worry. Be happy. You have pleased Me and so have the opportunity to be in My living Presence.



As has been mentioned, in the afternoons Baba often played cards or made house visits. As the days went by, it seemed He had visited many of His Poona lovers, but Baba noticed that Madhusudan, who so often sang for Him at Guru Prasad, had not invited Him to come to his house. Baba asked Madhusudan when he was going to invite Him to visit.

Madhusudan said, “Baba, my house is very small. To call you and invite you is to invite an elephant into my home and I don’t think I can manage it.” Madhusudan said this because he knew that inviting Baba meant automatically that Baba’s mandali and followers would also come. Madhusudan knew that his house wasn’t big enough to accommodate such a crowd.

But Baba said, “What will other lovers say? You are so near to me, so loving and yet you are not inviting Me to your house.” Madhusudan replied, “Baba, I do not want to see You inconvenienced.”

“All right,” Baba relented. “You go home now.”

Then, without telling him, Baba arranged with Meelan, Shinde and other local lovers for Him to visit Madhusudan’s house. He told them to make all the arrangements but not to let Madhusudan know about it. They went and told Subhadra about this plan of Baba’s and she agreed to keep it secret as well.

One day Madhusudan returned home and saw the house had been decorated, as if for a function of some sort. In that section of Poona, most of the homes were very small. So when anyone in the neighborhood wanted to have a program, they would make arrangements to use a neighbor’s house as well. Madhusudan thought one of his neighbors was having some sort of celebration and had arranged with Subhadra to use their house so he didn’t ask about it. But the next morning, he saw that Subhadra was preparing *bbajia* and

pakora [deep fat-fried snacks made with chickpea flour]. Baba liked these dishes quite a bit. Eruch said when he and Baba were walking down a city street during a *mast* hunt or other travels, if Baba smelled bhajias being fried, He would comment about the pleasant aroma. Baba would sometimes ask Subhadra to make one or the other for Him. So Madhusudan asked his wife what she was doing.

"I am preparing bhajia pakora," she answered.

"For what?"

"For the program."

"What program?"

"You don't know anything about it, so just be quiet. What do you have to do with it?"

Meekly, Madhusudan said, "All right," and didn't ask any more questions. You can imagine his surprise when Baba and party showed up. Some repairs were being done to the roads around Madhusudan's house so there was only a one-way street giving access. Along with Baba came 30–40 cars holding other Baba lovers. The main room in Madhusudan's house was approximately 10 feet by 12 feet yet somehow they managed to fit in. As Madhusudan recalls there were Indians, people from Pakistan, and even an American, Irwin Luck.

Baba asked Madhusudan to sing a bhajan. But thinking that Baba must not be comfortable in that mass of humanity, Madhusudan refused. "I can't bear it," he said. "You are so inconvenienced sitting there. I love You and I don't want You to be."

"You don't want Me to sit here?" Baba asked.

"No, no, You can sit there," Madhusudan replied, miserably torn between his wish for Baba's company and his desire to make Baba happy. "But I want You to be comfortable."

“I want that, too,” Baba replied, “but you are not allowing me to eat here, or drink here. You are not allowing me to sit and you are not allowing me to hear your bhajans.”

Madhusudan was afraid that Baba would then get up and leave but instead Baba said, “Ask everyone to come here and I will give darshan.”

“How will You do that?” Madhusudan blurted out. “There are so many people here, maybe thousands.”

In fact, the crowd outside the house was so large that those passing by assumed that there must be a talk being given by some big political leader. And, out of curiosity, people started lining up to see who was inside. Yet it was their great good fortune because Baba stayed and gave darshan to all who entered. Madhusudan estimated that it was probably over two thousand by the time it was over.

3RD JUNE

Baba began the day's session with the following couplet first in Hindi and then in English:

He who has eyes but does not see.

He who has ears but does not hear.

He who has the faculty of speech but does not speak

can see Me as I should be seen or hear Me as I should be heard.

Baba explained:

This does not mean that you have to remain totally inactive or lazy, but on the other hand you have to be more and more alert, receptive and watchful to the All-Pervading Beloved.

(BABA CONTINUES)

In one of the couplets Hafiz says:

*O Hafiz, if you want your Beloved to be
present, do not absent yourself for one moment from
His Presence.*

In *God Speaks* it is mentioned that the Qutub or Sadguru, the man-become-God, is equidistant from everything. That is why He can simultaneously be on every plane of consciousness, though externally His physical body appears to be present at only one place. To see Him as He is, is to see God.

So beware, let it not happen that when the Giver (Beloved), who knocks at the door of your heart, comes with the Unlimited Treasure, lo may He not find you asleep.

On the Path there comes a stage when one gets a certain type of experience in which all things appear to dissolve very gradually. And with external eyes you find all things practically disappeared and a vacuum is created which is accompanied by a feeling of fright. At that very moment, in that vacuum, a lotus is seen and as the lotus vanishes all things begin to reappear. Such an experience should be treated as cheap. In most cases it even nourishes pride and a feeling of superiority.

In another type of experience, when consciousness is so completely focused on a certain point, it makes everything else practically fade away. This makes one absolutely dazed. It is a state of conscious coma. Just prior to that experience if the hand is raised it remains raised till the coma is over and normal consciousness is regained.

Now one more type of experience is the experience of the fourth plane. On the fourth plane infinite power is at hand, but this entails great risk. Hafiz says:

*Just before the "kiss" there is that "asman": where
you feel all-powerful, but the least misuse of that power
takes you to dust.*

[*Asman* literally means sky, but here refers to an exalted station.—Eds.]

After crossing the fourth plane, one kisses the threshold of God's abode. Of what Hafiz says, none can gauge the depth of its meaning.

So on the Path there are three types of useless experiences. The first gives fright, the second makes you dazed, and the third, the experience of the fourth plane, where a great fall is possible. Therefore the Qutub does not make you pass consciously through the planes. To vouchsafe the intermediary experiences is child's play for Him. He is not interested in giving you a drop; when the Master gives, He gives you the Ocean. He only wants disciples to obey Him and at an opportune moment, He raises the individual to the highest level of consciousness.

Baba mentioned that all desire exclusive interviews with Him, when they want to send all others out. Baba then said that He had ample time to spare at His leisure but then He added, "But what about others?"

Not many mandali members stayed with Baba when He was at Guru Prasad. Although there were many small darshan programs with hundreds, even thousands of people attending over the course of a summer's stay, and while there were quite a few regular visitors from Poona and Bombay who visited frequently and who could be counted as among the intimate ones, these people did not stay once the day programs were over. The only two male visitors who did not live with Baba but who were permitted to have extended stays at Guru Prasad were Nana Kher and myself. I became quite fond of Nana and enjoyed his company, while admiring his steadfast devotion to Baba.

In later years, Nana moved to Meherabad and became well known as the caretaker of Baba's Samadhi. Many remember the loving embraces he would bestow on those coming to pay their respects to Baba and his heartfelt greeting, "Welcome home," as he enfolded them in his arms. Most, however, are unfamiliar with Nana's story, so I am including part of it here in his own words:

It was from Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, who was then my professor of philosophy in 1941, that I learnt about Avatar Meher Baba. Before this I had heard His name when I was in school, but I knew nothing about His life and His message to the world. I had read the life story of Shri Ramkrishna Paramahansa and some works of Swami Vivekananda as a college student. These works created great interest for me in the spiritual life. So when I heard from Dr. Deshmukh his personal experiences of Meher Baba and also eagerly read some works about Baba, my longing for Beloved Baba's darshan and divine guidance increased. I wrote my first letter to Beloved Baba expressing my great

desire for His holy darshan. But no reply came; still I continued to think of Baba very often.

In 1943, I decided to serve in the Field Cashier Military Accounts office at Poona during the Second World War, so that I could be close to Ahmednagar for Baba's darshan when an opportunity might occur. Before going to Poona, I learned from Dr. Deshmukh that Eruch was staying at Bindra House. So after settling in I went there and met his father, dear Pappa Jessawala, who told me that Eruch had gone to Baba for some work. On my next visit Eruch and his loving mother, Gaimai, were very happy to meet me. I started meeting Eruch every Saturday afternoon and we would talk about Baba and spiritual life.

During that time I wrote my second letter to Baba requesting His darshan soon. After some days, to my great joy, I received a letter from Adi K. Irani stating that both my previous letters to Baba had been read to Him and He was very happy to note my aspirations for the Truth. But Baba said that I would have His darshan at the proper time when the right moment came. So I should be happy and wait for the right time.

In the meantime, I read all five volumes of Baba's *Discourses* and was very much drawn to Baba without meeting Him physically. Finally, after four years of eager waiting, the great opportunity to have Baba's holy darshan at Ahmednagar came on the day before Eruch's wedding at the Sathas' house [Akbar Press]. Eruch had told me that Baba would attend his wedding, as Baba Himself had arranged the marriage. Eruch invited me to attend with the hope of having Baba's darshan there. Baba paid a visit to the Sathas' house on the day before the wedding and I was there. So Eruch told Baba about me and I was immediately called by Baba and had darshan

(NANA KHER CONTINUES)

for the first time. I at once felt that I was meeting someone I had known for years, and I was completely at home with Him. Then Baba lovingly asked about my arrival there and told me to wait outside and that He would call me for an interview later.

When I was called in, Baba asked me what was my ideal in life. I said spiritual freedom. Baba was very happy to hear this. Then He asked me whether I got angry quickly. Baba had touched my predominant characteristic and so I smilingly admitted I did. Baba very lovingly gave me instruction to repeat His name daily for fifteen minutes in a closed room. He also instructed me to fast every Sunday during the day and end my fast with a full meal at 7:00 p.m. after feeding a poor person with my hands. Baba said this would help me in serving His Cause, which I had offered to do in a recent letter to Him. I was very happy to receive Baba's divine guidance. After the wedding, I returned to Poona and began to carry out Baba's instructions.

After returning to Nagpur, I had a second opportunity to have Baba's darshan at Saidapet, Madras, in 1947, for only one day. I asked Baba for His guidance regarding a marriage proposal arranged by my parents. Baba told me that if I wanted to get married, I could do so. I told Baba that I was prepared to follow His directions in this matter. He asked me whether I had had any lustful contact with any women before this. Baba was happy to learn that I had no such contact with anyone. So He asked me why not marry Baba? I at once gave my consent to this loving proposal of the Beloved. I was extremely happy for this rare privilege. Then Baba instructed me that I should not touch any women thereafter. If lustful

thoughts came, I should not put them into action; but I should not worry about them and should try to think of Baba always.

On returning from Madras, my father and mother were upset when they learned that I had decided not to marry as per Baba's wish. So they tried through relatives and friends to persuade me to marry. But after some years they gave up this effort and became resigned to Baba's will. I opened a medical shop at Nagpur in 1947. Then in November 1948 I went with Babadas for Baba's darshan at Meherazad. This time I went to Baba with the determination to surrender to His cause. When I was called by Baba to Meherazad, where Adi Sr. and Dr. Ghani were both present, Baba told me that He was not giving darshan to anyone as He was very busy with His Universal work and met only those who wanted to share in this work. I expressed my determination to serve in His cause according to His instructions. He gave me instructions to dispose of my business concerns before May 1, 1949, and to come and stay permanently with Him at Pimpalgaon by walking on foot from Nagpur. I was very happy to receive these instructions from Beloved Baba, who told me to explain these instructions lovingly to my parents without any quarrel.

So after this momentous meeting with Baba, I explained to my parents my decision to join Baba. My father and mother were very sad and upset and could not bear this separation from me. My father wrote to Baba explaining their great sorrow about my decision to stay with Him permanently, and made a fervent prayer to Baba that I might be allowed to stay with them in their old age. After some days Baba replied to this, lovingly granting my

(NANA KHER CONTINUES)

father's request and informing him that Baba had no objection to my staying with them, provided that I obey and carry out the instructions which He would give from time to time. My father and mother were very happy at Baba's great compassion toward them. Baba also instructed that I need not sell off my shop if that made my mother unhappy. So the shop was not sold at that time.

Many years later I had the opportunity to spend time with Baba at Guru Prasad. During one of my first stays, dear Eruch was reading to Baba a list of persons who were to be called for a special meeting in May 1959. At that time the thought came to my mind, whether Baba had included my name in this list. Baba at once looked at me and asked what I was thinking. As on many previous occasions, I experienced that Baba knew what was passing through my mind. After a day or so Baba included my name in that list. But ultimately that idea of a meeting in May 1959 at Guru Prasad was dropped by Baba.

On the first day of my arrival, Baba called me and the mandali into His retiring room at 5:00 p.m. Baba asked me why my health was so pulled down. Was it due to worry of some kind? I told Baba that I had no such worry; but that my digestion was weak and I felt gas in my stomach. Baba said that it seems that my teeth are not healthy. So Dr. Goher was called at once. Upon examination she told Baba that I suffered from diarrhea. Baba told me to take her treatment; which gradually improved my health. This is just an instance, which shows how Baba was concerned with our small affairs and lovingly helped us in our troubles.

Then Baba turned to my beard, which I had kept for the last ten years. I told Baba that I had kept it to avoid the daily

botheration of shaving. But Baba asked for a vote from the mandali present whether I should have a beard or not. By majority vote Baba decided I should shave my beard on 30 May 1959. This is an incident which shows how Baba lovingly helps us to be natural and not an object of show to others.

Again in May, the next year, Baba lovingly called me to come for five days any time before 5th June 1960. So I went there on 4th June to attend the last darshan program for Poona lovers on 5th June from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. A spacious pandal was erected for this occasion for the public. At 7:00 a.m. a large crowd of lovers from far away collected at the gates of Guru Prasad. Large numbers of lovers from Andhra, Hamirpur, Calcutta and other places had specially come to have Baba's darshan on this day. So at 7:30 a.m. Baba and the mandali walked to the main gate with Yogi Shuddhanda Bharati, who had specially come for this occasion. Baba was lovingly greeted with salutations and shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai" by the lovers waiting at the gate. As the lovers entered the gate with Baba leading the way, a big procession was formed coming slowly into Guru Prasad singing bhajans in praise of Baba accompanied by musical instruments. A film of this procession was taken by dear Jalbhai.

The main hall where Baba gave His darshan was fully packed with lovers who were standing in a long queue in the pandal and in the front verandah to go in turn for Baba's darshan. While Baba gave His darshan, bhajans in praise of Baba were sung by lovers who came from different parts of the country. This continuous darshan of thousands of lovers went on until 12:00

(NANA KHER CONTINUES)

noon. Madhusudan and party ended the morning session with Baba's arti.

In the afternoon Baba allowed those from outside Poona to have His sahavas for some hours in the main hall. During this period Andhra lovers staged a ballet and a kirtan in Baba's presence. A famous artist from Andhra played the shenai instrument very melodiously. Thus this was a most memorable day for His lovers who came from all parts of India.

6TH JUNE

On June 6, 1960, Shri Sanjiva Reddy, the All India Congress President, came for Baba's darshan at Guru Prasad in the morning. Though he had come without taking his breakfast in the morning, which is the Indian custom when going for darshan, he was very happy to have Baba's darshan and stay with Him for some time.

Baba gave a special message on this occasion (it was later printed in Bombay for the occasion of the 1960 Silence Day, and the pamphlets were distributed to His lovers):

1. It is better to deny God than to defy God.
2. Sometimes our weakness is considered as strength
and we take delight in this borrowed greatness.
3. To profess to be a lover of God and then to be
dishonest to God, to the world, and to himself is
unparalleled hypocrisy.
4. Difficulties give us the opportunity to prove our
greatness by overcoming them.

5. A child's trust in its mother is complete because it leaves all its worries to her. She has to take care of it. So if we trust God and let Him worry for us, we live contented and happy.
6. When the leader of a nation puts complete trust in God, God makes him an instrument to guide the nation rightly.
7. We should think well of those who think ill of us.

This reminds me of a personal anecdote of one of Baba's dear lovers. Rama Rao Bilaspur of Andhra received a copy of this message whilst he was in prison. He narrates:

I felt that this last sentence, "We should think well of those who think ill of us" was addressed to me. I was in prison and Adi had sent a cover letter saying that Baba wanted me to behave well with the jail officials and my co-prisoners. It was really an eye-opener to me because some of the jail officials, including the superintendent, liked me, but somehow the jailers were not in tune with me. They used to insult me, and I would feel very upset. I would speak to Baba inwardly, saying, "Baba you have put me in prison though I feel my hands are not tainted by ill-gotten money. But as You are maintaining my family, I don't have any worry, other than that these people are mistreating me."

Later, Baba helped me to see that I had indeed been guilty but He softened the blow of this truth by saying about me, "He was My worker in prison." So, this last line was very timely, as if Baba had answered my inner cry to Him.

Perhaps each one who received this message could tell a story of how it affected them. Baba made each of His lovers feel that He was very intimately involved in their lives, and indeed He was.

7TH JUNE

Shri Vinayakrao Patwardhan, a very famous singer, gave a concert in Baba's presence in the main hall in the afternoon. Baba was very happy to hear this melodious music. He gave His own handkerchief to Shri Patwardhan in appreciation and told him to preserve it very carefully. Shri Patwardhan was extremely happy for this privilege to sing in Baba's presence.

9TH JUNE

Baba met with Shri Vijay Bhatt and Kaman Jalalabad. During the course of their talk Baba gave the following explanation:

Every individual is meant to be happy because God, Who is all Bliss, is within everyone. The level of love should be so high that it should make normal life difficult. Everything should be burned in the fire [of love] so that one should forget himself so much so that day and night seem to merge into each other. Then you will deserve the grace of God. Thus one can love God.

And later in the day, to one captain who had come for a private interview, Baba said, "The Final interview does not need even a split second. When you get *that* interview, you know everything. Compared with the Final interview, all other interviews have no value. When darshan for all others has stopped you are invited."

Someone from the assembled devotees asked Baba, "Give us some instructions pertaining to the spiritual path." Baba said:

What can I tell you? I am not a guru. I am Paramatma. I am neither sadhu nor mahatma, sant, wali or pir. I am God and therefore I could not give you any word by way of mantra. What I want is love. You should love Me to the utmost.

When someone asks for instructions of his own accord, what is My reply? It is one and the same, it will ever remain the same. Love Me. Love Me more and more. Love is the keyword. It is the password of true spirituality. Now it is natural to ask, "How should Baba be loved?" My reply is, "It is your lookout."

Everyone has an experience of being loved by someone. In that case, does ever the beloved tell the lover the ways in which he should be loved? It rests with the lover to continue loving, and to silently walk in the way honestly felt by him.

Again, in the realm of Love does ever the Beloved reveal the ways in which He should be loved? You have to show Me the way in which you love Me. I am the Ocean of Love and infinite are the ways that lead you to Me. In love there are no pre-prepared ways; it cuts its own way; it is creative. You have to find your own way. I am there right within to help you.

However, today I will tell you there is one thing which leads you to know how to love Me. It is simple. Repeat My Name, "BABA, BABA." Worry not if your mind goes on thinking on various things as you take My name. Remember Me while inhaling and exhaling, but do not neglect your work.

(BABA CONTINUES)

Let My Name reach deep down in your being. I am in you—the innermost Being of everyone—but I have an old, old habit of sleeping in your heart. When you ceaselessly repeat the Name, it does not allow Me to sleep. So much so, that I cannot even doze! Then I shall slowly awake in your heart and once I am awake in your heart, you too will awake. The love then shines in its intrinsic Beauty. The love finds ways and ways to love the Beloved and receive His ever-fresh Love. So take My name constantly.



I left on the ninth and so my diary account ends here. Baba left Guru Prasad for Meherazad on 20th June. Before doing so He gave a large darshan program. Nana recalls:

This time Beloved Baba very lovingly allowed me to stay on until June 20, 1960, when He and the mandali left for Meherazad, instead of the five days originally offered. On the day before Baba's departure, Baba bowed down to more than a hundred poor people at Guru Prasad in the morning and gave them each some money as His prasad. Before leaving Poona, Baba allowed His Poona lovers to have His darshan a final time at Bund Garden, where He stopped for ten minutes before proceeding to Ahmednagar. During this stay at Guru Prasad, Baba showered His love in abundance on all those who came from far and near for His darshan

and sahavas, as He was to enter the great seclusion in July 1960.

Two days later Mani wrote Dr. Kenmore:

It's really good to be back home—at the end of a hectic term at Guru Prasad one is almost ready to burst into pieces, so the comparative peace at Meherazad is a mighty contrast...

Harry Kenmore
walking with
Baba, Eruch, and
Francis Brabazon
on a road near
Meherazad



(MANI CONTINUES)

Your Mighty Ole Man gave magnificently of Himself to one and all during this summer in Poona—His Biggest of Hearts said YES to everything, even when often His body was too obviously saying NO. But there you are, Baba is Baba and that's all there is to it. [Bal's correspondence file]

1961



Baba beaming
in front of
Guru Prasad

*A*s always, I kept notes during my stays at Guru Prasad, but as the diaries after 1960 were lost, what follows until 1967 are my memories as best as I can recall them.

Before coming to Poona in 1961, Baba had issued a circular in February letting people know that no one was to come to Guru Prasad to see Him for any purpose. The circular stated:

For reasons of His very strict seclusion and very bad health, Baba expressly wants all His lovers to help keep Him absolutely undisturbed throughout His stay in Poona until such time as

(BABA CONTINUES)

Baba, on His own, asks anyone to see Him at Meherazad or Poona for His work.

Meherwan Jessawala remembers:

At the beginning of the summer of 1961, Baba sent word that Guru Prasad should be ready as usual for His summer stay. Baba was still in seclusion at the time and word was also sent that He would not be seeing any of His lovers. He asked His Poona lovers to not disturb Him in any way, or He would have to wind up His stay and return to Meherazad. When Baba arrived at Guru Prasad in the middle of March, none of us making preparations were allowed to be there. We had to finish our work of preparing the bungalow and make sure to be gone before Baba and the mandali arrived.

Generally, at the beginning of summer (February or March) Eruch would send me a letter about my annual stay at Meherazad, saying, “Baba wants to know when you are coming and how long you are staying.” But that summer there was no letter from Baba and so I stayed in my hometown. Perhaps this was due to Baba’s poor health and His seclusion or perhaps it was for reasons known only to Baba.

On 22nd March, Baba left Meherazad for Poona. It was even quieter than usual as Meherjee was the only outsider permitted to visit. Nariman and Arnavaz, Katie and Jim Mistry were allowed to come on weekends.

Mani’s Family Letter (April–May) gives a picture of this change:

This April hello is sent to you softly from the silence of His Seclusion that has been carried over from Meherazad to Poona with the care of a fragile fragrance, and bottled in Guruprasad

palace—a worthy container, offered with so much love by our dear Rani. A few days before our coming, the place was swarming with people—but these were workers putting a rejuvenating coat of make-up onto the stately mansion, overhauling the lighting system, adding a practical item here and an item there for greater comfort of the Beloved’s stay—and above all we marvel at the intuition that prompted the Maharani to make so timely an addition to its privacy by having a dainty trellis girdle the entire verandah.

Happily, the drive from Meherazad to Poona on 21st [*sic*] morning was considerably less trying and tiring than we had cause to expect; and as we glided through the familiar gates, Guruprasad looked as if it were all dressed up to go out but had planned a quiet evening at home. And, the month of April has indeed been a “quiet evening” at home, with no ringing or knocking at the portals of Baba’s Seclusion. In fact all concerned have helped most earnestly to preserve it, difficult though this has been particularly for those in Poona for whom Baba is so tantalizingly near and yet so far out of reach. To give a little instance, those Baba lovers whose work takes them along the road that runs past Guruprasad, have either abandoned the route altogether or risk a stiff neck as they cycle past looking dead ahead in case a glance at Guruprasad tantamounts to disturbing His Seclusion!

Nearly forty dates have been plucked from the Calendar since our arrival here, but in absence of Poona’s usual summer diet of Darshan-feasts, it somehow has seemed a shorter time.

(MANI CONTINUES)

However, this April silence of activities is not like a fasting, but is as though Guruprasad is “chewing the cud” of past fills while ruminating on the possibility of more to come, with the confidence of one who has had experience of His Compassion.

Apart from His inner working that we are not afforded a peep into, physically it has been for Baba a phase of “convalescence,” each day punctuated by a schedule of various “do’s” and “musts”—like someone that must sit down to his daily monotonous practising on the piano scales. One note introduced in this routine has been outings in the car, sometimes with the mandali [men] and sometimes with us—outings to nowhere in particular...

Evenings we look forward to, when we sit with Baba on the front portion of the verandah from where one can see the road that is at just the right distance and angle to the house so that it is entertaining without being a nuisance. India, the land of too many religions and languages, castes and customs, is a place of extreme contrasts shuffled together like a huge multicoloured patchwork quilt, and it is fascinating to watch the continually varied expressions of life flashing by. Closer in the foreground we see some of the garden and the statues standing round the fountain gazing entranced towards the pool of water before them; and sometimes the robins or bulbuls perch on their marble heads to pour cascades of song into space....

And so the Seclusion continues in Guruprasad, and in the hearts of His lovers wherein He is securely closeted while

remaining physically hidden from their gaze. But as Baba once said, He is eternally in Seclusion for His true Divine Self remains hidden from us. At someone asking why He did not reveal Himself, Baba said: “It is so easy for Me to do that. It is the concealing that is difficult.” He then gave a delightful simile of wind in the stomach, saying “How easy it is to release it! It is holding it in till the right time that is not only difficult and uncomfortable but can be painful.”¹⁴

As Meherwan reminisced:

Unlike Baba’s previous stays in 1959 and 1960, which were buzzing with activity and weekend programs, the 1961 stay started out very quiet and somber. Throughout that summer, Baba would call only a few of His lovers individually at times that He designated. Local Baba lovers took great pains to not even go near the area surrounding Guru Prasad, as they did not want to disturb Baba or His work in any way.

One day, Baba called me to Guru Prasad. I arrived at the set time and quietly walked up the steps to the verandah. I was delighted to see Baba and Francis playing table tennis! [A table had been set up in the main hall.] I still have the picture in my mind, of Baba seated on a high stool on one end of the table and Francis standing on the other side. Baba had been experiencing pain in His hip joint, so He was not able to stand and play. But this did not stop them from playing energetically with great speed. I was amazed to see Baba returning the ball so well despite His handicap and the disadvantage of sitting. Francis was a great player,

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

and Baba would make him run from one side of the table to the other, racing after the ball. It was a great form of exercise for Baba.

Unexpectedly, at the beginning of May, Baba decided to allow His lovers to visit after all. As Mani wrote in her next Family Letter:

...the first week of May found Baba in the mood to decide opening the Door of His Seclusion just the merest slit to allow a glimpse of Himself again. The one to be chosen for the privilege of paving the way by being the first to enter, was none other than our lovely “hostess,” the Rani.¹⁵

This was on 3rd May and two days later, Baba had a circular issued:

In response to the silent yearning in His lovers’ hearts to see Him, Baba has lovingly agreed to allow them to visit Him once in His seclusion during TWO WEEKS ONLY from the 15th through the 31st May 1961, between 4:30 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. only, on any one day at Guruprasad....

Baba wants His lovers visiting Guruprasad to fully help keep His Seclusion undisturbed by: NOT bringing any offerings to Him; NOT seeking to garland Him; NOT bowing down to Him; NOT seeking to have an interview with Him; NOT seeking His advice on personal problems...; NOT putting questions to Him, spiritual or otherwise.¹⁶

Adi Sr. sent me the circular and, immediately, I decided to visit Baba on the first possible day, May 15th. In the meantime, just two days after issuing His circular, Baba gave a darshan for children. Meherwan Jessawala recounts the event:

To all of our surprise, when May rolled around Baba decided to permit the children of the local Baba families to visit Guru Prasad. As a concession He allowed one parent to accompany the child to the program. About 300 children came to Guru Prasad in the afternoon on May 7th. Each child went past Baba, but none was allowed to garland Him or bow down. As they passed by, they received an embrace, a sweet kiss, or a loving pat from Baba. A few were even allowed to sit on Baba's lap. Prasad was lovingly distributed to each by Baba's own hand.

During the program it was plain to see Baba's mood changing and a lightness filling His face again. Earlier in the summer, Baba had been quite depressed and seemed burdened by His physical condition and His Universal work. However, when the young children filled the Hall, Baba perked up and seemed delighted by their joyful company. The charming program ended with merry rounds of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jail!" from the little one's mouths.

Mani echoed and amplified these sentiments in her Family Letter:

It was a lovely program and above all it was a unique one, when Baba was surrounded by His little ones ranging in age from 1 month to 12 years. And to them went the thanks of a hundred mothers or aunts that were allowed to accompany their charges. The Twins (Baba's nephews) who are about 15 years old, made themselves indisputably eligible for the Visit by one of them dressing up as a babe in arms and the other as a mother dressed up in sari carrying the hefty hollering infant into Baba's presence amidst a burst of delight from the assembly! It was

(MANI CONTINUES)

good to see Baba shaking with His warm silent laughter as of yore.

To each child Baba gave a prasad of sweets, and there was the kind that was not only shaped like a whistle but sounded like one—and Baba blew it for many a tot to show how it was done. No garlanding or bowing down was allowed, but at the end of the program when some 300 young throats lustily shouted “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!” it was music to our hearts that sent up a prayer of thanks for the change in His health and mood that brought about this Children’s Day.

The sober silence of His Seclusion was drowned by the incessant young chatter and noise. There was the boy that recited a Sanskrit verse composed in praise of Baba’s Silence; there was two-year-old Mehera who adores Him and insisted that

Baba should give her the sweet that one of the mandali had

in his hand; and there was

Baba’s first great-niece
of a few months old,



who played on His lap for the first time. Behind the scenes there was the toddler that cried for a biscuit, and when given a little cake hollered all the more because it wasn't a biscuit. But when one of us told him that the biscuit had turned into a cake because he was in Baba's home, his crying stopped like magic and he couldn't take his awed gaze off the cake for a long time. And then there was the little girl that kept pulling at her mother's skirt and pointing at Baba with an ecstatic look, saying "Ba-ba! Ba-ba!"

Programs with children in Guru Prasad introduced a lighthearted gaiety into this period of intense work

Baba, surrounded by young girls who performed for Him, as Rustom or Sohrab and Meherwan Mistry overlook the excitement



(MANI CONTINUES)

After each had approached Baba for the individual caress and a sweet, they trooped down the steps with Him and up again from the front side of the verandah. Surrounded by this crowd of youngsters, little of Baba could be seen—so that our Highest of the High looked the Smallest of the small! The 7th of May was indeed the children's Day, with Him who is their Father in the truest sense of the word.¹⁷

I arrived in Poona on the fifteenth, and went directly to Guru Prasad at 4:30 p.m., the allotted time for the beginning of the one hour darshan. I walked down the long driveway, up the marble steps and into the hall. I was amazed to see that so many people had come, and some from long distances, just for an hour's glimpse of their Beloved. I was overjoyed at the opportunity to be in Baba's divine presence again.

A group of Baba lovers from Hamirpur had come but had arrived in Poona the previous day. When Baba heard of their early arrival He allowed them to come and see Him. I met them outside of Guru Prasad and they told me with great excitement about the special audience they had had with their Beloved. You could always tell when the Hamirpur group arrived because of their enthusiastic shouting of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai." Baba had such love for them that when He would hear their shouting as they arrived, He would stand up from His chair and wait for His lovers to enter the hall.

I came with the intention of staying for only one hour in Baba's magnificent company, as was outlined in the circular. So I sat at the back of the hall and enjoyed the outpouring of His love for His lovers

and their love for Him. It did not occur to me to ask to stay at Guru Prasad (one of Baba's wishes had been that none should ask about being accommodated). I had arranged to stay at K.K. Ramakrishnan's house, about six miles from Guru Prasad, and I went there at 5:30 p.m.

Mani gives a brief account in her Family Letter of July about the start of the afternoon darshan days:

Unless you become as dust you cannot realise God.
But first you have to become stone, for you cannot
become dust right away. What is needed is to retain
human consciousness and become as stone and then
wear yourself to dust at the feet of the Perfect Master.

Baba was saying this, or rather Eruch was saying it as he read out Baba's gestures. It was the evening of 14th May, and over a hundred of His lovers were squatting before Baba, for the sound of the Seclusion door creaking open had reached those already in Poona in readiness for their visit next day. Among them was lucky Dina Snow, a Baba-worker from Australia who had been touring Europe and whose two-day halt in India was timed by fate to coincide with the beginning of the Fortnight Feast. However, the very first visitor was from the heavenly regions, in the shape of a thunderstorm—and more than once some remark from Baba or someone's reply to Baba's query was aptly emphasized by a terrific crash of celestial cymbals, followed by a deluge of rain rushing down as though the sky also had decided to open its door on that day.

Baba was not giving a discourse—He had made it quite clear that during these "Visit Hours" there would be no discourses.

(MANI CONTINUES)

But when He, whose first Whim brought forth the Creation, got the mood or whim in response to some comment or moment, we would receive from His Silence some added feast of words. For instance when Professor Deshmukh chimed out his favourite little marching song of “Beat the drums, beat the drums, sing Meher, sing Meher,” it prompted Baba to explain how one must be “empty” like the drum for divine music to emerge. Baba said:

“Only when the heart is cleaned out and the mind completely emptied, can they become instruments, hollow as the flute or drum, to give forth divine music.”¹⁸

On the evening of the 15th, the electricity went out and portable gas lamps were brought in, which was a boon for some as Mani relates:

On 15th evening, the aid of portable gas lamps was sought to replace the crystal chandelier and wall lights, as an explosion at the electric power-house had plunged the whole of Poona

in darkness, for a number of days and nights as it turned out. It made little dif-

ference to the hundreds of

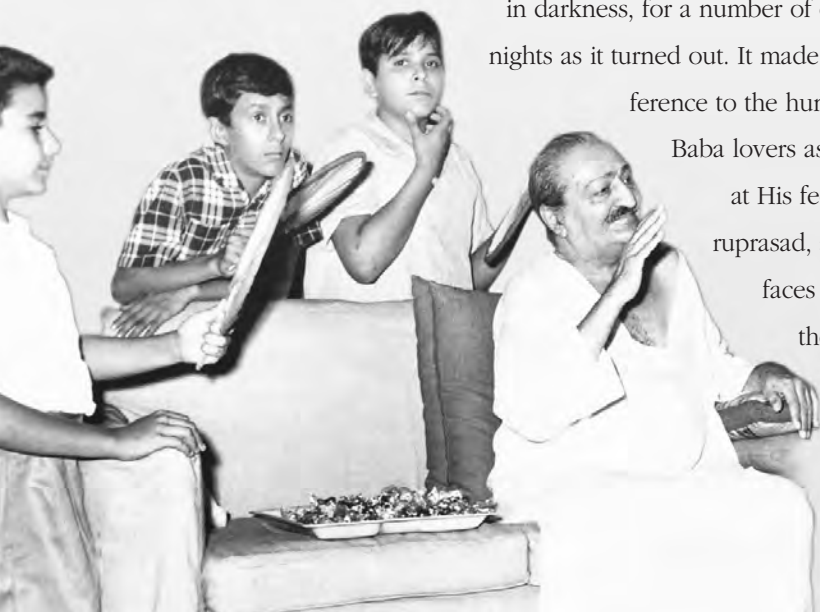
Baba lovers assembled

at His feet in Guruprasad, and their

faces reflected

the light of

The Baba-boys Brigade fanning Baba when the electricity went out: Meherwan Mistry, Beheram Irani (the twins' cousin), and Rustom



His Love that reached out to them. Nevertheless, it also meant that the ceiling fans, kept working all day to give Baba some relief from the summer's heat, stopped working. But it may be true that whatever occurs, turns out to be an answer to somebody's prayer—and certainly the fan episode answered the longing of some of the young Baba lovers to “do” something for Baba. They promptly ranged themselves about Him, and fitted with palm-leaf fans kept wielding them with perhaps more vigour than rhythm, throughout evenings and even mornings. As the electricity of Poona behaved temperamentally even after days of black-out, this Baba-Boys Brigade had more hours of the Beloved's sahavas than any of their elders.¹⁹

The next day, the 16th, I knew that I could not see Baba again. Still, the lure of His presence was such that I decided to go to Guru Prasad and simply stand by the outer gate just to be that much closer to Him. As I approached, I noticed some others, including Deshmukh and Pukar, who had the same idea and who were waiting outside, happy just to be close to Baba. The darshan program started and Baba gestured to Aloba, “Go and see if there are any lovers waiting outside the gate. If so, tell them they are allowed to come in.” Thus, we were called and, by His grace, we were allowed to stay longer. Baba told us that those who could conveniently stay without shirking family or other responsibilities were allowed to come from 4:30 to 5:30 for the rest of the darshan days.

As I met Baba that day, He told me I could stay in Guru Prasad with the mandali, not just for the duration of the darshan period, but until the end of my summer holidays. I was so happy to have the marvelous, and totally unexpected, chance to be in Baba's close company once again! And it was a great love feast to watch hundreds of lovers come from all

over India for these special darshan days to enjoy Baba's divine presence. As Baba was giving darshan, people would sing songs glorifying His Avatarhood. Often a smile would flash across His face in response to a certain lyric or tune. The atmosphere of the hall was supercharged with His loving presence.

Pratap Ahir, one of the local Poona lovers, who was to get married that month also came, at Baba's behest, with his fiancée. Pratap wrote a general account of his visits to Guru Prasad both before and after this, which I give below:

Baba's stay at Guru Prasad during summer months was usually a festival for all Baba lovers of Poona and Bombay. Baba would be in a relaxed mood and the flow of love would be in abundance. Every weekend would have some program when thousands of lovers would gather around Baba. Even if there was no program, the lovers could meet Baba more easily. To my humble mind, it was as if God was seeking reasons to meet His lovers. Before Baba's arrival in Guru Prasad, His lovers had been warned through a circular not to disturb Baba, so everyone was forbidden from coming to Guru Prasad except when called for specific work. For a week or so, no one approached Guru Prasad or received a call to come.

Then one fine morning, there was a call from Guru Prasad. Everyone dressed in their best and presented themselves before Baba. For some time, Baba would reprimand us: "None of you felt like seeing Me. And still you call yourselves My lovers." Some whispered in a corner, "But Baba, Your circular instructions were not to disturb You." Baba gestured, "So what? These are general instructions, but you should have at least inquired!"

Everybody politely admitted their mistake and on this admission, right or wrong, Baba would feel happy. He would then forgive us and give us permission to visit Guru Prasad whenever we had free time. I remember I used to run to Guru Prasad just to catch the moments when Baba used to say goodbye to everybody present before retiring for the day. He had a particular gesture: He would stand up, fold His hands, and pointedly say goodbye to everybody. If someone was hidden behind, Baba would move aside until He got sight of that person. This was His particular way, which I felt had its own significance.

One afternoon I was passing by the New Empire Cinema Theater on my way to Guru Prasad when I saw Baba coming in a car from the opposite direction. Baba was going to Bindra House. The car went ahead a little and stopped. As the car stopped, I got down from my bicycle and went near. Baba said to me, "Wait at Guru Prasad, I will be back within half an hour."

Was it necessary for God to stop the car just to tell me that He would be back soon? Can one imagine the amount of love that Baba showed for His lovers through this small gesture! In fact, I had an insignificant position in Baba circles, but the Master's love does not recognize anyone's position. It is to give this love that He comes down on this earth.

I was to get married in May of 1961. Baba wanted to see the girl before arrangements were finalized. I took her to meet Baba along with her parents, who are also Baba lovers, and Baba approved the match. After the marriage we both used to go to Baba during darshan and singing programs. On some occasions I would be late in reaching Guru Prasad. Sometimes

(PRATAP AHIR CONTINUES)

even if I was on time, Baba would already be sitting in His seat. Then, one afternoon when I reached Guru Prasad, the bhajan program had already started. I went and joined quietly, hiding myself from Baba's notice. After one song, Baba asked me to stand up and asked why I was late. I told Baba the reason. Baba said, "You were good before marriage, but after marriage, you are spoiled. The only punishment for you can be that your throat should be cut with a blunt knife." He was happy with His own idea of cutting me with a blunt knife. On one other occasion, when I was taking darshan along with my wife, Baba said to me, "Tell Me honestly, whom do you love more, Me or your wife?" I told Baba that I loved Him more than anyone else. Baba looked at my wife who nodded her head in confirmation.

When my first child, Meher Jyoti, was born, Baba was staying in Guru Prasad. He had asked me to take the child to Him first, directly from the hospital before she was taken home. Baba took her on His lap and kissed her forehead; then He allowed me to take the child home.

During the early years of my contact with Baba, whenever I would meet Him, He would tell me to love Him more and more. I wondered why, when I took Baba to be God in every sense, He kept on telling me to love more and more. What else does He want, I wondered. It took time for me to understand that a father is a father first and thereafter a district tax collector. Baba wanted us to love Him not just to worship Him.

What is Baba to me? Father? Mother? Brother? A friend? It is difficult to apply any particular measure to Baba or fit Him in

a particular role. As a father, He would have a close watch on our actions and command obedience. As a mother, He would give us tender treatment and forgive all our weaknesses. As a brother, He would give us a word of advice; and as a friend, He would give us a hand of protection. He is perfect in every sense. Dr. Ghani used to describe Him as *sab-rang-sha*, meaning, the one who is all colors.

I end this account with quotes from my own composition, which I have translated from the Marathi original:

Let the flame of Thy love be ever burning in my heart.

And with the light of the flame, let my life be illumined.

Let Thy beautiful form be embedded in my eyes.

Let it not fade away from my eyes.

Let Thy sweet name be always on my lips.

And with that sweetness, the words I speak be sanctified.

Mani also wrote about some of the programs during that two-week period:

Because of the queue of NO's attached to the Visits, including NO darshan, NO garlanding, NO discourse, part of the time Baba began to allow those who wished, to express their love by singing to Him or by performing a skit or anything that might be touching enough or amusing enough. It all began with some of the Centre's little tots who "with rings on their fingers and bells on their toes" sang and danced to Baba on the first day, and their performance was so delightful He made them repeat it on two more evenings. Then came the opportunity for the grownups,

(MANI CONTINUES)

so that apart from an occasional Qavvali singer regaling Baba and His assembly of lovers with mystical songs, there were the amateurish efforts from some among the Baba lovers who could sing, and some who seemed firmly convinced that they could! As the evening mounted, more individuals and groups mustered up ideas—a playlette, a verse in Baba’s praise, a piece of Indian classical dance by some of the girls who were eager to perform before Baba, “just as Meera danced for Lord Krishna.” Often the items were indeed good, but sometimes it was obvious that sincerity and enthusiasm far exceeded talent. However, we gained more from such moments, for they afforded us a further glimpse of Baba’s compassion and patience, and spoke volumes for His silent Love that sees through all matter into the heart....

The performance that stole our hearts was a drama the Bhajan party of Poona Centre got together, a drama depicting seven Avatars—Zoroaster, Ram, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Meher Baba—and the predominant expression of their Message to humanity. The actors were young Baba lovers, boys and girls from 5 to 15 years old, and if the very limited rehearsing time caused some faux pas in their appearance or acting it added all the more colour. Undoubtedly it was the first show of its kind performed anywhere at any time, for its unique audience and spectator was the self-same One depicted in all seven Avatars. Baba’s twin nephews walked in on the final scene as Baba and Eruch, Baba leaning on Eruch’s arm—and seeing the Twins go through the familiar scene of “Baba” giving darshan and prasad, while BABA was right before them,

brought forth an uproar of delighted clapping and laughter from the onlookers. As for BABA, seeing Himself thus before Him, laughed so deeply He had to wipe the tears off His eyes! And at the end when “Baba” gestured (and “Eruch” relayed over the mic in five languages), “I AM THE ANCIENT ONE,” there rang out a chain of “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai” from the spectators that shook Guruprasad to its gilded ceiling.

After one Qavvali (pronounced kuh-vaali) program Baba explained the meaning of a song: “My glory is from here to there which has no end, and each one can perceive My glory to one’s own capacity. So let Me see to what extent you can see My glory.”

Baba then added: “Ocean contains everything—water, dirt, nectar; and everything dissolves in the ocean. I am the Ocean. Nobody is debarred from coming to Me and helping himself to the endless expanse of Love; but how much of the Ocean you can take with you, depends on the receptacle you bring. If it is a cup, you can only take a cupful; if a pail, only a pailful. But once in a long while there comes the true hero, the giant in Love that can gulp the Ocean itself!”²⁰



Just before the two-week period was over, some Westerners, who had traveled the great distance to see Baba for only one hour, arrived. The first to come was Ann Conlon. She had sent a telegram to Baba saying that she would be arriving in Bombay and would make her way to Poona by Saturday the 27th. This caused a fair amount of speculation amongst Baba and the mandali as to when exactly she might show up.

They sent a cable to Ann telling her to check in at the Napier Hotel in Poona when she arrived and to call as soon as she got there. Probably she became a topic of much discussion because she hadn't met Baba before and she was coming for one hour only, and was a single woman traveling alone. All of these factors would have combined to generate a lot of curiosity about her and her upcoming visit.



Ann Conlon

Hearing all this talk, Baba's twin nephews, Rustom and Sohrab, decided to play a prank. Sohrab dressed up in Western style women's clothing, put on high heel shoes and carried a delicate purse and went to Guru Prasad. As "she" entered the hall it was announced that this was Ann Conlon.

Baba, alone of all those in the hall, recognized Sohrab but He did not let on. He had several of the men mandali greet her and shake her hand. He called Rano over from the women's side as well. Rano was a bit taken aback by "Ann's" looks and outfit, but then she reasoned that she hadn't been in the States in a while and perhaps fashions had changed. She was also surprised by "Ann's" odd way of speaking—(she seemed to answer every question with a high pitched "Yep")—but Rano was too polite to show it. She was a little embarrassed, as the only American amongst the mandali, that this new visitor from the States seemed so disinclined to talk, or answer people's questions other than with her monosyllabic response. Baba had also called Mani who, at first, didn't suspect a thing. But Mani's eye then caught sight of the purse "Ann" was carrying, which was actually a gift she had given to the twins' sister, Gulnar.

Being used to Baba's ways, Mani knew that Baba wouldn't want her to spoil the fun so when Baba told her to introduce "Ann" to Mehera, she

didn't say anything. But when they got to the women's side, Mani told Mehera that Ann had a cold and that therefore she shouldn't embrace her.

Meanwhile, Baba even had the DeSoto sent over to fetch Gaimai and Manu from Bindra House, with the order, "Drop everything and come," so as to join in on the fun. Although "Ann's" true identity was discovered in the end, this good-humored event made Baba laugh.

When Ann actually arrived, the mandali were a little reserved at first, not wanting to be taken in again. Ann probably didn't notice as she was so overwhelmed by meeting Baba in person after waiting six years for the chance.

Ann had first heard of Baba in 1956 from two sisters named Liz Sacalis and Ginny Sadowski. Gradually, Ann's longing to meet Baba grew and became almost unbearable. While at a Baba meeting in New York one Monday night in 1961, Ann was asked to read aloud from Meher Baba's *Discourses*, and she came to a sentence that struck her deeply: "When the disciple is ready the Master comes." So she thought, "I must not be ready." The very next Monday night, Fred Winterfeldt read out a Family Letter from Mani, which explained that because of the longing of His lovers, Baba was allowing people to come to India for His darshan for one hour, on any one day, over a two-week period. Ann was stunned and immediately felt this was her chance to meet Baba. However, there were only nine days left out of the period Baba had set aside.

Ann had no passport, no visa, no ticket, and no money. Liz was sitting near Ann at the meeting and, surprisingly, did not feel drawn to go, which was unusual because previously she would have done anything to see Baba again. She thought if Ann wanted to go, then she would give her the money. She turned to Ann and it was evident by the look on her face that she deeply longed to see Baba. Out of friendship

and love, Liz and Ginny gave up their chance to go and offered Ann enough money to make the trip for the one-hour darshan.

Somehow, Ann got a few days off work to go to India and then return immediately. When she went to the passport office, the man at the desk told her it would take three weeks to process. Exasperated, Ann explained that she had to leave in a few days. The man paused and then told her of a woman in the Manhattan office who might help her. She went into Manhattan the next day and was handed her passport in only two hours. It was a great surprise! That same day, she also acquired her visa and airline ticket.

When they found out at the Air India desk that she had never been to India and had to travel on to Poona, they asked if she wanted someone to meet her at the airport in Bombay to assist her on her way. Ann gratefully accepted and sent a cable to Baba that read, "No distance too great, no price too high. I'm coming and I'll arrange my own transportation from Bombay." (One reason Ann sent this cable was that Baba had said in the Family Letter that had precipitated Ann's sudden departure, "Baba says He would not wish His lovers who live at very distant places from Poona to undertake the long and strenuous journey incurring heavy expenses to see Him only ONCE for such a short time.") Ann was on her way to India to meet her Beloved Baba.

Ann was greeted at the airport and guided by the kind Air India employees to Victoria Terminus (the large train station) in Bombay. There she was put into the charge of the station master. Ann stayed in his office until her train arrived and he then put her on the train and arranged for people in her compartment to let her know when she reached Poona. Ann said that the only thing she had to do on her own, the entire journey, was get a taxi at the Poona train station to take her to the Napier.

When she got there, even before checking in, she went to the desk and said she had to make a phone call. The man at the desk said, “Just one moment,” and then proceeded to dial a number on the phone before handing it to her. It seems he had already been briefed by the mandali that when Ann arrived she should call Guru Prasad, and so, assuming this Westerner must be Ann, he dialed the number for her.

Ann took the phone and found herself speaking to Eruch, who told her that Meherjee would come and pick her up in an hour and drive her to Guru Prasad. Ann climbed out of the car once they reached the palatial home, and from the steps she could see Baba through the hall sitting in His chair. Ann described, “All I could see were His eyes. They got huge. They filled the room. They blotted out everything else. And I saw shafts of light coming from behind His eyes.” Ann ran into Baba’s embrace. “I knew for the first time in my life that I was completely safe and completely loved and completely accepted.”

After sitting down, Baba asked Ann all about her trip and how the arrangements were made. Baba and the mandali were surprised that she planned to come for just one hour. Then Baba asked why St. Francis loved Jesus more than Peter. Ann shook her head that she did not know, so Baba explained, “It was because Francis never met Jesus and therefore his love and longing were that much greater.”

Baba allowed Ann to stay in the hall, and her one hour was extended to six hours in His divine company. Still, Ann was prepared to go to Bombay to catch a flight home that night. But, now that she had stayed at Guru Prasad so long, it seemed she wouldn’t be able to make it to Bombay in time. The next flight was in five days. Baba asked her what she would do for five days and told her she wasn’t to sightsee. Ann said

she would just stay in her hotel and then Baba said she should come to Guru Prasad each day instead.

The next day Fred Winterfeldt arrived. Like Ann, he had been planning on just seeing Baba for the day and then flying home, but Baba told him to wait and to accompany Ann back to the States so, too, he suddenly found himself with permission to see Baba each day.

That evening, I was sitting alone in Guru Prasad, the only man there aside from Baba and Bhau, who were sitting in Baba's bedroom. Eruch had gone to Bindra House at 5:00 p.m. Francis was off in his room in the old water tank and Nana Kher had not yet been called for his stay that year. Both Pendu and Aloba were off somewhere. While in His room, Baba dictated a Hindi couplet. Following His gestures, Bhau wrote the couplet on a piece of paper which Baba then asked him to hand to me. I was sitting on the sofa on the verandah. Bhau handed over the chit of paper and said, "Baba has dictated this couplet."

Freely translated it is as follows:

*If you want to live,
Live life in such a way that Life itself is completely satisfied,
And die in such a way that you scare Death itself.*

Why Beloved Baba asked Bhau to write the above lines for me I can't say, but I have kept this message from "Baba to Bal" among my treasured belongings all these years.

This reminds me of a similar time at a later date, when I was alone on the verandah and Bhau came to me with a message from Baba. I have three sisters and two brothers. In India, it is the custom for the eldest

brother to see to the arrangements of his sisters' marriages if the parents are no longer living. My eldest sister got married before I came to Baba. I arranged the marriage of my two other sisters and sent their wedding invitations to Baba. All three of my sisters married and raised families, but the only one Baba ever sent "love and blessings" to was my second sister. Ironically, from a worldly standpoint, hers was the one marriage that was a complete disaster. Baba's love blessings always have a deep, profound meaning, releasing the individual from the bondage of illusion. Sometimes these blessings may even help them to work through suffering.

Relations between her and her husband quickly deteriorated and she suffered quite a bit at his hands. On top of this, both of their children were born with mental problems. The daughter underwent many kinds of treatment but eventually had to be put in an asylum. The son's behavior was more placid, but he was not able to attain self-sufficiency and had to be cared for constantly. My sister also developed cancer in her later years and underwent a long period of additional pain and physical torment before she died. Yet her trust in Baba remained strong, and she never complained to the rest of us about her plight or situation.

One day during the 1960s, I was sitting all alone on the verandah of Guru Prasad thinking about my sister and all the problems she faced. At that time, both of her children were recuperating from typhoid. I was worrying quite a bit about their health and wondering whether I should cut short my stay with Baba in order to be with them. Just then, Bhau came marching down the verandah toward me. There was something so brisk about the way that Bhau carried out Baba's orders, that he reminded me of a soldier, though at the time he was only wearing *chuddis* [shorts] because of the heat. He strode down until he was directly in front of me and then, standing at attention, he said: "Baba

says, ‘Don’t worry.’” Then, having accomplished the task Baba had given him, he turned on his heel and marched away without another word.

My mind, being as it is, did not stop its worrying. I couldn’t do that. But I was touched and immensely comforted by this sign of Baba’s omniscient compassion. It is not that Baba uses His divine powers to help us avoid suffering. But He lets us know that He understands what we are going through and reassures us that it is all for the best. He shows us that the key is to remember Him more and more.

Once when one of Baba’s close ones was undergoing a lot of intense physical suffering, the family came to Baba and asked Him to cure her. Baba explained that this was something she had to go through and it was better for her to go through it when she had Baba to sustain her, than to put it off to another life when she would not have that divine reassurance and support. In fact, Baba said, because He was there to support her, He was having her go through the suffering of several lifetimes all at once, just to get it over with. Seen in this light, the suffering, while still difficult to bear, was no longer regarded as a curse, but as a kind of dispensation.

So Baba’s “love and blessings” to my sister did not spare her a life which, to me, seemed to be one of unimaginable torment, but perhaps it was this that gave her the strength to endure it.

Just to finish this story, it was in the 1980s when I was staying at Meherazad, that my sister developed cancer of the stomach. Her neighbors at the time were a great help to her, but after a year or so, when it seemed she was at the terminal stage, she went to stay with my brother in Poona. I was feeling so weak at that point that I was unable to make the 80-mile journey to see her. With deep concern I went into Mandali Hall and prayed to Baba for help. Seven words came to me in response:

“Write her: Be centered in My name.” I sent her this and perhaps it helped her. Slowly the disease took its toll and she passed peacefully to Baba.

Returning now to 1961: On May 29th, a car pulled up to the portico and we were all surprised to hear, in a deep loud voice, someone singing “Swanee.” Immediately, Baba gestured to Eruch, “Harry has come. Go and help him.” Baba made His gesture for “blind,” and then the sign for “the West,” which was His sign for Harry Kenmore. Baba would point His two fingers to each eye for “blind,” and for “the West” He would make the motion of touching the brim of a hat. Eruch went to the portico and brought Harry through the hall to Baba.

This was a surprise because, unlike Fred and Ann, Harry had not written or given any intimation that he was planning to come. Baba had Harry sit close to His chair and patted his thigh to reassure Harry that Baba was right by him. I was sitting just behind Baba’s chair, and saw after a moment that Baba asked Harry, “Are you mad?”

There was an expression of bewilderment on Harry’s face, and Baba repeated again, “What are you doing here? Have you read the circular? Do you know that you can only be here for one hour?”

“Yes, Baba,” Harry replied. “I am ready to leave tomorrow. How could I lose the opportunity of being even one hour in the company of God, who has assumed human form?”

Hearing this Baba looked pleased and said, “Harry, your Pop is proud of His son.” These were the affectionate names that Baba and Harry called one another. Harry Kenmore used to say, whenever someone did something good: “Give that man a big cigar.” Baba liked the phrase and started using it also for a time, as did the rest of the mandali.

That same day, some of Baba's lovers from Hamirpur and a few others performed a skit in which they showed that many people in their area were suffering from a strange disease. A "corpse," played by G.S.N. Moorty, was carried onstage and placed before Baba. The other characters explained that the only remedy for all the other patients suffering from this strange disease was if Avatar Meher Baba agreed to visit Hamirpur for a third time. While the dialogue was going on, Baba reached out His leg and began to poke and tickle the "corpse" with His toe. Moorty was trying his utmost to keep still but he writes: "I felt Baba tickling my body with His toe so severely that I could no more lie down dead, but got up with a jerk." Moorty jumped from his position, as if he had come to life, thus adding an unplanned twist to the skit. Moorty describes how "Baba Himself burst into a silent laughter which was so contagious that the entire central hall of Guru Prasad was found resounding with waves of loud laughter from one and all. We were happy, since the original purpose of the skit was successful in making Baba laugh." Amidst this laughter Baba became serious and gestured, "I will come, but in My next advent."

Mani wrote about this skit as well:

The Hamirpur party, led by dear old Pukar, planned to make this opportunity serve two purposes, and wrapped up in each form of their entertainment was their petition to Baba to visit their land again. As Eruch explained to the non-Hindi speaking lovers at the end of the drama, "They have made a life-size marble statue of Baba and they want to house it in Nauranga.... Therefore through this drama they are praying, pleading, cajoling, arguing, so that Baba visits Hamirpur district." This lighted up many faces and there were hopeful murmurs: would Baba visit Nagpur

enroute?—and of course Calcutta?—and what about the state of Andhra, where a life-size statue of Baba in bronze is all ready to be installed in a house being built for it? Baba seemed to look most concerned and puzzled, and then said with a smile, “It is such a big problem for me to visit all these places where I already am! If I were not present there, I would surely pay the visit!” Then Eruch turned to Pukar and quipped: “So it would seem that first you must oust Him from your district for Him to pay that visit to Nauranga!” Before the laughter could die down, someone remarked “Then why shouldn’t BABA go everywhere to see BABA?” And the Beloved said, “That is a wonderful idea, but how can I pay a visit to Myself when I am never absent?”²¹

It was during this discussion of Baba visiting Nauranga that other Baba lovers started suggesting that Baba visit their homes as well. At one point, Baba said He would visit Nagpur on one condition—that Deshmukh, who was notoriously frugal, cover all the expenses of the visit for Baba and His party. The others who were there, knowing Deshmukh’s nature, immediately started calling out to him that he should agree. Kishinchand Gajwani, a very wealthy businessman from Bombay, shouted to Deshmukh not to worry about it, that he would give Deshmukh the money. But Deshmukh refused to commit himself. “I’ll have to ask my wife,” he said.

There was a lot of arguing amongst the lovers and Baba, as usual, seemed to enjoy it all. But there is an interesting footnote to this story. A few months later, in November, the temple at Nauranga, Meher Dham, was inaugurated. Baba sent the Maharani and Adi to attend. Keshav Nigam’s nephew, Pratap Chandra Nigam, relates that the Maharani told the following story about when she went there:

Once Baba was very happy with her and told her that she could ask for anything she wanted from Him. She told Baba that she wanted two things. The first was Baba's love and the second was peace. Baba immediately gestured that He was bestowing peace on her then and there, but to feel Baba's love she would have to visit Hamirpur, for that was where she would feel it.

She later told Baba that she had been received at Meher Dham as she had never even been received in her own kingdom. And, with tears rolling down her face, she confessed to everyone at Meher Dham that now, for the first time she was really feeling Baba's love.

On the last day of darshan, May 31st, Eddie and Irwin Luck arrived. Eddie had not yet met Baba. He had tried to come the year before with Irwin but his father had sent police to intercept him at the airport. This year the brothers had come without telling their father. After greeting Baba, the two sat in the hall with the other three Western lovers. Baba said, "They have come half way around the world just to be with Me for a few hours." Baba added, "Because they came for love, their reward will be according to Love."

Ed was struck by Baba's statement and he and his brother looked at each other in surprise. The others in the hall were very happy to hear Baba's statement and there was a sort of applause. Ed thought to himself, "A reward? I really haven't done anything. It was, of course, all Baba's way of drawing my brother and me to Him."

How boundless are Baba's divine ways! It seemed abundantly clear to me that everyone's coming was orchestrated by Baba. Even those who wanted to come but could not, were not ignored by Baba. As Mani wrote in her letter of 14th May:

And we think of those hundreds who live for Baba but must do so at great distances from Him physically. We know from letters already received that a number of them, despite Baba's gentle injunction, are planning to come for just that one hour. But there are many that cannot, either from lack of leave or money; and they will await the next opportunity, with Baba keeping the vigil along with them in their hearts. Once Baba had said to a devoted couple who were dismayed that they could not see Him more frequently, that better than their being with Him was His being with them; and this was always done by their remembering Him and taking His Name....²²

The finale of the darshan was so matchless that it was hard for people to leave the hall. Baba said it was time to leave, yet people lingered on the verandah and did not want to go any further. Finally, the lovers did tear themselves away from Guru Prasad and made their way back to their homes carrying Baba in their hearts.

As the Luck brothers were leaving, Baba told them to write Him, even though He was going to be in seclusion immediately following the darshan. They expressed their surprise at this and Baba repeated that He wanted them to write Him under certain conditions.

Ed and Irwin had hoped that Baba might let them stay on for "discipleship training." Ed recalled, "Even though it had seemed unlikely, we had that hope, but anyhow, of course, that period was over."

When Harry Kenmore got home, he wrote a letter to Eruch in an attempt to express how much the visit had meant to him:

July 18, 1961

My dear Eruch:

How many times and oft have I yearned to sit me down and write you concerning my reactions to that miniature but epoch-making sojourn into the land of the Avatar, to His palatial grounds particularly. But it has not been easy to do so. Eruch, what in heaven does He do to me that when I get back from the point ere I left, everything becomes so terribly unreal and meaningless so that even the slightest movement is an unnecessary oblivious gesture? Ah, but very deep under as it were there's a monumental meaning so difficult to fathom yet is more tangible and existent real than all else surfacewise. And now that this compound maze has lifted somewhat, I boldly sit down to say this even as I boldly determined to set out for the 1 hour reunion with the Most Beloved Guy of the Universe—MY POP. This was truly a trip I wanted to do alone without any knowledge of my purported venture leaking out to no[ne] around here. I did not plan even to stop at any hotel in Poona until I found myself sitting in the Bombay railroad waiting room and realized there would be a five-hour wait in Poona until the 4:30 p.m. darshan opening. My baggage labels were addressed Guru Prasad—so I casually asked my airline guide for the name of a dependable hotel. He mentioned the Napier. On the train, first class, my riding companions wanted to know where I had come from and where I was going. They gaped in consternation when I said that I was going to surprise a friend with a brief visit and probably return on the morrow or same evening, if possible. One who said he was a physician, paused to decide if he'd be willing to take

this daft one in hand for assistance at the Poona station, but a coolie was found quickly and a bit alarmed, I queried, "Where's my bag?" "On his head." And sure enough there it was on the rag-covered head of the coolie. After freshening up at the Napier, lunching and resting, a taxi was hailed and the next I knew hands from all over assisted me posthaste up to and through the door of the palace, then delivering me into your own capable hands. Then promptly I was standing before my very Grand Ole Man. It was great and good to be with Him once more. And isn't it funny, Eruch, I felt my trip had not ended with His greeting but that it had just begun. And I felt keenly His completely open-hearted very warm welcome, conscious that because of His love for me, He had ignored on[e] of His rules of the darshan. I not only did not expect the greeting I received but everything else that He rolled out the red carpet for. And this very lovable and unpredictable Ole Man of mine certainly surprised me in His presentation of this "shnook" to the assembled darshanees. And wasn't I proud of my Ole Man! By George, Eruch, how can anyone really be worthy of all this? It was all so very touching and so very grand! And there I was again sitting right next to Him the next morning instead of next to the exit gate at the Bombay airport. And I was so happy that He was happy I was there. And when Baba sprung the fact He was thinking of calling me Home for a permanent stay with Him, well, "I just swallowed my breath" as Francis says. "Did I want to come?" Just as in the past, there is no place I'd rather have come from and there's no other place I care to go to and not come from.

(HARRY KENMORE CONTINUES)

This is the only reason I exist right now—to be with Him always as well as to serve Him always. The desire to be with Him has been so strong that even that desire disappears with just an indeterminate residue remaining inside knowing only that patience and His Will alone can make this “heaven in heaven” possible. I don’t think of perfection, I don’t think of union—just to be near Him in His immediate physical proximity—that’s enough for now for me and there’s nothing else I need desire—save again His Will. Always and again always. And gosh, Eruch, you made me very happy when you murmured as you brought me to my seat, that I had pleased Baba with the rendition of the two



Baba and Harry

wonderful prayers at the close of the darshan. I had noticed His weakened condition of health and had even felt in you the terrible strain you'd endured the past several months and it was so good to be permitted a chance to please Him and to make Him laugh once again.

Well, dear Eruch, if my surprise visit stunned you all, I was stunned in return by the marvelous reception and treatment I received and it was worth a millionfold and more. And wasn't that American arti I sang Baba a pip!

Well, like I said, "The Lord, my God, tempted me with one hour and alas, I succumbed to that temptation." And I'll do it again! So convey much love to that Fairest of the Fair who did so much to make me happy and Whom I wish also to make very happy and tell Him of my deeply felt appreciation for everything He's done. And all He means to me. And love to you, you hard working guy, and to all Dhoti and sari clad mandali. You're all great.

Lovingly yours, Sonny boy Harry

How people were longing to see and be near their Beloved! During the rest of the summer months of 1961, Baba allowed people from nearby places, like Bombay, to visit and be in His company. As Baba had permitted me to stay for the rest of my summer holiday, I was able to attend all the programs. After that summer, He lovingly helped me to understand that it is only His grace that made my stay with Him possible.

Once again this year, Baba stopped at the Bund Garden to give some of His lovers one last glimpse. As Mani wrote the following month:

When we left Guruprasad on 7th morning, Baba once again halted at the Bund Garden to allow a farewell glimpse to the hundreds thronged by the river since dawn awaiting His coming. Seated once again underneath the shady tree (beneath which Babajan used to sit when she visited the garden) the beloved Saki dispensed to each His love-filled smile and presence that they drank in with their tears. He permitted them to sing the arti; and when He got into the car, each went by and kissed His hand. A cool soft morning for a tryst with God underneath a mango tree, and one can hear Hafiz saying: "Love knows no difference between monastery and drinking-booth, for the light of the Friend's face irradiates all."²³



1962

In 1962, Baba didn't go to Guru Prasad until the last day of March. He had already declared that He would not be giving darshan at any time during His stay this year. Once again, He wanted to remain in seclusion and no one was supposed to visit Him or even ask to visit Him unless He called them Himself. Unlike the previous year, however, I was allowed to come and stay during my school holidays as usual. Baba also announced that He would visit Guru Prasad again in the fall and would give darshan to both His Western and Eastern lovers for seven days beginning on 1st November.

Baba in
Meherazad
before
leaving for
Guru Prasad
in 1962

Despite Baba's seclusion, He allowed some of His lovers from Poona and Bombay to visit, usually on Sunday afternoons. As Mani explained in her Family Letter of 10th May of that year:

We have been in Guruprasad since six weeks—long enough for the Baba lovers in Poona to groan and bemoan the fact that half the time has already expired and now only six more weeks remain before their Beloved leaves for Meherazad. They argue that even if Baba does not allow them to visit Him, just the knowledge that Baba is in the same town makes all the difference, for the very atmosphere of Poona becomes enlivened and vibrating with His presence, and they are content. Not that they have had a chance to prove their words, for He who is “as soft as butter and as hard as steel” has found His heart melting enough to call them now and again on a visit, mostly on a Sunday afternoon, when they could gather at His feet during a bhajan or kavvali singing. Usually it's been the intimate group of a few Baba families (including those from Bombay holidaying here), but once in a while the reins are relaxed enough for all lovers of Baba in Poona to receive the opportunity.

Guruprasad, which is but a silent expression of Shantaben's (our dear Maharani of Baroda's) love for Baba, is not only our summer haven, but the “heaven” of His many adorers wherein they might be allowed when God wills it. But although Poona is a second home to us and Guruprasad is so well situated, it takes us Meherazadians a few days to get used to the city noises that carry on long past our customary early bed-time....

We heard a catfight at Guruprasad too, right in the hall where Baba and His assembly were gathered, although no cats were present! The feline screams, as well as the barking of a dog, whistling of birds, sound of musical instruments playing Indian and Western tunes, were all being emitted by a gently spoken little man—a professional known as Swami, whose half-hour performance of imitations and impersonations was an offering of love to Baba. He had attended the Birthday program at His Centre in Bombay and expressed his desire to be allowed to perform some day before Baba. Some of his dialogues, in different languages and different voices, were brilliant—and it was good to see the Beloved's bursts of laughter. Along with His Love-blessing, Baba gave him the prize of His own kerchief.

When the Swami heard of the absence of one of the mandali, Pendu, who was in hospital for a major operation, he insisted on visiting the hospital and giving a little private performance exclusively for Pendu, saying it is what a patient would need most. We heard that it cheered up Pendu no end, and of course the nurses and other staff who got to the ward in time had a good laugh too!...

Then there have been programs of singing: "kavvali" by a fine singer from Nagar who had sung for Baba in Meherazad, and who has that purity of voice and drive needed for rendering these songs of great Sufi poets. At the end of a song, or even in the middle of it, Baba would explain to us the meaning of some line particularly pleasing to Him in voicing a true lover's feeling.

(MANI CONTINUES)

In one such line the lover says to the Beloved: "I have no wish, I have no desire—not even for God-realization. May the agony of your Love abide with me always!"

Another says, "Try a million ways to keep your daaman from my grasp, I still claim to have You—for You, and You alone are in my heart—there is naught else."

Still another cries: "Parched with thirst we cling to our empty glasses, for when You lift the wine-jar O Saki, You will pour out to fill to the brim!"

There was the inevitable "bhajan" singing—by our young bhajan group of Poona, who prepared many a new song to regale the Beloved with—as usual composing the words and setting them to music. Baba liked them all and had some of them sung again—particularly the song "Nauranga" which the bhajan boys had sung at Nauranga on the memorable occasion of the installing of Baba's statue at Meher Dham. And there was "scientific" style singing (which requires infinite precision and vocal command over the intricate patterns of scales), rendered beautifully by a woman who sings over the radio, and has come to love Baba. As she is from Nagar and regularly attends the Centre there, Baba heard her in Meherazad, and was so pleased with her singing that she was called to sing at programs in Guruprasad.

The 6th of this month was our sixth Sunday since coming here, and the small intimate group (of about 150) gathered at His feet had the joy of watching their Beloved truly enjoying a recital by three musicians from the Music department of the All-India-

Radio station in Poona.... It was a thrilling recital, and the embrace that each three received from Baba was their happy reward, as they had performed for love of Him. When Baba told them their performance was the best, the principal player said it was due to His presence, for they had never before played so well.

Of course, to the assembly of Baba lovers, the entertainment aspect of a program is merely incidental. To them the performance or music is a reflection of the beauty of His presence, and the singing is often an expression of their own hearts. And so while they sit before Baba, drinking in His sweetness and following the endearing expressions of His face, the artist sings for and to Baba. As Baba said, to the last kavval, "None of these people will really understand the songs. But don't let that bother you. You are singing to Me, and that is enough—for I alone know their true meaning."²⁴

In addition to these mini-darshans, there was also the card playing that went on as usual. I don't recall if it happened this year or not, but I remember once, while Baba was playing cards with His close ones, a family came for darshan. Baba told a mandali member to not let them in just yet and then gestured to Francis to quickly collect the cards and put them in the box where they were kept [small wooden box with a joker on the cover; now with the Archives] and then put the box on the carpet behind Baba's chair. Baba then gestured to Francis to cover the box with a pillow and, not satisfied, yet another pillow, just in case

someone should walk behind Baba's chair, so they wouldn't see the cards. Then Baba said, "Get Me a garland." When it was done, Baba drew His hand over His face and then turned and looked at everyone, gesturing, "How do I look?"

Only then did Baba signal to let the family in to see Him. Baba always went out of His way to honor the preconceived ideas of divinity which His lovers had. Whatever their relationship, whatever medium they used, Baba would go out of His way to strengthen the bond by accepting them and their way of expressing love for Him.

Baba also held periodic meetings to discuss the large darshan program that He had scheduled for the coming November. This was what came to be known as the East-West Gathering:

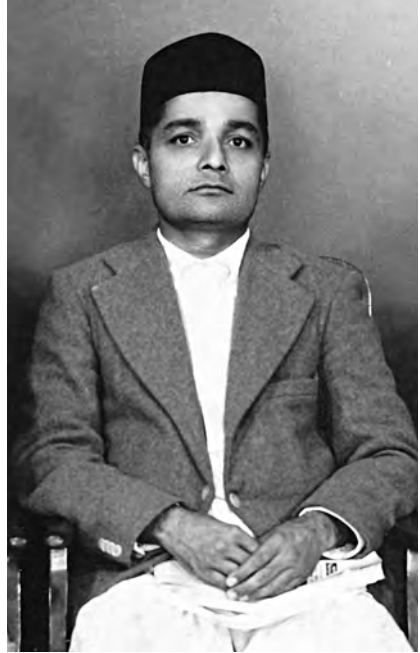
Often on an odd holiday or Sunday morning Baba has called a meeting of "The Boys" (Baba lovers and workers in Poona, from 8 to 80 years of age) where work and pleasure, solemnity and laughter, are blended as only the Master-hand of our beloved Master can do. Among these have already been four meetings devoted exclusively to discussing and deciding on the manifold arrangements to be made for the oncoming East-West Gathering of Baba lovers in November.²⁵

I am not certain of the exact dates but I know the following incident took place some time in the early 1960s. One follower who used to visit Baba at Guru Prasad was a great Telugu and English scholar. Later, he even became a member of India's Parliament. Whenever he came to Poona for darshan, a very graceful and beautiful woman from his family would accompany him.

Following their visit, when there were just a few of us around Baba in the mandali's room, Baba would tease Vishnu, saying that He knew that Vishnu's attention the previous afternoon had been completely devoted to this young woman.

Vishnu, who was well used to Baba's ways, mildly assured Baba that this wasn't the case. Baba, however, was not to be dissuaded and continued to tease him. In the intimate atmosphere that prevailed with Baba's close ones, Vishnu finally conceded, saying something to the effect of, "Okay, Baba. If You say so, it must be so."

Who knows what prompted this teasing. Perhaps someone else in the audience was momentarily distracted by a similar thought and this was Baba's way of bringing it to their attention. Perhaps, He merely felt like teasing Vishnu. Either way it was an



Vishnu, 1928

opportunity for Baba to relay the following lines to us, for He then referred to the well-known folk saying:

All that shines is not silver;

All that glitters is not gold.

To this Baba added two lines of His own, concluding with:

All that is beautiful is not youngish;

All that withers is not old.

On 13th May of this year, Vishnu died while at Guru Prasad. Again I quote from Mani's Family Letter of 15th May:

This news letter could not be complete without including Sunday the 13th, a day to be indelibly remembered by the mandali.

That afternoon, during the kavvali singing from 4 to 6, the Guruprasad hall was filled to overflowing with Baba lovers of Poona. Among them were also the well-known cricketers Nari Contractor and Polly Umrigar who love Baba and had come from Bombay with their family to have Baba's darshan. Contractor, the Indian skipper who had a most serious head injury during the recent match in the West Indies, was particularly keen to see Baba, and Baba was happy to see him. Dolly, his wife, told us at parting, "People are amazed at Nari's quick recovery, but that is because they do not know Baba and His Love that protected and helped him throughout the crisis!"

The gathering had occasion to be thankful to the singers, for Baba liked the songs so well He let the program continue past the usual margin of 6 o'clock. Next morning He said, "The kavvali made me so happy, that in my happiness I absorbed Vishnu within Myself."

Vishnu is one of the mandali who has lived with Baba for over forty years, a smallish man with a regal bearing and the kindest of hearts, who has never been known to express anger or harsh words during his life with Baba. He had been suffering for some time from coronary thrombosis, and scarcely an hour had gone by after that Sunday's assembly had dispersed from Guruprasad, when dear Vishnu dropped dead of heart failure,

in the midst of a sentence and with laughter on his lips. In death, as in life, he wore a tender look and as his beloved Master sat by his body, it seemed as though Vishnu had drifted into a gentle sleep. Baba sat thus for over an hour, and to Vishnu's brother-disciples gathered around, Baba said, "I have never before sat by any of My mandali as I am doing today by Vishnu—he is indeed most fortunate." We later recalled Baba's remark to the mandali that morning: "Vishnu has one foot in this room and one foot in the grave." The ashes of this very loving and loved companion of ours will rest in the place dearest to him: Meherabad.²⁶

That summer I had to leave in June but I was back at Guru Prasad on 1st July. It was a bit cloudy, but the sun soon appeared and the weather became pleasant. Beloved Baba arrived in the meeting room at about 9:30 a.m. He seemed to be in a serious mood though His face appeared radiant. He said, "I had no sleep last night. My whole body is still aching." Despite all this, He did not wish to cancel His visit to Ramakrishnan's place in Kirkee. He returned after an hour or so.

Kishinchand Gajwani from Bombay and Prem and Girja Khilnani from Ahmednagar came to Guru Prasad. Prem first met Baba in 1958. He then started coming regularly during Baba's 1959 stay at Guru Prasad. Meanwhile, his wife, Girja, stayed at home, completely unaware of her husband's visits there.

Girja grew up in a religious family with its own guru. As a young girl she went to a convent school and was taught that Jesus was God.

Being overcome by the idea that God could take human form, Girja decided that if God was in human form, she wanted to see Him. So she wrote a letter:

Dear God,

If you are here in this world, I want to meet you! I want to see you in a physical form and hope you will answer my prayer!

Your child,

Girja

She then put it in an envelope addressed to “God, In Heaven.” She didn’t get an answer and soon forgot all about it.

Her parents got her engaged to Prem; she didn’t want to get married but eventually she acquiesced and was happy in her family life. One day, while Prem was visiting Baba at Guru Prasad, Baba asked Prem to bring along his wife. When Prem mentioned this to Girja, she refused to go. She still had her family guru. But Baba repeatedly asked Prem to bring Girja and eventually, reluctantly, she went with him one day. Her initial reaction was not favorable. Baba was making small talk, asking people how they slept or how their work was going. Girja thought that if Baba were a spiritual Master, He should be giving spiritual talks. But He was silent and let someone else talk for Him. The thought came to her, “Who is this person?” Just then Baba turned to her and asked, “What do you think of Me?”

Girja realized that Baba had read her mind and this shocked her. Also it was her first meeting and she had no idea what she was supposed to say. She didn’t feel she could say Baba was God, nor could she imagine leaving her family guru. But “for some strange reason,” she liked going to visit Baba and thereafter, whenever Prem went, she would go as well.



Girja and Prem Khilnani

Baba would repeatedly ask her what she thought of Him. Then one day He suddenly asked her, “Who are you?”

Completely flummoxed by the question she kept silent. She recounts, “Eruch then said, ‘Baba wants to know whether you are a man or a woman.’ Surprised, I answered, ‘Of course, you know that I am a woman. What is there to ask me?’”

Baba then surprised her further by asking what made her so sure she was a woman. She recalls: “Now this was too much for me. It made

me speechless. I was so tongue-tied that in my mind I said, 'Baba, I know that I am a woman.' At once, reading my mind, Baba said, 'As you know you are a woman, in the same way, I know that I am God.'

This simple explanation helped Girja accept Baba's status but her mental turmoil was not over. She felt that Baba had her firmly in His grasp, but her mind needed more clarity. And it was then that Baba said, "Don't you remember that you had written a letter to God when you were young? You wanted His darshan in human form. I am that God who received your letter and hence have come in human form for you. And you don't recognize Him?"

As Girja relates, "I was dumbfounded.... With this all my doubts vanished completely."

On this Sunday visit, Baba had a homely chat with the visitors. In the course of the conversation, Baba casually asked Prem whether he was fond of seeing films. Khilnani replied, "There was a time when I liked to see films as an entertainment, but now I have no urge for it." Turning to Girja, Baba put the same question. She replied that she liked to visit selected pictures, especially those expounding the spiritual truths.

About then the son of a chief worker from Hamirpur arrived. He had gone to Bombay without the permission of his parents, and while there he was preyed upon by pickpockets. Baba allowed him to come in and arranged for his return journey.

When the boy left the room Baba said, "His father is the head of a joint family, a very practical and loving person. But see how his son is! How worried his parents must have been, but what is it all to this boy! Is this not a film show! The day-to-day events of the universe are like a film show. Some feel happy, some miserable."

Aloba was called and Baba asked him to recite some lines of Hafiz in Persian, meaning, “Happiness and misery are the lot of life and are experienced in the circle of duality. Once one gets out of this circle the duel of duality vanishes. Hence happiness and misery both mean nothing.”

Prem said, “Baba, we understand this pretty well in a way, but we cannot live up to it and cannot help being miserable, though this is all a game of nothing.”

Baba responded, “Mere verbal knowledge does not help much. But remember one thing: if misery and happiness are in the domain of Nothing and are really nothing, then why not always choose to be happy? Remain happy. Try to remain happy. Know that God alone IS and all else is nothing.”

One of the Baba lovers interrupted saying that understanding derived through reading is vague and later on becomes confusing. So he had left reading of books on spiritual subjects.

Khilnani responded, “It is a partial truth. When we are with Baba, our Master, reading becomes inessential. But when we are away from Baba, reading His books and meditating on the themes are the real solace in life for me.” Baba said, “The effect of reading depends upon the kind of books and the value you attach to them. We find people quarrelling in the name of religion. Is it not like dogs, fighting for the bare bones which have no marrow in them?” Baba had Aloba repeat the lines of Hafiz: “O God, forgive them [the orthodox people and the fanatics] for their fight, for they do not see the Truth.” Baba went on:, “The real men [lovers of God] do not pay heed to ritualistic books but inculcate the high truths revealed by the Perfect Masters.”

Khilnani then commented, “Yes, Baba, but it is a question as to why man, though he desires to be good and honest, fails to be so!” Baba

responded, “Not one, but many questions crop up in the mind, and will go on cropping up. But there is only one way out, only one remedy: Obey the Master. That will answer all your questions. That will lead you, guide you and make you understand what is in fact un-understandable. Hafiz says: ‘Whatever the Master says, obey Him without asking the why and wherefore of it.’”

Then it was time for the visitors to leave. They were quite happy, for Beloved Baba had been in a conversing mood. After a loving embrace they left Guru Prasad and Baba also went inside at about noon. This was the last Sunday before Beloved Baba left Poona for Meherazad. So Baba called the “card party,” a group of lovers with whom Baba used to discuss the arrangements for the upcoming November darshan program and whom He allowed to join Him in playing cards. All were present at Guru Prasad by 4:00 p.m.

The principal of the Cooperative Training College in Poona had expressed a wish to meet Baba particularly on that day, as it was his birthday. Baba consented, so the principal, accompanied by his wife, brought a fine garland and a box of sweets. He willingly agreed to keep the college hostel at the disposal of Baba lovers for the first week of November. After some ten minutes he left Guru Prasad.

By this time the “card party” had arrived and Baba asked all to take their seats against the wall. The cards were dealt and the favorite game of La Risque commenced. Thirty-four, including Baba, were participating. Everyone had only two cards on which one had to give a call of La Risque. The losing parties had to rub their noses on the carpet. Baba seemed to have enjoyed the game that day, yet in the morning He remarked, “Don’t think that I play cards just for nothing. It is all in connection with My work.” At about 5:15 p.m., Baba ended the card game and gave the following discourse:

Fana, Baqa and the Sadguru state

Shams-i-Tabrizi [Rumi's Master] stated: "It needs many cycles after cycles for just one advanced soul to realize God." And what do you find at present in India? The word Sadguru, which really means a man who has become God and who lives the life of God, is very loosely used. In towns and cities you invariably find persons who are referred to as Sadgurus. Is it so cheap an experience, so common a state? The state of man becoming One with God and simultaneously One with all in creation!

The term saint is generally used for persons whose dress and conduct differ from a common man and who lead a life of prayer and devotion. The word "sat" means real or in common usage it means good. So a man of good conduct and with a kind of life different from the normal man is treated as a saint, particularly by village people. The fun is even those who are honored with such epithets rarely realize the meaning, other than the mere verbal meaning, that these words signify.

The persons who have the necessary courage to tread the spiritual path are not many. People talk lightly about spirituality; and the spiritual path in fact is far above what they could realize. It is a matter of experience. To be on the Path is to be dead gradually to one's material and mental existence. This process proves very trying for the fickle and the worldly-minded people who lack singleness of heart. The Path leading to sainthood is not so easy.

One who sees the "sat" [Real] is a saint. The saint on the sixth plane of consciousness sees God everywhere, face to face. Such an experience is the result of a life of honest search and

(BABA CONTINUES)

sincere longing for Union with the Beloved God. This state of “seeing God” culminates in the final Fana and that is the end of the first journey.

In the first journey there are seven stations, one of which is referred to as the state of a saint—the one who sees God.

Final Fana implies the merging of the drop [individual atma] in the Ocean [Paramatma], and consequently the drop becoming the Ocean.

In the final Fana there are two stages. In the first stage there is conscious experience of the absolute “vacuum” state and in the second there is conscious experience of the “I am God” state. These two stages are in fact so completely one that each implies the other. This is the state of real Majzoobiat of a Perfect Majzoob.

Not all are destined to undertake the second journey. In the second journey there are no stations. In Fana one’s limited existence is entirely and permanently effaced. This is the state of unconscious consciousness except Self being God. In the second journey, i.e., Baqa, one has consciousness of the Unlimited Infinite and at the same time individuality is retained. This is the beginning and ending of the second journey. This is the state of perfect Sulukiat [God consciousness] of a Real Salik.

For example, you are Soman [Baba pointed to one of His lovers], in the experience of final Fana you are not left as Soman. Only God exists.

In the state of Baqa you become Soman the Infinite, i.e., you leave your limited Somanship and get established in God.

To others you appear just the same person as you were before, but they are not aware in the least of the change, the transformation within, from finitude to Infinity. You behave outwardly as an ordinary person behaves: you eat, you drink, you work, you play. You talk and joke, but others do not understand you, as you [really] are. They take you as someone with a finite form and mind. Some may regard you as an exceptional person but only the few can know you as Soman—the Infinite. This is the Baqa State.

The number of Perfect Masters [Sadgurus] is always restricted to five. In any age or cycle it is neither more nor less. The Avatar is an exception after the 11th Age. When one of the five Perfect Masters drops his body, one from among the Baqa state—and not one in the Fana state—takes the place as a Sadguru-Qutub. So goes the Divine Scheme.

One day or the other everyone has to experience the final Fana, which is the Goal of Creation. It is a long, long journey but if My Nazar descends on you, you will experience the Fana state in no time, for in reality there is no time, and no journeying. That Nazar is entirely different from My looking at you now.

In short, first, one has to experience Fana, and then abide in God while retaining one's individuality. Such a one may be entitled to Sadguruship. What then is the surest and safest way to become a Sadguru? Worry not, crave not for the seven stations of the first journey; not even the second journey, which Baqa implies. Leave it all to Me. Only obey Me. Hafiz, in one of his couplets says:

(BABA CONTINUES)

Don't pray to God. Pray to Qutub. Hold fast to His daaman. Leave all ritual and ceremonies and maybe one day the grace of Qutub will descend on you. Sadguru has authority to liberate anyone if He so wishes. He is the Man-become-God.

After hearing this discourse with rapt attention, all were set to thinking about the infinite magnanimousness and rarity of a Sadguru-state. Side by side the thought prevailed how fortunate they were to have come in contact with Beloved Baba, the Avatar of the Age, the Eternal Sadguru!

This was perhaps the last discourse and message during Baba's stay in Poona that summer, so it was an opportunity for Baba lovers there to reaffirm their faith and love in Baba and to hold fast to His daaman until the very end of their lives.

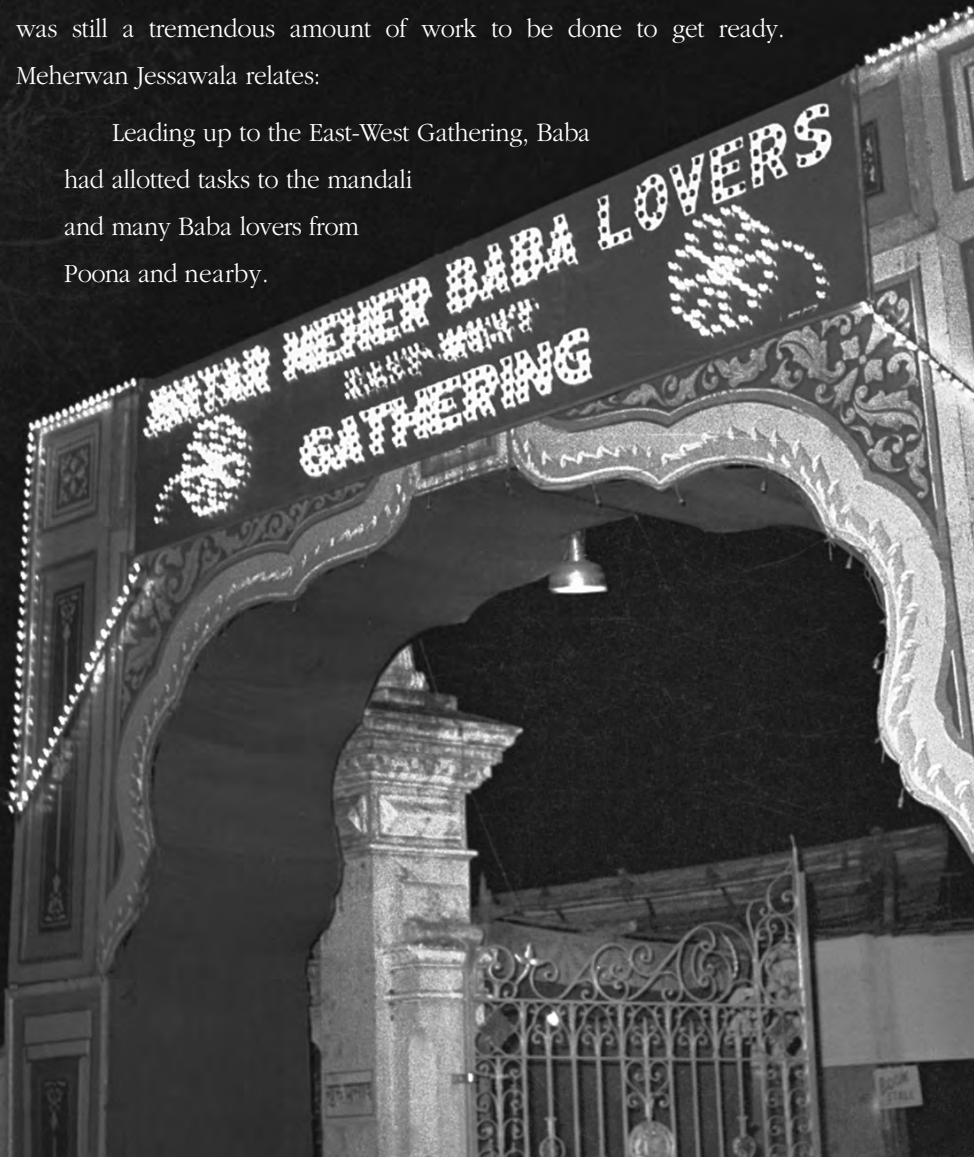
Baba left Guru Prasad on 7th July that year. But unlike previous years, this time Baba started planning to return in just a few months for the large darshan program being planned for his Eastern and Western lovers.

1962

EAST-WEST GATHERING

Originally, the darshan program was to be for ten days, but ultimately it was reduced to the first four days of November. There was still a tremendous amount of work to be done to get ready. Meherwan Jessawala relates:

Leading up to the East-West Gathering, Baba had allotted tasks to the mandali and many Baba lovers from Poona and nearby.



(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

Baba had truly seen to every detail. There was even a separate committee of volunteers to welcome the Westerners and see to their transport to and from Poona. In the weeks prior to the gathering, Meherjee and I busily went around Poona visiting hotels to make suitable arrangements for Baba's lovers from abroad.

As Manu relates:

Accommodations at that time in Poona were very limited. Meherwan and Meherjee had the duty of finding nice accommodations for the Westerners in hotels around the city, for Baba had said, "See that it is done well." Volunteers were helping to see that their food was clean, because Baba had said, "See that they do not fall ill." For the Eastern lovers, Baba arranged for a school hall to be given for their accommodation.

I had received a postcard from Eruch saying that I could come and stay as usual for this occasion. I came a week ahead and stayed with the other men mandali in Guru Prasad.

Baba did see to every detail, even down to which servants should be at Bindra House during the event. Baba sent this message:

Another point which beloved Baba wants only Bindra House to note is that He wants you all to keep with you a maid-servant of Meherazad by name Vachhi as long as Baba stays in Poona. Baba wants you all to take work from her; she will do all work and is a very honest and innocent worker. She is very slow in doing work but whatever is entrusted to her, she will

do it perfectly. She has suffered a lot in her life and therefore she wants a loving atmosphere, and Baba feels that in spite of all the hustle and bustle in Bindra House, the atmosphere there is of love and Vachhi will fit into it. But, Baba wants you all to bring her with you to Guru Prasad every afternoon on 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th for the East-West Gathering. Baba wants you all to take care of her and at the same time take work from her. Najamai will personally explain to you all about Vachhi when she comes to Bindra House.

Manu explained:

She had been married off young and her husband died, so the in-laws felt that she was unlucky. She stayed with her brother, Shankar, another servant at Meherazad. She was very slow, and Mehera also used to get a little bit annoyed, because she was taking care of Mastan's food (the doggy), but she would be late in coming and so Baba Himself would feed him. So Baba also would have to wait for her, and Mehera did not like Baba to be kept waiting. But she was a hard worker and Baba was very fond of her. He would pacify Mehera and say, "Let her be," because she had had a tough life. As per Baba's instructions, we brought Vachhi with us each morning in the tonga, with Kesar and the family on the way to Guru Prasad.

After the Gathering, Baba arranged for her return to Meherazad, where she continued in her duties.







In the days before the darshan was to take place, the headlines in all the newspapers were filled with the latest crises that were gripping the world. The Chinese had invaded the northern border of India and, on the other side of the world, the Cuban missile crisis had just begun. So, on the one side, the two most populated countries in the world seemed about to go to war, while the two most powerful countries in the world seemed on the brink of nuclear confrontation. Meanwhile, Baba's health was of great concern to the mandali, who were not sure how He would have the strength to endure the rigorous program ahead. Baba had been experiencing severe pain and muscle spasms that were not eased by medication. As Meherwan put it:

... when we saw Baba, His health was so frail that it seemed impossible that He was going to be able to bear the strain of the darshan program. Baba could hardly walk on His own. His health was going down by the day. Eruch explained to Baba, "We can still send telegrams to cancel the program. Your health is in no state to bear all of this."

Baba answered, "Under no circumstances will this program be canceled. Whatever happens this program will go on."

About a week earlier, on 23rd October, Baba had sent the following cable to Fredella [Fred and Ella Winterfeldt] in New York to be shared with other Baba lovers:

MY HEALTH IS VERY BAD BUT YOUR LOVE WILL HELP
TO SUPPORT ME DURING THE DAYS OF EAST-WEST
GATHERING STOP PASS ON THIS INFORMATION TO ALL
CONCERNED TRAVELING WITH YOU.

BABA

Still Baba's health did not improve and, in fact, just days before the gathering, Meherwan remembers:

Baba was in the mandali's room and wanted to go back early to the women's side. Francis and Eruch had to practically support Baba's weight, since He did not have the strength to walk on His own and was hobbling along. We were all frantic, wondering how the darshan was going to be possible!

Not only that, but Baba appeared to stop taking an interest in the upcoming program. Normally Baba saw to every detail, as He had during the planning of this event, as can be seen from the fact that not only was every Westerner assigned a specific hotel or club to stay at, but volunteers had been assigned to see that all the Westerners were driven, at prearranged times, to and from Guru Prasad. Sightseeing trips with Jal to Baba places in Poona had also been arranged, as well as medical facilities, and Donkin was even inspecting the kitchens and bathrooms of the hotels the Westerners were staying at to make sure they were hygienic. In fact, decades later, one of the strongest memories for Hoshang Dadachanji, who was a volunteer for the event, was how incredibly well organized it was.

Yet, when the Poona volunteers would report to Baba each morning at Guru Prasad, He didn't even seem to listen to their accounts. He was withdrawn, preoccupied—almost as if He didn't care, or couldn't be bothered with the preparations.

Meherwan saw this as being due to Baba's inner work, but it was still distressing and so unlike Baba's usual manner that it reinforced the impression that there was no way Baba would be able to give the darshan.

However, not only did Baba insist on holding the program, He invited the Western women to visit Him at Guru Prasad on the 31st

morning, the day before the gathering was officially scheduled to begin. And, typically, on the 30th, Baba called some of the Westerners to come a day early. A day or two before this, the most marvelous transformation had taken place.

As Meherwan and the other volunteers sat before Baba for their daily reports, suddenly the color started to flow into Baba's face. Before their very eyes, His cheeks became rosy, His eyes were suddenly lively and He seemed radiant. He started taking an active interest in everything that was being done and, when it was time to leave the room, He walked to the door briskly and unaided. All who saw this were stunned.

Filis Frederick knew nothing of this when she went to see Baba on the 30th. Filis had first had a vision of Baba as the Christ during a lecture she was attending at the Ramakrishna Center in New York in 1943. A few weeks later she had gone to a talk given by Norina Matchabelli but it was only when she was invited to the house of Norina, Elizabeth Patterson, and Nadine Tolstoy and saw a photo of Baba that she realized that it was the same person she had seen in her vision.

She and Adele Wolkin became good friends (so close that Baba used to refer to them as "Filadel") and they had, against Baba's instructions, gone to the train station in 1952 to catch a glimpse of Baba as He was heading off to Myrtle Beach. When Adele announced that she could see Baba (they were hiding behind a pillar on the third balcony), Filis suddenly realized that they were disobeying Baba and therefore she didn't look. So she didn't see Baba until about three weeks later at Myrtle Beach, where Baba had invited her and Adele to come for a week.

Filis, like Adele, fell in love with Baba and spent the rest of her life dedicated to His cause. This entailed putting out *The Awakener* magazine, a "journal devoted to Meher Baba." Many of the accounts

of people's meetings with Baba at Guru Prasad that I give in this book have been culled from that publication.

Returning to her meeting with Baba in 1962, Filis, at Meherjee's suggestion, had gone to the bank to change money and when she returned to her hotel, she discovered that Baba had called for her. She writes:

Frantically I prevailed on one of the volunteers to drive me to the colorful arched gate of Guruprasad (he was not allowed further). I hastened up the dirt road, bordered by gay flower beds and bookstalls, past the supercilious marble noses of Victorian stone angels and up onto the tiled portico of that long-dreamed-of holy of holies—Guruprasad itself! With thumping heart I



Filis Frederick, 1986

waited while my name was sent in to Baba. The others He had called that morning had already come and gone. When I walked into the inner hall the first thing I saw from afar was the white light beaming from Baba's eyes—it seemed soft and brilliant as a sun, and of all the glimpses of Beloved that came afterward in the crowded sahavas calendar, I still remember that first marvelous Nazar or glance of Baba. He was seated alone on the couch, dressed in His dear familiar pink jacket and white sadra.

I leaned over to embrace Him and kiss His cheek and remember thinking, "His eyes are brown, after all." And also that He was a little stouter than in 1958. Baba asked His special question, "Are you happy?" and I nodded—"To see You." He then inquired how my hip was, and how I had made the trip. Then I heard Mani's lively voice addressing me and for the first

time saw the girls standing at the left. Baba beckoned for me to embrace them—dearest Mehera, Baba's chief woman disciple; Mani, Baba's sister; Dr. Goher; Rano Gayley and Meheru whom I had met in 1952 at Myrtle Beach, and also Naja and Khorshed, whom I had heard so much about. Then Baba asked, "How do I look?" "Beautiful!" I replied. I fell silent, eyes traveling over every line of that beloved and oft-recalled Face, then Baba beckoned for me to leave.²⁷

One small group that had been invited to be with Baba consisted of Elizabeth Patterson, Kitty Davy, and Ivy Duce and, I think, Jane Haynes. I had been with Baba and Eruch when Eruch left the room to attend to some work. My nature is such that once my work with Baba was over, my instinct was to leave the room. But it would never occur to me simply to walk out on Baba, so I continued to sit there. I tried to make myself small in the corner.

As it so happened, some of Baba's longtime Western women were due to arrive. I felt that it was not my place to be in the room when they came, but Baba did not ask me to leave. So I was still sitting there when they arrived.

I remember them going individually to Baba and embracing Him. The feeling as Baba returned their embraces and stroked their cheeks was too sublime for me to put into words. It would take a great poet to describe the interplay of love in that room that day and I won't even make the attempt. I am sure, although I felt awkward and out of place there, that the women didn't even notice me, so absorbed were they with greeting their Beloved again.

All the Western women were invited to Guru Prasad the morning of the 31st but it seems that one of them, Diane Dimpfl (whom Baba had nicknamed “3B”), got a special invitation from Mehera to come a little earlier. She writes:

So much happened in the short days of the East-West Gathering. After years of writing to Mehera, I heard her voice for the first time over the phone shortly after I arrived with my family at the Turf Club in Poona. What a wake-up call! Her voice was deep and sweet, and it was the voice of a very strong woman. She had a laugh that would remind you of a dove cooing. She was just wonderful. So different from the nebulous person I’d imagined.

Mehera invited me to come to Guru Prasad right away, before the days of the darshan had started. I hurried over there in a taxi, then climbed the steps to Guru Prasad, still clutching my suitcases.

I don’t know what I was expecting to see once I reached the top of the stairs and looked in the glass doors of Guru Prasad, but what I did see was Baba, seated at the back of a large room. His men mandali were standing on one side of Him. On the other side, stood His women mandali, almost as though all were getting ready for a formal picture to be taken. I stood a moment at the other end of the hall, and what ran through my mind was something like, “There He is! Hmm. I began to see that being close to Baba can sometimes be painful. Let me think this through! Let me see exactly who this is.”

Playing for time, very deliberately I threw down one suitcase, then the other, and walked down the hall to greet Baba, as

Mehera stepped forward to show me to Him. Perhaps the men mandali left, then Mehera came in, but this is how I remember it.



3B and Baba, 1958?

There was an odd moment of shock when I got close to Baba. He had changed so much! He seemed much older. The suffering Mehera had written of had left its powerful stamp. He seemed somehow smaller. He looked up at me and gestured, “You should have run to Me.” Though I could not at this time feel Baba’s divinity, I knew deep within me that I *should* have run to Him.

Baba then sent me to be with Mehera, on the women mandali’s side of Guru Prasad.

Later that morning some 60 Western women came and met Baba in the large hall. Although this was also a reunion for many of the women who hadn’t seen each other in years, or who had been corresponding for years but had never met, their hearts, according to Filis were:

... concentrating on Him and His return of that love seemed to fill the room with an actual radiance of peace. What a long-awaited moment—to see our dear Master again, and here—in His homeland of India! He felt at home—and somehow I think we all felt “at home” too, especially together as we were now, with His precious dear family of Eastern women.

Baba broke the silence that had fallen after all had embraced Him. “Tomorrow there will be discourses. Anita has to be serious!” We all chuckled....

As the room vibrated with Baba’s living Presence, all problems—even those unknown ones buried deep in the mind—seemed to dissolve. The only problem I felt was: “How

(FILIS FREDERICK CONTINUES)

can I love Baba more? How can I fill my heart up with love for Him? All that love comes from Him ... I am helpless even to love Him without His grace....”

All too soon the happy hours were over. Those who had not yet met, or embraced the Eastern women, did so now, while the rest of us mingled in reunion from all quarters of the globe. Baba remained on the couch where a few, as usual, lingered for an extra embrace or bit of personal attention.²⁸

That afternoon, the Western men had their turn to be with Baba. Although, as usual, Baba was full of jokes and good humor, He also, as He had done with the women in the morning, referred to the suffering He was experiencing internally for the world. Charles Purdom wrote:

To meet Baba again after more than four years was to find him greatly changed. He was, now more than ever, a suffering man. His expression was as bright, his eyes as keen as ever, and his alertness seemed not to have diminished, but he was withdrawn, and for much of the time looked far away, as though not belonging to the world. He constantly smiled and was ready to joke, and his humor had not deserted him, but there was a certain indifference that I had not noticed before. Above all, there was an immense sadness that moved me strangely.²⁹

Some of the Australian group had been delayed in their journey to India and hadn't been able to make the morning sessions. Judith Garbett, who was meeting Baba for the very first time, was one of them and writes:

The East-West Gathering was to start the next morning, Thursday, 1st November, but Baba had said He would see the Westerners for a short time on Wednesday, 31st October. Francis told us we would all be seeing Baba at 3:00 p.m. Later we found that there had been a mistake—the men were to see Baba at 3:00 p.m. and



Judith Garbett

the women at 4 o'clock. We didn't quite know what to do. I stayed sitting on an old-fashioned couch on the verandah of the Wellesley Hotel, looking at the trees, watching the sun slowly, slowly sinking down behind them, thinking about Baba, wondering what He was really like, wondering whether I would meet Him after all.... I seemed to have no will to move, and could only stay there, thinking about Him, longing to meet Him.

Suddenly—it was now about 5:30—a blue car swung quickly into the drive and pulled up opposite us. The door flew open, and Bill Le Page leapt out, raced up the front steps, realized we were all there and cried out to us: "Come on, Baba wants to see you now!" Within moments we had all piled into the car and were being driven quickly and expertly through the crowded streets. It was not far to Guru Prasad and soon we were out of the car and walking up the gracefully curved marble steps and onto the tiled verandah, spacious and cool, to join the other Australians. Eruch came to greet us with his warm friendly smile, apologizing for the afternoon's confusion over the times for the women to see Baba.

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

Quickly we slipped off shoes and sandals. I remember looking up, and realizing with something of a shock that it was Baba who was sitting on a big couch at the far end of the room, already waiting for us. With Eruch saying, “Come and see Baba,” we walked through the wide double doors into the big main room, and straight towards Him. We all stood in a sort of wide group, facing Baba, and one by one went up to Him for His embrace, Bill giving the names of the “new ones” who were meeting Baba for the first time.

It was all very simple, and quiet and gentle. Those who had met Baba before in Australia were, of course, so happy to be seeing Him again. Others of us were perhaps a little shy. As each one came to Him, Baba would reach up, placing His hands on her arms or face, drawing her to Him for a kiss on either cheek, sometimes with a smile, a loving glance of recognition. I seem to remember, waiting my turn, that I felt a little unsure of myself, even rather nervous—it is hard to recall exactly. I don’t remember actually walking up to Baba. I just remember standing there before Him, leaning down to Him, my hands on His arms as He reached up and took my face in His hands and drew me to Him, and then allowed me to look at Him, deep, deep into His eyes, giving me, for just a fraction of a second, a fleeting glimpse of their infinite depths—a soul-touching, silent promise to me, a promise of eternity—a moment unforgettable in its intensity. It was almost as if time stood still and I was in a kind of vacuum, in which I experienced this most stupendous event of my

life ... in that moment I knew clearly, simply, irrevocably, that I was His. Then He moved His hands, and as I kissed each cheek, He kissed mine. I remember I was wearing glasses—unfortunately it hadn't occurred to me to take them off—and as I kissed Him the frame touched His face momentarily, and I felt afraid that this might have hurt Him. I did not weep, as so many have done on meeting Him. I did not say anything. Then the moments of His embrace were over; somehow I moved away, and He was waiting for the next one to come to Him....

Meherwan, who had earlier described Baba's dramatic return to health just before the sahavas was about to start, said that on this first day there was "no sign of the fatigue and exhaustion that was so evident the preceding week. It was a sight to see such a transformation! Baba was able to give out His love in abundant measure to all those who came."

Judith continues her account:

The first sahavas morning was already warm when at about 8:30 the busloads of Westerners arrived at Guru Prasad. The mornings were for Westerners alone, on Baba's instructions. Soon all had arrived. It was a little before 9:00 a.m. and Baba was already seated, with several cushions around Him, on the big couch where we had met Him the previous evening. Eruch was ever-ready and watchful just in front of Baba and a little to our right. I don't recall others of the mandali, but doubtless they were all close by. I was sitting to the right of the room facing

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

Baba. There were some in front of me, but I could see Him quite well, and could also turn to look at the various ones He spoke to. As people arrived, Baba would often lift a hand and smile to one or another well-known figure.

The reason Judith didn't remember other mandali was because we were not allowed to be there. This was an intimate gathering; we men were next door in the mandali's room, but we were not allowed even to look through the slats of the doors. Baba wanted the Westerners to be private. This is one reason I have relied so heavily on Judith and Filis's accounts of those meetings. But I also missed some of the afternoon sessions as well. As it turned out, during these darshan days, I was suffering from diarrhea. For reasons known only to Him, Baba had ordered that I should not use the toilet that was in Guru Prasad, and which would have been quite convenient for me. But, instead, I was ordered to use only one of the toilets on the grounds outside which was some distance away. I don't know why Baba gave me this order and it did not occur to me to question it. Judith describes that first session:

The morning began with each one in turn going to Baba for His embrace, greeting Him in his or her own way: some leaned towards Him from a standing position, some knelt before Him; some, glancing up first for His approval, prostrated at His feet. And to each one Baba gave and gave of His love. I still remember clearly how much I wanted to kneel before Him, yet whether through self-consciousness, uncertainty, or the remains of a rather "stiff-necked" upbringing, I did not manage to carry out this wish. How often since then have I regretted losing such

an opportunity! How often have I told myself, “Next time He comes there will be no holding back, I’ll come running to Him.”

Judith remembers this vividly because after that first morning’s session, Baba did not allow embraces from the Westerners. As He explained with a twinkle in His eye, “Tomorrow there will be no embraces, otherwise we will fill up the session only with embraces—and I will be limp!”

Judith continues:

Baba did not give particular discourses or talks that morning, but speaking to one and then another, and so on, He asked about and commented on different aspects of their lives and work—these were just informal chats as it were, of help to those primarily concerned, and of general interest to others. Sometimes Baba would speak quickly and directly to a man or a woman, enquiring if they had slept well, asking about their health, or their families at home. He told one young woman not to worry about her baby—“Give all your worries to Me,” Baba said. “If you keep on doing the worrying I can’t take over the burden. Give everything to Me, and I look after everything.” Sometimes He joked with someone; sometimes with just a smile He seemed to convey a loving, deeply personal message to another.³⁰

Although Judith didn’t remember it, according to Filis’s account, Baba did bring up spiritual topics so that He could, in His inimitable way, bring home to those gathered what it means to love God and to obey. After explaining the difference between human love, such as exemplified by Majnun for Laila, and spiritual love, Baba added, “In

love, one has to suffer a lot. If I tell you, Anita, to discard your dress and go naked around the city and beg, would you be able to? You won't do it willingly. Ella, will you do it?"

Ella said she would try and Baba then turned to Ben Hayman and teased him that he wouldn't be able to do it. Good humoredly, Ben, who suffered from narcolepsy and thus fell asleep even in Baba's presence, said, "I won't stay awake."

Baba immediately rejoined: "It's your duty to keep awake this noon, when all the Easterners come! And if you keep awake, I'll keep awake!"

In a more serious vein, Baba continued:

To love God, one should think of God, long for God and suffer the fire of separation until such longing reaches its utmost limits and is quenched in Union. But one who obeys the Master—who is one with God—need not suffer, for in obedience there is the grace of the Master. Even obedience is not easy. Therefore there is no solution at all! Eruch is with Me, he loves Me, he works for Me wholeheartedly, but even for him it is not easy to obey Me.

Eruch explained:

I just tell Baba we are helpless, in this and all other matters. I found this out during my long stay of many years with Baba. I thought obedience was easy, but I didn't know Baba would say "Get up" and "Sit down" at one and the same time! So I tell Baba, "I am absolutely helpless. I can't obey You, I can't love You!"

Baba summed up:

The best is just to remember Me and forget everything else, leave everything to Me. This is a complicated matter for those who are very interested in spirituality, but not for those who

love Me. Try to remember Me, try to please Me, try to do as I wish. That is how you should live in the world; otherwise it is too complicated. Hafiz says:

*When I first began to love God, I thought that was
the end of everything, that I had fathomed the ocean of
love, but I was only on the beach.*

He didn't know anything about the ocean. As soon as the ocean touched him he got a breeze of love, but then the waves tossed him back on the beach ... He shouts, "O why did I crave for you, God? What is this being tossed back and forth from the ocean to the shore? I have left the world for You, but I cannot find You!" Then the Perfect Master comes to his rescue. He teaches him that the Pearl [of Realization] is on the ocean-bed ... You have to learn to swim, then learn to dive, then find the Pearl and bring it back! ... After 40 years, Hafiz got the Pearl in his hands. It took 40 years for one who was absolutely determined ... Not like you people here who have just heard of it!

To realize God is not so easy as one thinks. But this can be gained through love for God ... by becoming dust at the feet of the Perfect Master. This means to obey Him implicitly. You are no longer your own—you belong completely to the Perfect Master. Hafiz says, "If you want to be the chosen one, leave everything and stick to Him in obedience. The question of why, wherefore, and what, should not enter your mind." Harry, Margaret, is it clear?³¹

Baba had 21 "points" read out, some of which He elaborated on. Afterwards He asked Harry if he had followed it. Before Harry could

reply, Eruch read out Baba's gestures, "Baba says even He can't follow it." This caused much merriment in the hall. Baba had Harry explain his understanding of it and then Baba said:

If I were in your place, I would say, "Baba, give me Your love.... I have nothing to do with all these contradictions, all this consciousness and unconsciousness and conscious of unconsciousness.... I just want Your grace"—and that would settle all accounts in a flash. When through the grace of a Perfect Master, one gets that Experience of the Infinite for which one has taken millions of births and deaths, it comes in a flash. A poet says to his Master, "I can't understand all this, it goes in one ear and out the other. Why can't you give me a glimpse of your Infinite State?"

Baba then gestured to Aloba, who had been called into the room for this purpose, to recite a couplet in Persian, which Baba translated: "The Master can turn this dust into the Touchstone, He can bestow His grace by only a glance. Hafiz says, 'I don't want Your full attention—just a side glance of Yours is enough to turn this dust at your feet into gold.' Harry, when will that be?"

Dr. Kenmore replied, "When we are fortunate to receive the grace of a Perfect Master."

Baba rejoined:

You are more fortunate to have the Avatar. My lovers are more fortunate to have God in human form in their presence. Just a glance from Me can give you all you need—can turn your vision inward. You will be sitting here, without any outward change, but you will become what you really are. It will make an infinite difference. When will that be, Margaret? Harry?

"Well, the time comes when Baba gets that urge, that whim," Harry said. "And that whim has no time ... otherwise, it would not be a whim."

Baba explained:

A whim has no time. It is all of a sudden. Tukaram, the Perfect Master, says, "No amount of knocking your head at the feet of a Perfect Master will give you that grace. It happens at the appointed moment." You have to wait for that moment. That moment is near, and for that you have to love Me wholeheartedly, otherwise you will miss it. If I knock at your door and you are asleep I will go away!

Eruch reminded Baba that He had said He would explain the Four Journeys, but Baba replied:

Why should I give explanations when you cannot understand anything? It can't be understood. I am infinitely bored; so much so that I am waiting for the moment when I can break My silence ... when at last the heart of the world can be touched. I am eager for the Word to come out! But I have infinite patience. I know that just that Word can solve everything, for that Word is the source of all words; yet I am so infinitely patient that I go on day after day repeating the same old truths.

At the end of the session, Baba said:

Today, disperse at 11:30 and come back to the meeting hall at 2:45. There won't be any discourses or explanations then. Just sit there quietly and be witnesses. There is nothing beyond sitting near Me, loving Me, remembering Me. This session of discourses is good for Charles because he has to write a book that will do My work. It is also good for Harry's "baby"—the tape recorder.³²

Judith remembers:

Somewhere about 11:30 the morning session ended. Throughout it Baba seemed to radiate love to His lovers. As on all the other mornings, the big room seemed absolutely filled with the warmth and light of His love; and the gathered love of all seated before Him seemed to well up and flow to Him—His love, first given, being offered again in love to Him. It was a deeply moving experience: entirely, indescribably, beautiful.... I have never known anything like it before or since, and even now, twenty-four years later, the memory of the power of that all-pervading love is still so fresh, so strong, so overpowering for me that tears flow involuntarily whenever I think of it or try to speak about it.

The morning session had been just for the Westerners. In the afternoon, the Easterners were invited. But there were so many, that now the program was held behind Guru Prasad under a large pandal, and people started gathering at the gates around noon in order to get a seat that was at the front and closer to Baba. At Baba's instructions, the first six to eight rows were reserved for the Westerners. The remaining seats were available to anyone on a first-come basis. The only exceptions were Baba's lovers from Poona, who were told they could sit at the very back.

As Manu remembers:

It was also a time when we Poonaites had to hang back in a sense, to let the Westerners, who had come from all over the world, and the throngs of Eastern lovers have their chance to be with Baba. There were some 5,000 seats and thousands more people were standing behind the chairs. Baba had sort of jokingly told

us before the gathering, “No Poonaites, I don’t want to see your faces.” He said, “Why should you take their time? Give them the time. You all have had the chance for so many years; so give them the chance.” Baba used to give us the opportunity to be with Him every year. He would call the residents of Bindra House very often. Baba is the compassionate father; He gave us this instruction, so He would be more available to those who were seldom with Him. So we sat right at the very back of the pandal on a bench. Baba would stand up now and then and ask, “Can you see Me?” And He would gesture with His hands towards us, as if giving His blessings.

Nergiz Kotwal, her daughter, Najoo, and Kharmen Masi, all of whom had lived with Baba at Meherabad and now were staying in Bombay,



Baba gesturing to someone in the crowd at Guru Prasad

had come very early and were just in front on the right side of the gate. The gates of Guru Prasad were still locked and those who had come early began to form a queue outside the gates. Najoo explains:



Nergiz



Najoo

Suddenly, we found people coming in like a river, hundreds and hundreds of people just collected at the back of us. There was a huge queue forming on and on down the sidewalk. We were waiting for the gates to open so we could just rush in and see our Beloved Baba's face after a long time. We were all yearning so much for that glance of Baba. Unfortunately, an old Baba lover came to the gate and ordered that only the left side of the gate be opened; not the right side.

As soon as Baba came out onto the dais and sat down, He started gesturing to Eruch, "I hope My lovers at the gate are safe. I hope some young people are there at the gate so that no one gets injured." He continued repeating this to Eruch. Of course, Eruch knew Baba very well, so he immediately gave instructions to three or four young fellows to rush to the gate and see that everything was all right.

When the young men reached the gate, they saw that there was a river of humans flowing from the left side of the gate. At the right side the people were almost in a state of stampede. I was holding onto the gate with Kharmen Masi in front of me, acting almost like a pillow cushioning me. At the same time I was protecting her with my arms by holding onto the gate so

that she did not get crushed. Mother was beside me and she was also holding onto the gate. They were pushing from the back and we were all getting crushed in the front.

Those youngsters went right to the back and told those people, “Don’t push! Don’t push! This gate is not opened yet.” With a lot of effort, those young men controlled the rush and then the gate was opened.

The All-Knowing One, Meher Baba, foresaw what was happening and intervened to protect His lovers. The people were then able to file into the grounds of Guru Prasad safely and made their way to Meher Baba.

Meherwan Jessawala might have been one of those younger lovers sent to see to the gate but he had been given a different duty by Baba:

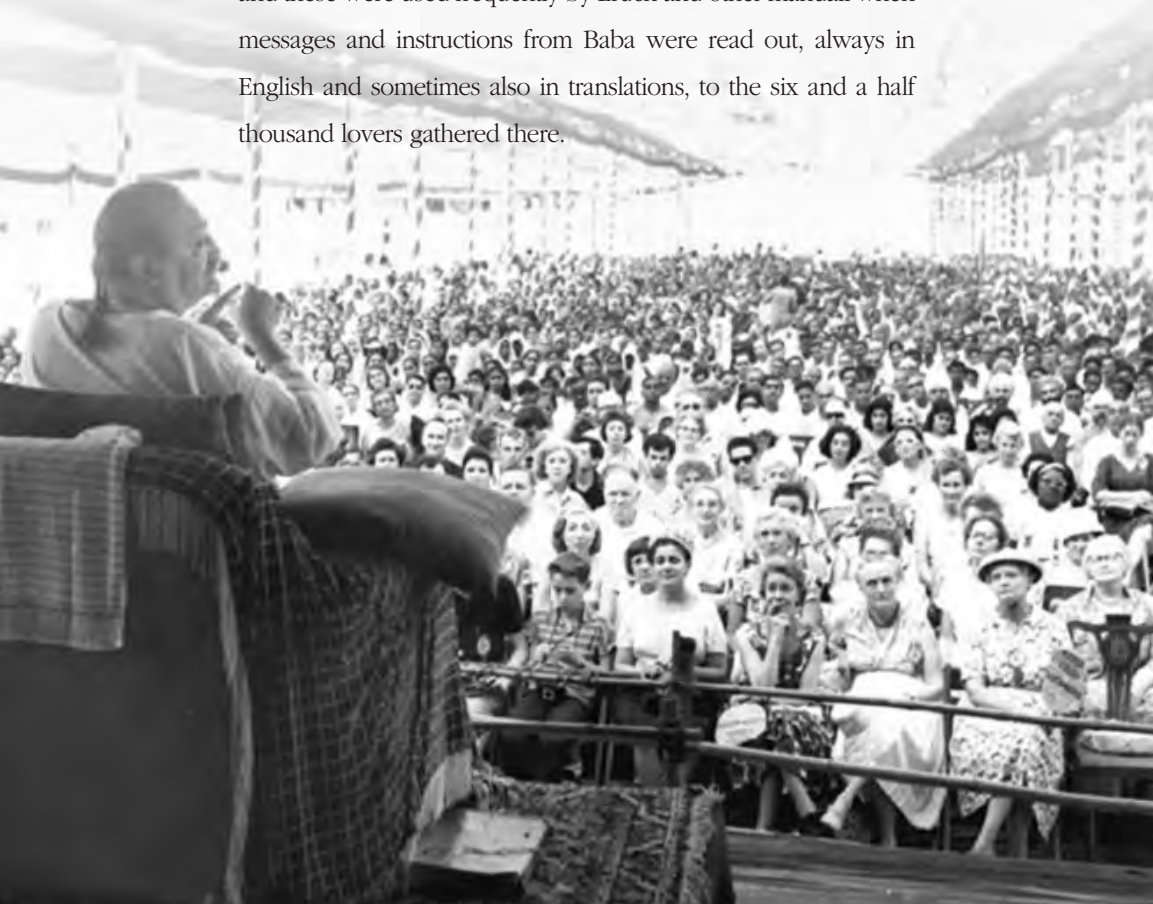
My duty during the gathering, under Baba’s direction, was to answer the phone. Personally, I was under a lot of pressure at work and was also not well at the time, so Baba told me that I shouldn’t strain during the program. There was only one phone at Guru Prasad, which was in the Maharani’s room. My duty was to answer the phone or make any calls needed during the morning and afternoon sessions. During the morning session, the phone would ring constantly, and I was kept very busy connecting calls and messages to various people. If there were any calls or information for Baba, I would give the message to Eruch, who would pass the information on to Baba at a convenient time. In the afternoon, if the phone was quiet, I could look out onto the dais from the window of the adjoining bathroom and see Baba and the program

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

going on. The platform for Baba's chair extended out so I could see Baba at close range. I had a bird's-eye view of the whole gathering. Similarly, the women mandali could see Baba and the proceedings from the opposite window on the women's side.

Judith Garbett remembers:

After lunch began the truly East-West gathering. The Easterners were already assembled in the huge pandal erected at the rear of Guru Prasad when the Westerners arrived to take the seats allotted them in front of the wide platform, with its small dais and deep armchair ready for Baba in the center. Several microphones were installed near the edge of the platform, and these were used frequently by Eruch and other mandali when messages and instructions from Baba were read out, always in English and sometimes also in translations, to the six and a half thousand lovers gathered there.



As is customary at such gatherings in India, the women sat on one side and the men on the other. Folding chairs arranged in wide rows were set up throughout the huge pandal, with an aisle on the outer sides and in the middle, and the floor was of packed earth and gravel. Except for wide entrances on both sides near the platform, the cotton “walls” of the pandal came low down, like an enormous tent. The top covering was of striped cotton material, thin enough to let plenty of light through, but the sides were of heavier fabric. The whole was stretched over a huge framework of poles, the long colorful strips of the cotton awning material being lashed together with twine. The ceiling over the platform was solid, to afford effective protection for Baba, and set into this were four fluorescent bar lights forming a square over His head. All the poles on the platform and throughout the pandal were brightly decorated, and the general effect of light and color was greatly enriched by the vivid shades of the women’s saris and dresses.

Baba came out onto the platform through the wide curtained doorway which led directly from the house and, steadied by the mandali, walked slowly forward to the front of the dais, stood a moment, and was helped gently into the big chair; then cushions were settled under His elbows and feet, and the afternoon began.

Baba opened the gathering by having Eruch read out a prepared message:

Baba wants me to convey to you all that He is very happy that you are here. Your love has brought you here but it is really Baba’s love that has drawn you to Him for this gathering.

This message was translated into Hindi, Marathi, and Telugu. Dr. Kenmore then stood and, after embracing Baba, recited the “Master’s Prayer” in English. As usual, Harry recited the prayer at the top of his voice, startling quite a few because they didn’t associate prayer with that type of loud shouting. Joan Dimpfl (Lud’s daughter and 3B’s sister) said that it terrified her. Afterwards Baba joked, “Your prayer has made a few feel that God is present here.” Then He added, “May My love make you feel one day that God is in everyone.”

Baba continued addressing the gathering:

I have been seeing the Westerners and giving them My embrace and love and also discourses. Today is the first day of the East-West Gathering. I want the Easterners to come to Me, one by one, and to put their hands on My knees and I will pat each one. That will amount to My embracing and meeting the Easterners. Come, come one by one. All of you will not be able to come to Me today; those left over can come near Me tomorrow.

The purpose of this gathering is not to give discourses or messages to My lovers. Many discourses and messages have been given in the past; another volume of My discourses will soon be printed in Australia. More than all messages or discourses, your love for Me will bring you to Me as you should come to Me.³³

One of the memories that has stayed with me was that even though much of the program was conducted in silence (no messages were read, no speeches were made), everyone’s rapt attention was on Baba sitting there on the dais, and the whole pandal was suffused with His love.

Darwin Shaw related a similar experience during the darshan at Wadia Park in 1954. There was such a strong flow of love from Baba that he felt curious as to how far it extended. He walked towards the back of the pandal, but however far from Baba he got, the atmosphere of His love was just as strong—the waves of love seeming to flow outward infinitely, without diminution. And, in fact, when he returned home, his wife Jeanne said she had felt it even in America.

Judith continues:

Arti was performed on the platform in front of Him by several Eastern and Western women whose graceful movements were a lovely and moving sight as the platters of tiny lights were waved in devotion to Him. The program for the afternoon was very full. Baba seemed very happy listening to the qawwalis, and He gave explanations of the meaning after each song.

Throughout the afternoon, at intervals between the singing, Baba gave His embrace to the Easterners. The mandali, long accustomed to organizing large numbers of people, quickly gave instructions early in the afternoon for the lovers to form lines on both sides, and the groups of men and women, by turns, moved up the steps and across the platform to Baba for His embrace, then walked on around the back of His chair and down again to return to their seats. The mandali and helpers stationed themselves at various spots to guide the lovers, and sometimes those near Baba had to give a gentle push to one or another to remind them they could not prolong their darshan but were to keep moving, otherwise there might not be time for many to come to Baba.

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

Many and many were those who brought a garland for Him, or an offering of fruit. Sometimes Baba allowed a garland to be put round His neck, and often He would touch gifts brought to Him and indicate He was returning them to the givers as prasad, or the gifts would be placed in baskets to be distributed later. After a few garlands had been hung round Baba's neck, Eruch would lift them off carefully and place them in the basket behind Baba's chair. Frequently, with most loving and gentle movements, Eruch would wipe the perspiration from Baba's brow and face, for the afternoon was very warm, and Baba was continually exerting Himself in embracing one after another in rhythmic succession.

Sometimes the flowing movement would be halted momentarily by Baba Himself when a well-known figure reached Him: Baba would smile lovingly, sometimes broadly, ask some question, and embrace this one; then the line would move on again. At other times a child would receive an extra embrace, and occasionally Baba would turn a child round, the Westerners catching a glimpse of a bright little face or glowing large dark eyes. Often women with tiny babies in their arms received His embrace, then stooping swiftly, would rest the little one's head on Baba's feet.

The very young, the very old, some very poor, some infirm, some large, some thin—men and women, boys and girls, all were there to enjoy the company of God, to receive His love and to give Him love. It was the Easterners' turn to come to Baba in the afternoons, but the Westerners, sitting watching Baba and the bright throngs filing past Him, were also sharing every moment. It was the bearing-out of part of Baba's message which

had just been read out: "You have come from great distances not for some convention or conference but to enjoy My company and feel afresh My love in your hearts. It is a coming together of children of East and West in the house of their Father."

Meanwhile Najoo Kotwal, her mother and Kharmen Masi, who had been rescued at the gate, had made it inside. As Najoo recounts:

We sat down and just stared at Baba before us. He looked so beautiful and radiant, like the rising sun.

Still, Najoo was not happy. As she explains:

I was feeling very unhappy and upset. In spite of having come so early and standing so long at the gate, we were so far away in the thirteenth row. I said to my mother, "This is very bad. We are so very far away." I started crying and grumbling. My Mummy said, "Don't be silly. Don't cry."

I complained, "We are sitting in this place and I can't see Baba and Baba can't see me."

"Baba is God," she replied, "He can see you. Why are you talking such nonsense?" But still I continued crying, because I was very upset that I could not see Baba and Baba could not see me—or so I thought.

Rows and rows of people were going for His darshan. Then came a very old, frail man with a very long, stringy silk garland. The man looked to be very poor. He took the garland so lovingly and put it on Baba's left knee. Then he bowed to Baba and passed on.

I saw that Baba was taking that garland and winding it on the forefinger of His left hand. He was bowing at the lovers

(NAJOO CONTINUES)

passing and all the while winding that little garland into a tiny ball. As I was watching Baba I was thinking, “What is Baba doing? Why is He taking that garland of the very poor, frail man and putting it on His finger?” Then Baba took the garland in His right hand and He threw it. He threw it in such a way that it fell right in my lap. When it fell in my lap, I was so pleased that I took the garland, jumped up from my seat, folded my hands and said, “Thank you, Baba, from afar.” I sat down and was so happy to have the silk garland from Baba.

Then my mother said, “Do you realize now that you could see Baba and Baba could see you?” Then I really understood what Mummy had been saying—that Baba is God and it doesn’t matter how far away we are. I am so happy to have that lovely garland. It is still the most treasured gift that I have ever received from Baba.

Baba, in this natural and silent way, was responding to the heartfelt longings of thousands of His lovers sitting before Him. As an observer, one could only see people sitting before Baba, or standing in queue and then bowing down for a second or two before moving on, but inwardly, with every moment, there was an incredible interplay of love being enacted. Simultaneously, Baba was clearing away doubts that some harbored in their minds, answering the unspoken questions of others, overwhelming some with His love, allowing others to see His divinity a little more clearly, fulfilling the unspoken request of another—and all of this at the same time with only the individual recipient of His love having any idea of what was happening.

For example, on the second day, the queue seemed to be moving very slowly. N. Hanumanta Rao was sitting with his brothers some three hundred feet from the dais and whispered that he didn't know if they would get a chance to have Baba's darshan. Baba immediately stood up and gestured to them and had it announced on the loudspeaker that the "backbenchers" should not lose heart because all would have the opportunity to have His darshan.

Only when His lovers have come forward and shared their stories have we been made aware of what was happening from their perspective, such as in the case of Gokaran Shrivastava, who was meeting Baba for the first time. He writes:

After coming in Baba's contact in 1961, I was repeatedly pacified by Him to await His darshan. I would constantly write to Him for His darshan and He would constantly assure me that He would give me His darshan at the right moment. The right moment took over a year to dawn and came as the East-West Gathering in November 1962. I was a college student at that time and was expecting great things from His darshan.

I had high expectations for two reasons. First, my Hindu background had carved a glorified version of God in my heart, where God appeared before the devotee as the radiating Sun. Second, photographs of Beloved Baba radiated and emanated very powerfully in my study room where they hung on the wall. One, and sometimes even two, of the photographs would fill my room with a kind of celestial light. These two events made me expect the same kind of supernatural halo around Beloved Baba, and I expected to see Him at my first encounter as a supernatural personality, rather than as a normal and natural human being.

(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

Such false expectations led me to a state of great shock, because when I saw Baba, He looked extremely natural though most beautiful. Beloved Baba was a perfect and most humble human being, rather than a supernatural personality beyond the reach of the common masses. I did not find a halo or glow around His form. There were no external physical marks whatsoever to prove His Godhood.

I first had heard that Baba is the same Ancient One who came as Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ, and Prophet Mohammed. I immediately wrote a letter to Beloved Baba complaining about why He had not taken me into His fold during His past advents? I



Gokaran Shrivastava

even wrote that He would have to pay me a compensation for that mistake. In reply to my letter Baba simply said that He enjoyed my complaint. Now when my turn for His darshan came I was determined that I would take His darshan seven times, one for His being Meher Baba and six for His past six advents of this great Avataric cycle. It was really quite a challenge to take His darshan more than one time, as it was repeatedly announced on loudspeakers that no one should join the queue more than once. I found that some lovers were even caught attempting the second darshan and were removed from the queue. I carefully observed that it was actually some kind of flicker in Baba's eyes that allowed the mandali to spot the culprit attempting to have darshan a second time.

After having my first normal darshan, I again joined the queue to get my second chance fulfilled. I was praying in my heart as I went along, “Baba please don’t help the mandali catch me, as I have to get your darshan seven times.” Finally, when I actually reached Him, He turned His gaze away from me as if He was ignoring me. In this way He actually helped me to have His stolen darshan without being caught. During the entire period of this great darshan, in different sessions and on different days, I was ultimately successful in getting His additional six darshans, besides my one legitimate chance. Each time He pretended to ignore me by not looking at me, but indirectly He helped me to encash my original complaint that He would have to pay me for not taking me into His fold for His past six incarnations. By allowing me to have these additional six darshans He had actually written off my complaint.

I have two very strong impressions of having Baba’s darshan. First is of the feeling of touching His feet. I cannot find any object that even comes close to the softness and soothing feeling that came from touching His feet. It is an indescribable feeling. Second, when viewing Baba’s darshan films it often appears that each lover hardly gets a fraction of a second for His darshan before being mercilessly pushed aside. But this is beyond the truth. In fact, when I reached Baba for my fluttering turn of His embrace or to bow down at His feet, time stopped for me. For the viewers it may just appear as a fraction of a second, but for me it was an eternity, a state of timelessness. All my thirst was fully quenched in that short period of time. The entire burden on

(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

my body and soul totally dissolved. I was not pushed aside, but in fact I was turned out of the queue victorious and rejuvenated.

Although Baba pretended not to notice Gokaran's extra darshans, at a different program when Koomu Viyanna Shastry, a traditional Hindu who had come for Baba's darshan but was not a Baba lover, took Baba's darshan three times instead of just once, Baba gestured "Three" to him as he approached for the third time, thus letting him know that his extra darshans had not gone unnoticed.

This reminds me of the story Sam Patel tells about his uncle. Sam, who was 14 at the time, came from Bombay with his parents, siblings, and his uncle and his family. They all had Baba's darshan on the first day and had gotten in line for a second darshan when they heard Eruch announce that Baba wanted His lovers to take darshan faster because it might rain and that none should take His darshan more than once.

Sam's father immediately pulled his family out of the queue but his brother and his family stayed in line. The uncle said there would be no harm in having a second darshan because, after all, it was Baba's darshan, which was something to be treasured. But when the uncle and his family reached Baba, He turned aside and completely ignored them. And then, as if to drive home the message, Baba called for Sam's father, who was standing in a far corner of the pandal, his hands folded in praise towards Baba. He came forward, tears flowing down his face as Baba embraced and caressed him. Although no one else in the pandal had any idea of the significance, this was a lesson about obedience and pleasing Baba that stayed with Sam's uncle for the rest of his life.



Hardeep Hanspal

Another secret drama being enacted that day concerned Hardeep Singh Hanspal, who came with his brother to see Baba for the first time. As a young man Hardeep had lost both his mother and father. In desperation and discouragement with the world, he turned the focus of his life toward God. Hardeep roamed from village to village, walking miles and miles begging for food and water. After a few months, he began to feel discouraged and tired. He realized that the focus of his life had become begging and that he felt lost as to how to live a life for God if he must worry about food, water and shelter.

One day while sitting on a bridge, an old man approached him and said, "Dear child, what are you thinking about? You are very upset; can I help you?"

Hardeep replied, "No, you can't help. It's my own problem."

"Come and share it. If you share your problem then some solution will come."

He insisted, so Hardeep narrated in short his story: "I am a seeker of God, I want to seek God, but thirst and hunger bother me, I have to go to many houses to beg for my food. That is the thing I don't like. I don't want to be a beggar."

The old man said, "Yes, your thinking is good, but you are on the wrong track. Why don't you earn your living? Your body needs food and shelter. Your spirit doesn't need such things, but you have to take care of your body and earn your livelihood."

"I have tried," Hardeep said, "but nobody knows me so nobody gives me a job."

He replied kindly, “No, have faith in God, because God is great. See this office nearby? Go tomorrow to this office and ask for help from someone. They will give you a job. God bless you.” Then he handed Hardeep some money.

The next morning Hardeep went to the office, which was very big and filled with many people sitting at desks. He noticed one man sitting in the middle of the big room, and thought that he might be the head of the section. To his surprise, the man got up and beckoned Hardeep to approach. He said, “Be seated. What can I do for you?”

Hardeep replied shyly, “Sir, I am greatly in need of some work from you. I just want to remember God, but I have to take care of my body.” “Why not?” he said. “You will get work, but for that you have to go to Poona. My friend is there. A big contractor, a millionaire. I will give you a letter to take to him. I am 100% certain he will give you a job.” Then he gave me some 20 or 30 rupees and said, “I’ll take you to the bus. Don’t walk now; you’ve walked so much.”

This kind and generous man sent Hardeep to Poona, where he got work at the T.C. Golati Bungalow, just behind Guru Prasad. Hardeep spent his time working and remembering the Lord. He continued to wonder, “What is the name of the Lord and what does He look like?” Little did Hardeep know that Avatar Meher Baba, God in human form, was staying in a bungalow very near where he went to work each day.

Hardeep wrote to his family to let them know where he was now staying. His brother replied saying that he was coming to Poona to see someone named Meher Baba, and wanted Hardeep to accompany him. So, together they went to meet Baba at the East-West Gathering. They entered the grounds of Guru Prasad and then made their way to the pandal. As Hardeep then describes:

I first saw Baba from a distance and what a sight! I felt so amazed. A glow was present all around Him and a vibration was coming from Him. It was just like an electromagnetic atmosphere charged with so much love. I felt dazed. I said to myself, "Who is this Meher Baba?"

While I was in the queue, I was looking at Baba continuously as the line moved. When I came closer to Baba, something happened to my body and mind. I didn't understand what was happening to me. When my brother's darshan was over, my chance came. Baba was giving an embrace to each one before me. However, I don't remember anything about being in front of Baba, nor His embrace. I have no idea what happened. I completely lost consciousness.

When my darshan was over, I regained consciousness, but I was now standing to Baba's left. Then the person at Baba's side indicated for me to move along, that indeed my turn was over. When I turned to walk away, a voice spoke in my heart, "You were longing to see God, you suffered so much, walked miles and miles for God. That very God is before you. Why don't you have a look at Him? Get a good look at Him. He is so near to you." Then I turned and looked at Baba and Baba made the *chinmai mudra* [the "perfect" sign]. I felt He was saying, "Yes, I am that." I was so overwhelmed with inner bliss, my heart was crying out, "I have seen God! How fortunate I am!"

One of the memorable events of that first day was the sudden downpour that occurred. This was unusual. Meherwan Jessawala, who had

lived in Poona since 1943, said that it never rained in November which was, in fact, one of the reasons why the East-West Gathering had been scheduled for then in the first place. Not only that, but earlier in the day there had been no indication that it might rain. I remember at the beginning of the afternoon session, Baba looked up at the sky and hinted that it might rain, although at the time this seemed impossible as there was not a cloud in the sky. 3B writes:

Baba, on the dais, stopped the proceeding... to ask, "What if it should rain?" Many heads ducked outside the pandal to behold a clear blue sky. Even under the tent it was very hot. Things proceeded, then, in a while, Baba asked the same question. Same crystal blue sky. Baba asked again about rain, one or two times as the afternoon went on, and throughout the audience fans briskly waved. Then He didn't ask again.

Suddenly, it was as though the sky was unzipped. The clouds had stolen [in] overhead and torrents poured through the thin silk tent, drenching everybody in moments, making the dirt floor ankle deep in muddy water.

K. Hanumanta Rao also remembered the sudden rain:

Because the Westerners were not used to the heat, they were given the preference of attending the sahavas in the morning session and the Easterners in the afternoon. On the first day of the sahavas about 10,000 people assembled in the big pandal made only of cloth, arranged in a way befitting the status of the Host.

Just as the sahavas started there was a heavy down-pour. Almost all the people were drenched. As the rain started, I realized that it would not be possible to return

to where I was staying to get dry and change clothes, since it was far away from Guru Prasad and my allotted darshan time would be over if I were to leave. Then one of the audience raised a question, "Baba, You say You are the Avatar of the Age. Now we are suffering. We want to come and meet You, to attend Your sahavas program, but it is difficult for us to be drenched and sitting for hours." Baba lovingly explained that when He was Rama, Krishna, and Buddha, many were praying to come to Him. Sadhus and saints pray for many years, fast, do not sleep, are exposed to the sun and open air, and even stand on one leg. They do all this to attain God-realization to reach God. Baba went on to explain that by sitting with Him we were benefitted thousands of times more than a man doing thousands of *tapas* [penances]. He said to the crowd of His lovers that it was out of His love that He brought the rain and cleansed the sanskaras of those in His company. Baba described that through this down-pour He was wiping away the old sanskaras, and that we were responsible for those we accumulated from that point onward.

Baba's physical appearance was as cool and refreshing as the rain that came that day. Even at a distance, I felt blessed seeing Baba. It was like sitting in air conditioning to be in Baba's cool and refreshing presence.

For Meherwan Jessawala the rain presented more practical difficulties:

While on duty the first day [stationed near the phone to take any messages that came], I saw from the window that it had begun to rain quite hard. There was no roofing over the pandal,

(MEHERWAN JESSAWALA CONTINUES)

so everyone was getting thoroughly drenched. However, no one moved from their spot. A few put chairs on their heads to protect themselves. Most people went on taking darshan oblivious of the rain. The ground was flooding from the unexpected storm. All of a sudden, the queue system seemed to go a little haywire. It was difficult for the volunteers to keep order amidst the confusion. I rushed out to help, leaving the phone unattended. People at the back of the line could not see that there was a delay at the front and continued pushing forward. I went out and instructed these people to stop pushing and to be very careful. It could have easily turned into a stampede!

Once the situation seemed to have calmed down, I went back to my post. I was feeling quite proud and elated that I had been able to bring order to the problem that had arisen, when other volunteers had not been able to. Within a moment, Eruch came over to the window and said that Baba wanted to know what business I had in leaving my post. I was shaken out of my pleased state, and surprised that Baba had even noticed me in



Meherwan Jessawala

all the chaos. I apologized and explained to Eruch that I was concerned that there would be a stampede. Eruch came back saying that Baba forgave me. Through this experience, I realized that it is Baba that does His work. I had no business thinking that I fixed the situation. Baba lovingly brought me back down to size.

When the rains came, there were many who were waiting for Baba's darshan, and the line stretched out beyond the pandal. The downpour drenched the people standing outside while those underneath did not get wet immediately. However, after some time, the rain was so heavy that the thin cloth fabric of the pandal got saturated and began to drip in various places.

For a while I was under the pandal, but when it began to drip I got a little wet and very cold. As my health has not been good since childhood, I went to another spot under the awning that was not dripping. Many people continued to sit in their same places, unaware of getting wet, and just continued to gaze at Baba.

I remember Edward and Irwin Luck were sitting in chairs near some of the posts that were supporting the pandal. Baba signaled across the crowd to them, "Stick to your posts!" And so they remained in their same spots the whole afternoon, not minding that they were getting drenched.

Since I had permission to go into the bungalow and all around, I went from place to place helping those people who were standing outside to find shelter. Then the rain stopped as suddenly as it had begun and the darshan resumed. Baba gestured that the Western women could go inside to change and that the women mandali would help them find dry clothing. Meanwhile, as Meherwan recounted, there was a short-lived urge on the part of many in the crowd to rush to Baba.

3B remembers:

The mood of a sudden wish to be near Baba had hit me too, and I remember helping a plump Punjabi girl onto the stage. Next thing I knew, I was whisked inside the women

(3B CONTINUES)

mandali's side of Guru Prasad where Baba's close Indian women mandali were hurriedly giving away all their clothes to replace those drenched ones being worn by the Western women. I remember one of the clothes I was given was a deep purple shift with hundreds of white butterflies on it.

I remember that Elizabeth, Ivy, Kitty and Jane were seated in the front rows and went in to change. Because Elizabeth was quite sturdy there were no clothes the women could find that fit her properly. Finally one of the women was able to find a robe, which looked like a kimono, that Elizabeth could wear. As it turned out, this was actually a gift Elizabeth had given to Rano more than ten years earlier.

Soon after they had changed into dry clothes, Baba called them outside again. Baba wanted to introduce Elizabeth to the crowd and explain about His Center in the West, in Myrtle Beach. Since Baba called her, Elizabeth did not even hesitate or feel shy to come to the front of the stage before the thousands there, wearing only a robe. She went right up and gracefully stood as Baba introduced her. Many people felt that this dressing of the Western women with the Eastern women's clothing was a symbolic representation of the coming together of East and West at the gathering.

By the time the darshan was over that day, everyone was completely dry and looked as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. That night, however, it rained some more and many of the paths were very muddy. Burjor Bode was an engineer working for the Municipal Corporation of Poona, and he was instrumental in getting truckloads of dirt hauled in and then spread over the muddy ground so that it would not be a hindrance to the thousands expected later that day.

The next morning, as planned, Baba again met with just the Westerners in a much smaller group. So small that they could meet inside the main hall instead of outside under the pandal. Once again, this was a morning of jokes, and intimate small talk as well as some profound discourses.

Picking up again with Judith's account:

On the second morning of the sahavas, another most moving experience for me was the reading by Francis of an Ode of Hafiz, translated by Baba, and versified by Francis. The words of this Ode were for me like a personal message of love and understanding from Baba. Although, as I said earlier, I did not weep at the moment of meeting Him, the floodgates had opened during the night. I could not sleep, thinking about Him, and wept because I felt I did not know how to love Him. The refrain of the Ode, repeated in every couplet, is "so be not grieved," and as I listened I felt that Baba knew what I was feeling and was telling me not to be concerned or unhappy. And immediately the sun shone again for me and I could enjoy being there with Him.

Referring to the ode, Baba asked Dana Field if he were worried. And then continued: "Dana, are you worried? Didn't you hear what Hafiz said—not to grieve? Who else is worried?" No one answered. Baba gestured:

If no one is worrying, I have to worry. But My worry is great fun for Me! It's a very old habit of Mine to worry for the whole creation, to worry continuously for the release of souls from the

(BABA CONTINUES)

bondage of life and death. It's great fun. Some come to Me to heal their diseases, to bless them with better prospects in life, or for a job or for children, or because they have too many children! And I have to worry about all those things, in addition to My Universal worries. You see Me sitting here with you, but I am simultaneously on all the planes of consciousness, on all those stations on the chart that is here before you. [Chart of the Four Journeys. Baba had a lengthy explanation of it given during that morning session.—Eds.] There are souls in the subtle world who want Me—and I am there with them; and there are those in the mental world who want Me, and I am there with them. You are in the gross world, so you find Me with you in the gross world; those in the subtle world find Me in the subtle world; those in the mental world find me in the mental world. And one rare one who finds Me as I really am is blessed ... But remember not to worry! Take the advice of Hafiz and do not worry!

“Baba closed the session around 11:00 a.m.,” Judith writes, “and on the way back to the hotel Francis took me to a teashop for a cup of tea and a chat. Little happenings such as this, and being included in the small family get-togethers in the evenings at the hotel, all helped me to relax and absorb something of the wealth of love that Baba was giving out for all during those days of the East-West Gathering.”

One of the conditions Baba had circulated before the East-West Gathering was that no one should expect or ask for a personal interview. But, on

His own, Baba set aside Saturday morning (the third day of the darshan) for individual and small group meetings with the Westerners. Before these started, Filis recounts a touching scene that occurred at Guru Prasad:

Some of us were at Guruprasad early this morning—8:30 a.m.—and we witnessed the affecting scene of the little band of Andhra villagers and some fisherfolk greeting Baba on the outer porch. Baba had sent for them at the bus station, where they were about to leave without having had His embrace. Now as they squatted around Him in a colorful semi-circle of men, women and children, He asked them to sing something for Him. This was their spontaneous song: “I bow to You in Your infinite aspects. Infinite Bliss, Infinite Knowledge, Infinite Power are in this Human Form of Yours. You are my real father and mother. I long for that day when I become One with You.” Eruch said even Baba was moved with the devotion expressed in their song. A prasad of sweets was passed out and, after each one had the privilege of embracing Baba, they left.³⁴

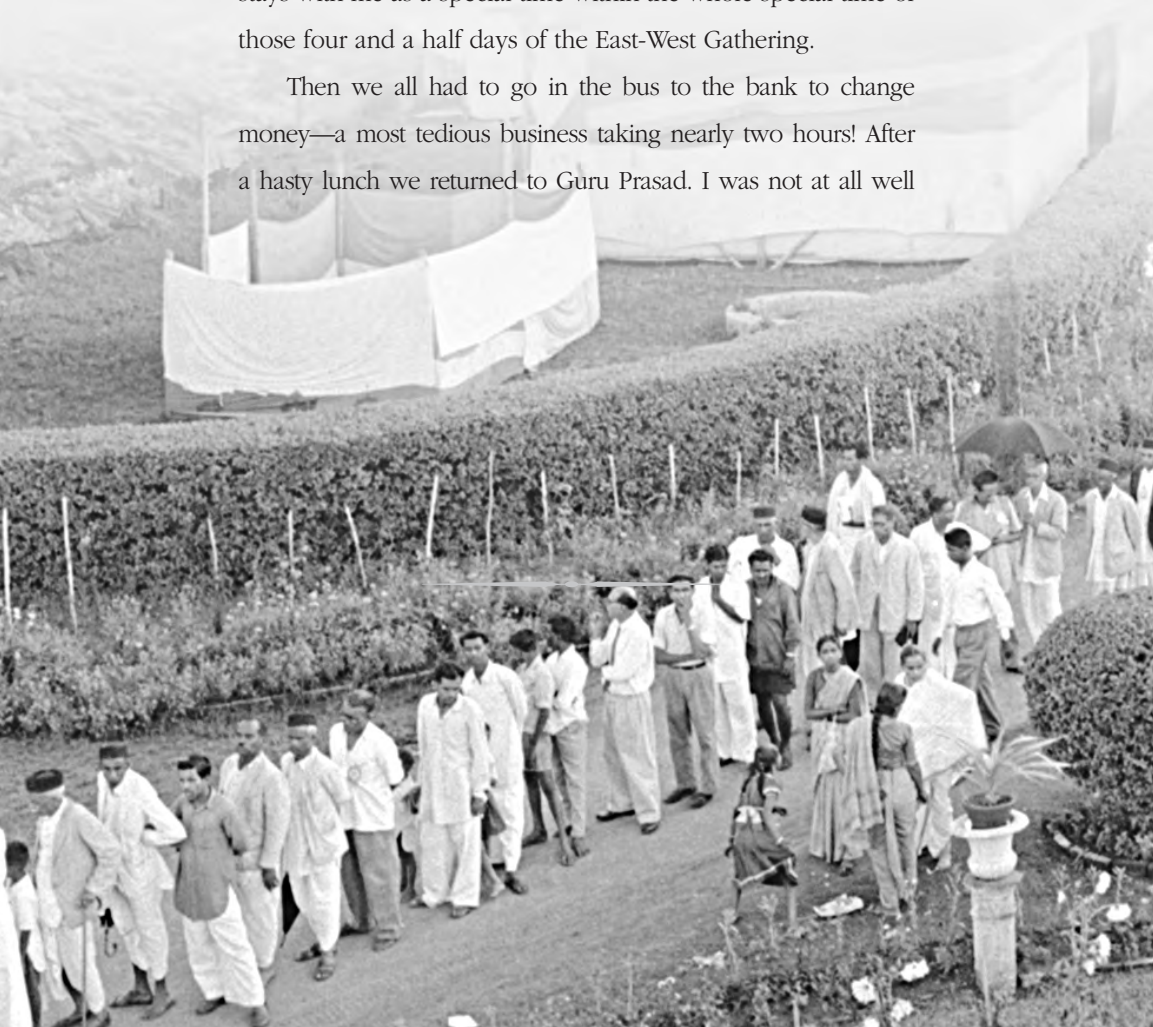
Then, around 9 a.m., the small meetings with groups started taking place. Judith writes:

There was only one small group for Australia. We sat on the floor in front of Baba in one of the small rooms off the front verandah. Francis was on Baba's right facing us, Bill Le Page sat with his family and I was next to them. Most had already met Baba, but those of us who were new ones were again introduced by Francis. I still remember how suddenly surprised I was to hear Francis saying, “And this is Judith, a new one. She

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

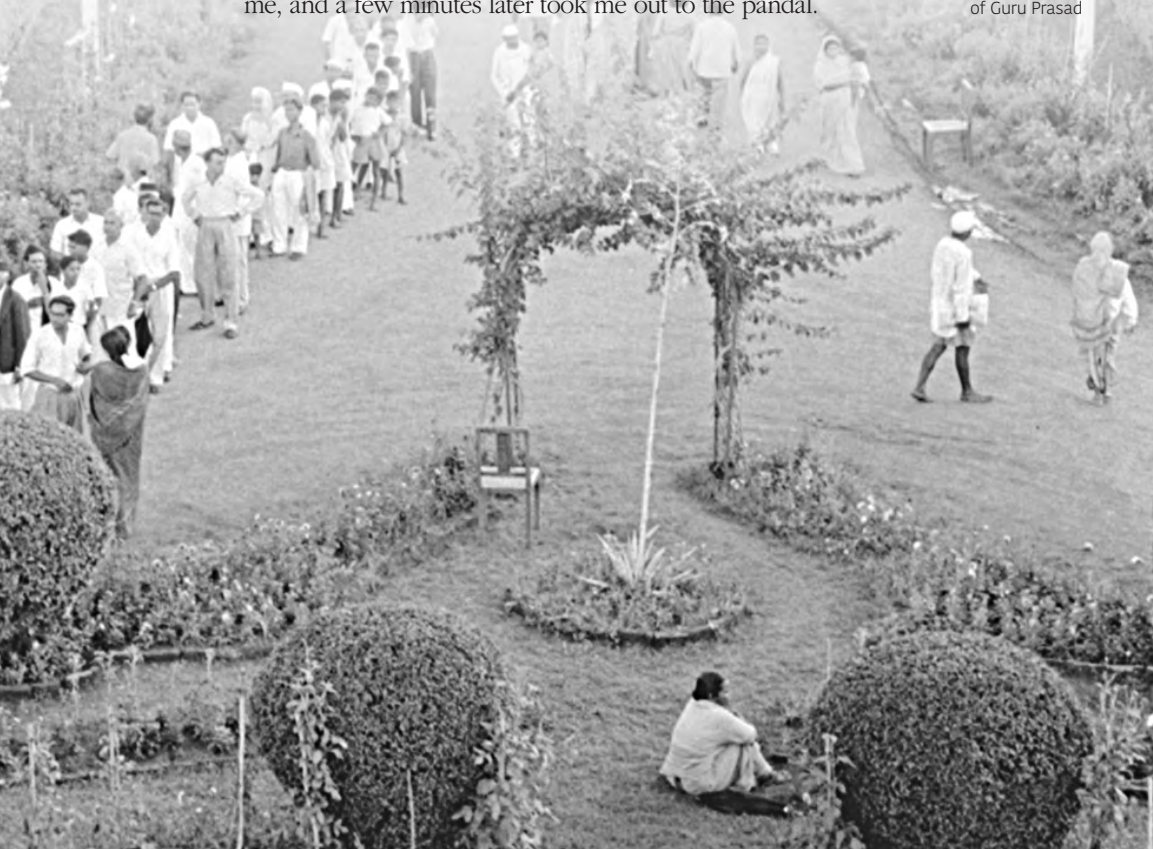
is a first-class secretary who has been helping with the Baba work,” and Baba then said that He was pleased I was helping Bill. There must have been exchanges with others there too, but being so bemused with all the momentous happenings since arrival in Poona, nothing more of our short interview remains in my memory. Looking back, again it seems as though I was almost the only one there, sitting at His feet. Perhaps this is felt by each one in His presence. And this of course was the only personal interview, as it were, that I ever had with Him, so it stays with me as a special time within the whole special time of those four and a half days of the East-West Gathering.

Then we all had to go in the bus to the bank to change money—a most tedious business taking nearly two hours! After a hasty lunch we returned to Guru Prasad. I was not at all well



that day and was told to see an Indian lady doctor there (not Dr. Goher), after which Mani had me lie down in the main room while everyone else was out under the pandal for the afternoon program. I don't know how Mani knew about me being sick, but after telling me to lie down she brought a chiffon scarf and with such a loving gesture spread it over me. She came back a little later, and I said I felt better and wanted to go and join the others. As she led me through their rooms she told me I loved Baba, that she knew this from the photograph sent over earlier. She said, "It is easy to love Baba when you meet Him, but you loved Him before you met Him, and that is why Mehera took your picture and kept it." I remember standing there with her, just shaking my head—I couldn't speak for the tears in my throat. She put her arms round me, and a few minutes later took me out to the pandal.

People waited to have Baba's darshan in long lines that extended out to the road in front of Guru Prasad



As the darshan days went on, thousands of people waited in line for a moment's darshan with Baba. The queue stretched the length of the pandal and wound its way in a multitude of curves and switchbacks to contain the mass of anxious lovers. After passing by His holy feet and receiving His blessings and prasad, all were filled to overflowing with Baba's love and compassion.

At one point during this program, Burjor Bode, who had been so helpful in getting the truckloads of dirt to spread over the ground after the showers in the evening of 1st November, was on the stage standing behind Baba. He relates what happened next:

Bhajans were all the while being sung and music was being played. All of a sudden Baba called me and said, "You sing one bhajan." I was petrified. I was not really a musician, and to sing on the spur of the moment before a crowd of thousands was daunting. I did not even have a song prepared or know which one to sing. I appealed to Eruch, "How can I sing?"

But Eruch said to me, "No, you must sing," because Baba had asked me to. One of Kabir's bhajans occurred to me. So I sang that to obey Baba's request. When I finished there was a thunderous applause from the audience. Baba hugged me and made the perfect sign. I said to Him, "Baba, You must have sung, because I was petrified. I don't even remember singing."

Later that evening Baba called another emergency meeting with Eruch, Pendu, Padri, others, and me. As we were gathered Baba praised me so much. He said, "He has done such a good job and it is amazing that the function could continue despite

the downpour.” It was such a heartfelt experience to be praised by Baba.

I then said, “I only organized things, I did not do much.”

Baba said, “But it turned out so well.”

As with almost everyone who is drawn into Baba’s net, there is an interesting story behind Burjor Bode’s attendance at the East-West Gathering. Burjor had first had Baba’s darshan way back in 1937:



Burjor Bode, 1963

As a young boy I was in school in a small place called Devlali, near Nasik. And in 1937 my grandfather came to know that a Parsi saint, an Irani, was in Nasik. My grandfather thought, “Let us go and take His darshan.” So for three days we all went back and forth from Devlali to Nasik in a tonga for Baba’s darshan. I was only 13 years old but I still have a very vivid impression of the glorious personality, very fair, and radiant that was Meher Baba! I remember His long hair and how He was as if pulsating or bounding with energy.

I left Devlali in 1941 and came to Poona for my college education. I wanted to be a civil engineer, and there was only one engineering college in the state of Maharashtra. After that I worked professionally for four years in Bombay, and afterwards with a private contractor. Then in 1951 I joined the Municipal Corporation, where I stayed in Poona until my retirement in 1980.

While working in Poona, Meherjee consulted him about getting his land reclassified so that he could start a factory on it. Burjor helped

him and ultimately it was successful. Meherjee was very pleased at this outcome and one day told Burjor that Meher Baba had come to Poona, was staying at Guru Prasad, and asked whether Burjor would like to meet Him. [This was probably during Baba's first stay in 1957.] Burjor recalls:

I said yes. I had been visiting saints since my childhood; in fact, right from a young age of about seven or eight, my family was associated with Upasni Maharaj of Sakori. He is our family guru. My father and mother were great devotees, and until my father passed away in 1932, we used to regularly go to Sakori during my father's vacations. From that time onward, my family continues to have a close association with the Sakori ashram.

And so, I was quite pleased when Meherjee asked if I would like to meet Baba. I said, "Certainly!" And then I remembered that I had seen Baba in 1937 when He gave a mass darshan in Nasik.

After that Burjor saw Baba again when He was staying at Ganeshkhind, and he was intimately involved in the planning for the East-West Gathering.

It is impossible to convey the feeling of loving intimacy that prevailed despite the huge crowds. Baba, as was His way, managed to make people feel He was not only aware of their presence but that He loved them in a uniquely personal way. There are many stories that have already been published about the East-West Gathering and many, many more that have yet to be told. But I wish to give just a few excerpts from several of them to try to capture something of this flavor, and something of the way that Baba worked with each individual.

Anthony Thorpe wrote:

Early in 1955 I left my native England on an urge to go abroad to a commonwealth country. Australia did not draw me, but New Zealand did! I was 25 years old, had just finished my training as an architect and was not particularly interested in spiritual matters. A year later, my mother in Wales was asked by a friend who had been persuaded to visit Meher Baba, to accompany her to meet Meher Baba, who was then making a brief visit to London. My mother was searching through Christian teachings but was not familiar with Indian mysticism, let alone someone of the stature of Meher Baba! It had been my brother, at that time farming in Wales, who had been attracted to Meher Baba on hearing of Him and reading some of His statements. Tied to the farm by the animals, my brother persuaded her to go with this friend.

This meeting with Baba had no immediate effect on my mother, she says. But in 1958, when Meher Baba was visiting His center in South Carolina, United States, my mother and brother went to be with Him. I remember sending some money from New Zealand to help with their fares, but that was all. It turned out to be a most moving experience for both of them, and in a wish to share this with me, my mother sent me my first book by Meher Baba which she purchased at the Center. At the time I had no feelings of being drawn to Baba, but was perhaps



Anthony Thorpe with his mother, Hilda, in 1980
on Seclusion Hill in Meherazad, India

(ANTHONY THORPE CONTINUES)

undergoing some sort of preparation, and I always feel grateful to my mother and brother for feeding me with spiritual literature during those early years in New Zealand. I was interested in and reading Krishnamurti, Gurdjieff, etc. and was attending evening classes at a school of philosophy in Wellington, where I lived.

The book, *Listen, Humanity*, lay on my shelf for a year or more before I again picked it up to find that it was now much more meaningful! Though I was in New Zealand in 1958 when Baba visited Australia, I had not felt moved to visit Him then. The life pace of each soul is in accordance with their receptivity and preparation.

It was not until November 1962 that I finally went from Christchurch, where I had married and settled in 1960, to India to meet Meher Baba in person, at His East-West Gathering, which He had said was “only for His lovers.” I went with a group from Australia and with the encouragement of one there with whom I had been corresponding and obtaining Baba literature. What I had read had spoken to me internally. Meeting Baba did not convince me of His divine stature. I had already in my own way been convinced inwardly, though one could not express this in words.

He captured my heart with His radiant love, and His majesty shone from Him in a very compassionate and yet cosmic way. His suffering was most apparent, yet one had this incredible feeling that this experience of being with Him was such a privilege. To witness Baba working with the thousands of Easterners who had flocked to Poona to have His darshan together with 150 Westerners was unforgettable. His seemingly tireless yet crippled

form seemed to bear incredible burdens both physical and cosmic, out of which shone such a love as I had never witnessed! Baba told us at this gathering that at this time He was giving us an opportunity to witness only a tiny glimpse of His love, but that His manifestation would reveal His fullness!

During a brief moment with Baba in India when individuals were asked if they had anything particular they wished to say to Him, I had told Him that I would like to be an instrument in His work in New Zealand. His gestured reply was interpreted by one of His close mandali to the effect that it was God alone that matters and that He was pleased. It may seem strange, but I cannot recall the actual words. Baba's real connection always seemed internal.

On returning to New Zealand I felt like I was treading on air. Every leaf seemed to contain Him. Yet I felt so inadequate and unworthy, so immature! It was not an experience one could share with others readily—though one wished to with all one's heart! [From an account given to Francis Brabazon.]

On Sunday, November 4th, instead of just meeting with the Westerners, Baba allowed all those who had not yet met Him to come in the morning for an embrace. Baba was on the dais at 6 a.m. When He came into Guru Prasad later that morning to meet with the Westerners as usual, He had already embraced 3,000 Easterners. This morning, as a treat, a musical program had been arranged. Baba had told the Westerners the previous day that there would be no time for embraces or questions that

day as He wanted them to hear Vinayak Rao Patwardhan, a classical Indian musician.

Meherwan recalls that program:

I remember two programs Baba allowed the mandali and a few of us to watch from outside the doors and windows to the hall. The first was an outstanding performance by a classical Indian musician named Vinayak Rao Patwardhan. Initially, Rao, who was a famous singer throughout India, was not going to be able to perform for Baba because he was scheduled to fly out that same day to do another performance. Baba encouraged him to come, saying He would send Rao in His car straight to the airport immediately after he finished singing! Rao accepted and regaled all with his gorgeous voice. He had invented his own type of music where his voice imitated the sounds of an instrument. It was just as if there was a hidden instrument down in his throat. Many times we would see artists who were so inspired by performing in Baba's presence that they would excel to great heights during their performance, unlike ever before. The song that Rao chose, called the "Bhairavi," is a piece that is usually sung at the end of a classical concert, because it is very sad and melodic. The Westerners, wonderstruck by his singing, watched with rapt attention. Baba generally did not care much for classical compositions, but this Baba enjoyed very much. What a blessing to sing before the Lord!

Even with the singing, there was still time as usual for Baba to joke with His near ones, interspersed with short but profound exhortations to love God.

That afternoon (the last day of darshan for the Easterners) there was a “public” darshan to which anyone could come. Up until now, only those with badges had been permitted entry into Guru Prasad. It was supposed to start at 2:00 but, as usual Baba came out much earlier, a little after one, because the crowds that were forming were so large.

Baba had Don Stevens read out “The Universal Message.” A little later, Dr. Kenmore recited the “Prayer of Repentence.” Filis was later to write:

We all stood as the Prayer was said. At the end Baba made a beautiful gesture as if He took away the load and burden of our collective past. Then He allowed the mandali one by one to come and bow down to Him for the first time in many years (“twenty-two years” Eruch said). This was surely a significant moment for them all.

Judith Garbett wrote:

It was an extremely moving scene to witness. The love and reverence each one had for Baba was paramount in every line of their bodies as they approached Him, bowed down at His feet, and moved on. To an onlooker it seemed that such a moment was His gift to them to give again to Him their all.

This event also made a deep impression on 3B:

There were three events during the gathering that especially stick in my mind. First, Baba giving the men mandali the opportunity to bow down to Him. Baba usually never permitted this. But on this day, one by one the mandali bowed down in reverence to Him in very individual ways. I particularly remember Francis’s very simple bowing down, and Eruch.

Judith's account continues:

Then the Public Day Darshan began in earnest, and hour after hour until evening the lines of men and women were called alternately to file by Baba, hour after hour they offered their love and respect and He responded, continuously lifting His hands to His heart. There are many sequences of this in the movies which recorded the crowds of people, including an entire village of gypsies magnificent in the vivid colors of their dress and ornaments.

As the queues filed by, Baba told the Westerners that once the public had had their turn, they would be allowed to bow down to Him. But, He added, "If not, you can all go home thinking you have taken My darshan, which you have had the last four days."

Filis describes these last few hours in more detail:

A basket of hard candies was presented to Baba and blessed by a quick gesture, then passed out among us. The Poona bhajan mandali continued their devotional songs. The throng filed past Baba, averaging about thirty a minute. Among those coming by were the gypsy caste of Banjaras in colorful clothes sewn with big pieces of mirror, and wearing heavy ornaments. They had walked twelve miles to see Him. Baba said, "These are nomadic tribes. I have visited their huts. Each one has a photo of Me, they worship Me as the living God. The government support has changed their habits of dress. They used to wear so many more ornaments; even sleeping in them.

"I am in the least one of them and in every one of you. No one is low and no one high in My Nazar. Because God is One, I

am One, you are all One; there is no difference of tall or short, man or woman, beautiful or ugly, rich or poor. All are one in My Nazar.”

At this point a woman devotee began crying “Baba, Baba” at the back of the tent and came rushing forward. She was grasped by the workers and taken outside. Baba said “She is full of love, but if permitted to come to Me would take hold of Me and never let go.” He gestured with hands at His neck.

He also said, “When the queue is over you may come to Me and bow down and that will be the first bowing down and the last bowing down.” Now the queue extended one-third of a mile outside the gates; 7,000 people were here, Eruch reported. So many garlands piled up beside Baba they looked like a mountain of blossoms. Some were just tiny strings, some gorgeous affairs of roses, jasmine, ginger flowers, marigolds. One family brought their bald-headed baby to Baba and the baby hair they had cut off. Baba explained it was a custom to cut a child’s hair and take it to Kasi or to Benares to drop in the sacred Ganges: but for His lovers, Kasi and Benares were here, at His Feet.

In small groups, the Western women were invited to go inside Guruprasad and say farewell to Mehera, Mani and His other women disciples. At 3:30 Baba speeded up the line. A correspondent of the *Maharashtra Times* asked Baba which country would be ultimately victorious, China or India. Baba replied, “As the Avatar of the Age, I have taken birth in India—so Bharat [India] will eventually be victorious. Just now someone was reciting the call of Lord Krishna in the Gita. I am Lord Krishna.

(FILIS FREDERICK CONTINUES)

I am the Ancient One; time and time again I come down to protect and redeem My lovers. I am the Christ, the personification of Love.”

Shouts went up from each language group as Baba’s pronouncement of His Avatarhood and India’s victory were translated.

At 4:30 the queue was still longer than ever—Baba gestured, “At this rate, they won’t be able to have My darshan.” He added, “The Westerners will have no chance either.” Kitty Davy replied from the front row, “It’s enough just to sit here and watch You.” But Baba answered, “It’s one thing to see the ocean and another thing to dip your feet in it,” at which the Easterners murmured approval.

Still the crowd seemed endless, but amazingly patient, even the innumerable babies made no outcry. There were more lost children held up to the mike and an amusing moment when one little fellow on the platform lost his trousers. I kept my eyes on Baba’s eyes continually and on His exquisite, gesturing hands. He was wearing a heavy, fantastic garland all of roses and every now and then Eruch wiped the sweat from His brow and neck.

The crowd came on and on—first men, then women. And no matter how poor, His lovers offered the Avatar a gift—coconuts, sweets, bananas wrapped in paper or leaves—and above all, they offered Him their hearts. Mothers with babies swung the little ones off their hip and onto Baba’s feet in one swift gesture of surrender. Others laid their hands on Baba’s knees, or touched His feet with their forehead. Baba did not

always glance down at those before Him, but sometimes carried on a lively mudra conversation with Eruch or others. It was as if He really was the Ocean of Love and to touch His feet was all the individual needed.

Around 4:45 Baba said, “After a very long time I am giving My Poona lovers the opportunity to bow down to My feet. In January 1956, I gave My last public darshan in Poona. Today I have again allowed the Poona public to come for My darshan. After they are finished, you will have an opportunity—if it doesn’t rain.” He gestured to Dr. Kenmore, “Your thoughts are on Me within.”³⁵

Manu Jessawala remembered well that last chance to place her head on her Beloved’s feet:

The Westerners were called in the morning and the Easterners in the afternoon. Small groups were also called on particular days, but not every day. It was during these sessions that all were given a chance to bow down to Baba and touch His feet, which was a rare opportunity.



Manu Jessawala

We came to know that this was happening and we Poonaites thought, “Baba won’t let us have darshan.” Baba would tease us about this for the seven or eight days [*sic*], Baba would say, “You all not, eh? You all have had enough.” But in the end poor Baba said, “Today is the last day, so the Poonaites also should have the last darshan,”

(MANU JESSAWALA CONTINUES)

when we could put our heads at His feet. Oh yes, we were so happy—to take darshan of His lovely feet. We had been wondering if Baba would call us or not, and while the others were having their chance, we had been looking on like vultures. Then the last day, He allowed it.

An Eastern poet read a poem dedicated to Baba. The queues of men and women on both sides still pressed forward. At 5:30 Baba announced: “It’s impossible for all to come near Me and bow down at My feet. The queue is just where it was. You have been gazing at Me all this time. Carry My form there in your heart and see it as often as possible.”

Harry Kenmore, guided by Christine Wise, went through the darshan line and Baba said, “You are a daredevil to go in the queue and you are blessed for it.” Groups from the different centers at Delhi, at Dehra Dun, and Andhra came on the platform to sing bhajans. I went indoors to say goodbye to dear Mehera, Mani, Naja, Meheru and Dr. Goher, and to receive some prasad of puffed grains. During this time the gates of Guruprasad were closed and the queue cut off. Those remaining went by Baba more quickly, followed by the volunteer workers. A spontaneous dance by one lover, a song from Lenny Willoughby, and then arti—the last arti of the sahavas—was performed. Baba said, “All of you—take Me with you.” As we left the pandal it was twilight with spectacular colored clouds piled high around a slender moon. I looked back at Baba’s white figure seated in His chair under the soft glare of the lamps, still surrounded by the colorful throngs of His lovers. The Avatar

in person was still showering His love, after having embraced over 10,000 souls. Truly He is the inexhaustible Source of Grace in our time. Later, we heard the crowds had broken down the closed gate of Guruprasad in their intense desire to see Baba, who then, in His mercy, drove out among them in a car and in this way gave all of them a glimpse and His blessing.



The last day for the Westerners was Monday morning. A group asked Baba if they could perform a skit for Him. Baba gave His approval and we all waited in anticipation for a good laugh. Although, as I said, Baba did not permit His mandali to attend the morning sessions with the Westerners, this was one of two times that he made a sort of exception. Meherwan writes:

The second program that we were allowed to watch from the side doors was a hilarious skit performed on the last morning of the event. As I recall, the plot of the skit was to solve the mystery of Baba's silence. It began with a Sufi man, Khaled Alfaqih, who entered from the portico dressed as a doctor. He had been called by some Baba lovers in order to find out why Baba did not talk. Doctor Alfaqih started to examine Baba. He put a stethoscope to Baba's chest and asked Him to breathe. All were laughing merrily and Baba was smiling brilliantly. Then the doctor asked Baba to open His mouth so that he could examine His tongue. Perhaps he was going to ask Him to say "Ah" next. Baba shook His hands and gestured, "No, not that." Meherwan remembers, "The comedy made us all laugh so much that for a few minutes many forgot their approaching

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

departure. Although unknown to them at the time, for many of the Westerners, this was the last time that they would see Baba in His physical body.”

Each lover has their own relationship with Baba and their own personal story of coming to Baba (and if we only knew it, not just in this life, but in previous lives as well—what a drama that would make) and others have no idea what is transpiring in a person’s heart when they are with their Beloved. So it was for Louis Agostini, who had met Baba for the first time during the gathering and was now saying goodbye that morning. He writes:

... All the visitors from the West had gathered in the large hall at Guru Prasad to have their individual farewells with Baba. Some prostrated themselves before Him in order to kiss His feet, and I was not sure until the last moment whether I would do this or have an embrace. Baba Himself had not suggested these as alternatives. However, when my turn came, I instinctively chose the embrace because it gave me an opportunity to lengthen the last few precious moments in closer proximity and also the chance to whisper something privately in His ear, for no personal interviews had been granted during that great Gathering. What I whispered was, “Thank You for everything!”

The “everything” I had in mind was firstly the opportunity He had provided for me to have the great joy of meeting Him face to face, unworthy though I was, and also, of course, for dissolving so much of my ignorance, which in turn had led to a far better understanding of the meaning of life and the purpose of existence.

I had read Paul Brunton's *A Search in Secret India* in which Brunton writes that he had departed Meher Baba's ashram after a brief stay of one week utterly convinced that Baba could not produce a miracle even if He wanted to. I was quite familiar therefore with Brunton's harsh appraisal when I read the advertisement in *The New York Times* announcing a talk about Meher Baba. And thus fueled with a borrowed criticism I sallied forth for my very first Baba meeting.... I had gone there to challenge and sow the seeds of personal disbelief which I had nurtured concerning this unlikely tale of a world redeemer in our midst.

It seemed like a long, ponderous wait at the talk before question time arrived.... Finally, I got to my feet to address the speaker [Darwin Shaw]. "You said," I inflected with the rising voice of a rejected swain, "that Baba has come to awaken the consciousness of mankind. Then what is He waiting for. I am ready!"

As far as I was concerned an unprofitable afternoon had been spent on a wasteful expedition. But the inscrutable manner in which fate was playing her hand lay hidden in the unrealized dividend I had pocketed on my way out, in the form of a small printed pamphlet which described the Meher Spiritual Center at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. It was to become my most important directive.

A few years later, the "Moving Finger" had written a most unexpected note in the diary of my life. It decreed that my path should cross that of Paul Brunton in New York City, and we met frequently in his home. These visits always ended in a period of meditation. One day I learned from him that he had received

(LOUIS AGOSTINI CONTINUES)

a copy of *God Speaks* which had come from Murshida Duce, but we never engaged in any discussion about Baba. Years later he was to write me that he felt that another person had written *A Search in Secret India* and that certainly if he had to do it again, he would write the book differently, though he did not know what he would say about Baba since he had not seen Him since those long ago days of his visit to the ashram. Eventually I was asked to take care of his mail while he was abroad for he was still an inveterate traveler.

So it was that while bathed in the glow of my enchantment with Brunton and bound further by a heightened appreciation of the several new books he had written on matters that interested me, and in my new capacity as his secretary, my wife and I journeyed to Myrtle Beach to receive a most delightful welcome and to enjoy the warm hospitality of Elizabeth Patterson and Kitty Davy, whom we loved from the first moment. In the days that followed I could sense a definite turn in my mind amounting in part almost to a protest that I had been forced to miss so much in the estimate of Baba who was obviously no counterfeit. In the month we spent at the Center, a rumor floated around that Baba might allow His Western lovers to visit Him in India during the following year, and this happily proved to be true. It was time now to make preparations.

As part of my readiness to attend this East-West Gathering, it occurred to me to write a letter to my father in the West Indies telling him about my forthcoming trip to India to meet Baba. It was the longest letter I had ever written and I also tape recorded

it. By this time, the bronze portrait of Elizabeth, which my wife had completed, was ready for donation to the Center, and my wife decided to take a copy of the tape recording to Myrtle Beach as well. Apparently someone at the Center must have written to India about the recording for it was not long before I received a letter stating that Baba would like me to bring a copy of the tape to India for Him. And this I did.

It came as a great surprise however, when one afternoon at the splendid hotel where we had been most comfortably installed, my wife received a telephone call from Mani, informing us that Baba had just played the tape privately at Guru Prasad for His disciples. In the recording, I had referred to myself as Paul Brunton's secretary, and I suppose that some of the disciples may have wondered, "What is Paul Brunton's secretary doing here among us at the East-West Gathering?" In fact, Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, visited me at the hotel in this connection and I explained away the seeming contradiction.

There was no doubt that the guru whom Brunton had so badly chastised in his book had become the Sadguru in my life.

Judith remembers that last morning as well:

On Monday morning, we all had to say goodbye to Beloved Baba in the large hall of Guru Prasad, the room which had seen so many lovers gathered in the presence of Love. To say goodbye, each one was to go to Baba for His embrace, and then leave the room. I was sitting about halfway back, so I could watch others go to Him for a while. Baba seemed to have a few words for

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

different ones, and to May Lundquist who was near me He said, "This is the last time you will see Me." May thought it must mean that she was going to die soon, but Baba of course knew otherwise, that very, very few of the Westerners would see Him again. My turn came, and I stood there hesitating, but Baba beckoned to me, "Don't hold back," and so I went to Him....

Filis writes:

Now Baba gestured for each of us to come forward individually for that heart-rending final embrace. Some stepped forward at once, others hung back. A few prostrated themselves at full length before Him. Some were crying, others looked grave. But as usual Baba gestured to them, "Look happy!" I took advantage of this moment to kiss Baba's "Lotus feet" for the first time—for previously Baba was always in the "New Life" phase when this was forbidden.

Everyone cheered when Ruth White, unaided, walked up the aisle to Baba and embraced Him and He called her "My soldier!" Ruth is ninety-three.

On a final note of humor, Baba cautioned all of us not to come to Guruprasad that afternoon, and—"Harry, don't phone!" Harry had phoned Guruprasad even before leaving New York.

Then, very, very slowly, supported by many loving arms, Baba walked out of the hall into His own room, until all we could see was the top of His head. That was my very last glimpse of the Beloved Avatar. May it really not be the last for any of us!³⁶

As it turned out, that was not the last glimpse for a lucky few. The Australian group did not leave Poona immediately and got a chance to see Baba on the seventh. Judith describes this meeting:

The following Wednesday afternoon some of the Australian group from the Wellesley, who had been practicing singing together in Sydney and on the ship coming over, were very quietly called again to Guru Prasad. By this time nearly everyone was sick in one way or another and Dr. Donkin had been attending various ones. So our singing to Baba in the small side room at Guru Prasad was really not the best. Baba had a word for this one and that one, and to my surprise even for me—I was sitting right at the back of the small room, and suddenly He gestured, “Are you happy?” I immediately knew He was talking to me, and answered, “Yes, Baba very happy.” It was a very sweet moment, entirely natural. When we were to leave, Baba indicated that each was to come to Him for an embrace but that we were to cover our noses with handkerchiefs so that He would not catch a cold from us.

It seems incredible, looking back, that the East-West Gathering took place in just four and a half days. It certainly felt much, much longer than that. There was something going on all the time, yet one could sit there either in the small morning gatherings inside, or among the thousands under the huge pandal in the afternoons, just looking at Baba. One didn’t have to do anything, but just be there with Him, be in His presence. I should say that I often wished He would look at me, give me some sign, but this never happened, of course. Yet I felt he did

(JUDITH GARBETT CONTINUES)

know when I thought a lot about Him, as on the afternoon of October 31st while waiting and longing to meet Him, and also on the morning when the Hafiz Ode was read, appeasing my desolation. And, quite simply, I knew I was His. There was no need to ponder over it or question it. It was so, and matched up with the unusual and quite strong feeling of inevitability which often came to my mind during the voyage to India.

And so the great event I had traveled halfway across the world to attend was over. But a New Life had begun for me, with an entirely new significance and purpose—the God-Man had so quietly and gently drawn me to Him, had embraced me, had awakened my heart to His love, had started to make me aware of the sweet gift of His companionship, a gift which He continues to add to as the years go by, and which He uses to help me just be with Him, and [leave] everything to Him.

As I have said, each person who attended the East-West Gathering has their own story to tell. A story unique to them, but universal in the sense that it is the story of Baba, the Beloved, drawing His lover closer to Him. Sometimes this story is one of delightful and buoyant happiness, sometimes of periods of despair and pain when the Beloved is helping whittle down the ego, or pushing the lover away, only so that they will be more strongly determined to come back. As a kind of coda to the gathering, I am ending with these stories, starting off with 3B:

Throughout the East-West Gathering, Baba constantly asked me to spend time with Mehera (rather than with Him). Mehera

spent a great deal of time with me, showed me her treasured photos, clippings and drawings, as well as embroidery with Baba's hair in it. She fed me rosewater and showed me how to use white stone powder to make *rangooli* designs for festivals. She also gave me a cloth bag with large round seeds in it that Indian girls use for playing jacks.

Mehera gave me many gifts. One present I could tell she felt was both fun and precious was a plastic heart on a simple necklace. Looking in the peephole of the heart, you could spy a little picture of Baba. Another present was a brooch in which the black embroidery thread in the colorful pin was Baba's hair, and five neat nail clippings made a flower. One present which I have right by my bed right now is a double picture stand with a photo of Baba on one side and a picture of me as a child on the other.

Mehera told me many stories of Baba and animals. Perhaps it was at this time that, knowing that I felt the life allotted to women is more limited than the life men lead, she said, almost fiercely: "Women can be more devoted!" I had such a strong impression that she was on my side. It seems that during this darshan, Baba mostly gave His love to me through Mehera.

Once she told me that Baba slept in no one's bed but His own, and didn't even sit on another's bed. But once Baba came and sat on her bed. She was so pleased and thrilled at that—that Baba, with sweet mischief, went and sat on the other side of her bed, too! (She demonstrated.)

Perhaps she was trying to tell me how lucky I was, because when Baba left us and returned early from Myrtle Beach in

(3B CONTINUES)

1958, He came with my father to our family home in Kentfield, California, and He stayed in my bedroom and slept in my bed.

I guess those happy days with Beloved Baba must have taken on the quality of a dream, a most vivid and wonderful dream. This actually was not the way it always seemed. I was in shock that Baba had changed so much. He moved slowly. You could tell His body had been through a lot. He had to be supported at every step, often by two of the mandali. Compared to earlier times, He seemed uninterested in His surroundings. Response to joking and entertainment from devotees seemed to come only with effort. Though years later I was able to see in photos the grandeur of Baba in His old age, at that time in India I felt shot down that His swift and beautiful, twinkling “youthful grandfather” appearance was gone—as though a candle had been blown out. We had to begin to learn to feel His love in a new, more inward way. It was almost as if He had called us all there to let us know that we would not always have Him with us, not in His physical body.

Baba seemed to up the ante at the East-West Gathering. Though He granted me a few priceless interviews even after announcing that to help Him none of us were even to *long* for a private interview, for the most part, Baba seemed to make a point of having little to do with me. I could not ever get Him to return a glance or smile. If I tried to line up for a hug more than once, He'd ask, “Why aren't you with Mehera?” Later, one of the women mandali quietly approached me and said Baba wanted me to be around Mehera as much as possible. All this

gradually culminated in one exceedingly painful event. I had been invited as part of a select list to take a daily bus ride to see Baba with this small, private group. People like Kitty Davy and Margaret Craske were there—real oldtimers, proven lovers—plus one teenager, me, in Guru Prasad hall. Baba told all of us in that group that we were especially dear to Him. He told us three things we were to remember all our lives, two of which were: we were especially dear to Him, and we could never lose His love, no matter what we did or became. Baba also made the point that this was very serious; we were not to take it lightly. Somehow I just couldn't settle down. I absent-mindedly moved from place to place. After a time, the meeting ended.

The next afternoon, I lined up with the others for the bus to take us to Guru Prasad and Baba. One of the mandali was holding the list and checking us off just before we boarded the bus. When my turn came, I found my name had been removed from the list!

The days that followed were miserable for me. Thank God-Baba for Murshida. Seeing me glum, she asked why. I said, "I don't think Baba likes me anymore." She turned on me and told me firmly to get that idea right out of my head. I can't remember her words now, but the sense was: Baba's love is always the same, and you have always been someone particularly dear to Him. One part of me believes this to be so; but life has proven to me again and again that in another sense everyone in the universe is equidistant from Him and has no claim at all. It seems both these things can be true at once.

(3B CONTINUES)

Mehera told the following story more than once to a group of women: In the time of Rama or Krishna, His lovers learned about the dread Kali Yuga, the coming terrible epoch in which even brother would turn on and kill brother. They begged the Avatar to spare them, to not have them reincarnate in that worst of all ages. Mehera laughed and said, “And here we all are!”

One day Mehera surprised me with the gift of a pink nylon wedding sari, with seed pearls sewn on a pretty satiny choli blouse. “You will get married, won’t you, 3B?” she asked. Mehera had a picture taken of her next to me, with me in this lovely sari. Mehera took me before Baba in Guru Prasad hall. She happily showed me to Baba. He did not seem to place much importance on this moment, but commented, “3B looks quite well in a sari.” Little Wendy Haynes was struck with how lucky I was to have Mehera paying so much attention to me and kept wistfully mentioning this. Perhaps she was looking at this older girl, me, through rose-colored glasses. I didn’t feel lucky at all at that time, and I may have let on as much. I was still trying to process my recent removal from the list.

The next thing I knew, Mehera and the women mandali had bestowed on Wendy a smashing, jewel-colored, butterfly wing-iridescent sari that completely put mine in the shade! And after that, Baba began to lavish attention and love on Wendy. This was hard on her brother Charles, who, like me, had had a glittering moment with Baba. We commiserated together. [Baba had lavished His attention on 3B during His 1956 visit and, in

much the same way, seemed to single Charles out for special attention during His 1958 visit.—Eds.]

In the mornings the Western Baba lovers—not a large group—met with Baba in Guru Prasad hall. In the afternoons, we joined the Indian Baba lovers under the long, long, silk pandal where Baba gave darshan for hours. All afternoon, seated on the dais at the head of the pandal, Baba made a slow gesture of pulling our love to Him, then giving His love back to us. He did this over and over. Birds slipped under the pandal and flew up and down the lengthy tent, then circled Baba's head, as the thousands of lovers gathered filed by for His darshan. It was very hot, and the afternoons could feel long. Sometimes it was only after the darshan that I suddenly sensed that supercharge of love permeating everything, pouring out of even the cracks of the broken pavement at the Turf Club.

The day we had to leave to travel home, Baba was going to call us all up to Him one at a time and embrace us each. Who would be first? Remembering the love Baba poured on me the first time I was with Him, I dared to dream perhaps He'd relent. I actually thought there was a chance He'd call me first. Instead he called Wendy! Looking over her head at me as He embraced her, He gestured, "She reminds me of you, when you were her age." And so she could, a small blonde girl! This was my last time of seeing Baba, though not His last message to me. The day we left, He sent Eruch or Adi to me to tell me to always remember Baba and Mehera.

(3B CONTINUES)

You might wonder what I make of all this, from Baba's extreme attention and affection when I first saw Him when I was a child, to a firmer and firmer push away each time I saw Him after that. In one sense, I never got used to it or fully accepted it. In another way, I guess I can say, I "had my time" with Him and Baba was teaching me that real love is the kind that remains even when things don't go your way.

Another person who experienced a variety of intense emotions during the gathering was V. Rama Rao:

I first met Baba in Andhra on January 24, 1953. Sometime later, due to certain foolish circumstances, I found myself in prison. Baba maintained my family, and by Baba's grace, after my release, I got a good government job, which was a miracle in itself. The one and a half years I spent in jail could become a voluminous account of Baba's work—the ways in which He helped me and other prisoners.

A year after my release from prison, I came to the East-West Gathering. I was sitting in the front row amongst other Baba lovers, but I was feeling so much agony. I was inwardly saying, "Baba, You are God, You are compassionate, but You made me suffer. For one and a half years I suffered (they permitted me to leave 6 months early because of my good conduct), I have suffered unnecessarily and You did not allow me to come and have Your darshan after my release. You made me go to Hamirpur and I obeyed You, but now here I am sitting before You, my hands are not tainted with that ill-gotten money."

So I was sitting, quietly boiling, I was not going to have Baba's darshan, I was adamant, like a fool just staring at Him. Even though He had so compassionately maintained my family for those years. So the first day I did not have Baba's darshan. The second day, when Raghavula (who was instrumental in bringing me to Baba in '53) stood before Baba, Baba asked him, "What about Rama Rao?" and Baba made His sign for prisoner, hands as if shackled together. So Raghavula said, "Baba, he has come." Baba said, "But he has not taken My darshan." So there was an announcement over the loudspeaker saying, "Rama Rao Bilaspur [Rama Rao's hometown], Baba wants you." So I was a little upset you know and it was a very nervous moment for me to go up to Baba. My small son ran up to Baba, had His darshan and got down.

I went to Baba and there were tears in my eyes. Baba didn't pay any attention at first. Raghavula said, "Baba, Rama Rao has come."

Baba continued giving darshan and simultaneously asked me, "Are you guilty?"

"No," I said.

He continued giving darshan and asked me a second time, again I said no.

A third time, He said, "You *are* guilty!"

I started crying. G.S.N. Moorthy was there, Keshav Narayan Nigam, an attorney-at-law, Adi, Eruch were there. When I started crying I thought, "God is telling me I am guilty, but my hands

(V. RAMA RAO CONTINUES)

are not tainted with ill-gotten money.” Baba told Nigam, “Take him out, he is crying out like anything, and explain to him and ask him what has happened.”

So Nigam took me aside and asked me, “Rama Rao, under what sections are you convicted?”

I said, “161 and 162.”

He said, “161 is taking a bribe and 162 is abetting a bribe, it is a crime. So when Baba said, ‘guilty’ He is correct.”

[In the book *The Ancient One* this story is told without mentioning Rama Rao’s name. In this the crime is given as theft when, in fact, it was bribery.—Eds.]

So when I went to Baba, He embraced me and asked me, “Have you understood? You are guilty.”

I said, “Yes, Baba.” Then He asked me, “Have you come alone?” Out of joy I forgot everything and replied, “Yes.” But Moorty reminded me that my son had come. I had forgotten all about my son!

Baba told me, “You have not introduced your son to me. Tomorrow morning I am giving darshan to Westerners. Bring your son and introduce him to Me.”

The next day we went to Baba and Baba asked my son, “What do you want?” We were very poor you know and my son said, “I lost two rupees while going to buy prasad for Baba and my parents abused me.” Baba replied, “What is there? In future you will be counting the currency notes.” Baba was right; now he is a State Bank official.

Then Baba told the Westerners, "He was My worker in prison." His words softened the blow of having Him bring home to me my guilt. Perhaps, in calling me His worker, He was referring to the time I spoke to a fellow convict who was going to be hanged on August 17, 1961. On August 11, he was taken to the central jail in Raipur, and I met him before he left. He was crying to me and said, "You say your Meher Baba is God, then He should help me. I am innocent." I said, "You simply pray." He said, "What more prayer can I do? They will put me in a solitary cell and feed me like a glutton and the next day I will be put to the gallows." He was crying. Now just see, for Baba, there is no word impossible in His dictionary. He knows the truth. That man was a God lover. August 15 was Independence Day and some other celebrations of Indira Gandhi were going on and she forgave about 22 people and that man was pardoned. He came twice to Meherabad afterwards, in the early 1970s to take Baba's darshan at the Samadhi.

To be in Baba's company when He used to be either at Guru Prasad, or at Andhra, or anyplace, it was really a joy which we cannot express. It was such an individual happiness that the more I looked at His face, the more enraptured I would become. Even a nod of His head makes the whole world dance, so how to tell what His presence at Guru Prasad meant? In my life with Baba, He has made me suffer like anything. If I tell my suffering, you will simply cry, but if I tell what grace He has bestowed, you will also cry!

Last, Bernard Bruford tells a story that shows Baba's perfect timing. Bernard was only 19 when he attended the East-West Gathering. He recalls that when the "Four Journeys" was read out and explained, he felt that he couldn't understand any of it. Being younger than most, he assumed everyone else had followed the discourse and he was alone in his confusion. But, thinking that he couldn't follow the messages, he spent his time watching people take darshan because he was fascinated by what he called Baba's "economy of movement."



Bernard Bruford, 2018

He noticed that as people approached Baba for their darshan, they tended to look up at Baba and He would look at them. But then, as they bowed to His feet, in a very natural and graceful way, Baba would turn and have a conversation with someone on the dais, or would point to someone in the crowd and gesture to them and, again in a natural way that didn't seem the least forced or rushed, Baba would turn and His attention would once more be on the person who was raising their head from His feet.

The perfection of Baba's timing, as well as the grace of His movements stunned Bernard. But, he noticed, after a while, that every now and then, Baba would seem to mistime it, and He would still be looking away when the person finished taking darshan. And then he realized, that that only seemed to happen when the person moved on after taking darshan without looking up at Baba again.

How could He know, and time it so perfectly? But then, it finally happened that once Baba did make a mistake. A woman bowed to Baba, and Baba turned to talk to someone on the dais, and He was still talking to the person when the woman looked back up at Baba.

Oh well, Bernard thought. Baba is human as well as God and it would seem that even He can make a mistake.

This seemed to be confirmed when, years later, Bernard happened to meet that woman when they were both visiting India. They got to talking about the East-West Gathering and she confessed that she felt very hurt when she looked up, after bowing to Baba and He wasn't looking at her. Although she had tried to get over it, it still hurt her, and she carried it with her. There was nothing Bernard could say to ease her pain.

But then, years after that, the woman was once again visiting India when an Indian man came up to her at the Pilgrim Center and said, "I remember you. You were at the East-West Gathering." The woman, as politely as she could, confessed that she didn't remember him at all.

"Well," the man replied, "there is no reason why you should. But I remember you well. You see I was sitting on the dais that day when you took Baba's darshan. And when you bowed to Him, Baba turned to me and told me how much He loves you. So I've always remembered you."

Thus, decades after Baba "wounded" her heart, the woman heard an explanation for Baba's indifference that more than made up for it. It reminds me of the dream Henry Kashouty once had when Baba explained to him that sometimes a heart has to be broken, so it can hold even more love.

Meherwan described the days of the gathering as "an absolute love feast. Everyone was drowning in the Ocean of love that was all around. The afternoon sessions with Baba were a sight to behold. Not a seat was empty. The Easterners and Westerners were brought together as never before. All were completely bowled over by His presence; Baba gave

everything to us. He was absolutely aglow, radiating His love through the crowds to reach each and every one.”

Francis Brabazon later wrote:

So the Beloved covers his Truth with seventy thousand veils—and our most-seeing is the folds of the outer-most veil delineating volume and plane which we call lovely Form. And He talks in rhymes and riddles about That which is behind the inner-most veil—exasperating everyone round Him, or seeing them head-nodding as though they knew what He is talking about!

To the disciple who blurts out: I am sick of hints and promises, I am fed up with the long-windedness of the tale; coyness is all right at the beginning of courtship, but at some point soul must become naked to soul. Of course, I am not such a barbarian as to suggest this between You and me—but two or three veils less should not offend Your modesty, and it would be an encouragement to me.

To this earnest but reckless disciple the Master says, If I brought the sun a million miles nearer you would die of its heat; if I brought My Reality nearer by two veils' thickness you would be reduced to a heap of ash.

So God-Man Meher Baba took off only one veil—and we all lost our heads.³⁷

For me, there was an interesting backstory to the East-West Gathering. Before the Gathering, Baba went over a long list of things that needed to be attended to. I was stunned to hear one of the points read out, which was that I was supposed to meet with Charles Purdom, when he

came, to discuss his recently finished manuscript, *The God-Man*, which he had sent to Baba.

Now, by 1962, Beloved Baba had given me more than a few opportunities to help with His English writings. I was mainly responsible for compiling and editing the notes that became *Darshan Hours*. And there were countless messages that Baba had had me translate into Marathi, or edit in English. But I was still totally unprepared for this bombshell.

Naturally I felt very reticent about this task, as I knew my English was not particularly good. I wasn't even all that used to speaking English with Westerners. The only Westerners I ever spoke to were Dr. Donkin and later Francis, but these conversations tended to be very brief and more on the lines of "Hello, how are you," and other social small talk, rather than philosophical discussions.

There was another reason why there was a little irony in Baba assigning me this task. Not long before, I had been sitting in the mandali's room in Guru Prasad with Baba, and I happened to notice a set of files that He had before Him. My eye was attracted to them because I had never seen such nice files before. Unlike Indian files that, in those days, had simple paper covers and were then tied up with string, these were nice hardback files with the pages neatly arranged inside. I had not a clue to their actual contents nor did I have any interest. It turned out that these were the files of the manuscript that Purdom had sent to Baba before coming to attend the darshan program.

Since my coming to Baba, I was greatly impressed by Purdom's writings and his command of the English language. He wrote books on Shakespeare and the creation of garden cities. I felt scared to talk with such a learned person in English, which I was not yet used to speaking. But I said nothing about my fear to anyone.

One day, while sitting near Baba, He sensed my predicament and very casually referred to my upcoming meetings with Purdom, who was coming for the East-West Gathering. Without my asking Him, Baba just gestured to me, "Don't fear. Purdom might have misspelled the Indian proper names of people and places used in the book; and you can help him to correct these, as well as any biographical details." Thus, the subject ended. This was greatly reassuring, for I felt competent to do that much.

Baba's instructions prepared me for my first meeting with Purdom in the Poona Club, where he was staying. Despite my fears and ideas about proper English etiquette, to my amazement, I found my meeting with Purdom very open and comfortable. He turned out to be the perfect English gentleman who managed to put me at my ease from the very beginning. Baba inwardly helped me not only to correct the spellings of Indian words, but to share my thoughts on some subjects presented in the book. After the Gathering ended, Baba left for Meherazad, and I promised Purdom that I would visit him on weekends for this work.



Charles Purdom

One weekend, when we had practically finished our work, Purdom suggested that I should have lunch with him. By this time I had lost my fear of him and felt comfortable discussing *The God-Man* with him. Having lunch at a place like the Poona Club, however, was a different matter altogether. I was essentially a typical middle-class Indian from a small village. I didn't even know how to use a knife and fork. I had no idea at all how one managed a Western-style meal. In fact, to this day I do not feel comfortable in any kind of formal social setting. But I did not know how I could refuse Purdom's invitation without seeming rude. So I decided I had

to tell a white lie. I said that while walking over to the club, I had passed a restaurant that had appealed to me and had already made plans to dine there. Purdom, gentleman that he was, graciously accepted this feeble excuse at face value without saying a word. I felt it was a harmless lie, not for any selfish gain, but out of fear of my inability to follow Western etiquette.

Despite this small incident, these meetings helped me to feel confident in my ability to converse in English. Later, Purdom even wrote a few letters to me from England expressing his happiness to have worked with me. I had no idea that a decade later, Baba would inwardly help me to write about His life, in the books entitled *Glimpses of the God-Man*.

Although the following incident didn't happen at Guru Prasad and occurred two years later, I'm including it here as a kind of footnote to my meeting Purdom to "help" him with his writing in 1962. Purdom's *The God-Man* was published in 1964 and he sent a copy to Baba in August of that year. The book is comprised of two sections and the second part contains Purdom's personal thoughts and reflections about various matters. Purdom offers his opinion that *God Speaks* had undergone some alterations, either consciously or unknowingly, by those who compiled the book. When Murshida Ivy Duce read this, she became very upset, as she considered it of great importance that *God Speaks* be understood to be the exact transcription of Baba's words, without any kind of editorial interjections, deletions, or corrections.

She wrote a letter to Baba objecting to Purdom's personal views about Baba's book, *God Speaks*. Baba seemed to take her objection quite seriously, although I have seen Baba on a few occasions not be overly particular about the literal exactitude of His messages. After the letter was

read out, Baba said, “Didn’t Bal Natu confer with Purdom on this book? How is it that Purdom has written this? Did Bal give him this misinformation?” I had already returned home so Baba asked Nana Kher to write me a letter in Marathi in which He placed the blame for this unhappy situation squarely on me. Baba not only blamed me, but He had Nana write in no uncertain terms exactly what He thought of me for allowing this to happen. He specifically told Nana to use a certain term of abuse for me (a strong one) in the letter.

I was surprised to get this. Not so much at the tone of the letter, but by the fact that I thought myself completely innocent of the charges. In fact, I had never even read the section in question. I wrote to Baba and explained that I had told Purdom no such thing; the topic of *God Speaks* was never mentioned in my discussions with Purdom at all. I further wrote that the section was clearly Purdom’s own personal thoughts and that I had had nothing to do with giving him that idea.

Baba received my letter and asked Eruch to reply to Murshida Duce to clear up the matter in regards to my involvement. I also received a letter telling me that Baba was happy I had not misinformed Purdom about *God Speaks*. Baba instructed me not to worry about having received the letter from Nana. As was typical, nothing more was ever said about the whole incident. The next time I saw Baba, He was as loving as ever.

I remember Dr. Ghani once telling me about a Hindi expression that if you are walking with the Master and you go ahead, He may abuse you because you are so presumptuous as to walk in front of Him. If you go behind Him, He may abuse you for acting like a king with a servant walking before him. If you walk at His same pace, He may abuse you for thinking you are equal to Him. There is no way out. But Ghani said not to take it to heart, because it is necessary for the

Master's work that He abuse His disciples in this way, and the best thing the disciple can do is simply to resign himself to the Master's whim of the moment.

Padri also used to say, "Living with a Master is difficult; living with the Avatar is almost impossible. And when the Avatar is an Irani, then God help you!"

As I said, although Baba seemed to take Ivy's concerns about the verbatim nature of *God Speaks* seriously, my impression is that most of the time Baba did not seem particularly concerned about the literal exactitude of His messages. Although even the simplest of His sayings is invariably full of profound wisdom, it seems as if the exact wording was not Baba's main concern. During the Guru Prasad days, for example, Baba often gave "points" to Francis or Eruch through means of His gestures. These points would then be worked up into a message that would be read out to Baba for His approval. Sometimes Baba would suggest a few changes, but these were usually fairly minor.

One time when I was with Baba in Poona, He had a message read out. It struck me that one verb should be changed, and I felt free enough in Baba's presence to suggest this. Baba's face took on that interested look of, "Oh, really?" as only He could, and He smiled and nodded His approval of my suggestion. Baba told Francis to relay my suggestion to Rano.

Not long after this it was lunch time, and I left the mandali's room. Once away from Baba I began to think about the change I had suggested. I realized then that the message had already been typed and was ready to be read out at some upcoming visit to an institution in Poona. If I insisted on my change, it would mean that Rano would have to retype the entire message and additional copies. I knew that she was already so busy with other work Baba had given her, that this would be quite an imposition.

And as I considered this, I realized that my suggestion wasn't all that critical. In fact, as I thought about it, I came to the conclusion that the way the message read originally was perfect.

So when I saw Baba after lunch, I said, "Baba, I've been thinking about it, and I feel that the original verb was better." Baba's face again took on that look of extreme interest, "Oh, really?" Baba beamed His pleasure at this new decision and nodded His approval. Thus Rano was not burdened with extra work after all.

Baba seemed delighted when I had suggested a way to improve the message, and He seemed equally delighted when I proposed that no changes be made. It's almost as if the "work" of the message was done the moment it was first read out to Baba and He approved it. Whatever little changes were suggested by those who were asked to give an opinion didn't seem of great importance. As I thought about it, I wondered at my audacity in suggesting the change in the first place and marveled at Baba's willingness to accept it without correcting my mistake—then forgiving me and accepting my acknowledgment of error without a word of reproach, just as a loving father would do.

Perhaps an even more striking example occurred with *The Everything and The Nothing*, which was published in 1963. These little discourses were mostly taken from notes I had jotted down during Baba's conversations with others at Guru Prasad. The final compositions were read out to Baba who approved them. Later on, I was mortified to discover that I had misused a word in one of the discourses. When the book was reprinted, the mistake was corrected. But Baba, the All-Knowing One had allowed the book to be printed with the mistake in it. I don't know if anyone noticed it or not. Baba's omni-ignorance, as I call it, is truly matchless and unfathomable.

1963



*A*lthough the stories I relate in this chapter are significant in my life with Baba, I am not exactly sure when they happened. An incident which I have grouped with other stories that occurred in 1963, might really have taken place in 1965. Since my diaries for these years have been misplaced, there is no way for me to ascertain for certain when a particular event happened. But it doesn't matter, for Baba's interactions with one are timeless.

Baba visited with the Poona group several times to help them set up a new Centre while it was under construction

The pattern of Baba's days in 1963 was very much as it had been during other summers. It was a mixture of intimate gatherings with His close ones, occasional larger darshan programs, and meetings with His workers. One of these latter occurred in March.

Baba's lovers in Poona decided that it would be helpful for Baba's work if they had their own Centre. Baba took an active interest in their plans and even enlisted his brother Jal to help raise funds. Still problems arose. The workers were all for Baba, but they were also strong individuals and didn't always see eye to eye about how to proceed. They felt it was very important to do things in the best possible way and, because this was for Baba, they felt even less inclined than usual to compromise.

At the end of March Baba called a meeting at Guru Prasad with the main people involved in establishing the Centre. There were about twenty gathered in the mandali's room, and I was also there. Baba began the discussion, and it quickly became quite open and frank as the workers honestly expressed their views. It was also a little heated and, after a while, it became apparent that the differences of opinion could not easily be resolved. Baba listened patiently, but after a while He concluded that if His lovers could not work together in love, then there was no point in their having a Centre. He remarked that the Poona Centre should be a house of love, and that if it couldn't be built with love, then what was the sense of building it at all? It would be better to continue as before with each individual loving Baba and not trying to maintain a Centre.

Some objected to this, but even with Baba's dire warning, the workers could not agree. Finally, Baba simply declared that all work on the Centre should stop. There was a stunned silence, and I remember thinking how all the work that had gone into the planning of the

Centre had been for naught. After a while Baba turned to one of the main workers and asked him what he thought. He said, “Baba, You are so compassionate, so merciful. I think it would be good if You gave the workers one more chance.”

Baba considered this for a while and then signaled His acceptance. “But,” He warned, “you must strive to maintain harmony.”

Some weeks or months later, just a few of the men were sitting with Baba in the mandali’s room. One of the workers from the Poona Centre also happened to be there, and he said to Baba, “Why is it so hard for us to work together? When all love You, why are there such disagreements and controversies?”

Baba gestured that he shouldn’t worry about it, and then took the blame on Himself. “It is My age-old habit, from the days of Krishna that when everything is going smoothly, I can’t stop myself from sticking My foot out and tripping things up.” I remember vividly Baba taking His foot out of His sandal and raising one leg up in demonstration as He said this. Then, by flipping His index finger over, He indicated tripping.

This reminds me of another meeting Baba had with His workers and close ones. As I’ve said, in these early years, Baba often allowed His Bombay lovers to visit Him on the weekends. They would come by 9 a.m. and Baba would have a nice time with them, joking about family matters in the mandali’s room. One day, Baba asked them about the progress of the work at their Centre. Baba asked with such sincerity that it seemed as if it was the only work He was interested in. They replied that now that they had a special hall, they were doing quite well and that quite a lot of new people had started coming, taking interest in

Baba's literature and life. Their new Centre had been opened in March of 1962.

One man said, "Baba, although the newcomers show their exuberance at the beginning, after some days we find that they are not regular visitors. Once, during our friendly talks a few of them said, 'Baba's discourses really touch our hearts, but when He says He is the Avatar, it's hard for the mind to accept. How can He be what Ram or Krishna were? The second thing we have found is that He has not been keeping the promises He has given. In spiritual traditions it is taken for granted that the saints don't go back on their words.'" The man paused and then admitted to Baba, "It is true, Baba, that many times You have changed the timing of breaking Your silence. This has put off people and they stop coming."

Baba looked amused, "Yes, you're right. Why do I do that?"

For a moment, Baba became serious as if thinking deeply. Everyone in the room waited to hear what He would say next. I, too, was anxious to hear Baba's answer. Then suddenly there was a smile on Baba's face and He said: "Yes. Now I know. You see, when I was at school I was really good at languages, but I was very poor in maths and that's why I'm not good at calculating the correct dates of the breaking of My silence." There was a ripple of laughter in the crowd and Baba continued, "Only give importance to what you feel about your personal relationship with Me and how I help you in your daily living. The rest is My business."

On another occasion, one of Baba's dear ones said, "Baba, we take You to be the Avatar. The work of the Avatar is beyond our comprehension. But when You say You are the Avatar, it's a mild shock for those who do not know You. If You were to say publicly that You are only a saint, hundreds would flock around You."

Baba smiled and said, “You are right. But remember God is divine honesty and one has to be honest with God and with oneself. With My divine honesty I tell you that I am the Ancient One. So, how can I speak a lie?”

Of course, for His work, Baba is free to do anything, but this should not be an excuse for us to be complacent about pleasing Him. Baba’s work is what it is, but He made it very clear to us that our work should always be to strive for harmony, to love Him by concentrating on Him, and not to judge others or worry about their behavior.

One other memory I have concerning centres may have occurred around this time. As I’ve said, Eruch would read out the correspondence from the West to Baba in English, while I was asked to read the correspondence in Marathi to myself and then convey the gist of each letter to Beloved Baba. Only if Baba wished it, would I read out the entire letter. On one occasion Baba received some letters and printed pamphlets from Hamirpur and Andhra about celebrations to glorify His name. Baba asked me to acknowledge the letters and then He very casually asked me, “You are replying to these Centres, but do you have a Centre at your place?”

I had to say, “No, Baba.” But I tried to correct myself by telling Him that when I returned to my hometown, Kurduwadi, I would begin to have a program of singing and sharing His words one day a week. Baba approved of this and looked very happy at my response.

Once back at Kurduwadi, I wondered how to start the weekly meetings. It just so happened that a friendly acquaintance of mine, who lived in my same building, used to sing devotional songs and also

played the harmonium. The gentleman, Shri Paralikar, was a primary schoolteacher and when I approached him, he very willingly consented to participate in the new Baba programs with me. It was decided that we would meet for one hour on Saturdays. He even agreed to learn and sing some Baba songs from a book I had.

My sitting room, which I arranged with Baba's pictures and carpets for people to sit on, quickly turned into a mini-Centre. These weekly Baba programs soon drew a few members, including my sister. We would generally sit around singing songs in devotion to Beloved Baba and sharing stories of His life.

One year, on Baba's birthday we organized a larger program that was open to the public. We sent out invitations to people in the area to come for the celebration and further spread the news by word of mouth. The festivities for Baba's birthday were held in the hall of the local high school where I worked. We had also reserved the meeting hall once when G.S.N. Moorthy visited and gave a talk about his times with Baba.

Baba did not ask me about the Centre ever again, and very few new people came to Baba through our meetings. I never worried about this though because I felt that Baba did not want me to proselytize His name. It was simply a gift to remember Him in the company of His lovers and the numbers did not matter.

Later on, Paralikar started composing songs to Baba on his own, and his immediate family came to love Baba. He even visited Baba in Guru Prasad to have His darshan a year or two later, perhaps in 1965. Even to this day, Paralikar visits Meherabad on Amartithi or some other day during the year, and he feels that through Baba's blessings, his entire family has benefited.

Another friend of mine also came to Baba in those years, and then later came for Baba's darshan at Guru Prasad. When we went together to the darshan program, we stood at the back and gazed at Baba from a distance. After we returned home, I realized that I had not introduced my friend to Baba. I then wrote a letter to Baba explaining that I had come with a friend to the recent darshan in Poona and I wished to apologize for not introducing him.

Soon, I received a reply from Baba through Eruch, in which He conveyed: "No one requires an introduction to Me, for no one is a stranger to Me. However, I am a stranger to most, and those coming and remaining in My presence do not do so without introduction. As a matter of fact, they have come with many introductions—for many times in previous lives have they been introduced to Me and have gone away and forgotten Me and met Me again...."

What a beautiful explanation by Baba!



In mid-April, Mani wrote in her Family Letter:

Guruprasad is "switched on" again and the light of the Beloved's presence is flooding the lives of His lovers in Poona and shedding its rays over the city's teeming population whether it is aware or unaware of the blessing. The lovers wait in tiptoed hope for a call from Baba that will throw open to them the gates of Guruprasad so that they might enter into the presence of God. Baidul, usually the appointed Peter of this heaven of Baba lovers, knows the days and occasions permitted by Baba, and during holidays and Sundays he waves the visitors in with a vehemence that tunes in with their happy mood. They come

(MANI CONTINUES)

walking, cycling, by car, bus, taxi or tonga; they come alone; they come with children, with garlands, with joy-rubbed faces. They come not just because of their love, but because of their Beloved's compassion which overrules the rules He put down in November about "no visitors, no darshan, no programs." In fact Baba has announced that this summer's stay of three months at Guruprasad will be dotted with musical programs fixed for every Sunday afternoon from 3 to 6 o'clock, during which time His lovers can be in His presence. It will be an Eastern gathering of Baba lovers in a complete sense, for even the singers will sing for Baba in love, their reward being the privilege of singing to Him. This honour goes to such nationally renowned artistes as Begum Akhtar, Hirabai Barodekar, Vinayakrao Patwardhan, Saraswati Ranay, Shahu Modak (who is also a famous film actor), and others. Begum Akhtar, fulfilling her promise given to Baba at Meherazad, will be in Poona for four days, and Baba has reserved two afternoons for her performance at Guruprasad—the first Saturday and Sunday of May.³⁸

One of the musical programs Mani did not mention, because it had not been planned in advance, is described by Merwan Dubash, who had first come to Guru Prasad with his parents Adi and Rhoda in 1960. He was thirteen years old then and sixteen now. He writes:

In 1963 I was learning to play the piano, and whilst at Guru Prasad one afternoon after lunch, when Baba was with the women mandali, I noticed a harmonium in the main hall. As I knew how to play the piano I started experimenting with

the harmonium and tried to play the tune of one of the Gujarati Artis. Not surprisingly, Baba found out that I was fooling around with the harmonium. So one afternoon He said, “I hear you are trying to play the harmonium.” I said, “Yes, Baba, I play a little bit and can play the tune of the ‘Meher Raj Arti’ on it.” Baba said, “Is that so; let Me hear it.” So I brought over the harmonium and played the tune for Baba. He liked it and said, “Can you play anything else?” “No Baba, I can’t.”

Baba then decided that He would play a joke on the women mandali. He told them that three famous qawwals would be coming to sing in a few days time and He wanted the women, including Mehera, to be present to hear them. Over the days leading up to this “big event” Baba kept building up the women’s expectations.

On the appointed day and time in the afternoon Baba made sure the women were ready for the famous qawwals. The performance was to be in the mandali’s room. The women and Mehera sat behind the door leading to the main hall. The door had shutters which were opened so that the women could see Baba but nobody inside the room could see Mehera. The stage is set; there is great expectation and Aloha comes running in to the mandali’s room to tell Baba that the qawwals have arrived. A few seconds later, the three famous qawwals enter—they are the twins, Rustom and Sohrab, and myself with turbans on our heads! I played the harmonium and was the singer and the twins provided the accompaniment. The women mandali told us later that as soon as we opened our mouths to sing and

(MERWAN DUBASH CONTINUES)

started making a racket with the harmonium they knew right away that Baba had played a prank on them.

What I haven't told you is that to prepare for this the three of us had sat down with Adi Sr. (who was a good singer in his time) and learnt to sing one verse of a qawwali. So we at least completed this verse in front of Baba who enjoyed the whole affair immensely. The women mandali still remember the prank today.

Of course, despite the programs and the humor, Baba's work continued as always. Dr. Bharucha, who visited from Navsari whenever he could and invariably took copious notes while there, wrote:

As soon as one entered Baba's room, one could feel that the atmosphere was very tense. Baba was not at all in His usual good humor. He was in a non-communicative mood. His fingers moved ceaselessly, and He never glanced at those who were seated in the room. From His face, one could judge that the burden of work was tremendous. He suddenly gestured that the burden was very great since yesterday. At 8:20 a.m. He asked me the time. In the fifteen minutes that followed, He must have asked a dozen lovers what the time was. The importance of those minutes He alone knew, but I could not help thinking that some great event must be taking place somewhere in the cosmos.³⁹

And then, Baba's mood would change and once more He would be making small talk with those around Him, cracking jokes, and the atmosphere would instantly change from somber to joyous. Or, as He

did on one day, Baba asked Deshmukh to recite his English kirtan. As Bharucha wrote:

Baba said there has never been anything of the like in history before. He asked another lover to sing with the doctor. This lover had a voice of which the less said the better. Even Deshmukh's voice was not much better, and the kirtan had to be abruptly stopped as Baba said with a smile that He got "palpitations" with it! Baba remarked, "For one who gets Self-Realization, everything illusory vanishes. Yet I have maintained my sense of humor, and hence I can bear the universal burden."⁴⁰

On another day, Baba asked Deshmukh if he would obey if Baba asked him to go back to his hometown and walk through the streets completely naked. Deshmukh immediately volunteered his willingness to obey, which caused Baba to jokingly remark, "Deshmukh is a very intelligent person. He knows that I would never ask him to do such a thing; that's why he replied in the affirmative." Everyone laughed but, in fact, Deshmukh undoubtedly would have done it if Baba had asked him to.

But, as always with Baba, along with the humor flowed spontaneous revelations of the Truth.

Nana Kher's brother, Dr. Vinoo Kher, arrived on the first of May for a visit. He was a professor of physics at Amravati. Eruch told Baba that Vinoo had given a nice speech before his colleagues on the occasion of Baba's birthday and that he had tried to explain Baba's status as the Highest of the High with the help of scientific reasoning. Baba seemed intrigued by this and asked Vinoo to read the summary of the talk the next morning.

Baba said: "The basis of creation is nothing but gas; there is nothing except gas, but nothing Is. Nana has an aquiline nose, Mona is fair, Meherji is here, but I say all this is nothing. What is your reply to this statement, Vinoo?"

"Until we experience this as nothing, we should presume it to be real."

Meherwan Jessawala interjected, "Can we not use the simile of a dream to show this as nothing?"

Eruch answered, "But then people will say, 'We feel and see this as real, so how can this be nothing?'"

"But that is exactly what happens in a dream," Meherwan replied.

Vinoo then said, "If this is all nothing, people will say, 'Why should we do anything?'"

Baba gestured, "No one does anything."

Eruch asked Vinoo, "Don't scientists say that there is nothing like matter? That all this is energy?"

"No," replied Vinoo. "That is not so. Matter and energy are convertible. Matter and antimatter create energy when they come together."

Then Baba stepped in:

In the November gathering [East-West Gathering] I have explained the Four Journeys. They are journeys within. There are also outer journeys. The creation is based on gas, and gas is nothing and nothing Is. Mind is the junction between the inner and the outer journeys.

There are two outlets. Inner and outer. Outer is nothing but the shadow of reality; just as the shadow is because of you, so with the creation. Mind is the one that gives substance to matter and energy. If you go beyond mind, there are infinitely vast

fields in the outer space which contain millions of universes with innumerable suns.

There are 18,000 worlds in creation with human habitation. I have explained more of this at Meherazad to Francis and Eruch. Scientists will have to come down one day to the fact that there are innumerable expanding and contracting, evolving and devolving universes. Just as, according to conditions, the shadow is sometimes bigger and sometimes smaller, so it is with the galaxies.

How can the mind imagine the endlessness of creation? It cannot. Why not? It is because we want to understand that which is beyond mind [with mind]. Mind and energy are absolutely nothing. Once mind is annihilated, you become the infinite. All these universes which scientists find astonishing will then be nothing.

Now, on the other side, that is the inner side of the mind, there is shorelessness. You cannot pin any point in it. No universes, no galaxies. Then what is there? In sound sleep, who is there? Nobody. No mind but the one who experiences the beyond state, the experience of is-ness is there. It all means that the goal is to be fully awake in sound sleep, which is impossible without My grace.

Vinoo asked, “Baba, what is mind?” Baba replied:

Today my health is not good, and it has been a while that this discussion has been going on. To explain what is mind, even hours and hours will not be sufficient. It is good that you think more deeply on what I have already explained.

But then Baba relented and added:

Mind. There is nothing like mind also. But it is different from matter. In sound sleep, if at all there is anything, it is mind.

(BABA CONTINUES)

Every thought of yours has an imprint on mind. There are impressions which bring you down from sleep. Thus you awake and you go to sleep. Ages and ages have passed by, but mind, energy and body [matter] remain, though as nothing. I will explain one day what is mind.

Baba then asked Vinoo whether he knew Persian and Vinoo said he didn't.

Baba said:

Hafiz, the God-realized poet, in one of his couplets says:

The status of love is so sublime that it can never be reached by the mind.

And with the help of mind, you try to reach that which is beyond mind. And that is the difficulty.

Majzoob-e-Kamil, that is the Majzoob of the seventh plane, has no mind. He is all merged and absorbed in God. With your physical eyes you see him eating, drinking, talking and walking. But the Majzoob has no mind. He has no mind, energy or body. When you sleep, you snore. But you are not aware of it then. So too with the actions of a Majzoob. He appears to those around him to eat and drink.

Mind? Mind is the junction between the inner and the outer. If mind is annihilated, you experience infinity. You are seeing the things in this room. Is it not? But who is seeing?

You are the one who does not see anything but only exists. As soon as you identify yourself with the mind, you are a person. If you don't, you are infinite. Vinoo, why do you want to

go to the length of satisfying others through reasoning? This is doing wrong to them.

“Baba, because they believe in the power of reasoning!”

“Why feed them with that which ought to die?”

“To help them to go beyond reasoning with the help of reason.”

As always, Baba had the last word “Help them to unlearn what they have learned.”

Gokaran Shrivastava, who had first met Meher Baba the previous year during the East-West Gathering, writes:

Then came the 1963 group darshans at Guru Prasad, where every weekend lovers from different states were called for one to three days. In May 1963 my father and younger brother accompanied me. We reached Poona a day prior to the scheduled darshan. Gokuldas Dharamshala, opposite Poona Railway Station, was the main place where most of the Baba lovers stayed. At about 3:00 p.m. a messenger from Guru Prasad came announcing that Beloved Baba would be giving a special pre-schedule darshan at 4:00 p.m. the same day to those who have arrived early. About fifteen fortunate persons had come early, so we all hurriedly rushed to Guru Prasad and assembled in a small living room there. All of us were invited to sit on the floor in front of Baba, who was already waiting for us.

He was in a very happy mood and decided to distribute some sweetmeats to us as prasad. We made a queue and

(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

approached Him one by one to receive our share. Except for one of us, all the others were shy and felt content to receive a handful of prasad only once. But Dr. C.D. Deshmukh was different from the rest of us. He would join the queue again and again, and each time Baba would give Him more and more prasad without showing any sign of anger. When all of us had our turn, Dr. Deshmukh again approached Baba and with a childlike simplicity he pulled the shirt from his trousers and held up the tails as if he were holding a basket in his hands. Baba gave a hearty laugh at this, and as a token of His approval of Dr. Deshmukh's simplicity, He poured out the remaining sweet-meats from the five-kg. container into Dr. Deshmukh's shirt.

It is interesting to note that none of us could muster the courage to approach Baba and ask for prasad twice, while Dr. Deshmukh unhesitatingly kept approaching Baba again and again and demanded more and more prasad. We were so stupid at that time, because instead of asking for more from the Source itself, we pestered Dr. Deshmukh afterwards to share with us from his hard-earned additional lot. He flatly refused to give us even a pinch from what he got from Baba. This incident reflects on the kind of lukewarm relationship we had with Baba, while Dr. Deshmukh's childlike simplicity earned him a closer tie with Baba. Many years later the mandali explained to us the importance of our attitude toward Baba. If we felt close to Him, He would come even closer, and if we felt shy of Him, He Himself would remain aloof. Baba used to say, "I am shy of strangers."

One of the most loving expressions that Beloved Baba used to give to His lovers at almost all gatherings was to ask two things. First, whether the lovers had eaten well? And second, had they slept well? One morning, Baba asked Pukar those questions during the darshan program in the central hall. Pukar replied that he had not slept well. Baba asked him why, to which he answered that he could not sleep because he had not eaten well. Baba again asked him the reason he did not eat well. Pukar answered with the help of a practical demonstration that his usual diet was a foot-high heap of chapatis and the previous night he could get only a half-foot-high heap. Baba gave a hearty laugh and everyone felt much relieved. I was specially fascinated by this kind of dialogue between Baba and His lovers. So I decided in my heart that I would forego my evening meal that night so that the next morning I could also stand up to tell Baba that I had not eaten well. The whole scheme was plotted in my head and I anticipated His next question. I was ready to tell Baba that I did not eat well simply to get an opportunity to speak with Him.

When we all gathered in the central hall the next morning, I was waiting for Baba to greet us with His usual two questions about sleep and food. Oddly, that morning Baba did not ask any such questions. I tried to draw His attention and He deliberately avoided looking at me. The three hours of the morning session were soon over, and with a heavy heart I came out of the darshan site without having had the opportunity to talk to Him. I would not venture to explain why Beloved Baba behaved this unusual way on that day. One thing became very

(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

clear to me—we cannot force Beloved Baba to respond in the way we want Him to.

The famous ghazal singer Begum Akhtar came to sing before Baba while we were there. Baba enjoyed the singing very much, though many of the Baba lovers were not able to appreciate her deep classical style. Baba enjoyed it so much that He presented her with a precious ring that He Himself put on her finger. Dr. Deshmukh was so excited by her singing that he tried loudly to copy her. Though he tried to keep pace with her singing, he failed to do so, and he would keep quiet for a time. Then after a little pause, he would start copying her again. Baba gave him a warning that he should sit silently without disturbing the program, or he would be turned out of the hall.

This made Dr. Deshmukh silent for a while but again he started accompanying Begum Akhtar. This time Baba actually sent him out of the hall and told him not to come back. But after ten or fifteen minutes Dr. Deshmukh again appeared at one of the side doors of the hall and requested that Baba let him in. When he promised that he would sit quietly without disturbing the program, Baba allowed him to come back. He sat quiet for only some time, but then he would periodically stand up and recite Sanskrit *slokas* [verses]. Baba then paid no attention to him, and the ghazal singing continued uninterrupted along with periodic recitations from Dr. Deshmukh. By using Dr. Deshmukh Baba probably demonstrated the meaning of childlike simplicity, which Baba liked most.

Baba (and Adi) thoroughly enjoyed
Begum Akhtar's performance



(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

During this program Baba emphatically demonstrated His indiscriminate love for all. On one side of Baba's chair sat the Maharani of Baroda, a queen, and on the other sat Begum Akhtar with the same honor and respect of a queen. Contemporary Indian society would not have held a queen on par with a ghazal singer. But in Baba's eyes all are equal. He put a golden ring on the Maharani's finger, as well as on Begum Akhtar's, to confirm them at equal status in God's love.

Baba repeatedly told us that while we were in His presence we should minutely observe each and every thing that was happening there. He told us that we should try to imbibe in our hearts all His facial expressions in order to remember Him when He would not be with us physically. I vividly remember His ever-changing expressions and the constant movement of His fingers as if He were directing a puppet show. Time and again, He would satisfy our curiosity by sharing with us the cause of this constant finger movement. He told us that while He is present amidst us, He is simultaneously directing His advanced spiritual agents, all over the world, communicating with them through His finger movements.

There is an interesting story behind Begum Akhtar's singing. She had been asked to sing at Guru Prasad the previous year but she hadn't come. Then, in January of 1963, she asked Baba if she could come to Meherazad for His darshan. Even though He was in seclusion, Baba not only permitted it but allowed her to garland Him and to bow down to Him. Baba asked her why she hadn't come the previous summer and she said she had been ill and therefore unable to sing.

K.K. Ramakrishnan penned the following account:

She then told Baba that since the day she heard of His call to her she had been craving for His darshan and daily sang a special ghazal before His photo, and that remembrance of Him always brought tears to her eyes. Begum Akhtar requested Baba to permit her to sing that ghazal as she was actually in His presence. Baba smilingly replied that He would give His permission only on the condition that she gave a *jalsa*—a performance of four to five hours—at Guru Prasad on any day in April or May. On hearing this, she was filled with joy and lovingly accepted the condition and began to sing the ghazal of her daily prayer to Baba (the first line of which translates as: “O Love, my tears are the result of surrendering to you!”).

It was a very touching sight to see the tears coursing down her cheeks while she sang with such deep love and great reverence for Beloved Baba. All present were deeply moved by her singing, for while she sang she wept tears of love and joy; Beloved Baba gave her one of His own handkerchiefs to wipe away her tears. Shri Madhukar Golwalker of All India Radio, who had accompanied her to Meherazad, was visibly moved.

After this, Begum Akhtar requested Baba to permit her to sing one more song. Her singing so pleased Beloved Baba that He permitted her to sing a third and again a fourth song. Thus Begum Akhtar came to Meherazad seeking Baba’s darshan and she had the darshan, as well as an opportunity to sing her love for Him. The parting scene was most touching for she would not let go Beloved Baba’s feet and kept on weeping as she clung to

(K.K. RAMAKRISHNAN CONTINUES)

Him. Baba patted her head and embraced her and told her not to forget to come to Poona next summer in the month of May for a four-hour singing performance at Guru Prasad. She not only promised to give the performance, but also most willingly agreed to stay for three days in Poona and be at Beloved Baba's disposal for those three days.

The most interesting part of the visit was her reply to Beloved Baba's suggestion that she be paid something for the singing program in May. Baba told Begum Akhtar that He was Faqir and *Badshah* [Emperor] simultaneously, and therefore He would request someone to give her something as His Prasad for the singing program at Guru Prasad. In reply she bowed down and told Baba that by His grace she craved for nothing but His Love. Baba was pleased to hear this.

Her reaction showed a significant change in Begum Akhtar. Twenty-five years before this, Baba had called Begum Akhtar for a jalsa at Meherabad, but she had demanded Rs.1000 per day from the date she would leave her home in Lucknow until she returned. How time has changed her! Begum Akhtar craved to sing before Baba even if it was only one ghazal. Such are Baba's mysterious ways. He can draw towards Him those whom He wants; but He has infinite patience to wait until they, on their own, learn to draw closer to Him.⁴¹

In the mandali's room at Guru Prasad, Baba would sit in a comfortable chair that is now in the Guru Prasad Memorial. Baba would spend the

mornings hearing the day's correspondence and any other news we had to report.

Before lunch, Baba would generally leave the room. After taking our lunch, the mandali would rest in this same room. Some of the visiting close ones would also rest there, and those who were accustomed to an afternoon nap would quickly fall asleep. Sometimes, when Baba returned, He would find someone still sleeping. Baba would gesture for the others to keep quiet and not disturb the person. Then He would approach the sleeping person and with the nub of His cane poke the person's belly. The person would wake up with a start and the rest of us would have a good laugh.

I sometimes wondered if I would ever be lucky enough to be awakened by Baba in this way. But being a light sleeper, I rarely slept during my rest after lunch. One particular day, seven to eight people had been permitted to stay at Guru Prasad, so for the sake of convenience I went to Pendu's room to rest. I unexpectedly fell into a deep sleep. Baba, as usual, came into the mandali's room after lunch, and saw that I, as well as two or three others, weren't there. He entered Pendu's room without my noticing it. Silently, Baba approached me with His cane in hand. When He got close enough, He took the stick and poked me in the belly and I woke up. I was startled and also pleased. Baba smiled with enjoyment.

It is hard to capture the flavor of the intimate companionship we were blessed to share with the God-Man. On the surface, Baba's actions often seemed most ordinary, yet for me, His actions had their own unique significance. Apart from the humor of Baba's poking me in the belly, I also felt that Baba had literally awakened me in my

life with Him. What good fortune to be awakened by the “Awakener” Himself!

On another occasion, Baba showed me a way to stop worrying, which I am still trying to put into practice. You see I am a first-class worrier, on any number of subjects. Baba told me, “Don’t worry about your worries,” but that’s a different story. This one concerns someone who used to visit Baba at Guru Prasad.

Invariably Baba would ask the man, “How are you?” which seemed to be the man’s cue to recite all his worries and troubles. Baba would then respond by telling the man not to worry.

This happened two or three times. On the fourth occasion, the man again started listing all of his problems and said, “What can I do? I try not to, but I can’t stop worrying.” His problems were about his finances, his health, his job, and his family. Baba listened intently, showing great interest and gesturing as the man recited his woes, “Is that so? Is that so? Oh, you are right. You can’t help but worry in such a situation.”

When the man finished telling Baba everything, Baba gestured, “But there could be a remedy for this. In your room do you have a table?”

The man nodded. Baba asked, “Where is it?”

“In the corner.”

Baba replied:

All right. At night, or when you first get up, close the doors and windows and turn off the lights and get yourself under that table in the corner, and in the darkest corner of the table as well, and start worrying the worst. Go ahead and worry. Continue worrying the worst for half an hour. Think about some terrible thing that will happen that day: “someone whom I don’t want to meet will come and see me, or there will be a crash, or

something will happen to my car, or an awful thing will befall my family,” and so on. Then, when you come out from under the table, you can say aloud, “Now there is nothing worse that can happen that I haven’t already thought about and worried about,” and you will be free of your worries.

Such were Baba’s ways, humorous, but also profound and significant. I don’t know whether the man took this lesson to heart and tried it, but it was a good lesson for me that I am still trying to work out.

This was also the year that Pegu appeared. A blue-eyed Siamese cat came into the compound and disappeared somewhere inside Guru Prasad. A few hours later, the cat’s owners sent their driver to inquire whether we had seen their much-loved cat. They were a well-off couple who lived in a big cottage behind Guru Prasad one lane over. She, Dolly, was a Parsi, and her husband was a Punjabi. At the time of their marriage it had been a big controversy as she was one of the first Parsis to intermarry. Her family had disowned her because of it.

Aloba, who loved cats, tells the rest of the story:

I told the driver that I had seen the cat two to three hours back. It had jumped on the wall and went to the other side. So the driver went back and reported that. After that, the cat started coming over to Guru Prasad regularly. It was a very lucky cat. It came and went to the dining hall where Baba and the ladies took breakfast in the morning. Baba would spot the cat and give him some left over biscuit, some piece of bread and butter. This cat, named Pegu, became fond of Baba and Guru Prasad. It was very clever and very wise.

(ALOBA CONTINUES)

The cat would come right to Baba's room in the morning. Baba's door was closed and the cat would come and sit outside it. When Baba's bell rang the door would be opened.

There was one common bell for all of us, two or three swishes, *kurr...kurr...kurr*; and the cat registered this as Baba's song. The cat was very intelligent. So exactly when the cat heard

Baba's bell ring, he would appear. He would go to Baba's dining hall with Mehera, Mani, Naja, Goher, and Rano.

After a few days, Dolly came to inquire about the cat again. We all confessed that it came to Guru Prasad every day and liked being there. Dolly was not drawn to Baba but for the sake of the cat she came. She said to Him, "Baba, this is my cat." Baba replied, "I am not keeping it here. It is yours. You can take it away." She became happy and started to take the cat. But the cat did not

want to go to Dolly's house. Dolly went near the door of Guru Prasad and the cat started biting and scratching. He jumped down from her arms and acted like he did not want to go.

So she said to Baba, "Pegu won't come to my house; please send it with your man." So Baba told me and Khorshed to take the cat in Baba's car to the other side of the road to give it to her. I took a towel to not frighten the cat and to not get scratched, and we brought it to her house. She had a chain collar ready. The moment we arrived at the house she put the collar around the neck of the cat, so it would not get away. The cat was imprisoned for two or three days. One day, the moment Dolly opened the collar the cat ran straight to Guru Prasad.



Pegu and Baba

Dolly came to Guru Prasad again and said, “Baba, Pegu ran away.” Baba replied, “The cat does not like to stay with you, but this is not our cat. So, this cat should be shared between both of us. You bring him half of his food. Since cats are very fond of fish, bring fish here to feed it.” So she agreed to send fish at 12 o’clock sharp with the driver. He put it on the porch where the car pulls up. The first day the cat raced to it and he gulped all of it! I was surprised because the cat’s body was not so big and I wondered how it could put all that fish inside it.

Baba decided that the cat’s morning and evening meals would be supplied from Baba’s side. Usually Pegu was given a biscuit and cream in the morning, fish at noon for lunchtime, and in the evening a biscuit and milk. The cat would always sleep under Baba’s chair.

So this became a habit, that every time Baba would stay at Guru Prasad during the summer months, the cat would start to come. When Baba would leave Guru Prasad for Meherazad, the cat would stay at Guru Prasad for some time and then eventually return to his house. Baba had left some money with Mohite, the groundskeeper at Guru Prasad, to continue to buy provisions for the cat. It was his responsibility to give Pegu milk and biscuits. Dolly’s house would continue sending fish.

One day, Pegu was hit by a motorcar when he tried to cross the road between Dolly’s house and Guru Prasad. Baba was not there when Pegu was crushed under the car and died. Mohite immediately informed the Jessawala family that the cat’s dead body was lying there. So they went to the bazaar and bought a white canvas cloth and some flowers. They carefully took the cat and gave him a funeral. It was decided to bury him at Guru Prasad under the *chameli* tree, which has a kind of jasmine flower, so that the blossoms will always fall on his grave.

When they informed Baba at Meherazad, He said, "Because Pegu was so fond of Me, now he will not take animal form again. He will proceed direct to human form. And he is closer on the path toward Me. So the cat's story ends here." As for Dolly, Baba said, "She came to be a Baba lover through that cat."

Gita Ram describes another incident during Baba's stay that year:

In June Baba had again permitted the Hamirpur group to come to Guru Prasad. When we arrived we found that Baba was not in a happy mood and the mandali were worried about it. Adi K. Irani came to where we were staying and asked if Ram Sahai Yadav, Hiralal Rajput and myself would perform a dance before Baba to please Him. So we agreed. Adi made arrangements for the costumes that we were to wear and we quickly came up with a skit idea. Hiralal dressed as a woman; he put on a sari blouse and sari and wore ankle bracelets. My character was a Muslim man and Adi supplied me with a fake long black beard, a wig, a fez and a tabla. Yadav was dressed normally.

There was a large crowd for the Sunday program. We entered the Hall in our costumes and went before Baba, who was sitting in His usual chair.

Yadav's role was to ask questions of the two characters, Hiralal and myself. So first, he asked me, "Where are you going?"

"To Avatar Meher Baba's durbar."

"What are you going for?"

"Baba's mood is not good, so we want to please Him."

“Please demonstrate before me how you are going to please Avatar Meher Baba.”

“We’ll please Baba by singing and dancing.”

Hiralal and I both were wearing earthen pots tied all around our waists but hidden under our garments. I started to sing to Baba, “*Gbataria mori, tumi samalo, Hey Baba Avatari. Bar key mari, dum nikale jatabe. Bar key mari jatouon, dum nikhale upsari.*” Loosely translated as:

“Because of the burden/weight, I am dying and my breath is also going to stop/I cannot bear the load. So kindly take care of this worldly load [family, spouse, baggage, everything] that has been thrown on me.”

We were holding small hammers and, going in time with the beat of the song, we one by one broke the earthenware pots. The breaking sound was actually quite melodious. I also had cowbells tied around my ankles to make a sound. It was Eruch’s idea that we wear the pots as a way of amusing Baba. Baba was happily clapping along to the music and He started laughing when we broke the pots.

Then Hiralal said, “Baba, please come to Hamirpur to give darshan to the poor people there who cannot come to Poona. We want You to bless us by coming there.”

Hiralal looked to Baba for an answer, and Baba said, “I will come.”

But Hiralal said, “I don’t believe You, Baba. You are telling a lie. You are just saying this to please us.” Baba was laughing and promised to come the following year to Hamirpur to give darshan to the poor.

(GITA RAM CONTINUES)

Hiralal was still acting like Baba was lying, saying, “Baba, You are a very big liar.”

I said, “Hiralal, don’t say that. Baba doesn’t tell lies. He will definitely come.”

Baba was laughing, enjoying the conversation. Everyone was laughing.

At the end of our performance, Baba called us both to Him and embraced us. The impact of His love embrace was so powerful that I went into an altered state. I just lay my head in His lap and then I do not remember what next occurred. I was told that Baba clapped and asked Eruch to call Babulal and Mungalal to lift me and take me back to my spot among the crowd. I do not remember anything more from that afternoon. I was in ecstasy.

When I returned home, my aunt (who was like a mother to me) saw to my most basic needs, because for two to three months I remained in a kind of blissful state, where I did not get up from my bed unless prodded, nor would I leave my house. When Baba sent a circular to His lovers, calling for the Hamirpur group to meet together in Nauranga, my mind’s condition changed and I was able to participate in that meeting.

Dina Talati, a longtime Baba lover, whose husband Naval had been at Sakori when Baba was still known as Merwan, came with her daughter, Perviz. [She wasn’t sure if this happened in 1963 or 1965, but 1963 seems more probable.] Perviz writes:

This time my mother and I were alone with Baba, with Eruch interpreting. My mother, who had some questions for Baba but

had been unable to contact Him, asked, “When You are in seclusion and we need You, what do we do?” Baba replied, “Ask me here,” and He put His hand on her heart, “and I will answer. But remember,” He continued, “the first voice you hear is My voice. Very soon, another voice may contradict what you heard. That is not My voice. Only if you are prepared to hear that first voice, ask Me.” And with emphasis, He added, “I will definitely answer.”

This applies today as well. Many times Baba emphasized that His lovers should be willing to bring all their problems to Him, and to not only ask Him anything, but ask Him for anything. After all, if we can’t ask Baba, our true Self and compassionate father, then who can we ask? As Mani and Eruch would often tell those coming to Meherazad, “Don’t be afraid to ask, but don’t expect an answer.”

Here Baba is promising that He will answer, although sometimes we don’t always recognize the answers He gives. As to whether Baba’s advice about the first voice being His is generally applicable or was meant specifically for Dina is for the reader to decide. But it should be noted that Perviz says:

From my very early childhood, my mother used to drill into my head that when it came to obeying Baba, one should listen to the first instruction that He gives and not the second, even if He contradicts His own first instruction. She knew how Baba wanted things. This was based on her long experience with Baba, having been a lover of Baba’s since 1921 or ’22, back when Baba was known simply as Merwan. [Actually, at that point, Baba had already been given the name “Meher Baba” by His Kasba Peth lovers.—Eds.]

Mani gives her own quick sketch of these darshan programs in her Family Letter of June that year:

This summer a rich harvest of the Beloved's sahavas has been gathered by Baba lovers from many parts of India, and Guruprasad has added to its score of cherished memories many more Baba-occasions, expected and unexpected....

[On] the "Andhra-weekend" nearly 200 Andhraites came by special train carriages, including a number of children and the inevitable babes in arms who were placed by their mothers at Baba's feet for their share of His darshan. That Sunday there was Burra-Katha also, as desired by the Beloved. It is a sketch conveying the story of Baba's life and the glory of His Avatarhood, performed partly in dialogue and partly in song by the Trio who originated it, and played before Baba at Meherabad during the 1958 sahavas. It was their fourth performance in His presence, since the eight years they have devotedly played it over a hundred and fifty times to crowds of thousands of people in Andhra, thus carrying Baba's dear Name and message of Love to villages and towns and cities all over the state.

The Hamirpur weekend was no less memorable. Two large groups came—one by train, the other by private bus across which was painted in Hindi: "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" Their contribution to the weekend's program was unexpected but thoroughly enjoyed by all—they enacted, in condensed form, one of Bhau's plays. A simple affair, seasoned with much humour and spicy acting (especially as the women's roles were played by men), it revealed the true story of Hamirpur before

the tide of Baba's love swept away the severe opposition that faced the first few lovers who pioneered to spread Baba's message in that district. The priests and the orthodox were scared of this unknown "menace" which threatened to dissolve all distinction of caste and creed in a brotherliness and oneness of love for God, and so they incited the people to harass these followers of Meher Baba and stop them from endangering their age-old ideas and customs. When Baba first visited Hamirpur, He was to give darshan to Nauranga—the place where Meher Dham now stands—a little village where rural life and transport facilities are primitive. Water is channeled to the heart of the fields thru big arteries of canals that are crossed by crude bridges. A few hours before the morning Baba was to arrive, the opposition party tore down the bridge and breached the canals, flooding the area and the surrounding fields, so that Baba had to give darshan on the outskirts of the village. But Love won, as sooner or later it must. On Baba's next visit there about a year later, the opposers were among the foremost to welcome Him. Today Hamirpur district has one of the largest Baba followings, and yearly big fairs are held at the different places sanctified by His visits.

Every day seems a Sahavas Day for some Baba group or other. The number increases in size by Friday when outstation Baba lovers rush down to Poona for the weekend, swelling into such a crowd every Sunday morning and afternoon that the palace seems too small a place to hold them! But like a mother hen Guruprasad manages to spread itself to accommodate under its wings all the Baba-chicks gathered around Him for their hearts' feed of His presence. Baba gives them His darshan or embrace;

(MANI CONTINUES)

He gives them spiritual discourses; He listens to the singing or musical recital with obvious enjoyment and appreciation; He teases Dr. Deshmukh whose outburst of song at unexpected moments is expected by all; He recalls some amusing incident of the past or asks someone to narrate a joke and the hall resounds with laughter. And Baba says: "You see Me doing all this, but simultaneously My work continues. It is as breathing is to you—you talk, work, play, eat, sleep etc. but you never stop breathing. It is the same with My work which continues without a stop whatever else I may appear to be doing. However, when I have special work to do I go into seclusion and wish not to be disturbed."⁴²

A common feature that summer, along with the card playing and singing programs and spontaneous discourses, was Baba having Harry Kenmore recite the "Master's Prayer." Harry arrived near the end of May and quite often Baba would end the morning session by having Harry recite the prayer, which he would do enthusiastically, in his usually booming voice. Periodically, throughout the summer, Baba would refer to His silence and His breaking of it. Baba would often hint that world conditions would continue to be bad for the next nine months but that He would break His silence after that.

When I was at Guru Prasad it was my duty to read out the Marathi correspondence. But sometimes as other letters were read out to Baba, He might ask me to respond. One day there was a letter from a woman who lived in Baramati, not far from Poona. She came periodically to Guru Prasad for Baba's darshan, and I had the impression that she was following some yogic path.

Her letter had questions about very esoteric points concerning the kundalini, the third eye, chakras, and the like. When this women's letter had been read, Baba turned to me and gestured, "Tell her to write to Anna 104." I smiled at this pleasantry of Baba's. "Anna 104" was Baba's nickname for Jagannath Gangaram Jakal, one of His earliest disciples but he had died years before (December 4, 1953).

Later that day, Baba was walking up and down on the verandah while Eruch attended to some work in his "office" in the corner, just in front of the partition which separated the men's dining room.

Baba saw me and gestured, "Did you write the letters?"

"Yes, Baba."

But Baba was not satisfied with that and asked me specifically about which letters I had written. When I told Him, Baba inquired, "But what about that letter to the woman?" Still thinking Baba was joking, I only smiled.

At this Baba seemed quite displeased. "Why are you showing your teeth to me like that?" He demanded. Baba was all love, but when He expressed His displeasure, it used to pierce me like an arrow. Instantly my lighthearted mood was gone, and I became quite nervous that I had displeased Baba.

"Did you write that letter?" Baba demanded.

"Baba," I began, "Anna is long dead."

"What has that to do with you?" Baba gestured, as His eyes burned with intensity. "What was My order to you? I ordered you to write the letter. Nothing else is your concern."

Like a dog with its tail between its legs, I quietly padded down the verandah to Eruch's office and took a blank inland post card. I quickly wrote this woman to the effect: "Your letter was read out to Baba and

you should write to Anna 104 for answers.” Then I gave the address in Solapur where Anna had last lived.

The whole time I was writing, Baba was pacing up and down the verandah. When I was finished, I very timidly ventured forth, and as unobtrusively as possible slipped the card under the clip holding mail that was to be sent that day.

When I had done that, Baba asked, “Did you write?”

“Yes, Baba,” I said, feeling tremendously relieved that I could now answer in the affirmative.

I realize now that it was only Baba’s great love and concern for me that prompted Him to not only ask me if I had written as directed, but to continue to pace up and down until I finished. Although I had not intended to disobey, by using my mind, instead of simply taking Baba at His word, I had come perilously close to not carrying out an order He had given me. Who knows what the effect of even that unintentional carelessness would have been. To save me from those consequences, Baba expressed His displeasure so that I would be sure to do the duty I had been assigned. This was a lesson to me that I should not think about Baba’s orders, but should simply obey them.

But my stupidity did not end there. Although I was now happy that I had obeyed Baba, I started to worry about what this woman and her nephew would think when they got my letter. They were bound to discover that Anna 104 was dead, and then they would think either that I was mocking them or was a most peculiar person. Foolishly, it did not occur to me to worry about how this might make Baba appear in their eyes. I was only worried for myself.

As they lived in Poona district, it was their habit to drive to Guru Prasad on the weekends for Baba’s darshan. The next time I saw their car pull up in the drive, I carefully stepped into another room, so I

wouldn't have to meet them. This I continued to do for the next few weekends. As Guru Prasad was a palatial building with many rooms and doorways, it was not difficult to make sure that I never happened to bump into them. But then one weekend, as I was entering a room, I was shocked to discover myself standing face to face with the woman and her nephew.

Being timid by nature, I nervously awaited the response I had imagined they might make. But to my amazement, they made no mention of the reference to Anna 104 whatsoever. It was as if Baba completely wiped the whole incident from their minds.

I realize now that I should not have given their opinion of me a second thought—Baba compassionately accommodated my selfish pride and spared me even the least embarrassment! Really, what can I say about Baba's infinite compassion? Not only does He forgive us our trespasses, but He goes out of His way to ensure that we don't trespass in the first place. He humors us in our selfishness until we are able, in our growing love, to offer it to Him in surrender.

Sometimes this meant that Baba would take one of His close ones to task. Maybe it was because, as in my instance, one hadn't obeyed Him properly. Other times, it seemed to us watching, that the person had done nothing wrong, nothing to warrant the abuse they were now being given. Yet, such was the power of Baba's personality, that even when we were not personally involved, we tended to hold our breath at such moments and even feel guilty as if we had trespassed, and silently determined to try our best not to let Baba down in the future. But then Baba would forgive the person or move on to some other subject in such a way that it was clear that Baba had put the matter behind Him. It was like the sun suddenly coming out from behind thick clouds; the atmosphere would be light and lively again with no lingering trace of unpleasantness.

Mani used to say that when Baba called you on the carpet, He could bring you to tears (and often did so), but when He made His sweeping gesture of forgiveness, it was like the ocean washing clean the shore. It wasn't that He was moving on to other things, diverting your attention for the moment from what the matter had been; it was as if the matter itself had been washed away completely, so universal was Baba's forgiveness.

Another experience related to obedience took place about this same time. Baba was in the habit of visiting the homes of some of His lovers in the Poona area when He was staying at Guru Prasad. Those of us with Baba generally accompanied Him on these visits. Depending on the number going, we would take one, two, or even three cars. Baba would decide who was to go in which car, and would tell Pendu, who would then inform me. It was my job to let everyone else know which car to get in. One day, when there was only a handful of us, I happened to be in Baba's car. I was in the back seat and Baba turned and looked at me and gestured, "Remind Me tomorrow to trim My mustache."

The next morning, from the mandali's room in Guru Prasad, I could hear the sound of Baba's electric razor as He shaved in the main hall. When He entered the mandali's room a little later, I noticed that Baba had shaved, as well as trimmed His mustache. He looked radiant. Still, having learned my lesson, I resolved to remind Baba as He had requested. So when the opportunity arose I drew Baba's attention. "Yes?" He gestured, looking at me.

"Baba, You wanted me to remind You to trim Your mustache." Baba looked pleased at my reminder and gestured that He had already trimmed it. This only confirmed my belief that when it comes to Baba, the best thing is simply to obey.

Talking about reminding Baba about His order brings back another incident which took place in 1963. One day a great scholar and lover of God named Bahirat from Pandharpur visited Baba. Baba gave him an audience for ten minutes in which he sang compositions of Tukaram. Bahirat had recently written a commentary on the works of the Perfect Master Dnyaneshwar. Before he left the room he gave that book to Baba as a present. I have always loved the *Dnyaneshwari*, which is Dnyaneshwar's commentary on the Gita. Dnyaneshwar's use of Marathi is as graceful and beguiling as his spiritual wisdom is profound. My curiosity was aroused and the thought arose in my mind, "I wonder what he's written in that book."

Baba, the All-Knowing One, read my mind and, after Bahirat left, He gestured, "Come here." As I came near to Him, Baba put His right hand over the title of the book and, flipping it over so I could not see the cover, gestured with His left hand, "Don't open it; don't read it." And with a smile Baba handed it to me. I returned to my seat and covered the book with a newspaper that was by my side. It was a clear indication from Baba that He knew my thoughts. But my mind was not satisfied, so after a few minutes, I asked, "Baba, what should I do with the book?" Baba's expression changed, as though He had to answer a very serious question. He waited for a few seconds and gestured, "Ask Me this question next year on this same day." Baba's answer delighted me; inwardly I felt He had guaranteed I would survive one more year. This had been a question in my mind as my health had long been frail.

The year passed and I was again with Baba at Guru Prasad, waiting for the date and time to remind Baba about my silly question. The book, covered in paper, was by my side, and I was waiting for the precise moment to remind Baba about His instructions to me. The year before I had even

noted down the exact time, because I wanted to show off how literally I was following Baba's orders. But this also Baba knew. It so happened that on that day Baba received some lengthy letters from the West, which Eruch was reading. My anxiousness grew as Eruch continued reading, and my plan to express literal obedience to Baba was being foiled. Looking at my wristwatch in desperation, I raised my hand to attract Baba's attention. He looked displeased with me and motioned, "Hands down."

When Eruch finished reading the letters, Baba asked me why I had raised my hand. As I felt a bit upset, I said, "Nothing special, Baba."

To this Baba gestured, "Come on, speak out."

"Baba, last year at this time You asked me to remind You in one year about the question regarding Bahirat's book that you had given me. Now, it has been exactly one year."

An expression of happiness came over Baba's face. He nodded His head and gestured, "Oh, that is why you raised your hand. That's okay." However, Baba did not say anything more and returned to other work.

After a few minutes, I couldn't contain myself any longer and spoke again, "Baba, You have still not answered my question. What should I do with the book?"

As before, Baba became very serious, putting His finger to His chin as if this was a very important question indeed, and asked me, "Feel the cover, is it hard or soft?"

"Baba it's a bit hard, but not too hard."

Baba smiled and gestured, "Fine, then why don't you use it as a pillow?"

That answered the question, and Baba inwardly guided me not to ask anything more about it. For had I asked, expressing my inquisitiveness as to how many days I should use it, I wonder what would have been His reply. Perhaps I would still be using it as a pillow to this day!

As it was, the time limit was not given. I did use the book as a pillow for a few days and then put it away in a safe place.

When Baba comes into one's life, He removes the abscesses of pride so that His love can flow freely to touch one's heart. Like the divine surgeon, He removes obstacles in one's relationship with Him with loving compassion and a hint of humor. Sometimes, He also gently encourages us, so that we feel freer in His presence and this too enables us to open our hearts to His love to an even greater extent. One time, although I don't remember the year, Baba stepped out of the main hall and then asked me to come near. When I did so, He kissed me on the cheek.

Then Baba turned to all assembled and asked, "Do you know why I kissed Bal?" Of course, no one had a clue, any more than I had. Baba said, "It's because he has no girlfriend." I took this to mean that Baba was confirming an earlier order He had given me to not touch women and was acknowledging that I was obeying Him. Through His kiss, Baba helped to wipe out my subconscious impressions of attraction toward women. Perhaps most significantly, it indicated that in my life, Baba Himself would fill all the roles of friend, companion, guide, Master, father, mother, grandparents, girlfriend and God, for me in one. In short, Baba was, on His own, reassuring me that He was all in all for me. What greater gift could He possibly bestow?

From then on, during Baba's darshan programs in Guru Prasad, if other authors presented Him with a book, Baba would call me, repeat the same

gestures, “Don’t open; don’t read,” and hand me the book. In this way, I received three books in all, which I wrapped and kept in my collection. So, in the late seventies, when the subject of Baba’s “Missing Book” came up at Meherazad, I shared the above story with Baba lovers from the West in Mandali Hall and concluded by saying, “I have the books, but not ‘The Book.’ I do not know where it is, nor am I looking for it.”

Like the telephone game, this story was told to people in the West and it was distorted to give the impression that in fact I had “The Book.” One friend, who had met Baba in the early thirties, very solemnly called me aside at Meherazad, some time in the late eighties, and whispered, “Bal, what about ‘The Book?’ When is it going to be ready for publication?”

This gave me a good laugh, and I repeated, “Dear brother, I have the books, but not ‘The Book.’” He was surprised by my answer, but was then satisfied that I definitely did not have “The Book.”

The whereabouts of the three books Baba gave me is now something of a mystery as well. I had wrapped the books so that I should not ever see their covers even by accident, and I had stored them in a cupboard in my house in my hometown. There they remained for years. When the house was finally sold in the eighties, whatever belongings of mine, which I did not have with me at Meherazad, went to my brother’s place in Solapur. The thought came to me after a while, that if I were to die, what would happen to these books? So I decided to dispose of them. I wrote my brother and asked him to look for the books, which were neatly tied up in a cloth. He couldn’t find them anywhere for they had somehow been misplaced. So it seems Baba gave me the books and then took them away again in His unique way. And what it all means is anybody’s guess.

There is a follow-up to this story that I often share. In the first week of November 1968, I was at Meherazad with Meher Baba. This happened to be my last visit with Him. After listening to some letters, Baba wished to hear something interesting. He looked at me and asked if I had a story. I waited for something to come to me, and eventually Baba helped me think of one. I said:

Baba, I'll tell you a story of one of your lovers, Nirgundikar, who stays at Pandharpur and is a genius. As a young man he was an atheist. He was a voracious reader of Eastern and Western philosophers, such as Hegel and Kant, but still his mind wasn't satisfied. Then he wrote a series of articles for a renowned Marathi monthly under the title, "Why I Have Become An Atheist." In the late fifties, by coincidence, we happened to meet and I started sharing Baba books with him. Once I gave him *God Speaks*. When I met him after some days, he related how extremely happy he was to read the book. He told me a funny thing: As he read *God Speaks*, his whole being would be so full of joy that he would get extremely feverish and have to stop reading. Then after a little break, as the fever would subside, he would continue. I asked him why this had happened. He replied, "Whatever gaps or intellectual puzzles I had while reading the Eastern and Western philosophers, were filled in and solved by Baba's writings." This gave him conviction that not only did God exist but that Baba is God.

I felt this was a rare story; however, Baba gestured, "*God Speaks* is of great importance, but the real secret is revealed in 'The Book,'" referring

to the book He had written in the mid-twenties. Baba also spelled out for me one key word from “The Book.” That word, and Baba’s intimacy, in a way, took away any superficial curiosity to know more about “The Book.” It satisfied me completely. That was the last time I recollect Baba referring to it.

I have not come ... to establish any new religion. The Book which I shall make people read is the book of the heart which holds the key to the mystery of life.

—Meher Baba

Returning now to 1963 (although, again, this could have taken place the previous year): There was an unexpected visit to Guru Prasad from an old associate of mine whom I hadn’t seen in almost fifteen years.

As a young man, I was very interested in serving my country and helping to improve conditions of the common people. I was an active member of a social work organization while I attended college in Poona and, in the late 1930s, I would even lead meetings at its centre. As an interesting footnote, many years later the Poona Baba Centre was built almost exactly on the location where this branch of the organization’s gatherings were held.

During the course of my activities for this group, I became friendly with some of the senior members. I was impressed by their dedication, sincerity, and self-sacrifice. It seemed to me that they were living the kind of life one should aspire to live. A few years later, I met Meher Baba and my inclination towards service was slowly channeled by Him in a completely different direction.

In 1949, after visiting Hardwar for a duty Baba had given me, I happened to be in Poona. While there I looked up Vinayak Rao, the head of the Poona branch of the social work organization. He was happy to see me and treated me to a good lunch, during which he asked me who Meher Baba is and what He taught. I don't remember what I said, but I think I gave him a book about Baba's life and discourses that he looked through. He decided that Baba's teachings were in accordance with ancient Hindu philosophy, and therefore he did not worry about my close association with Baba.

Although I admired and was even a little in awe of this elderly noble soul and his associates, I did not actively pursue contact with him. As the years passed, I felt that if any of my former friends happened to come to Baba, that would be nice, but I didn't feel like going out and trying to bring them to Baba. I knew He would see to that.

Even so, I was a little surprised one day when a car pulled up to Guru Prasad and Vinayak Rao and some of his friends got out. They had set up an interview with Baba through a close friend of theirs, who was a Baba lover. They were still living a dedicated life of service to the nation, as they saw it.

Vinayak Rao expressed his wholehearted satisfaction in my following Baba, and I was happy about this because he had been so influential and a sort of mentor for me in my early life. After he greeted Baba he asked me, "How many Bals like you are here with Meher Baba?" I laughed at his friendly teasing and replied, "I know of only one."

Baba seemed happy to see them, perhaps because they were sincere in their efforts. One of the group, who was a sincere practitioner of raj yoga and had had some mystical experiences as a result, asked Baba

very humbly if there was any sign by which one would know if one were on the spiritual path. Baba looked at him with love and answered, “As long as one thinks he is on the spiritual path, he is not.”

This answer has stayed with me all these years and reminds me of a quote from one of the great ones, “Virtue is unconscious.” Though spirituality is very solemn and sanctified, it also seems to me that its essence is a kind of spontaneity that effortlessly radiates the truth. It was not as if Baba ever had to stop and think about how to best answer anyone’s questions. He just spontaneously responded to whatever the situation was, and this was always more profound than the most laboriously thought-out metaphysical statement.

Irene Billo once related that when Baba was visiting Switzerland in the 1930s, someone came to see Him and stated that he had been fasting for three days, thinking Baba would be pleased at this spiritual discipline. Baba looked concerned, not impressed, and said, “Oh, you must be feeling very hungry then.” Baba went on to remark, “Spiritual life, in remembrance of God, should be as natural as sitting in an easy chair.”



Certainly one of the hallmarks of Baba’s way with His close ones was the natural way in which He guided us. Although Baba was very direct in describing how to love God when giving a talk, when dealing with individuals, He liked to arrange circumstances in such a way that it wouldn’t even seem as if He were telling us what to do. Madhusudan relates the following incident around this time:

On Sundays and holidays Baba used to allow a few of His lovers from Poona and Bombay to stay with Him for a few hours.

We used to play cards in the mandali's room. We would sit in a circle on the floor. Because of the summer heat, each one of us took turns bringing sherbet to drink as a refreshment. One day it was Meelan's turn. He was the photographer who took so many beautiful pictures of Baba, and he was late.

Baba was asking about him: "Why hasn't he come?" When he finally came about 2 p.m. he brought two bottles of sherbet with him but the way he put them down called attention to the bottles. Jokingly, Baba asked whether these had been purchased openly or on the black market and whether they were of good quality or not.

Meelan assured Baba that they were good quality and had come from the open market. Mr. Shinde good humoredly told Baba that he bought many things on the black market. Baba asked, "What? Is that legal? Do you buy liquor?"

Mr. Shinde explained that in our society it is expected to have liquor at certain ceremonies, or marriages. Baba seemed interested and then asked everyone there whether they ever drank liquor. So many of us were there—Jalbhai, Pendu, Meherjee, Jimmy Mistry, Ramakrishnan—and we all told Baba whether we ever took liquor. In fact, Mr. Soman and some others were planning to celebrate a feast on the next day and expected to serve liquor there.

Baba did not seem at all upset. He said that He didn't allow or prohibit liquor. "It has no meaning in spirituality," He said, but then continued, "since this is a dry [no alcohol permitted] area and Maharashtra has a legal restriction on liquor, I say one should not consume or take liquor here. If at all you are in the

(MADHUSUDAN CONTINUES)

habit of taking liquor, you should go to a wet area and consume there. You must stick to the rules, try to follow the rules.”

Through that incident I have noticed how naturally Baba gave instructions. Because of how natural it was, I can remember it to this day.

As I have said, Baba generally liked the atmosphere around Him to be light. Baba would often joke with His close ones or tease a particular member of the mandali, usually with a twinkle in His eye which all, except for the one being teased, could see. In Poona, Gadekar, because of his childlike nature, had been a favorite target of Baba's. Deshmukh, despite his great learning, was in many ways just as childlike. His reluctance to spend any money was legendary and was often the butt of Baba's good-natured ribbing. Aloba also came in for his full share of attention. Baba once told all of us present that He had to be careful about giving any orders to Aloba because Aloba rushed to fulfill them with such alacrity that sometimes he would be off even before Baba had finished explaining what it was that He wanted.

In June, after the Navsari group had sung for Him, Baba joked, “Today, I feel as if I should come again after 1,400 years as even the thought of coming after 700 years seems very tiresome.” But sometimes, instead of providing the humor Himself, Baba would ask those around Him to provide the entertainment. Mani used to say that Baba had always loved stories and even as a boy would sit near an old Muslim and listen intently to the stories he would tell Him. This was a trait Baba kept to the very end.

Once in Guru Prasad, I am not certain of the year, Baba gestured to me, “Tell Me a story that will make Me smile. My burden is so heavy—so just tell Me a lighthearted story that will delight Me.”

I remember I told Baba a very silly story that illustrates the foolishness of superstitious traditions. The saying goes that if a cat crosses someone’s path, then it is bad luck and something unfortunate may befall the person. Usually a superstitious person will turn around after seeing a cat cross their path and go home. I would also do this as a young boy. This particular story tells of another Indian superstition about cats:

In earlier times in close-knit families, children would be married to a cousin in order to keep the families connected. One such child, a girl of only seven, had been married in this way. Generally, a new daughter-in-law is expected to work hard and this family gave her the job of churning milk to butter. The girl would work very diligently to churn the milk and when finished would store the butter in a cupboard. Because the girl was so young, she would often forget to close the cupboard door, and more often than not, a kitten would come and steal the butter or knock it over. The girl was much harassed by her mother-in-law because of her carelessness. During these times she would remember her own mother’s kindness and cry.

The girl had such an enmity for this cat that whenever she saw it she would chase it and throw rocks at it, meaning to do it harm. One day as she was churning, the girl noticed that the kitten was just behind her—ready to pounce on the butter. The girl grabbed a stone lying nearby in the mortar and threw it at the kitten. It hurt the cat so badly that it fell immediately onto

(BAL NATU CONTINUES)

its back, feet up in the air—as if dead. When the family came to know about it, there was a great hubbub. It is an old superstition that if a cat is killed in the early morning, the one responsible for its death will go to hell.

A Brahmin, who had a big belly and wore a large golden ring on his finger, was called from town in order to absolve the girl's sin. But when he discovered what time of day the killing had occurred, he announced that it was the most inauspicious time and that the entire family was in danger of damnation. He demanded an ounce of gold to perform the rituals needed to cleanse the family's prestige, which was at risk. A furious bargaining took place to convince the Brahmin to take less gold, as the family could not afford so much. Meanwhile, the poor young girl went to the other part of the house and saw that the kitten had come to its senses, having only been knocked unconscious. Immediately, the cat ran away. Delighted, the girl raced back to her family and told them that the cat was not dead! The Brahmin's face fell because he now had to go away empty-handed. He was so greedy and now so disappointed.

As I was telling the story of the mischievous kitten, I was laughing softly. You see, Baba comes down to our level and makes us feel so natural and unselfconscious—like a friend with whom one shares fun and good humor. So, here was God in human form before me and I was so completely at ease as I was telling Him the story, that I was laughing as I told it. I think that both the story and my own laughter provided good entertainment for Baba.

In those days, Baba was meeting with His devotees from all over India. Some would come from faraway places for His darshan. On this occasion, soon after I had finished telling Baba the funny story, an Indian family came to pay their respects to Him. After greeting Baba with devotion, they sat near Him, hoping just to be in His divine company. Do you know what Baba did? He told them, “Just now Bal told Me a very funny story. I really enjoyed it and you must listen to it too!”

They had come to be with Baba and were not at all interested in me. To this day, I still don't know who this family was. Still, Baba said, “No, no, no, you *must* hear it.” Baba told me to take the family into the adjacent room and tell them the whole story in a way that would make them feel as if they had participated in it at the time when I told it to Him.

The family didn't seem happy about this instruction, for they didn't wish to leave Baba's presence. But what to do? Baba had told them to leave Him. So, on our way to the room next door, the father of the family whispered in my ear, “Just give us the gist of it—a short version of the story.” I understood that they wanted to be in Baba's presence again as quickly as possible, so I agreed.

Once we were in the next room, I started telling them the story of the girl and the kitten, and throughout it they nodded their heads in efforts to encourage me to hurry through all the details. I think they must have been greatly relieved when at last I finished the story. They quickly got up and rushed to Baba, and I slowly followed them.

As soon as we were all in the room, Baba looked at me and gestured, “Did you tell them the story?”

Before I could answer, the head of the family hurriedly interjected, “Yes, yes, Baba. He told us the whole story and it was very funny.”

Baba looked at me again. "Did you really tell them the way you told Me?"

"Yes, Baba."

And the family joined in with a chorus of "Yes, yes...."

Baba only shook His head. "No, no, no, you did not."

Now the family started getting frightened, wondering if there was going to be a second version of the story, meaning that they would once again have to leave Baba's company.

Baba looked at me and said, "You did not tell them the whole story."

"Yes, Baba," I repeated, "I did tell them."

For a moment Baba was silent, and then, looking at me He repeated, "You did not tell them the whole story. You were only in the next room. And as you were telling it to the family, I did not hear you laughing as you had with Me. So I know that you did not tell the whole story. You must be as natural with others as you are with Me. This is what you should have done."

"Yes, Baba."

And the family exclaimed, "That's all right! That's all right!"

Baba didn't ask me to tell the story again, much to that family's great relief.

Another story I remember telling to Baba, I call "The Psychologist's Shock!" This occurred while I was in Meherazad. Baba had called me forward from my usual spot opposite His chair and gestured that the weight of His Universal work was pressing down on His head. He asked me to tell him something funny to relieve the burden.

I am not much of a joke teller and didn't know what I could do, especially as Baba had gestured, "Make Me laugh." There was no choice

but to come forward, sit in front of Baba, and hope I would think of something. Mani often liked to say that “it was no joke, telling a joke to Baba,” because so often one’s mind went completely blank. When this happened to me, Baba would say, “Come on, come on.” But where to go, there is nothing in the mind; it’s totally blank. And so once He said, “Tell Me some news,” and I thought, Baba knows everything, what should I tell Him, would He like this, would He like that. And so my mind was working.

What Baba wanted was that when He gives you a certain order, even, “Tell me a joke,” that you should respond to it immediately. And I failed and He said, “Well there are hundreds of worlds and hundreds and millions of things in the world and still Bal has no news to tell Me.” In spite of this, I was unable to say anything, I was in such a mood, “What to tell Baba?” But this time, instead of worrying about what to say I just enjoyed the opportunity to come even closer and sit so near to Baba, face to face. And then Baba came to my rescue and He suddenly put in my mind a story I had read a few days earlier. I said:

Baba, as You know, in England there is a lottery based on who will win the Derby, and the winner gets ten thousand pounds sterling [in those days a considerable sum]. Now it so happened that there was a good man, one might even say a saintly man, who was living on a small farm with his wife. He had a few animals and raised some crops, which provided more than enough money for his simple needs, and he was quite content.

His wife was also happy, but she began thinking that as their two children grew, the family would need more money to see to the children’s education and marriages. The wife knew that her

(BAL NATU CONTINUES)

husband would feel that they already had enough, so she decided to purchase a lottery ticket. The investment was minimal and was something they could well afford, and the return, if she won, would ensure that they would have enough for their children no matter what the future held in store.

She bought a ticket without telling her husband. When the Derby was held some time later, it turned out that she won 10,000 pounds sterling. But then she began to worry. She knew her husband and his simple ways, and she thought that if she suddenly announced that she had won that much money, the shock might be too much for him. So she went to see a renowned psychologist who agreed with her that she would have to cushion the blow for her husband. Together they devised a plan.

She invited the psychologist to the house and introduced him to her husband. The psychologist proved to be quite charming and soon he and the husband were chatting easily. In the course of their conversation, the psychologist asked the husband what he would do if he were to suddenly come into possession of a thousand pounds. The husband replied that he had never given it any thought; that God provided for all their wants, and he didn't spend any time thinking about earning more money. As the psychologist persisted, the husband said he supposed he would buy a few more animals and maybe build a better barn for them so they would be warmer in the winter.

The next week the psychologist came again to visit. And again he and the husband seemed to hit it off and they had a long

talk. This time, during the conversation, the psychologist asked the husband what he would do if he were to suddenly come into possession of two thousand pounds. As this was a sum which was beyond his ability to even imagine, all the man could say was, "Oh, God would show me what to do with such a sum."

The psychologist went away amazed. He had never met such an unworldly person before. As he continued to come week after week, he became more and more impressed with the man's simplicity, honesty, and contentment.

Of course, these are not the exact words I used when I told the story to Baba. I am merely now giving an example of the kind of story I told. But I do think that I drew the story out as much as possible so that it would be long. Baba was always the most perfect audience. And He loved stories.

At any rate, I had the psychologist come week after week, and each week he would ask the husband what he would do if he suddenly came into possession of an amount of money that grew by 1,000 pounds each week:

So finally the tenth and last visit came. The psychologist arrived and found that the wife had prepared a more lavish tea than usual. She knew that this was the final week and as a kind of celebration she had turned the tea into a sort of feast.

The psychologist was genuinely fond of the husband by this time and the husband, in his simple manner, had accepted the psychologist in his heart as a true friend. After the usual

(BAL NATU CONTINUES)

good-natured conversation, the psychologist posed the crucial question, “What would you do if you found that you had won the Derby lottery of 10,000 pounds?”

This time the husband didn’t hesitate. “Why if I were to ever come into possession of such a fortune,” he declared, “I would immediately give half of it to you.”

Hearing this and knowing how honest and truthful the man was, the psychologist was convinced that he would get the 5,000 pounds. The shock of which was so great for him, that he collapsed on the spot.

Whether this temporarily relieved Baba’s burden I can’t really say, for as I finished the story I was too shy to look up and see Baba’s reaction, and once I was done, I quickly got up and returned to my usual place in the hall.

Baba and
Bal shared
many
lighthearted
moments



1964



Baba opening
the door of
the new Poona
Centre

In February of 1964 Baba had a circular sent to the West, which stated:

I will be in Poona from April 1st to the end of June 1964. For reasons of my own, I will NOT give darshan to anyone this year. I will be going to Poona for relaxation and I want to be left completely undisturbed. Therefore, no one should visit Poona this summer with a view to see Me.

Perhaps because Baba had been in “seclusion” in past years and then relented and allowed darshans to take place, or perhaps knowing the ardency of His lovers, Baba added:

No one should approach Me or seek permission to approach Me. Neither should anyone write to Me or cable or telegram to Me during My Poona stay and for the rest of the year, but in case of emergency, a cable or telegram is permitted.

Baba softened the blow a bit by finishing:

A number of you who have been looking forward keenly to seeing Me in Poona this year may be upset at not being allowed to see Me, but I have previously told you that you should hold fast to My daaman under all circumstances—and not seeing Me is one of the circumstances.

And then, giving all some reason to hope, Baba concluded:

This year will be the climax of My suffering, but 1965 will be a glorious year for Me and My lovers.

Baba arrived on 1st April and, a few weeks later, Mani described the difference in Guru Prasad that year:

In the three weeks’ stay here we have come to realize the impact of Baba’s message that was sent out to all concerned in the East and West (in the Circular issued on 23rd February), for Guruprasad has been a strangely silent abode. Missing is the human stream that flowed constantly along the driveway, and the happy stampede of darshaners that was almost a daily occurrence

last summer. To the many who had hoped and planned to come to Poona this May, to stay as long as they could so as to have the Beloved's sahavas as much as they could, the announcement that He will NOT give darshan this year came as a "bolt from the blue," and reacted on those around Baba too.⁴³

And yet there were exceptions to this seclusion. Nana Kher and I were permitted to come as usual and stay at Guru Prasad. Khorshed also came for the three months from Bombay where she had been staying ever since the New Life despite her ardent wish to be able to come and live once more with Baba. And again, Meherjee and Meherwan, as well as Baba's brothers, Jal and Beheram, and the nephews, Sheroo and the twins, and their brother-in-law Jehangu, were permitted to come any time, although they most often came on Sunday when others from Poona were also called for the weekly card game. The Maharani was allowed to visit daily for a week during April. She had been told she could come for any five-day period during the summer and, on her own, chose early April. Not only were visitors not permitted, but we, at Guru Prasad, were not allowed to leave the premises either.

There was one large exception to this general pattern of quiet rest and that occurred when Baba went to inaugurate the Poona Centre on 1st May.

K.K. Ramakrishnan, the longtime secretary of the Centre, wrote the following account of its opening in 1964:

"Let there be five or five hundred, I will be there."

These words of assurance were conveyed by Meher Baba through gestures to His lovers of Poona. The occasion was

(K.K. RAMAKRISHNAN CONTINUES)

the inauguration of the centre and its big hall that was to be constructed by these lovers as an expression of their love for Him and readiness to work for His cause. Meher Baba further added, “I have created the atmosphere of My love here and blessed it. It is now up to you to maintain it.”

Baba had promised me that He would bless the centre when the building work was completed. Accordingly, He asked me to arrange the inauguration. The first day of May 1964 was fixed for the inauguration when Baba would be in Poona for His summer stay in Guru Prasad. Baba had, however, instructed me not to have a public function and that the inauguration should be simple and in a quiet manner as Baba was in seclusion. Therefore, only a few close families of Baba lovers were invited for the inaugural function. The newly constructed hall had a capacity to accommodate about seven hundred people. Toilets and bathrooms were also provided. Also a special room for Baba to rest in had been constructed. Adjacent to this room was another room that was for use as the office of the centre.⁴⁴

It might be noted that, even though the plan was for a relatively small gathering (around two hundred were invited), those invited brought their families and it ended up with around 500 people being present for the event.

Ramakrishnan continues:

The story of the centre in Poona goes back to the fifties when Baba programs in Poona were held at the houses of Baba lovers spread over different localities. When I joined the

Poona group, it strongly occurred to me that the Baba lovers at Poona should have a place of their own. They can assemble at this place, as and when they want and sing the glory of their Divine Beloved Meher Baba and enjoy the atmosphere of His love. There was one more strong reason for having such a feeling. Poona being the birthplace of Meher Baba, the Avatar of the present age, it had a special place in this Avataric Advent. This special privilege of Poona city needed a befitting expression of gratitude and love by having a grand centre. When this thought was placed before Baba, Baba not only approved the idea but also thereafter guided and helped me at every stage in the creation of a building for the centre.

Thus, on Friday, May 1, 1964, Baba started in a car accompanied by His mandali from Guru Prasad and arrived at the centre at 8:55 a.m. The assembly of five hundred and odd lovers heartily hailed Baba. His car was driven right up to the verandah outside the main hall. The hall was decorated with articles of seven colors that symbolized Baba's seven-colored flag. As soon as Baba stepped out of the car, the President of the centre, Sadashiv Shelke-Patil garlanded Him. With a smile, Baba embraced him and approached the door where Meherjee Karkaria presented Him with a tray containing scissors and a key. Baba cut the seven-coloured ribbon tied across the doorway and unlocked the door.

Baba walked into the main hall on the carpeted pathway with petals of flowers spread over it. The pathway led up to the stage where a cushioned chair, specially made for Baba for this occasion, was placed. The seven trustees of the centre followed

(K.K. RAMAKRISHNAN CONTINUES)

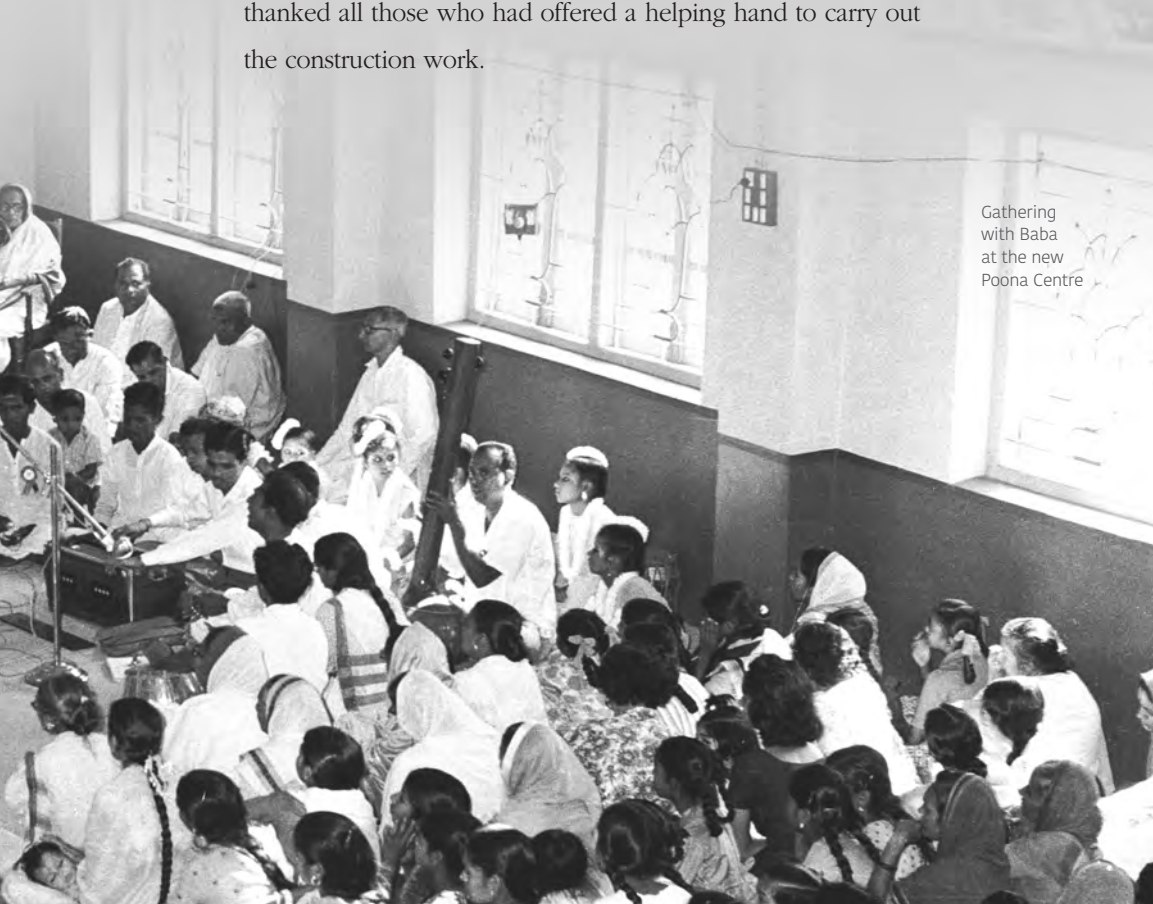
Baba as He entered the hall. Upon entering, Baba looked all around the hall and felt happy. He praised the framed photographs that were presented to the centre by Bhikubhai [Meelan], a Baba lover and photographer from Poona. These photographs were displayed on the walls all around the hall. The photographs had captured Baba's different moods while involved in various activities of His Avataric work.

After Baba was seated in His chair, Adi unfurled the seven-coloured flag from the ceiling of the main hall. After this, the lovers who were waiting outside filed in and took their seats. As soon as all were seated, a group of seven children entered the hall from the side room singing a song of welcome to the Avatar. Each child held a garland of one of the seven colours of Baba's flag. One by one, the children garlanded Baba and gave



a dance performance. Baba appreciated this performance and in turn praised Madhusudan for the efforts he had taken to organize this program. The Poona bhajan mandali led by Madhusudan then sang the songs which Madhusudan had composed for the inaugural functions of Baba centres: Meherdham in Nauranga, Meherastana in Kovvur and Meherdham in Dehra Dun.

After the singing, a five-year-old girl, Mehera Kerawalla, recited in English the Parvardigar Prayer and the Repentance Prayer, which was followed by the prayers in Marathi by Sudha and Asha Bhawsar. Soman, on behalf of the lovers of Poona, expressed gratitude to Baba for His compassion in gracing them with His presence at the opening of the Poona Centre. He also thanked all those who had offered a helping hand to carry out the construction work.



Gathering
with Baba
at the new
Poona Centre

(K.K. RAMAKRISHNAN CONTINUES)

After the children sang Baba's arti, the sweets touched by Baba's hand were distributed to all as His prasad. Baba allowed His lovers to approach, meet and garland Him. This was contrary to Baba's previous ruling. This showed that Baba was really in a very happy mood.

At about 10:30 a.m., Baba stepped down from the platform and, with the assistance of Eruch and Francis, walked into His room, which was nicely decorated by Homai Malati. He sat on the bed and took a sip from fresh coconut water offered to Him and also touched the fruits and other eatables placed before Him to eat. He then allowed the mandali to partake in the eatables. Then He proceeded to the office room and sat there for a little time. At 11 o'clock, He left the centre's premises but not before giving a promise to Sadashiv Patil, "I will give Darshan at the Poona Centre just once more, exactly after one year from today that is on May 1, 1965, which will be the first day out of the five days darshan programs at Guru Prasad."⁴⁵

Parichehr Saadi, who had come in 1959 to meet Baba at Guru Prasad, came for this darshan as well. She automatically became in charge of the Iranis because she could speak Persian. Baba was happy and told her: "Very good. You're looking after them."

While there, she had wanted to try to sell some of her jewelry to make some money. Coming from Pakistan, she had not been allowed to bring much with her and it was possible to get good prices for gold in India. But somehow a shady character had gotten involved and when Meherjee heard about it he felt certain that Parichehr would be cheated.

Baba personally got involved and told Parichehr what was a fair price for the pieces she had given to the man and ordered her not to accept anything less.

Parichehr also wanted to sell some rings. Baba took them in His hands and told her not to sell them, but to keep them with her and not to lose them.

He repeated this instruction and then added, “Even if you don’t wear them, keep them.”

Parichehr said, “Yes, Baba,” but she started to get worried, thinking, “My God, if I lose it what will happen to me?” So, from then on, she kept the jewelry safe with her at home.



After the celebration at the Poona Centre, there were no more public programs that year. Mani wrote in mid-June:

We have been here over eleven weeks, but the novelty of our experience of a silent Guruprasad has not worn off. The Beloved’s family in the East and West have been wonderfully faithful in observing His wish not to disturb Him this year, and we can imagine how difficult this must be for them. For the many who are in Poona, to be so near Him and yet not to see Him must surely be like being in paradise blindfolded! There have however, been darshan seekers, mostly individuals who had not seen beloved Baba before, coming from hundreds of miles for a glimpse of Him; and as a rule Baba remains “not at home” to visitors coming for His darshan. While we enjoy the comfort of Guruprasad as a home, visions of next year rise

(MANI CONTINUES)

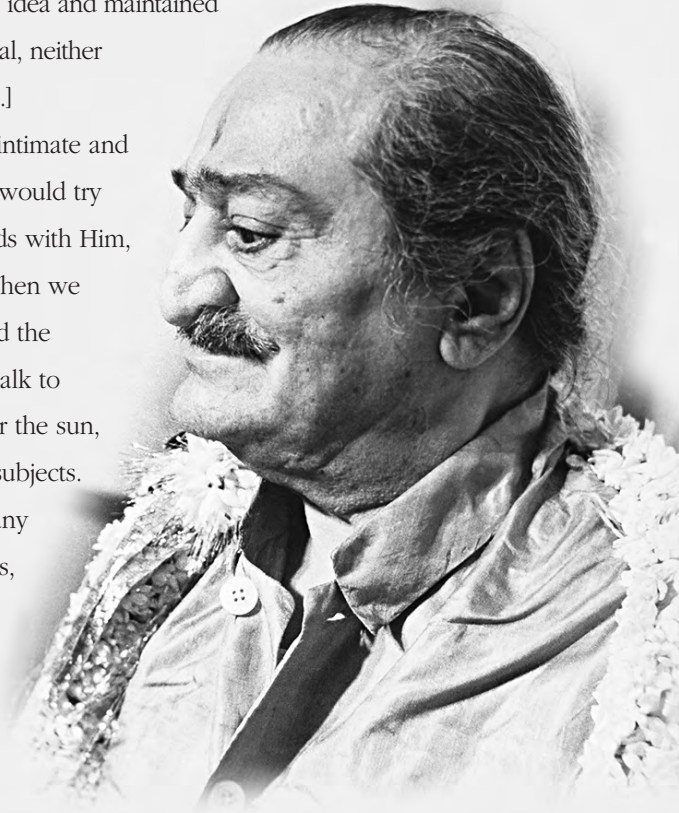
before us, floating on fond hopes and speculations woven from hints dropped by Baba that next summer He might make Himself available for darshan to all. And so we live in anticipation of the future and contentment of the present.⁴⁶

But there were those who did get to see Baba that summer, as Mani notes later in the same letter:

In the mornings and afternoons Baba sits in the smaller hall with the men mandali, and the group around Him grows bigger by a handful on weekends when a few of His close family are privileged to be with Him. While Baba is at the dining table with us for breakfast, we can see the fountain in the garden pond with the flash of pink bougainvillea behind it; and Baba often notices the doves and mynas and hawks that come to drink from the basin of the fountain and bathe in it. Just as breakfast is over, four tots troop in—the eldest being a boy of 5 and the youngest a girl eighteen months old who sometimes toddles in clutching some rose petals in her hand to place before Baba on the table that she can barely manage to reach. These young visitors, children of the caretaker and manager of Guruprasad bungalow, sit every morning on the steps waiting to be called in to Baba, solemnly greet Him and receive His prasad of sweets. The toddler wants to be the first to get the prasad and often gives the sweet back to Baba for Him to unwrap it for her, which He does. Sometimes she brings her doll with her and gives it to Baba to play with.⁴⁷

At some point that summer, someone sent a *Newsweek* magazine article from the United States that was read out to Baba in the mandali's room at Guru Prasad. The article talked about Fred Hoyle's Big Bang theory of how the world was created. As it was being read, Baba smiled with a glimmer in His eyes. It seemed as if He appreciated Hoyle's ideas on creation, which pointed in the direction of the truth. [Actually, although Fred Hoyle gave the name "Big Bang" to the theory of the universe's sudden creation, he personally opposed this idea and maintained that the universe was eternal, neither created nor destroyed.—Eds.]

It was a wonderfully intimate and quiet time with Baba. We would try to entertain Him, play cards with Him, and just chat with Him. When we were playing cards we had the freedom if we wanted to talk to Baba on any subject under the sun, except so-called spiritual subjects. Baba didn't want to give any discourses, or explanations, or even talk about love, or surrender or anything connected with spirituality. On the contrary, Baba would look to us to give Him "news."



A quiet time with Baba

I remember once, after racking my brain to come up with something that might interest Baba, I thought of something I had just seen in the newspaper.

I told Baba, “Do you know that today is Buddha Poornima?”

Buddha Poornima is the full moon day of Baisakhi [name of month in Hindu calendar] that generally falls in May, according to the Indian almanac. I went on to tell Baba that Gautama Buddha was born, experienced enlightenment, and dropped His body all on this same day. I thought this was interesting and told Baba who, in His compassion, let me share this news with Him. But when I was finished, Baba looked at me and said, “You’re telling me?”

It was only years later that I heard from Mani about when Baba visited the Ellora Caves in Maharashtra with His Eastern and Western women disciples. As they reached cave number ten, which is known as the Carpenter’s Cave, Baba pulled His alphabet board out from under His arm. He pointed to the grand statue of Lord Buddha inside the cave and spelled out: “I am Buddha.” Baba spelled it out three times, and Mani, standing by His side, read it aloud. Mani described how it was as if from every nook and corner of the cave the words, “I am Buddha,” reverberated in a moment that held eternity.

Another day a short item that referred to Baba, of not more than a paragraph, appeared in a local Marathi paper. The news it gave was both distorted and uncomplimentary. I remember vividly that Baba, who was usually totally indifferent to publicity of any kind, seemed to take this very seriously.

“I was born here,” Baba shared with us, “and now I am staying here. I have had so many darshan programs here, and in spite of this something as such appears in the paper! What will people think

of Me? Who could have put such a thing in the paper? Who is responsible?"

Of course none of us knew, so a few suggestions were made, but these didn't satisfy Baba. He formed a small "committee" to get to the bottom of it. To me the item had seemed rather trivial, and I could not understand why Baba was making such a big deal of it. Perhaps for that reason, I was put on the committee.

One of the other members of this committee was a local Baba lover named K.N. Soman, who happened to be the assistant editor of another local Marathi newspaper. My actual investigatory work was limited by the fact that Baba had told me I was not to leave the premises of Guru Prasad. So, instead, I would phone K.N. Soman daily and ask him what he had found out.

After a few days, while we were playing cards in the mandali's room with Baba, He turned and asked me, "Did you phone the assistant editor?"

"Yes, Baba. But he doesn't know what reporter was behind that item."

"Keep trying," Baba urged. And for the next few days, Baba continued to anxiously inquire from me as to whether or not I had discovered who had been responsible.

One morning when I saw Baba, He gestured, "Did you get the news?"

"No, Baba. What news?"

"You didn't get the news? But I got the news."

"How? Did someone telephone?"

"No, but I got the news."

Unable to contain myself, I blurted out, "Well, who was responsible?"

Baba smiled and pointed to His own chest, indicating, “I am the One who was responsible.”

This brought home to me that it is always Baba who plays His own game. He uses whatever means are at hand, be it praise or opposition, for His work of shaking the mind and awakening the heart.



There were a few others who also were allowed to come and see Baba, but for the most part, Baba's stay at Guru Prasad continued in relative isolation. Baba left for Meherazad on 1st July, but Baba told His Poona lovers that they could say goodbye to Him in Bund Garden as He left [which was something Baba allowed most years]. As it turned out, it rained so much that meeting at Bund Garden was not possible and Baba allowed the lovers to come to Guru Prasad itself.

1965

*T*he next year Baba arrived in Poona on 30th March but, in stark contrast to 1964, Baba allowed large darshan programs to be held, both at the new Poona Centre and at Guru Prasad itself. The previous year, in His circular announcing that no one was supposed to visit Guru Prasad, Baba had said that 1965 would be a glorious year for Him and for His lovers. As His physical suffering continued unabated that year, I would hesitate to say that it was a glorious year for Him, but for His lovers, that summer certainly was glorious.

Baba greeted
large crowds
at Guru Prasad



Once again, on His arrival, only a very few were allowed to see Baba. Mani wrote two weeks later:

Greetings to you from the heart of Guruprasad, which throbs once again with the presence of beloved Baba.

...Among the very few privileged to receive Baba on arrival at Guruprasad, was our Siamese cat of the nine names, who ran to Him with loud welcoming meows; and later when Baba came over from the mandali's hall in His little wheeled chair, the cat was seated on His lap, looking demurely up at us from its place of honour.⁴⁸

The previous year when Baba inaugurated the Poona Centre He promised He would make one more visit, the next year on 1st May. Now, in addition to that program, Baba decided to have four more days of large public darshans at Guru Prasad the following days, much as He had for the East-West Gathering. Mani describes the preparations:

The approaching footsteps of May are heard and felt in the many movements around us, as preparations for the May Darshan are being speeded up. The compound of Guruprasad is a hive of workmen putting up poles and canvas for the darshan pandal (awning), working on the erection of the dais, planning the arrangement for thousands of chairs, for loudspeakers and other details. All available accommodation within practical distance of Guruprasad, appears to have been reserved by Baba lovers from out-stations far in advance—hotels, inns, school premises, and *karyalays* [halls rented out for weddings and auspicious functions] which will serve as dormitories for hundreds of darshaners. By the end of March,

Baba lovers approaching hotel managers for room reservations, were told regretfully that they were fully booked up by “Meher Baba’s party!” Two thousand, from various parts of India and from Pakistan, Iran and Aden, have been able to ensure for themselves some arrangement or the other for the stay in Poona; while efforts continue frantically to meet further requests pouring in. The lovers from Andhra and Hamirpur, coming in groups of hundreds, are working out their problem of mass-conveyance by reserving train-bogies and chartering buses. And perhaps by the time this letter reaches you, they will all have converged, from all points in the East, at the feet of The One who is the centre of their lives, whose Love is the sole reality of their existence. May they receive in full, the Love which the Beloved will give them through His silence.⁴⁹

The first day of the darshan program was held on May 1st at the Poona Centre. Again, Mani gave a brief account of it in her Family Letter of June 15:

On 30th April, the night before May-Day when Baba was to give His darshan at the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre, Poona had torrential rainfall accompanied by lightning and thunder that rent the night with its din. It was as though the skies were giving a roaring ovation before the curtain of May was lifted to a glorious dawn, which found Baba lovers in their thousands flocking to the Centre grounds to await Baba’s arrival. As the Centre’s Hall could not accommodate more than some hundreds, every bit of the adjoining space was covered with “pandals” wherein by 7 o’clock the darshaners stood packed in a solid crowd that tailed out over a furlong down the lane and along the main road. It was made up

(MANI CONTINUES)

of men and women, young and old, of diverse castes, religions and languages, who cried out with one voice and heart: AVATAR MEHER BABA KI JAI! when the Beloved's car drove up at 8 o'clock. Baba was at the Centre for nearly four hours, so wondrously radiant and smiling; and although it was beyond possibility for more than a section of this massive Baba-crowd to approach Him for darshan, most of them were granted a glorious glimpse of Him from the balcony where they were accommodated in relays.⁵⁰

Darshan at
the Poona
Centre



Keshav Nigam and K.N. Soman read the Hindi and Marathi translation of K.K. Ramakrishnan's welcoming speech and Baba's response, which had been read by Eruch:

"I am happy that in welcoming Me to the hall which in your love you have built for My work, you are welcoming Me to a place in your lives and a seat in each of your hearts. For it is to live in your hearts and to share in your lives that I have come among you."

Dr. Bharucha's account gives a sense of the love madness that prevailed. While these translators were reading out on the mic, Baba gestured, "No one is hearing them." The thousands outside the hall were getting frantic at the delay in getting Baba's darshan. They were cheering loudly, "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai," and were not bothering to hear the speeches. When the Beloved of their hearts was seated before them, all words fell on deaf ears. The heart overruled the mind completely. Everyone was trying to push his or her way to a latticed window to get a glimpse of his Beloved. Those at the windows were clinging to the lattice work for all they were worth lest they be torn away to get drowned in the ocean of humanity behind.⁵¹

Baba explained to the crowd that they would get a chance to have His darshan during the following programs to be held at Guru Prasad. Furthermore, because not everyone could be accommodated inside the Poona Centre hall, those who were already inside were asked to remain seated while those who were outside were told to come forward in queues for Baba's darshan. Additionally, those who had come from afar and had to leave were also allowed to join the queue. As Dr. Bharucha writes:

(DR. BHARUCHA WRITES)

The darshan began at 8:30. Batches of about 100 women and then men were admitted into the hall at a time. The rushing pushing and stampede at the door was too much for the volunteers to manage. Those who were lucky to enter the hall stood in a queue. They came past Baba, bowed down their heads on His feet and left.

Even so, after two hours, it was obvious that the lines were too long to allow even that limited group to have darshan.

Dr. Bharucha continues:

Baba called for Ramakrishnan and asked him to allow big batches of His lovers onto the balcony in the hall in turns so that they could at least have a good glimpse of Baba. Every batch that came onto the balcony cheered, and Baba would wave to them and gesture that all should come the next day to Guruprasad.⁵²

The next day the programs continued at Guru Prasad. The pandal, this time, was a bit more rain proof than the one used during the East-West Gathering. Unlike the Poona Centre, where there were too many people to allow them all to have Baba's darshan, at Guru Prasad arrangements were made to allow it. As Mani had written in a previous letter:

It will in fact be a "darshan" in the literal sense, for Baba has permitted His lovers to bow down on His feet. As a rule this has been forbidden, at Baba's express wish; and over the years at different gatherings, big and small, we have known the mandali [to] go hoarse from repeatedly calling out "Please do

NOT bow down—do NOT touch His feet,” though not often succeeding in stemming the flow of this spontaneous expression of homage on the part of the Indian lovers. For this May darshan Baba does not only condone it, He fully permits it.⁵³

Perhaps this dispensation was a gift from Baba, who knew that this would be His last public darshan, although He never indicated that at the time. When I read the circular that said, “No one should try to embrace Me, no one should try to touch My person, but I give you an opportunity to bow down to Me,” I just felt, “What is this?” Because when we were with Baba in Andhra or on other occasions, the one thing we had to repeat, standing near the queue, was, “Don’t touch Baba’s feet.” When we were in Andhra we used to say *vaddu*, which means, “Don’t.” So when people were starting to bow down to Baba, we would say “Vaddu.” And we had to say it so often that I still remember that word. After two visits to Andhra with Baba, that’s the only word in Telugu that I learned.

And now, Baba was saying openly that even if you bring garlands, you can put them at My feet and you can touch My feet. That was the greatest blessing in disguise. If somebody touched Baba’s feet without His wanting it, it wasn’t good. They might think it would benefit them but, as Kabir has said, “When He gives of His own will, it’s milk and when you ask and He gives, it’s water, but when you extract from Him, it’s blood.” But here it was milk, honey, and nectar because it was right from Baba.

So all those who came felt, “This is the time when we can offer ourselves—our lives—at His feet.” And that’s the greatest opportunity. For five days, it was a love feast, right from the first day when He visited the



The darshan from May 2-6 was a massive love feast

Poona Centre and then for the successive days at Guru Prasad. One of the first messages Baba had read out to greet those on the first day was:

I am happy to see you all, and I am touched that many of you have come from distant parts at no small sacrifice to be in My presence for a few hours.

Devotees spend their lifetime savings and even risk life itself in pilgrimages to bow down before God in forms sanctified by tradition. And their rewards are according to tradition.

But you have journeyed to bow down before God who has taken human form because of love. And your reward will be according to love.

As always, Baba's love silently reached out to every person in attendance; each feeling it in an individual way, depending on their receptivity and the nature of the ongoing drama that Baba was always engaged in, bringing hearts ever closer to Him. Perhaps one will get a glimpse of this from the following accounts.

Urmilla Shrivastava, Gokaran's wife, got the chance to have Baba's darshan for the first time that May. She writes:

The disciplined silence that pervaded the atmosphere during the darshan touched my heart, as well as Baba's intermittent standing up from His seat to greet His lovers, specially those who were sitting at the far back seats. Meher Baba would Himself fold His hands in reverence to His lovers. This was the most touching sight.... The massive pandal was erected in the back garden of the Guru Prasad palace. Male and female lovers sat in two

(URMILLA SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

separate areas with an aisle in between. During this darshan there was no discrimination of caste, creed, or economic status. The entire range of Indian society was represented there as Baba lovers, sitting together. In order to manage things easily the sitting area was divided into different provincial compartments.

During His darshan, no lengthy lectures were delivered; only a few directives were announced from time to time relating to Baba's darshan. Intermittent shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!" and bhajans would break the prevailing silence there, otherwise the darshan program went on peacefully and orderly.

We stayed in Poona for about a week and took His darshan every day between 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. On various days lovers from different provinces were given a chance to personally bow down at Beloved Baba's feet. I also got this opportunity to put my head on His lotus feet. The experience of bowing down to Him is difficult to describe, yet its memory is still alive and fresh in my heart.

Her husband echoed these sentiments, recalling:

By the time of the 1965 mass darshan for Easterners, the seed of Baba's love had transformed into a full-grown tree within my family. A large group of my family members started loving or at least respecting Baba. A big family contingent including my sisters, sister-in-law, brothers, mother, father, brother-in-law and my wife, all went for Baba's darshan. This was a period of a great upsurge of Baba's love throughout India, and many people came for His darshan, prompted partially by the concern

that Baba was going to drop His body soon and people would not get the opportunity to see Him again. Again Baba was available at two levels of contact simultaneously. He was giving out collective satisfaction to the masses of over five thousand lovers, gathered under a very large pandal, while offering His love to individuals through a peculiar mode of His working.

Time and again Baba announced that He was also with those lovers who could not come for His darshan because of whatever kind of difficulty. My father was left alone in Bhopal because of serious illness. On our return he told us that he felt Baba's presence there very, very strongly and felt as if he was taking Baba's darshan in Poona along with all those who gathered there.

My younger brother wanted to wash Baba's feet and collect the water as sacred prasad. He was carrying a wet handkerchief, which he tried to rub against Baba's feet gently without losing a drop of water. But he was caught in the attempt and warned by the mandali not to proceed. He was very upset for the whole morning session that day. When the darshan was over, we were all leaving Guru Prasad and, just then, someone loudly called out our names and beckoned us to come inside Guru Prasad. By Beloved Baba's order, Bhau Kalchuri very lovingly gave us a bottle full of Baba's sacred feet-washing water. This shows the compassion of Beloved Baba and how promptly He responded to an individual's longing.

One of my friends was also attending the mass darshan program, but some misunderstanding had crept between us so

(GOKARAN SHRIVASTAVA CONTINUES)

that whenever she would appear before me I would be filled with hatred and agony. This feeling became unbearable to me and I brought it to the attention of Beloved Baba, telling Him that I was not able to enjoy His darshan because of an acute sense of hatred for a person present there. Baba then called both of us, and after asking me what was wrong, He made a sign of a cross [actually the shape of an x] by using both His arms, and then clapped to say that everything was over between us and I should not worry. All hatred vanished instantaneously, as if there was nothing there. I thus enjoyed His darshan fully.

During the darshan, the most remarkable events were when Beloved Baba, with the help of a mandali member and Dr. Bharucha, would repeatedly get up from His seat throughout the program. This He did out of His utmost compassion for His lovers who were sitting at the far end of the pandal and were not able to see Baba clearly because of the distance. He would console them by saying they should not worry about not getting the front seats, and as a compensation He would stand up again and again so that those in the rear could see Him properly.

Most of us were engrossed in Baba's darshan so much so that we actually forgot to note other things around us. I overheard someone in the crowd saying that the gathering was unique in the sense that thousands were gathered there, sitting in silence and admiration. Nothing was asked by Baba and no lectures were delivered. Why then were thousands sitting there in an orderly fashion not for a day or two but for five days? Is it not really wonderful? We came to our senses only when it came to an end.

M.B.G. Shastry was another Baba lover who brought his family for Baba's darshan, including his siblings and in-laws. In fact, the party was large enough that they filled up an entire bogie on the train. His mother, Lakshmi Devamma, could walk only with difficulty and used two "walking sticks" as supports. When the gates to Guru Prasad were opened for darshan, the family rushed in to get seats and completely forgot about her. Left behind, in the crush of the crowd, she fell and would have been trampled but just then, Baba's car appeared, and she was picked up and put inside and then driven to the pandal. This "divine intervention" helped convince her that Baba was who her son was saying He was all along.

At the time of her death she was living with M.B.G. Shastry's brother [who, incidentally, is the one who took the photograph of Baba gesturing, which was in the Samadhi for many years] in Vijayawada while Shastry and family were living in Hyderabad.

Near the end of the morning session, Baba had it announced on the microphone that all those who were seated would get their chance to have His darshan during the remaining four days, so they should be patient. Just before this, Eruch was called and given a message from the women who were watching the program from inside. They told Eruch to replace the pillow behind Baba's neck with another one. When Eruch did so, he was surprised to see how soaked with sweat the first pillow had become. He had been too busy attending to everything to think about this, but the women, whose concentration was just on Baba, thought of it.



Eruch and Adi
tending to
Baba during
the darshan
program

Another touching example of the women's constant thinking of Baba's comfort and well-being occurred so simply and quietly that few, if any, were even aware of it. During the program, Adi K. Irani had to convey something to Baba. So as not to block people's view of Baba, he stood a bit behind Baba's chair and to the side and conversed quietly in Baba's ear. Again the women sent a message from inside asking Adi not to stand behind Baba as that made Baba turn His head, which caused Him pain. They were well aware of Baba's suffering and did whatever they could to lessen it.

Typically, although Baba was radiant throughout the darshan program, when it ended He seemed exhausted and in great pain. Still He met

with a much smaller group in the afternoon in the mandali's room. Dr. Bharucha wrote:

Baba asked us to tell Him a joke. One lover said, "Once a man visited a boys' school. He asked the boys a question: 'If a train 300 yards long crosses a railway platform in three minutes, what is my age?' All the boys were dumbfounded. One boy suddenly raised his hand and when asked the answer to the question he replied, '46 years, sir.' The man was quite perplexed at the answer for that was his correct age. He asked the boy how he had calculated his age. The boy replied, 'My uncle who is 23 years old is only half mad, sir!'"

All enjoyed the joke. Baba then said that He would now give us a joke. He said, "During the East-West Sahavas in 1962, there was the Chinese aggression on India. During this sahavas, there is Pakistani disturbance. All are alike to Me, whether they be Chinese or Pakistanis. But, the fact remains that I have taken birth in India, so don't feel nervous. This is My joke. My joke means your suffering in ignorance. This suffering of yours I take upon Myself."⁵⁴

One of the more unusual incidents during this darshan concerned A.S. Jaganath of Andhra on 4th May. In his own words:

Having been born in an orthodox Hindu family and steeped in tradition, it was difficult to accept Beloved Avatar Meher Baba as God in human form when I first heard of Him and had come to Vijayawada in February 1954. My impression was that

(A.S. JAGANATH CONTINUES)

He was one more guru in the number of gurus who abound in India, so I lost the opportunity of having His darshan in 1954. I was just twenty-nine years old.

When my first physical contact with Him occurred on November 12, 1955, it brought about a complete change in my understanding of God and His inscrutable ways of “netting His lovers.”

The moment I set eyes on Him, I had the impression that I had met Him somewhere and His personality appeared to be familiar. While being introduced, dear Baba Himself said that He had known me for a long time, and with His loving embrace, I melted in His arms. This was something that I had not experienced before. I could feel His terrific power and energy that flowed all around and at the same time, a certain peace permeated not only within me, but the entire atmosphere. I was completely bowled over, and then and there accepted Him as the Avatar without any strings attached. This physical contact started my love affair with Baba and by His blessings, I was able to render much volunteer service in His cause and during His darshan programs, right from day one till He dropped His body.

So in the course of these volunteer duties, I and my family, along with other Baba lovers from Vijayawada, attended the opening of the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre on May 1, 1965.... [It] was really a sight for the Gods to see, for the Beloved sat in all His resplendent glory on the dais of the hall, showering His blessing on one and all assembled there.

The next day, the darshan program shifted to Guru Prasad hall. In spite of His severe pain, Baba was seated in all His majesty on the dais, surveying His group of dear ones gathered from all over India and the world. Before the start of the darshan, Baba's message was read out over the public address system.

"All these years, I used to embrace you, My lovers, and bow down to your love for Me. Now I cannot embrace you, so I allow you to bow down to My love for you."

On the third day, May 4th, I, along with some other lovers from Vijayawada, were in the queue to take His darshan. During this time, Beloved Baba stood up once or twice with the support of brother Eruch Jessawala on one side and Dr. Bharucha of Navsari on the other side and raised His hands in blessing to those gathered. After having darshan, I was returning to my volunteer's post when I tripped and fell down headlong. I struggled to get up, but I could not, since my left knee was "frozen" and I could not straighten it. My struggles caught the attention of dear Baba, as I was in His direct view. He instructed Dr. Bharucha, who was standing by His side, to find out what had happened to me. Dr. Bharucha rushed up and bodily carried me into Guru Prasad, where he gave me a thorough check-up. He was able to reset my knee. After administering some medicine, he went back to report to Baba about what happened. By that time it was 11:30 a.m., and in another half an hour, arti was to be performed, signaling the end of the morning darshan program. Dr. Bharucha returned immediately and informed me

(A.S. JAGANATH CONTINUES)

that Baba had directed that I should be taken after the arti, in His car, to the nearest hospital for further check and report.

Beloved Baba's blue car arrived soon after the arti was over and pilgrims were departing. Dr. Bharucha, with the help of my colleagues, brothers G. Rama Rao and M. Satyanarayana, carried me into the car and took me to Jehangir Nursing Home about three to four furlongs away from Guru Prasad and admitted me there. I was X-rayed by a famous orthopedic surgeon known to Dr. Bharucha. It was found that there was a hairline fracture in the left femur bone. After sedation, a temporary plaster was put on my knee. All this was completed by 3:00 p.m., and as I came out of sedation on the spur of the moment, I told Dr. Bharucha that I wanted to have Beloved Baba's darshan. Dr. Bharucha went to Guru Prasad and apprised Beloved Baba of the situation and my request for His darshan. Dr. Bharucha returned with instructions from the Beloved that He would give His darshan the next day at 7:00 a.m. sharp. I was happy beyond measure.

Early morning the next day, a big taxi was engaged and with the kind help from the hospital authorities, who loaned us a stretcher, I was taken to Guru Prasad in time. My same colleagues carried me in the stretcher into the front room of Guru Prasad, where Baba was awaiting us. The stretcher was placed horizontally right in front of the Beloved's feet. My wife had accompanied me to Guru Prasad, and waiting in the hall at that time were Eruch, Adi K. Irani, Francis, Majety Ramamohana Rao, Chinta Sarvarao and Y. Manikyala Rao.

Baba first addressed my wife, whom He noticed was shedding tears, and asked her why she was crying. As she was not in a position to clearly express herself, Beloved Baba explained to her through Eruch that there was nothing to worry about as we were all in His fold. Calling her nearer to Him, Baba embraced her with the words, “Remember that I am always with you all.” Then He slowly turned His gaze towards me lying on the stretcher at His feet, and again Baba asked Dr. Bharucha to repeat what had happened and instructed Adi K. Irani to send money for the hospital charges, which we assured Him we had already paid.

All this time, my attention was completely riveted on His beautiful face, with my eyes full of tears. There was complete silence for a while and it appeared that time had stood still. After a few minutes, with Baba’s full compassion reflecting in His face, He did something unbelievable, which completely dumbfounded me and rendered me speechless. Beloved Baba slowly released the sandals on His feet and in a smooth movement, placed both His lotus feet on my chest, signaling to me that this was His embrace. This gesture full of unbounded compassion from the Highest of the High brought forth such a torrent of tears that I was drenched in this happiness, and clutching His feet with both my hands, I pressed them to my chest. As I said, time stood still, till in His own way, Baba signaled to me, “Are you satisfied?” I could give no audible answer as I was choked with tears, so I just nodded my head in assent. Then He slowly withdrew His feet and directed that I should return home and not bother Dr. Bharucha again for His darshan. With one more embrace for my

(A.S. JAGANATH CONTINUES)

family, we left His presence on our journey back home with His wonderful parting words that He is always with us.



In her Family Letter, Mani described this last large public darshan that Baba gave at Guru Prasad. Thousands flocked to Poona for the opportunity and Mani wrote:

A daily feast for the eye and heart were the five days of darshan programme held beneath the huge pandal built in the grounds of Guruprasad. Measuring about 300 by 75 feet, it held more than three thousand chairs....

By 6:30 in the morning of 2nd May, the first of the five days of darshan at Guruprasad, there was already quite a crowd of men and women and children standing outside the gates, chanting Baba-songs and crying out His JAI, growing in number every minute as more buses and taxis disgorged their occupants who had a date that morning with God. Before long the pavements were swarming with humanity, brimming over on to the road itself. When the gates were opened at 7:30, it was like the bursting of a dam—to see that tide of lovers pouring into Guruprasad was an unforgettable sight! In the movement of that first rapturous rush, some of the women who had been standing in the forefront, went down like nine-pins, and the wonder of it is that none of them was really hurt. When Baba heard of this, He ordered the gates to be left open, so that the darshaners could walk in as they came....

There were those who walked with the support of a stick or helping hand, others who came at a brisk run or strode vigorously with cameras slung from their shoulders; and the children who hopped along in glee or walked solemnly with flower garlands held out ready for offering to Baba. Now we would see a boy on crutches walking with surprising speed, now a crippled young woman being wheeled in a chair; next in view would come a scattering of sadhus in ochre robes, men with venerable beards and turbans, women in saris of fascinating colours with youngsters of all ages trailing along....

Seated in His chair on the dais, wearing His white robe and garland of flowers, Baba looked radiant throughout the long hours of darshan-time each day, His God-smile shining on the sea of lovers before Him....

Every one of them was given the opportunity to bow down to His Love that surpasses all understanding—His Love that gave no thought to what it cost His physical body which was racked with pain, and immensely fatigued after each darshan session. Because the lovers were many and the days were few, Baba gave of Himself for longer hours each morning and also for over an hour every afternoon. Even this seemed not enough, and on the third day Baba had Eruch announce over the mike that henceforth there would be no messages or announcements given, and no reciting of the Master's Prayer (which had so far been the first item every morning)—there would be no time for it! "There is but one threshold of the Beloved, and there are thousands of heads to bow down on it in obeisance"—this

(MANI CONTINUES)

line from an Urdu ghazal by an ancient mystic might have been penned for this May-Darshan! All through the darshan-hours, men and women in alternate queues were seen endlessly passing by across the bamboo passageway, inching their way to the feet of the Beloved, thereon to lay their heads in love and obeisance. One by one they approached Him, and with upturned faces animated with the glow of His presence, stood before Him for a moment that embraced eternity. As each placed his or her head on His feet, along with the garlands and babies they had brought with them, some bathing His feet with tears and kisses, He acknowledged their love with folded hands held to His breast or touched to His forehead. It was a profound gesture that brought to life the symbol: Mastery in Servitude. Smiling His love on some, bowing His head to others, now asking after someone's health or work, now caressing the face of a child held aloft to Him, He was Father, Friend and Beloved to all.⁵⁵

Once again a large contingent from Hamirpur came for Baba's darshan. Gita Ram remembers:

From Hamirpur, 350 people came for Meher Baba's darshan. It took four days traveling to reach Poona from Hamirpur. When we reached the railway station early in the morning, there were four volunteers posted by Baba there waiting for us. They told us that it was Baba's orders that all people coming from Hamirpur, in whatever condition they arrived in, were to go immediately to Guru Prasad and meet Baba.

At that time, the train was run on coal, and after such a long journey, we were all covered in black ash. But as per Baba's orders, without changing out of blackened clothes we went to greet Him.

Because we were dirty, we folded hands from a distance and then sat in front of Baba. Baba made a signal, and my name was called out, "Gita Ram from Taiyea Village, wherever you are, please come, Baba is calling you." So I went to Baba. I was feeling most uncomfortable to be before Baba in such a state. I didn't want to touch Baba with my dirty hands, so I was trembling before Him. Baba just grabbed both my hands and drew me into His tight embrace. As before, Baba's embrace had such a powerful impact on me that I began weeping and trembling and lost normal consciousness. Again Baba told Eruch to call Babulal and Mungalal to help take me back to my seat. I have no memory of what happened next but I was told that I was lifted and brought back to the dharamshala. The next morning, I got a little back to my normal state.

For six months after returning home to Hamirpur I was in an altered state, my aunt took care of me and would wake me to do the basic things, like eat and excrete. I never asked Baba about it, I just knew I was filled with Baba's love and that I would forget myself when I looked at Baba. When Baba called my name and I went near to Him, I became intoxicated, full of ecstasy and forgot myself. Any time I met Baba at Guru Prasad, I had the same feeling.

It was not uncommon for people to be overwhelmed by emotion on meeting Baba. This was especially true during qawwali programs. Baba did not want His mandali to succumb to such states, however, and one time, after Aloha had fainted during a program, Baba told him to control himself in the future, which he did.

Just as I had been most touched by Baba's message, "My Dear Children," during the East-West Gathering, the message that has stayed with me from this darshan program was given on May 3rd.

Baba had Eruch read out:

This time of your being with Me, I do not intend giving you a lot of words to exercise your minds. I want your minds to sleep so that your hearts may awaken in My love. You have had enough of words, I have had enough of words. It is not through words that I give what I have to give, but in the silence of your perfect surrender. My love, which is always silent, can flow to you to be yours always to keep and to share with those who seek Me.

And Baba's love did flow. It is difficult to describe the scenes that transpired. I remember I would find some people who had just met Baba sitting under a tree drowned in His remembrance; some would be shedding tears and some would be so chirpy, happy and they would say, "This happened and that happened, and I did this and I met Him and" The whole atmosphere of Guru Prasad, for five days, was just ringing with "Baba, Baba, Baba, Baba." Yet, contained within that name, were innumerable stories of His love, of His compassion. It is impossible for me to convey what it was like when so many would come together in His love,

with Baba's physical presence suffusing everything, and the atmosphere that prevailed at that time. Again, perhaps some stories from others who were there might give a glimpse into that surcharged atmosphere.

We have already recounted Hardeep's initial meeting with Baba during the East-West Gathering. This is what he writes about the 1965 darshan program:

Baba came by 9:00 a.m. and began giving darshan, one by one, quick, quick. Some people were playing kirtans on the dais. It was so crowded that everyone was just pressed up against each other. When Baba came to the dais to be seated, many people rushed around His chair. They had a chance to speak with Him and Baba blessed them. Because of the crowd encircling Baba, He could not be seen by us at the back. There was a short man by my side who started crying. When I questioned him, he said, "I have come such a long distance to meet Baba and when my chance comes I cannot get in the queue. There is such a big queue, when will I ever get to join it? Perhaps I won't even get the chance. How unfortunate I am. I am not even able to see Meher Baba, though all you tall people are able to see him."

People were standing on chairs, but there were no spaces left on those and so I tried to lift the man up to see Baba's face, because it was sometimes visible to me. But it was so crowded that I could not even move him an inch. I tried for five minutes. After that, he sat on the ground with his head in his hands, dejected. I felt very much for him. Immediately, Baba stood up and He waved His hand towards us and there was an

(HARDEEP CONTINUES)

announcement on the loudspeaker: “Baba says, My lovers at the back should not be disheartened and feel that Baba is away from them, because they are not able to see Baba. As a matter of fact, Baba is nearer to them than those who are in front of Baba, and Baba gives all those at the rear His special blessing and love.”

When Baba waved His hand in the air, we were charged by it and we shouted, “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai” three times. Then the people in front started looking at the back, because we had created a great sound. “What is happening at the back?” Then I looked around and found that the dejected man was now standing on a chair. He had found a chair and was looking at Baba! Can you imagine! How omnipresent and omniscient Baba is! I was overjoyed and I congratulated that man. “Can you see Baba now?” I asked him. “Yes,” the man said excitedly. And to our amazement, within a couple of minutes, we don’t know how it happened, but we were in the queue.

Yet Baba didn’t stop there. After blessing those of us at the rear, Baba said: “Many of My lovers around the world could not come today because of their commitments and responsibilities. They wanted to be here with Me, but they could not come. Yet they are remembering Me in their own places. They are thinking of Me and their love is reaching Me, and I give them My blessing, too.” And He waved His hand in the air, giving blessing to whosoever they may be. And then, Baba went further: “There are many, many persons around the world who love God as God should be loved, but they don’t know

Me. They have not yet heard My name, but they remember Me indirectly and they are true lovers of God. Their love also reaches Me. How can I forget them? I bless them also. And once they know Me, they come to Me.” Those three messages I remember. Beautiful! That’s the universal touch of Meher Baba to all of us. Now, when people come who have not seen Baba, I tell them, “In 1965, Baba remembered you.”

As I was in the darshan queue with my group, I had not told anybody that I was planning to speak to Baba. But inwardly I had been praying to Baba that He give me another chance to meet Him, so that I could request His help in a certain matter that greatly troubled me. That was my sincere prayer to Baba and it had been granted! I was on my way to see Him again! Our group leader, Nehru, was introducing us to Baba, and Baba was allowing each one to touch His feet.

When my turn came, Nehru said, “Baba, he is Hardeep.” Baba nodded and I approached the dais. I looked at Baba and I tried to say what I had planned, but nothing came out. My voice was choked. I was looking with a pale face and disturbed mind at Baba. I was puzzled, thinking to myself, “If I don’t speak to Baba now then I will lose my chance. This is my opportunity. He is God He can do anything for me!” So, after what seemed like a long time, Baba permitted me to speak. He gestured, “Come on. Speak.” When He gave the gesture, I retrieved my energy and ability to speak, and I said, “Baba, I have had difficulty in coming to You.”

(HARDEEP CONTINUES)

As I stood before Baba, He gestured for the line to stop. Everybody who knew me was confused and wondered what it was that I was saying to Baba. "What difficulty?" they thought. When I uttered these words, for a second Baba's face became serious, and then again His face changed and He made a gesture with both hands that was like pulling something out [with thumb and index finger] and then putting it back. Then He looked at my group leader, indicating that He wanted him to speak the answer to me. Nehru said, "Hardeep, your problem has been solved by Baba. No problem." And then I was very happy. I put my head on Baba's feet. I touched His feet and then moved away. On this occasion I was fully conscious of taking His darshan.

The difficulty that I had been having was about the impressions connected with a particular religion that we carry into each birth. We are brought up in a particular tradition, and it can be very binding. To come out of that binding and go to Baba is difficult unless you break out of the tradition and who best can break you out of your bindings except for Baba? So Baba did that for me. From then onwards, I never looked back. I didn't care for anything material. Material losses were nothing to me, because I was on the road to God. If I were to lose anything materially, I didn't have a long face, because Baba's grace was there. I knew Baba was holding me up and slowly, slowly moving me towards Him.

T.K. Ramanujan, on the other hand, was meeting Baba for the first time:

I had heard and read about Baba but had never had the good fortune of meeting Him. I wrote to Baba asking Him whether I could come and see Him. I got a reply from Him saying that I should visit Shirdi, the tomb of Sai Baba and then return home. The letter said that He would call me to Poona in May.

Back at Jabalpur, we received Adi's circular announcing Baba's darshan at Poona from the first to the fifth of May. One of the conditions laid down by Baba was that He would not be embraced. I felt very distressed at this as I had longed for the opportunity to be in my Beloved's arms. The day before leaving for Poona I had a dream in which I saw Baba. He said, "Embrace me now as much as you want, but do not in Poona." I flung myself into His arms. I woke up in the morning feeling happy and well rested.

On the day of my departure, I met a woman who asked whether she could accompany me to Poona for Baba's darshan and I gladly agreed. We traveled to Poona and then went to Guru Prasad where we got in a queue for the long-awaited darshan. The queue seemed to be moving at a snail's speed while my heart was racing to be at the feet of my Beloved. The woman who had accompanied me was in the women's queue. As I neared Baba, His eyes seemed to be like pools of infinite love and tenderness. My heart pounded with tremendous excitement. I felt He was the reason for my very existence.

At last, I was in front of Baba. I bowed down at His feet, surrendering everything to Him. When I looked up, He did not

(T.K. RAMANUJAN CONTINUES)

even glance at me. A few seconds elapsed and I was pushed ahead by the people in the queue behind me.

I felt depressed and extremely upset. I went and stood under the awning at a little distance and began to cry. I had been thinking, “Baba is God, He knows what is going on within me; when I meet Him, He will look at me in recognition.” But no, Baba had not looked at me. My tears so filled my eyes that I could barely see Baba. I wiped my eyes and my nose but the tears would not stop. Just then the woman who had accompanied me came up to me and complained that while she had had Baba’s darshan, He had not asked her anything nor had He responded in any way when she had bowed at His feet. She added, “Baba is for the rich. I am very poor and so He did not care for me.”

No sooner were these words out of her mouth when Baba, who was busy giving darshan, turned and looked towards her and gestured, “Come here.” She joyfully went to Baba who lovingly patted her hand and exchanged a few words with her.

Now my sorrow was only intensified. Baba had not even looked at me, I thought. I had been longing for Baba’s darshan for months, perhaps years, and He didn’t seem to recognize me at all! Was I such a sinner that I deserved no more? Was my love too tepid to merit recognition? Had I committed some fault? All sorts of thoughts raced through my mind while I continued to sob and sob.

Just then someone touched me on the shoulder. I turned to find it was Baba’s sister, Mani. She embraced me very lovingly

and asked me why I had been crying for such a long time. Before I could explain, Baba's quick fingers moved. Eruch said to Mani, Baba wants you to leave him alone. Was Baba testing my patience? Maybe I didn't even deserve to be at Guru Prasad.

When Baba left the stage without looking at me, my sorrow knew no bounds. As the huge crowd of Baba lovers left the compound jubilantly, I staggered to the front gate, with my mind reeling and my heart broken. At the gate I turned back to look at Guru Prasad because I did not know if I would ever see it again. I crossed the road and stood in a queue for a bus. My heart was weeping. All my hopes and dreams about meeting Baba had now been shattered. A city bus pulled up and people started scrambling to get on. I thought my heart would burst with pain. Suddenly I heard someone shout my name, once, twice.

I was dazed and my mind was a complete blank, but the sound of my name being called out brought me back to my temporal surroundings. I saw a Mr. Moorty making his way through the crowd and heading straight for me. Moorty shouted out, just as I got onto the bus and it pulled away: "Baba wants you to come and see Him this afternoon at three." Moorty was left behind, but he called out again, "Baba wants you at three today." As the bus jolted away, my tears changed from those of heartbreak to those of joy. My Beloved had heard me after all. He was a compassionate father, though rather slow I thought.

I left my hotel at two, thinking I would walk to Guru Prasad. As fate would have it, I took a wrong turn. I began to

(T.K. RAMANUJAN CONTINUES)

walk fast. It was getting close to 2:45 and panic was starting to grip my heart. I was nowhere near Guru Prasad. I began to run. A few yards ahead my sandal strap broke. I picked it up and began running again without even knowing whether I was going in the right direction. The only thought I had was that I had to reach Guru Prasad by three. It was now 2:50 and I was still running, panting and exhausted.

Just then a cab suddenly pulled up next to me and the driver asked, “Are you going to Guru Prasad?” “Yes,” I managed to say and he opened the door. I jumped in, with my sandals in my hand. The cab raced down the road and we reached Guru Prasad at 2:55. Eruch was at the door calling me. I went in and Baba was sitting there with outstretched arms. How long He embraced me I do not know, but I awoke in His arms.

Even though Baba had stopped the reading of the “Master’s Prayer” and all announcements so that every moment could be devoted to giving darshan, there were still lovers clamoring for their opportunity to bow before the Beloved’s feet. As Mani wrote:

On the morning of 6th May, after the Arti was sung, Baba left the stage [as the dais was referred to] amidst a tumult of love-cheers from the standing multitude. It was the last darshan program—or so we thought! Pretty soon it was plain that there were yet some hundreds hungering for their share, including teenagers who had been in the middle of their school or college exams during the six days—thus daily we found the verandah of

Guruprasad jammed with darshan-seekers. Baba allowed three more days of grace, during which He gave darshan to groups of lovers crowded into the mandali's hall, mornings and afternoons. He gave a special afternoon to the “workers” and “volunteers”—those of the Poona Centre who had shouldered the unenviable task of seeing to the innumerable details involved in this gigantic Darshan arrangement, and others from different places who served as guides and helpers during the gatherings.⁵⁶

Even those who missed the darshan still experienced its repercussions in their life as the following two stories illustrate. The first is from Kohiyar Satarawala, whose association with Baba extended over the previous decade:

I remember over and over again Eruch telling me that “work for Baba, however insignificant, is not like eating a chocolate.” And dear Bhau always quoted, “In the path of love you have to chew roasted grams of steel.” And even now, whenever Bhau greets me, with that familiar quote, I really feel that I have not been a Baba lover at all!

Baba used to order me to attend His various sahavases and meetings since September 1954. Accordingly, I used to go to Meherabad or wherever Baba ordered. So in 1965, Baba sent an order for me to work for His sahavas during the first week of May at Guru Prasad, Poona. At that very time, the Ripon Hotel, which I owned in Mahabaleshwar, was overflowing with guests and there were constant phone calls. I had to look after the

(KOHİYAR SATARAWALA CONTINUES)

visitors, check the staff, deal with problems such as the water supply and bringing cooking materials from town, as well as making and receiving payments. So I felt I just could not leave the hotel premises.

Though all the time I felt very uneasy about not being able to attend the sahavas, I felt I had no way out. However, on the very last day of the sahavas, I felt a very strong urge to at least have Baba's darshan. So I left Mahabaleshwar for Poona by car with my family in the morning.

On arrival at Guru Prasad I was shocked to discover that the sahavas was all over by 10:00 a.m. There was hardly anyone to be seen in the premises of Guru Prasad, except the workers who were busy dismantling the pandals. In fact, someone said to me, "How very disgraceful of you to not have come. Now please go back, for Baba has ordered us not to allow anyone on the premises."

I was shocked, and was in a daze and stupor. I had brought the family especially for Baba's darshan and what was this? My family was so close to Baba, how could such a thing happen? But I had been asked to "get out," so I moved towards the car for the return journey. At the very last moment, I saw someone, I think Eruch, shouting instructions to stop the car and allow the family to come in. So we entered Guru Prasad compound and were greeted by Eruch, Pendu and Bhau. "Where were you? What happened?" they asked. I could not answer.

"Come in. Baba has called you and the family." So I was shown in to Baba and a small group of the men mandali. Then

Baba asked, "Why have you delayed coming? All these days I have been asking repeatedly for you. Nay, I was *eagerly awaiting* you. What happened? Did you receive My order or not? Why did you disobey Me?" Baba flashed His anger at me, and I felt extremely small and I could taste the very bitterness of all His utterances. Yes, I felt like a puppy dirtying the carpet, and I had no answer to give.

Then Baba asked, "Do you love Me or not?" With a dry mouth I said, sheepishly, "Yes, Baba." But Baba persisted, "Then why have you disobeyed Me?" I could see His eyes flashing and I could see His anguish and disappointment. "Why, oh why, have you done this? Do you know I have been so very anxious to reward you very handsomely for all that you have done for Me? I had decided to reward you very handsomely. Nay, in fact I had kept everything ready to feed you with My own hands from a plate of gold and diamonds! In fact, you and yours would have tasted that 'food' forever, but you are luckless. Now go back empty-handed."

You can well imagine my position then. I felt miserable, as if the ground was sinking under me. I could give only a dizzy reply, "Baba, my hotel is filled with guests and along with the duty of looking after the affairs of the management, I was unable to attend here."

"Oh! What a flimsy excuse," Baba declared. He went on to reprimand me further, saying, "I am everywhere, you miserable wretch! Do you think *you* manage the hotel? No, no. You cannot do it without My help. Who do you think came to

(KOHİYAR SATARAWALA CONTINUES)

your hotel as visitors—it is I. And who do you think manages them—it is I. I worry about everything there and you have so badly failed Me. Now go as you have come. I again say, you go empty-handed!"

Very sheepishly I walked out. I had just the last glimpse of Baba. He smiled, beckoned me near Him. Were there tears in my eyes? No, my eyes were dry, I was so stupefied. I could not move. I even forgot to bow down to Baba. So He asked me to bow down, and then He hugged me and held me close to Him and kissed me. It was a very, very sad moment in my life; I wanted to cry but not a tear could come out. All this was so stunning and paralyzing. The mandali, so close to me, looked on in silent witness. Even now I still feel the heaviness I felt then. I can never pardon myself. Yet what could one do in such circumstances but submit to one's own destiny? I lost Baba that day, for that was the last I saw of Him!

V. Rama Rao, who had gone to the East-West Gathering after his release from jail, didn't make it to the darshan at all, and yet his relationship with Baba was also affected by it:

Baba called all His lovers to come to Guru Prasad but, in my foolishness I did not avail myself of the opportunity. I had been at loggerheads with my boss. I was very political at that time and parliament members and ministers used to visit my house first before going to his bungalow, though I was his subordinate. When I told him that Baba was giving darshan, just

to punish my arrogance he said I could not take leave. I argued with him, insisting that my assistants could manage the work, but he was adamant that I could not go, so he didn't sanction my leave. On June 13, 1965, Beloved Baba had Bhau Kalchuri write me the following postcard:

My dear Rama Rao, Beloved Baba remembered you yesterday and asked me why you did not come to attend the darshan programs held from May 1st to the 6th, but as I had not had any information from you in this respect I could not tell Him the reason of your not coming. You have missed the greatest opportunity of Baba's darshan and it is really surprising how a lover like you could do so. Beloved Baba wants you not to worry and love Him more and more. Baba sends His love to you and your family. With loving regards, affectionately yours, Bhau.

When I received this postcard, I just cried and cried about the missed opportunity. My wife consoled me and told me to write Baba all that had happened on the chance that Baba might allow us to see Him. I wrote and pleaded with Baba to give me another opportunity to have His darshan and He called me to Meherazad later that year. I came with my wife, my five sons and a daughter and we had Baba's darshan.

Baba gave my children a code of conduct. They were asking to touch the feet of schoolteachers and parents, but we used to say, "No, Baba does not allow that," so they wrote to Baba about it. He wrote them, "When you touch the feet of your

(V. RAMA RAO CONTINUES)

teacher, think you are touching the feet of Baba. When you touch the feet of your parents, feel you are touching the feet of Baba.” He also gave them a list of simple instructions that follow the gist of “Baba’s Wish” message. That is how they were brought up, they are very good children.

After these programs, Baba once again saw very few, and usually only those who had already been drawn into His circle of love, such as some of His lovers from Pakistan and Bombay. It is not clear from her account whether Parichehr Saadi came again in 1965 with others from Pakistan or whether this refers to a different time, but she writes:

I went with Minoo Kharas and his wife by boat to Bombay. And we went to Baba at Guru Prasad, and were allowed in and taken to Baba, who was sitting in the mandali’s room. Minoo’s wife and I were dressed in ordinary cotton dresses. When we came in, Baba gestured the word for fat. I looked at myself and thought, “I am not fat.” Baba gestured to Eruch that we should come closer, so Eruch said, “You two fat ladies come and bow down to Baba.” Baba asked, “Are you eating so much?”

I asked, “Baba, am I fat?”

He said, “Yes.” Minoo’s wife was also stunned. Baba had a good laugh at our expense. Then Baba told me, “You are putting on weight.”

I used to have bread and butter in the morning with tea and then go to work. In the evening I loved potatoes, fried potatoes and potato chips. I used to have a good time with

potatoes. Just one day before I had gone to a shop that was selling potato chips, frying them right in front of you, and I took a big bag and finished half of it. Then the next day I went to Baba and He said, “No more potatoes. No butter and no potatoes.” I said, “Okay, Baba.” But I was thinking about this other half a bag of potato chips. I had told myself that I would eat the other half tomorrow. Well tomorrow never came.

One time my mom made a dish I loved called potato chops [potatoes with mince-meat inside]. I ate it to my heart’s content. After a long time mom made these potato chops, and I didn’t remember Baba’s order at all. Baba must have given me a chance to eat potato chops without remembering. The next day I went for some leftovers. Mom said, “You ate potatoes!” I said, “Mommy, why didn’t you tell me?” She said, “I also forgot.” Now what to do? A mistake is a mistake. I didn’t do it on purpose. After that I didn’t do it again. I still do not eat butter or potatoes.

The last time I went to see Baba at Guru Prasad was before He dropped His body. He was sitting there with all the ladies and I went a little late. He told me to sit down and started asking me about what I was eating. He asked if I ate a lot of rice. I said, “Not that much rice. Baba, I already don’t eat potatoes. Now, You are saying I am eating lots of rice. When I am feeling hungry I eat a little more. Otherwise, I don’t eat much.”

He said, “Don’t eat much.”

I said okay. He was joking with me. So I then said, “Baba, let me ask You now whether I should eat rice or not because tomorrow You will again say how much I eat.”

(PARICHEHR SAADI CONTINUES)

He said, "Eat everything, but don't eat My head." [An Indian expression meaning to pester or bother.]

I said, "Baba, I am asking You for the future, because You might ask why I eat rice."

"No, no. You can eat everything but no butter or potatoes." He then said, "You should have become a boy. Why are you a girl?"

I said, "My mother also said I should have been a boy," since I was talking freely and laughing.

Baba said to the others, "See Parichehr, how she laughs."

We all said how nice and happy Baba looked. He said, "See I am smiling because of her. She comes in chatting and chatting, and she makes Me smile. I am so happy. Otherwise, all of you were sitting with long faces and I also had a long face. Now she came and see how I look—very nice." He was so happy.

I said, "Baba, I am going on Thursday."

He said, "Okay, go on Thursday with all My blessings."

Being in His company was like walking in a cloud. I felt light as a feather. I loved Baba from then and still I love Him.

This reminds me of another time Baba spontaneously gave out dietary restrictions for His lovers. It was occasioned by playing cards with Baba. He had called His Poona lovers about some work and after that was over, we all played cards. Naturally all were delighted at this opportunity and after the game everyone was sitting in a semicircle before Baba, who was sitting in the sofa chair in the mandali's room.

Baba was asking questions about various ones' family members and such when, unexpectedly, He suddenly asked, "Do any of you drink wine or country liquor?" Then He started pointing to each one for their answer. One or two said, "Very rarely." A couple said, "Just wine." A few said, "Liquor, though rarely." But the large majority said, "No, not at all."

Baba didn't make any comment but in a jovial way, He pointed His finger in a circular motion to all those around Him and gestured, "Those of you who have been drinking, it was all right up to this day. But now, all those who are sitting before Me, should henceforth drink no more." And He held out one hand in a tight fist and then forcibly clapped His other hand down on top as if putting a stopper in a bottle. It was a potent gesture. It would have been hard for a few of those present to stop drinking all at once, but because of Baba's help and instruction, they were able to stop drinking permanently.

I had not been one of those who ever drank at that point, but from then I have made it a point to never take wine or liquor. I consider this one of Baba's blessings with regard to my personal health.

Because of personal things in her life, Urmilla had written Baba after the May darshan asking if she could have His darshan again. Bhau had read out the letter and subsequently Baba decided to give an extra darshan program for those who had been unable to attend the May program, and he allowed Urmilla and Gokaran to be included in that group. Urmilla recounts that Eruch got upset with Bhau for asking Baba to hold this darshan. He felt that Bhau was ignoring Baba's health and had created an extra burden for Him, especially as hundreds of people

came for this darshan and he didn't want to have anything to do with this program. So, Urmilla adds, "That was the first and last time Bhauji acted as Baba's interpreter."

Urmilla writes:

On June 6, we arrived a little before three. The darshan time was 4 o'clock. Suddenly we were spotted by Nana Kher, who was probably on watch duty in one of the front verandahs of Guruprasad. He told us to go inside the hall and take seats before Baba came there for darshan.

Gokaran and I were actually heading to Bombay for some educational training programme and our train was to leave Poona railway station at 4:30 p.m. When we entered the hall, we were horrified to see that it was fully packed and we thought that if we waited for our chance to get Baba's darshan we would surely miss the train. Catching this train was important, as we were to report at the Bombay University before the next morning. Our horror was changed into a great and pleasant surprise when we found that this large group of Baba lovers in the hall gave us a clear passage to go to the front row without any hesitation and without any instruction from anybody. Till today we still wonder how we got this V.I.P. treatment.

So we sat in the front row and the fear of missing the train was gone and we were comfortable. Soon Baba arrived and He asked Bhau to announce that Urmilla and Gokaran should take His darshan first, as they had to catch the 4:30 p.m. train. Both of us went to Baba and one by one bowed down at His feet. When I took Baba's darshan, Baba started asking me some questions. He asked me about my educational qualifications,

about the grade, and about the merit position in the university examination. I told Baba that I was MSC in Botany and obtained first grade and third position in the university merit. To this Baba first lifted His two fingers and then lifted one finger. Bhauji interpreted that Baba said, “Both of you are first class.”

After taking His darshan, we left for the Poona railway station. The train was just about to leave when we arrived. It was so overcrowded that we had no chance to board. Suddenly a stranger came up to us saying that he had tickets for two seats. He charged us a nominal amount and gave us two comfortable seats. This concluded our darshan journey with Baba’s helping hand till the very end.

After this, Baba saw very few through the end of His stay. In fact, Baba even declared that letters to Him should no longer be read out. However, there was still a small circle of close ones from Poona who were permitted to come and the card games continued.



During my stays at Guru Prasad, I not only had the opportunity to sit in on the small and large darshan programs, but the more intimate gatherings as well. The conversations Baba had were lively and far-reaching. One moment Baba would casually be joking with those around Him, perhaps even teasing one of His mandali, and the next He would be involved in a serious and detailed discussion of an aspect of His work.

I am generally reticent about getting involved with the affairs of others, and this tendency certainly has been reinforced by several incidents that happened when I was in Beloved Baba’s company. I noticed that, in general, unless He asked for comment, Baba did not seem to

like others adding their two cents worth when He was discussing a subject with someone. Sometimes when a person interjected their opinion in spite of this, Baba would turn to that person and gesture, “Who appointed you *kazi* [judge]?”

During a previous visit to Guru Prasad, someone’s marriage was being discussed and, on his own, Vishnu offered his opinion. Baba asked him, “Did I ask you? Why are you poking your nose in?” He then explained that when one volunteers an opinion of one’s own on a matter being discussed, especially unasked by Baba, one becomes connected to that situation and to the *sanskaras* of those involved in it. However, when He, the Impressionless One, asked for our views, as He commonly did, then we were free of incurring any *sanskritic* involvement.

Krishna Nair related a similar incident that made a deep impression on me. The story took place in the 1940s in Dehra Dun and concerned a servant who worked for Baba. Baba had given this man some money when he was leaving for his hometown. It seemed the sudden wealth had unbalanced him and he was now indulging himself in ways that Baba would not approve of. Somehow, in the course of conversation with Baba one day, this servant’s name came up. Krishna happened to know him and proceeded to report to Baba the sad news of his current behavior.

A look of displeasure animated Baba’s face and He gestured very forcefully, “What? Do you think I am blind? Do you think I don’t know what is happening?” Krishna learned the lesson that he should not bring such subjects to Baba’s attention unless specifically asked. Indirectly, it was a meaningful lesson for me as well. Although Baba often acted as if He were ignorant of things, there was no need to tell Him, the All-Knowing and All-Seeing, about the failings of another.



There was a vast range of exchanges between Baba and those meeting Him throughout the four days of the darshan program

Yet, as with most things involving Beloved Baba, one cannot easily make hard and fast rules concerning one's behavior. One time I happened to be in Mandali Hall at Meherazad with some of Baba's close mandali, and Baba began discussing something that seemed to me to be most private and personal. This was somewhat unusual, as Baba generally would not openly discuss personal matters. However, this

particular discussion was so personal that I felt ill at ease being present, as if I were eavesdropping. Yet I could not simply get up and walk out, because Baba had not told me to leave. So I sat there, fidgeting, shifting uncomfortably, hoping that Baba would notice me and ask me to leave.

The discussion continued to its conclusion, and when Baba dismissed us, I tried unobtrusively to slip out the door with the others. Though I had my head down, Baba saw me and gestured for me to come near. "Oh my," I thought to myself, "now Baba may express His displeasure because I listened in on a discussion I had no business being part of." I braced myself inwardly for Baba's coming remarks.

To my surprise, however, Baba gestured, "Sarosh Irani was supposed to be here today. When he comes, I want you to tell him everything that transpired. And tell him with such vividness that he will feel as if he had been in the room today."

In Baba's All-Knowingness He allowed His dear ones to be present for certain discussions, whether they were directly connected with it or not. That was a part of His game.



On 1st July, Baba left Guru Prasad to return to Meherazad.

1966



*A*s I have said, when I first came to Baba I had rather preconceived ideas of not only how a Master should behave, but how those around Him should as well. Although I quickly became 99.99999% convinced of Baba's Divinity, that small remaining fraction of a percent was due to the behavior of His mandali. In a manner that was so natural that I didn't even realize it was happening, Baba redirected my attention to focus more and more on only Him. Without criticizing me, or directly admonishing me, Baba helped me to become less judgmental. I slowly became less "spiritual" in the sense of rigid rules of behavior, while all the time

becoming more surrendered to His will. And, although this might seem odd at first, it was not through spiritual discourses or talks, but through simple interactions around “worldly” things, like cards, movies, food, that Baba helped me in this transformation.

In the latter years of the 1960s, generally only Eruch, Pendu, Bhau, Francis and sometimes Aloba would be at Guru Prasad consistently with Baba. Nana Kher and I were permitted to stay there routinely and would take off from work to avail ourselves of this opportunity. In these years, although Baba would sometimes have some of His Poona lovers, family and workers visit, it was usually only a handful of us for lunch.

I am not particularly interested in food, nor am I able to digest much, and the simple rice and dal and vegetable that we would get most days was more than adequate for me. We few men, minus Eruch, who would use this time to attend to other work, would eat on the verandah in a partitioned off area that was our “dining room.” After lunch, we would return to Baba. One day Baba started asking me what I had for lunch. My usual response was, “Some rice and dal, Baba,” or something like that, and Baba would then ask me how it was. I generally said, “Fine, Baba.”

As the days passed, I began to feel that my part of the conversation was inadequate. So one day, when I returned from lunch, I happened to be the first to arrive, and I was alone with Baba. As usual, Baba asked me what I had for lunch, and I told Him. Baba then asked me how it was. Just to make the conversation a little more interesting, I said, “Well, Baba, there could have been a little more salt.”

“What!” Baba gestured. “You’re complaining about the food?” With that Baba began scolding me, yet in a loving way, as a father might gently reprimand his son. “You’re living in a palace,” Baba declared. “Has your father or your father’s father ever had food in such a place? And not only that, under the same roof as the God-Man? And yet you’re so ungrateful that you are criticizing the food!” And Baba went on, telling me how worthless I was. But for me, this was a great occasion, as if Baba had just been waiting to bestow this gift of intimacy on me.

Even so, I was not unhappy when some of the other mandali arrived and Baba finally dropped the subject. I noticed that after that, Baba stopped asking me how the food was.

Not taking long over lunch gave me other opportunities to be alone with Baba as well. On some days, if we had our meal before the women’s was ready, and if Eruch had work to do, Baba might be all by Himself in the mandali’s room while we ate. So naturally I would go back there to be with Baba. By the last half of the 1960s, Baba had brought me close enough to Him that I no longer was diffident about such opportunities, and I would not hesitate to enter the room even if Baba were alone.

Once when I was alone with Baba, with a casual intimacy Baba gestured, “Do you like meat?” Baba’s gesture for meat was to make a chopping motion with His hand, as if He were a butcher and His hand was the knife.

“No, Baba, I don’t eat meat.” (I had been raised in an orthodox Brahmin household and we did not eat meat of any kind.)

Baba then flipped His palm to face up and then down, which was His sign for fish.

“No, no. Even the smell I can’t tolerate.”

Baba then cupped one hand, pointing the fingers at me and rotated them in a circular motion, His gesture for eggs.

“Sometimes I have eggs, Baba, but not all that often.”

Baba then gestured, “Whether you are a vegetarian or non-vegetarian makes no difference. If one is raised in a certain culture, there is no harm in continuing the eating preferences of that culture, but don’t make a fetish of it. Do you think that God is looking over everyone’s shoulder to see what they are eating? It is not what goes into your mouth that is important, but what comes out from it. The real thing is to love Me; that’s what matters.”

Through such casual conversations, Baba made me feel that He was like my most loving divine father. And in a very natural way, it has been easy for me thereafter to not worry about following a strict vegetarian diet, but to concentrate on the real thing that matters in life—to love God. Actually, these times spent with Baba were far more nourishing than any worldly feast could ever be, and they continue to feed me to this day.

Two other occasions (although the first may have happened in a previous year) that involved food gave Baba an opportunity to express His intimacy with me in a very natural way. From time to time, after our meals, Baba would ask me how I liked a certain dish. My usual response was, “It was fine, Baba,” and I often used the Marathi word *chaan*, for “fine.”

Sometimes when Baba asked me how I found something and I would say, *chaan*, I noticed that Baba would exchange a look with the mandali and there would be smiles all around. I didn’t think much about this until I noticed that sometimes when Baba asked me my

opinion about something, if I happened to say, “It was okay, Baba,” or “It was good, Baba,” He would continue asking me questions until I finally said, “chaan.” And then Baba and the mandali would all smile again, as if enjoying some secret joke.

Although I am often unaware of such things, eventually even I became conscious that something was going on. I asked one of the mandali why everyone found it so funny . It turned out that my Marathi pronunciation was very close to a Gujarati word for cow dung. So when Baba asked me, for example, how I found the food at lunch, and I said, “It was chaan, Baba,” I was unknowingly making a rather extreme statement. No wonder Baba and the others found this amusing. Yet, I noticed that once I had found out what the word meant, Baba stopped asking me questions in order to get me to say it.

This reminds me of a story that took place during the 1930s. Norina Matchabelli found it distressing when she was in Italy with Baba because He insisted on calling Kaka Baria “Kaka,” which means excrement in Italian. What amused Baba, mortified the princess.

Baba enjoyed puns, just as He enjoyed jokes and most innocent displays of wit. One time he was discussing very profound spiritual points with a quite learned gentleman, the principal of a college in Delhi. When the man said he didn’t understand some things, using *cheez*, the Hindi word for “things,” Baba immediately responded that as long as there was “cheese,” the mouse of the ego would be attracted to it.

This last food story occurred one day while I was eating lunch at Guru Prasad. I heard the Savaji family from Nagpur arrive. They were meeting Baba for the first time. Baba was happy to see them and talked with them for half an hour. After I finished my lunch, I entered the room and heard Baba telling the family to eat their lunch at Guru Prasad.

I informed Pendu, who became concerned because there were only three meager meals left that were to be our supper, and there were six members of the family! Just then, Dr. Goher came from the women's side with the news for Pendu that there was a special lunch treat for the men mandali. It turned out that the gardener's son had been recently married, and he had brought a feast that day for the mandali. So there was plenty of food to feed the family. They were called in and they really enjoyed a delicious meal orchestrated by Baba's divine will. For me it was a very loving coincidence that reminded me of Baba's omniscience and compassion.

Meher Baba, the All-Knowing One, continues to this day to provide timely care for His dear ones.

The quiet nature of this year's stay can be easily seen in Mani's Family Letter of 10th June:

... Our stay there this summer has been a quiet one, in utter contrast to that of last year when Guruprasad was constantly humming with swarms of happy darshaners from far and near, and the massive May gathering of Baba's Eastern lovers. But if the great influx of last year spoke resonantly of the love of His many lovers, their very absence this year is more eloquent—for it is in obedience to the Beloved's wish that none should visit Him except those whom He specifically calls for His work. It is said that love is silent but not dumb—and surely, obedience is the tongue with which it speaks! The other morning, while listening to some verses composed by Francis, Baba was in the mood to dictate a message in verse. Rapidly His fingers spelt out:

HE WHO SEEKS MY PLEASURE
FINDS THE DIVINE TREASURE.

Among the very few whom beloved Baba was pleased to call for a visit was Maharani Shantadevi of Baroda, hostess of the Highest of the High during His stay in Poona. She maintains Guruprasad the year round, solely for Baba's three months' visit each summer. Every time when Baba tells her how happy He is at Guruprasad, He is saying how happy He is with her love for Him—and that is all dear Shantadevi asks for. Visits granted to a few of His other lovers, men and women, were as short as they were rare, lasting perhaps no more than a few seconds as measured by the clock. It was therefore quite surprising when one afternoon Baba called a meeting of His workers from the Avatar Meher Baba Poona Centre. Seated before Him, they discussed the progress and problems of their efforts to spread the Beloved's message to more and more people in and around Poona. More surprising for us was to see Baba looking so lively and radiant during the longish session—listening to them, encouraging them, admonishing them, counselling them. At a time like this it is as though the infinite tiredness we witness in His dear God-eyes is put aside and our hearts are warmed with the “fire” of former days when His physical health served as a sturdier companion in bearing the strain of His universal burden....

More than anything else, the absence of the Bombay Baba-group that flocked to Poona every summer for a long stay (filling all available hotel space within walking distance of Guruprasad so as “to be nearer to Baba even if we are not permitted to visit Him”) reminds us how strict His seclusion is this year. And there is the viewpoint of the hotel-wallas too! One of them was heard to remark “Yearly we have two good seasons

(MANI CONTINUES)

in Poona. One is Meher Baba season when we cater to the many followers of Meher Baba; the other is the racing season after June. This year we shall be missing our first season.”⁵⁷

One time, while playing La Risque with Baba (probably in 1966, although it could have been 1965), He called for a certain card that I held. As I tried to hand it to Him, my big toe got caught in the hem of my *dhoti* (a traditional Indian garment, essentially a long piece of cloth that is wrapped around the waist and covers the lower half of the body) and I had to balance myself with my hands to keep from falling forward. Baba looked at me with displeasure and gestured, “Why are you wearing a dhoti?” At the time, I did not take His remark seriously.

But, again that same week, while playing La Risque, Baba asked for a card that I held. I leaned over to hand the card to Baba and in the same manner my toe got caught in my dhoti and I fell forward onto my knees. After throwing me the card He wished to discard, Baba looked a bit serious and repeated, “Why do you wear a dhoti?” This time something touched my heart deeply and that very moment I decided to stop wearing it. I felt that it was Baba’s wish that I stop.

In those days, my younger brother who was staying in Poona was allowed to visit Guru Prasad after five in the afternoon, and by chance he came that day. Upon his arrival, I asked him to go and bring me a pair of his trousers. (Because my brother worked in Poona, he had adopted the more modern style of dress.) Although this surprised him, he complied with my instructions. The next day when Baba came into the hall, He saw me wearing the trousers, but didn’t say anything. Though

I did not feel comfortable, I continued wearing them. The next day I asked my brother to have two pairs of pants and two dress shirts made for me. Before my vacation was over, the pants were ready, so I dressed and stood before Baba, who gestured His pleasure.

When I returned to my hometown that June I wondered what my family and friends would think of me in this entirely new attire. My younger sister looked surprised but didn't say anything. The next morning I felt a bit nervous about attending school, so I did not arrive early as had been my habit. I reached school only a minute before the prayers began and joined the line of the teachers. I knew that the eyes of most of the students were on my new clothing. As soon as the prayers were over, I rushed straight to the classroom and started teaching, without the usual exchange of conversation with my fellow teachers after prayers. That day I did not talk to any of my colleagues, but acted as if I was always in a great hurry to be in each of my classes. By the time I reached home, Baba had helped me to overcome the fear of criticism from others. He had not only inspired changes in my outward mode of dress, but also in my inner perspectives toward life.

Although there were not many visitors that summer to Guru Prasad, every now and then the Poona bhajan mandali were allowed to come and perform for Baba.

When the darshan program was nearing its close, Baba would make the gesture for "M." The bhajan mandali knew that this meant *mulakat*, an Urdu word meaning meeting. This was their signal from Baba that the current meeting was about to end, and was Madhusudan's

cue to sing a particular ghazal by Jafri, entitled “*Kabhi to cbhatega phijase Andbera, Kabhi to madhur chandani Rat Hogi.*” Freely translated this means “One day the darkness of ignorance will disappear and the wonderful full moon of knowledge will dawn.”

Jafri was a renowned Urdu poet who was one of Baba’s favorite ghazal writers. Baba especially enjoyed the one that ended with the parting of the lover from his Beloved. Baba would often end smaller Guru Prasad gatherings, at which the bhajan mandali were performing, with this ghazal sung by Madhusudan and the others. A free translation of one of the verses is given below:

Sometimes I feel that if I had known that this game of Love is

always a game of agony mixed with ecstasy,

perhaps I would never have dared to join.

It is always You, Beloved, who checkmates me and never

allows me to win.

The moment of separation from You draws closer and closer

and all the blissful shining stars of memories are blacked out.

What a heartache! God alone knows when we shall meet again!

[For a full translation of the ghazal see Appendix E.]

Baba left Guru Prasad this year on 1st July to return to Meherazad.

1967



In 1967, Baba's seclusion became even stricter and even the card playing was curtailed. Eruch had written Harry Kenmore that fall about the upcoming stay at Guru Prasad:

Although Baba wishes to remain undisturbed till the end of November 1967—undisturbed by any visitor—yet visitors press their requests and plead to see Him. This disturbance has now reached its limits and Baba has had three big boards painted

and put up at Meherazad for the visitors to read. The boards are painted in three languages, Hindi, Marathi, and English, and the words painted are:

AVATAR MEHER BABA HAS STOPPED SEEING
AND GIVING DARSHAN TO ANYONE—By Order

Baba has told us to carry these boards also to Poona for His summer stay at Guru Prasad from March to July 1967. Hope this stops visitors and leaves Baba undisturbed. [Letter from Eruch to Harry Kenmore, October 8, 1966.]

Many of the diaries I kept while staying at Guru Prasad have been lost, but the one I kept in 1967 remains, and the following is mostly material taken from that, although some additional material has been added to give a fuller context. In 1967, Baba and the mandali arrived on 2nd April. I came to Guru Prasad for my six-week stay on 26th April, when my diary begins. Nana Kher took notes before I arrived and I have included some of these here as well. [In the following diary notes, the material set off in curly brackets represents later editorial insertions and comments from Bal and, more often, Meherwan.—Eds.]

The informal mixing of personal small talk, jokes, spontaneous discourses and “Baba work” continued as before. The big difference between this summer and 1960 is that because there were so few visitors, the number of “spiritual talks” was greatly reduced. Those who tended to be around Baba this summer were close to Him and as such, even if their minds had questions, they generally refrained from asking them as Baba always stressed to His close ones to simply love and obey Him

and tended not to indulge in intellectual, philosophical or metaphysical discussions.

The other big difference in that summer is that although Baba's physical suffering was apparent in one form or another pretty much ever since the second automobile accident in 1956, it became more and more of a central focus of our time with Baba as the years went by. I think readers will be able to pick up on this as they go through the notes, although that summer had started out with great promise. As Meherwan notes:

During the summer of 1967, Baba called very few of His Poona lovers to Guru Prasad. My name was among those permitted to be there so I would come and see Baba when I was not working. Baba told me that I could come and visit as long as my office work did not suffer. So on the weekends, I would do the marketing work early in the morning, and as soon as I was done I would gleefully cycle to Guru Prasad to be with Baba. It was the best way imaginable to spend a weekend!

As opposed to the earlier years at Guru Prasad that were so full of activity and people, this summer was very quiet and there were only a few people around Him. Baba would often retire very early in those days and so I would leave by around two or three in the afternoon. In the early part of the summer, Baba's health was beginning to improve. He would do physical exercises in the mandali's room. One of the things I remember is Baba kicking a bedding roll with His foot in order to strengthen His leg muscles. We put up a bar across the doorway of the stairwell to the upstairs for Baba to do exercises with. And Eruch fixed up

(MEHERWAN CONTINUES)

bamboo poles going up the stairs to act as a railing. Clothes were then tied around the poles so that Baba could catch hold of them and He would even sometimes walk a little ways up the stairs for exercise. Usually, Baba did not like to do such things and would rush through exercises to get them over with. But this summer, He seemed to have a little more interest for it all.

Baba's walk was becoming faster and stronger. He would stride along the long verandah of Guru Prasad in the morning and afternoon with such delight.

One day [April 10], Baba told Eruch to call Dr. Ram Ginde for five minutes to see His walking [in fact, it turned out to be 50 minutes]. Ginde rushed to Guru Prasad as soon as he got the message that Baba wanted him. He was amazed to see Baba walking on the verandah with His former speed. He and Baba walked briskly down the verandah together. Afterwards, Ginde, who was almost panting, remarked that he was practically out of breath trying to keep up with Baba. It was such a sight to see Baba walking so fast; it was almost like in the old days.

My diary actually begins on the 26th. But Nana took notes before I arrived, and I'm including these as well.

16TH APRIL

Pukar and Keshav arrived in the afternoon just before Baba left the sitting room. They were asked to stay on 17th and leave by 19th by the morning train.

19TH APRIL

Surabji [Sorabji Siganporia] and Kishinchand Gajwani were called for five minutes. It was Gajwani's birthday. Baba graciously permitted them to stay for 50 minutes.

25TH APRIL

At 9:30 a.m., while Baba and the men mandali were sitting together, they all experienced a slight tremor of the earth, like an earthquake. After the tremor passed, Baba was in the mood to explain the original whim and *mahapralaya* (the complete absorption of consciousness up to the fourth plane at the destined time). He also explained the time factor connected with mahapralaya.

26TH APRIL

Kapurchand Mehta, one of the proprietors of "Shangrila" biscuits, came in his car to see Baba. Because of the strict seclusion, Baba did not see him, but Eruch had a long talk with him. Baba wished to convey the following message to him: "(1) Read *God Speaks* and other books by Baba, (2) Remember Baba wholeheartedly, and (3) Love Baba so much as to get merged in Him completely." As the phone was not in order, this message was sent to him through a letter.

The next day Aloba was sent to give Mehta *The Everything and The Nothing* in Hindi, as a gift from Baba.

The exhibition to commemorate the "Century of Canada" [Montreal's Expo 67] begins tomorrow. In the Indian pavilion a "special shelf" will be reserved for Baba books. Copies of the "Universal Message" will be given free of cost to the visitors, estimated to be about 10,000 a week.



Bhau and Eruch walking
with Baba on the verandah
of Guru Prasad

27TH APRIL

In the morning Baba came by at 8:30 a.m. He started walking from His room, putting His hands on the wrists of two mandali members and walking with His former speed. It is really a most delightful and satisfying sight to see Him walk like this.

After the usual day-to-day enquiry, Bhau read two poems in Hindi and Francis read out two ghazals. All the compositions were very much liked by Baba and the mandali.

A section of *God Speaks* was read out to Baba by Eruch. Baba directed Eruch to underline or mark certain words that He is expected to explain later. Baba instructed Francis to work on this second edition of *God Speaks*.

Throughout the summer months that year Baba explained various terms and concepts included in *God Speaks*, and He made revisions, starting with the very first page, to the second edition of *God Speaks*,

which He had instructed Eruch and Francis to work on and edit. As a certain section would be read out, Baba would sometimes direct one of them to underline or mark certain words or points that He would then explain in further detail later. He wished to clarify many sections so that no doubt would be left on the subjects that were included. It was such an amazing privilege to be an observer while the God-Man Himself explained about life and the universe.

Jimmy Mistry arrives in the evening and will stay through Monday afternoon.

28TH APRIL

Baba came to the mandali's room by 8:30 a.m. Baba told us that He was not feeling particularly well. He asked how all the mandali were, and Francis said he felt drowsy. Bhau read out one of his songs and all liked it. I think Francis read something, too, but Baba declared He wasn't in the mood for ghazals. His brother Jal came to visit around 9 a.m. and gave Baba a ballpoint pen. Baba motioned for me to come forward and He handed me the pen. He asked me to read aloud what was on it. To my surprise, there was a quote of Baba's embossed in yellow that read: "Love Me more and more and you will find Me.—Meher Baba."

When I had finished reading I tried to give the pen back to Baba, but He gestured for me to keep it as a gift and to again take my seat. He did not say anything more about it. After a while, Jal left. I wondered whether Jal had come just to give that pen to Baba or for some other work, but no other business had been discussed.

I started using that pen, and upon my return to Kurduwadi, I kept it in my bag until the ink ran out. About that same time a traveling salesman with the same type of pen was in town. I bought one of his and

used it until the inscription on it had also worn away and I could no longer tell which pen had been given to me by Baba and which one I had bought. So I have both of them as keepsakes.

I took this pen as Baba's signal to me to love Him through writing about His life. As I look back at the six volumes of *Glimpses of the God-Man*, which Beloved Baba both inwardly and outwardly guided me to write, the thought creeps into my mind and heart that by giving me a "ball pen," He meant that Bal should be like a pen and write. This may be true or totally wrong, but when He gave me the pen by stretching out His hand, I felt it was His special way of giving me a proverbial pen which still works—which is me. I myself even marvel at the number of works that the Bal pen has written. And though the ink ran out of the original pen, the "creative ink" that Baba inwardly gave me is still flowing.

Baba heard a few paragraphs of *God Speaks* up to the section on fish form. Baba listened to some developments about Avatar Meher Baba Trust.

In the afternoon, a phone call [came] from Adi Sr. bringing the good news that water level was reached at 83 feet by the drilling work at Meherazad.

29TH APRIL

Nariman, Arnavaz, and Katie came last night from Bombay for a stay at Guru Prasad. Once in the mandali's room, Baba said, "I feel infinitely depressed. I am not in a good mood because of the pressure of work—the world situation."

Katie remembers:

In the late 1960s when Baba was in strict seclusion while at Guru Prasad, I would only come when called. And while

there, one had to be very careful to not disturb Him when He was working. There was not to be a single sound. So everybody had to be quiet and whisper to one another. If I was helping Naja in the kitchen, I had to be constantly alert to see that no lid fell to the ground. We used stainless steel vessels, and if one of them was dropped, it made such a noise that the sound would reach Baba's room. This required concentration on Baba all the time—not to make any noise, not to disturb Him. We had to think more of Him, than of ourselves.

God Speaks was read out to Baba from fish to human form. Baba said about this part, “Birds and fishes are innumerable but species are not innumerable.” He explained that this correction had to be made in *God Speaks*.

In the afternoon, Baba came by 2:30 but most of the time was devoted to reading from *The Times of India* and *Indian Express*. Playing cards was stopped earlier at Meherazad particularly because the correspondence was heavy due to Baba's birthday and it continues to be canceled at Guru Prasad this summer.

30TH APRIL

Meherwan, Jehangu, Sohrab, and Rustom came today, being Sunday [to entertain and visit Baba]. Patil Kaka [Sadashiv Patil] comes in the afternoon, every Sunday.

Baba was in the mood to listen to jokes from Sohrab, Rustom and Jehangu. Sohrab and Rustom would save up funny stories to tell Baba when they came to Guru Prasad. The servant at Baba House had a stutter which Baba used to enjoy. The twins had a lot of funny stories about him. As for correspondence, today was a day for Australia. Baba

was very, very happy with the reply received from Robert Rouse. Cables were sent to Robert and Lorna Rouse and Dr. O'Brian of Melbourne.

A message was also sent to Rick Chapman. [Rick had come to India the previous June on a Fulbright Scholarship. Although he had not expected to see Baba, who was in seclusion, he wanted to be near Him and to meet as many Baba lovers as he could. To his surprise, Baba called him for a meeting in August 1966. Rick had also traveled in India and had sent a "report of his tour" to Baba. Now, before going back to the States, Rick was staying in Poona so that he could be close to Baba. Each evening he would visit Bindra House and listen to Eruch tell what had happened that day. The next morning, when Eruch went back to Guru Prasad, Baba would sometimes ask him what had happened at Bindra house the night before. Eruch would share anything of interest and, in this way, would often mention Rick to Baba.]

Baba's message to Rick said:

I am pleased with you. I am with you.

Do the work entrusted to you diligently and bear in mind that the time of My manifestation is fast approaching. Carry My message of Love to all Americans. Do not be affected by how they receive it.

You, Allen [*sic*, Allan Cohen], and Bob [Robert Dreyfus] are capable of drawing the Americans to the Truth which I alone am.

My love to you, Allen [*sic*] and Bob.

Give my Love to all lovers of Mine whom you meet.

Two pages from *God Speaks* were read out to Baba. Baba left the mandali's room for His room by 11 a.m.

In the afternoon He came by 2:20 and left by 3:30 p.m.

1ST MAY

Baba came at 8:45 a.m. He looked cheerful, but said He felt infinitely depressed. Baba inquired about Rick Chapman and when he had left Poona.

The report of Rick's tour from 10th February onwards was read out to Baba. All liked the way in which he presented the matter. Kailas [Cave] at Ellora and Golgurda [*sic*, Golconda] Fort were described very aptly and symbolically.

Letters from Mr. and Mrs. Luck—the parents of Irwin and Edward—were read out to Baba. Meherwan recalls:

They would sometimes write to Baba complaining about Irwin and Edward, especially Irwin as he was the elder son. They were keen on having him become successful. Their father, Morris, who was in real estate, was very wealthy and hated the idea of them coming to India to see Baba.

Many years after Baba had dropped His body, he came to India to see what his sons had been doing there. He visited our family at Bindra House. While visiting, he had a scowl on his face the entire time. We tried to take him here and there to show him about Baba, but he was not amused. He was, however, very taken by the old synagogue in Poona near Baba House. The synagogue was over a hundred years old and was built out of brick. It had a tall tower with a big clock on all four sides. It was a grand landmark in Poona that could be seen from a long distance. The clock had broken and no longer told the time. Morris was so taken by this synagogue that he gave a big donation to get the clock repaired. From corresponding with Baba and visiting His home in India, how can we know what connection he had to Beloved Baba?

Today is the 3rd anniversary of the Poona Centre. Baba sent His love Blessings to all at the Poona Centre. A special party meal for all at Guru Prasad was sent by the Poona Centre lovers.

Baba came at 2 p.m. and left at 3:30 p.m.

Nariman, Jim, and Katie left in the afternoon for Bombay.

2ND MAY

Baba arrived in the mandali's room by 8:40 a.m. Today, the first chapter of *God Speaks* was read out to Him. He said that He will explain the process of evolution in detail so that no doubt is left about the subject. Francis is asked by Baba to edit *God Speaks* according to his understanding and at the end Baba will see the corrections, including the deletions, etc. that he has made.

These days, Baba shows interest in the news from China. He often remembers Mao. Baba then permitted some of the correspondence and telegrams to be read out.

In the afternoon, He came by 2.00 p.m. and left by 3:30 p.m. Aloha read out a letter from Iran from Mohommad Fanai. The "Baba work" in Iran is spreading among Muslims.

3RD MAY

While hearing *God Speaks* today Baba said, "Gross form *evolves*, consciousness evolves, but subtle body and mental body *develop*. There is no process of evolution in the seven kinds of gases." Francis asked Baba if there is no evolution then what else happens. Baba said He will explain it later.

Baba asked for a pencil and paper. Once it was brought to Him, He began to draw a diagram to explain the theme of the sojourn of the soul. The soul is, in fact, infinite and eternal—in Paramatma. I was

sitting near Baba's chair and was able to see Him effortlessly illustrate the complexity of this with ease.

Today He heard a part of the fourth chapter on "Reincarnation and Equipose of Consciousness."

He left the sitting room by 11:00 a.m.

Then again He was with us from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The newspaper was read out; He continues to show interest in news about China.

4TH MAY

From today, Bal started reading Marathi biography to Eruch. [Probably K.N. Soman's.]

Baba had a slight spasm in the waist and so He came a bit late to the mandali's room today.

Meherwan remembers:

One day, while walking vigorously, Baba sprained His back and developed a catch or spasm in the muscles. This ended the phase of physical activity that summer. Baba began to experience pain with even the slightest movement. His walking and activity had to be curtailed. Many treatments were tried, including massage with a hot iron instrument that the mandali would move over the affected area to relax the muscles. A sofa couch was brought into the mandali's room for Baba to rest on. And when He would stand or walk, a waistband was wrapped tightly around Baba to support His back.

When He came in, He inquired about "new things," i.e., some unusual happenings in the world, or in any department of life. He is also particular to hear the news about China.

Today He seemed interested when I told him that a gorilla in a zoo in England paints and draws pictures with a brush.

Eruch massaged Baba's waist.

Baba had given a theme to Bhau, who composed a good Hindi poem on it. Francis read out one of his ghazals, which Baba liked very much. He said, "This has surpassed all the previous ones."

The draft of the Life Circular No. 65, which discussed the instructions for Silence Day, was approved by Baba.

The afternoon time was mostly devoted to the hearing of *The Times of India*. No reading of *God Speaks* today.

One of the ghazals that Francis read out to Baba was "Because of Love":

*The evening pianos have faltered into silence—because of
love.*

*The night trumpets have wailed their last notes of
violence—because of love.*

*How earnestly we pursue our roles in God's great game—
because of love.*

*The freshening dream...the kiss, ever new and the same—
because of love.*

*Who, if he could hear his own voice, would go on
singing—because of love?*

*The end remains covered, else few would make a
beginning—because of love.*

*The difference between being pelted with eggs and
showered with roses—because of love,*

*Is less one of talent than one's fate-share which time
discloses—because of love.*

*We sleep; sometimes we dream; and awaken to a new day—
because of love.*

*A billion years of wayfaring; yet still we don't know the
way—because of love.*

*We would not yet even have broken out of the Beast-cage—
because of love,*

*If it were not for God-Man's compassion and holy rage—
because of love.*

*Tomorrow is another day for the battle's violence—because
of love.*

*The few remaining hours of the night are for wine and
silence—because of love.*

Baba liked this ghazal quite a bit. Not only would He have Francis read it periodically, but after hearing this ghazal, Baba started regularly commenting after a letter was read out to Him, or something funny was said, “It’s all because of love.” Baba would make the letter “b” and then “e” and then “c” and we would know what He was trying to say. If the context of the situation was such that we didn’t immediately grasp what Baba was conveying, He would then gesture “L” with His hand for love.

5TH MAY

Baba gave some points for *God Speaks*:

1. In seven kinds of gases prior to “stone forms” there is no evolution but *transformation*.
2. Awareness is connected with ... Consciousness is not connected with ...?

Baba will explain this point later. The differences between consciousness and awareness, as explained by Francis through a figure, was appreciated by Baba; i.e., an ordinary man uses energy and mind though he has not either subtle consciousness or mental consciousness.

Baba had a rash on His head. He told us since morning that He is getting a splitting headache.

Francis said, "What is it due to?"

Baba said, "*God Speaks*."

Francis said, "No, it is just one of the normal reasons."

Baba said, "Right. Now though I am not having pains in the hip or cervical pains of the neck and you find me walking, still the pressure of the Universal work is so immense that I feel giddy. I feel infinitely tired or depressed."

Baba at times is very adamant about not changing His routine, perhaps even more so when, according to human understanding, such a change would ease His suffering.

He asked Eruch and Francis to have a look at the *God Speaks* section. Eruch suggested that certain things be taken out and deleted. Baba then heard another part of the fourth chapter, "Reincarnation and Equipoise of Consciousness," before leaving the sitting room at 11:00 a.m..

Report of Baba's 73rd Birthday as celebrated at Uganda (Gulu) by Trilok Singh was read out to Baba.

6TH MAY

Nariman came last night. It was bit cooler today. Baba talked with Eruch and Nariman for about 45 minutes. Baba still has a catch in the waist.

There was no Hindi song or ghazal reading today and Baba was not in a mood to hear *God Speaks*. Telegrams were read out to Him and

a letter from Rick to Eruch. Nothing special, just reading out of the usual newspapers.

In the afternoon, Baba asked some of us whether they believe that He is *bhola* (guileless). Most of them said that being perfect He is everything, which includes His being *bhola*.

[This reminds me of the time when something happened and Baba appeared to know nothing about it. Baba gestured, “I don’t know how it happened. I am *bhola*.” Eruch came back with a humorous pun, “Baba, You are *bhola* and You are also *bbaala*,” which means a hunting spear. Baba really laughed at this.]

Eruch would often remark that sometimes Baba would be like a child, and then, other times, like a spear that would pierce you with His displeasure if you disobeyed. Eruch was the first person I saw tease Baba in this way—only Eruch could get away with it!

Baba left by 3:30 p.m.

7TH MAY

Sunday is a day of hearing jokes from Sohrab, Rustom, Jehangu and others.

Today was Manu’s birthday. So we had *sev* [fried vermicelli made from gram flour] and eggs in the morning and in the afternoon *pulav* [pilaf]. Baba permitted Manu to come to Guru Prasad in the morning and leave with Nariman by 4:15 p.m.

Manu remembered that day:

Baba told me that it was to be a holiday for me, and that I was not to cook at all. I used to help prepare Baba’s food at Bindra House in the summers. Baba wanted me to enjoy myself at Guru Prasad on my birthday. Dadi drove me on his scooter. He had one of those sidecars that I sat in. I brought a garland

(MANU CONTINUES)

with me for Baba but I was so shy that I gave it to Mehera to offer to Him. Mehera insisted that I should garland Baba myself since it was my birthday. So I went to garland Baba as He was seated in the dining room at the back of the main hall. Baba asked me to not put it on His neck as He was suffering from great pain at that time. He held out His right arm and I lovingly placed it there. Baba then embraced me and gave me a big hug. He told me to enjoy my day in His company and with the women. What a treat to be with Him on my birthday, or any day.

For those who were permitted to come, Baba's first question would be, "Give me some new news." And upon hearing it Baba would remark, "This I have heard 700 years ago."

Baba still has a catch in his side. Eruch used the electric vibrator. Baba did not feel much relief. Today no songs, ghazals, or parts of *God Speaks* were read out.

Kitty Davy writes that in South Carolina a big concert of two thousand students is arranged where Rick is expected to speak on Baba. [More likely this was in North Carolina.]

When the news was read that in Russia a book containing small stories from the Bible is handprinted as a government publication, Baba said, "Russia is slowly heading towards God but China won't."

8TH MAY

Baba came by 8:30 a.m. Today He will have a "hair wash" after almost two years. Baba said that the very thought of taking a bath gives Him a fright. He will not bathe but intends to wear a raincoat and collar so that water may not touch His body; perhaps this was one of Babajan's traits!

Some news from *Sakal* newspaper read out. Baba is still having a catch. He left by 10:00 a.m. No mood for *God Speaks* today.

Bhau's seventh song was read out. On May 10th, Baba wishes to hear all the seven songs. Adi Sr. came from Bombay at midday and left in the afternoon by 4 p.m. Rick Chapman was sent a cable conveying, "I like the content very much."

Dr. Deshmukh came and a speech he had written, which included many quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita*, titled "Avataric Wonder," was read out to Baba. After the speech was read, Deshmukh said, "Baba you are *acharya purush*" (acharya means wondrous or amazing, and purush means the Oversoul).

Baba said in surprise, "I have never heard this phrase applied to My status before." Deshmukh replied, "Baba, it is right in the *Gita*." Deshmukh then recited the couplet for Baba:

"Some look on the soul as amazing, some describe him as amazing, and some hear of him as amazing, while others even after hearing about him, cannot understand him at all."⁵⁸

After sharing this couplet Deshmukh remarked, "So, you are that Baba. I call You acharya purush. So instead of understanding You one has to wonderstand You."

Baba smiled at this scholarly explanation and new name given to Him by his dear lover Deshmukh. I too was struck by this new and creative word, "wonderstanding."

Dr. Deshmukh used to wear the black *gunda* [cap] *tilak* on the forehead, which is used to signify that the person is openly Ram's. Once Baba asked Dr. Deshmukh why he was wearing that and, even though

Deshmukh was a scholar, he said he didn't know. He told Baba that this had been his habit since he was young, because he was raised that way. Baba told him it is used to remind the person that it is not with the two eyes that one sees, but with the third—that is the real eye.

From an earlier episode in my life, when I first learned of Baba, I read that two of Baba's Sadgurus were Brahmins. As I was a conservative Brahmin, I thought I should follow a Brahmin instead of Meher Baba. I wrote to Narayan Maharaj about this. I received a letter back from his secretary which was not really a response to my query. In it, I think he instructed me simply to "Follow God."

I also wrote to Dr. Deshmukh about this same quandry. From his surname, I knew he was a Brahmin. Deshmukh replied, "You fool—He is Parabrahma!" This affected me greatly. It was all Baba's game of drawing me to Him.

9TH MAY

The catch in Baba's side is giving Him more trouble. Eruch used the heater, like an iron, over Baba's aching part, the left side of His waist. It did not give Baba much relief. Whether He sits, sleeps, or walks, the pain is still there. It seems Baba does not want to part with His lover named pain. Baba said, "Pain has fallen in love with Me." On an earlier occasion Baba said that the pain had become a Baba lover so He cannot ask the pain to go.

A few letters were read out to Baba, but neither poems nor ghazals, nor *God Speaks* was read out.

While hearing one news item from the *Times*, Baba remembered and quoted a line of Ghalib that when translated means, "Only the hope of dying keeps me alive."

Baba left at 3:30 p.m. It was very hot today. Yesterday the temperature flew to 107°F. Today it may be 109°F.

Meherwan adds:

Another memory I have of that summer is that it was unusually hot, with temperatures rising to the 100s, making Baba and the mandali especially appreciate the coolness of Guru Prasad. However, news from Meherabad and Meherazad told of the intense heat and drought they were experiencing there. Meherazad had hardly any water left. Padri sent a message asking Baba if they could drill a bore well to try to find water. Baba gave permission and so a site was selected and drilling commenced. They went down to fifty feet, but there was no sign of water. Then eighty feet down, and still no water. Padri was very concerned and asked Adi's advice. Adi called Guru Prasad and talked with Eruch. I remember Eruch coming into the mandali's room and asking Baba what they should do about the well. Baba thought about it for a while and then said to tell them to go ten to fifteen feet further down. Eruch relayed the message and they continued drilling. Sure enough after another three to four feet, water gushed forth.

10TH MAY

Baba was not feeling well. He is getting pains due to a catch on both sides. Moreover, His back is also aching. Even standing up straight proves to be painful for Baba, yet still He walks. Eruch has a sore throat so Francis read out the letters to Baba. In the afternoon Meherjee read out *The Times of India*.

In the morning, Bhau read the seven songs specially composed under Baba's direction. Baba gave points in prose. Baba liked all the

songs. The first began, “Everything is happening in spite of nothing happening.”

It was very hot yesterday and even today, i.e., 109°F.

Detailed news about Zakir Hussain was read out to Baba by Meherjee. Baba inquired as to who succeeds the president in case he dies within his period of office. [Zakir was elected President of India three days later.]

Cable sent to John [Bass, most likely]: “Eating well means eat neither less nor much. Dress well means neither be dandy nor shabby.”

11TH MAY

Today Baba was feeling more pain and it was difficult for Him to stand straight.

While reading out the correspondence, there was news about the proposed foundation of a Meher Service Society by Apparao. Baba sent a message via a telegram:

Service to anyone in any form when rendered with humility, honesty and love is service to Me. Therefore I happily approve your starting “Meher Service Society.” I bless the project. Stop. My love blessings to you and your wife and family.—Meher Baba

Letter from Bill and Francis’s reply were read out.

Baba rested on the bed and had Pendu use the heater over the part that was paining Him.

Nariman came by noon. He brought the news that Goher’s mommy was rather seriously ill.

In the afternoon the newspaper was read out to Baba as usual.

Waman Padale, Adi’s assistant at the Trust office, phoned to say that the water at Meherazad was of good quality.

12TH MAY

Jimmy [Mistry] came last night to stay at Guru Prasad until Sunday evening.

Baba's pain continues. It is getting difficult for Him to walk.

About Bill Le Page, Baba said, "Baba work is his rest." Baba had given him special detailed instructions in February 1967 when he was called to stay at Meherazad.

In the afternoon, Baba came earlier, by 1:45 and left by 3:30 p.m. During the newspaper reading, Baba wants others and me to tell Him some uncommon news. He wants to hear news that little children might be interested in, about tigers, snakes and scorpions, accidents, mishaps, etc.

There were a lot of headlines about political affairs [the election was the next day] and Baba joked as to what would happen if firecrackers were wound at the back of fat leaders and then set off. [Sometimes children would tie firecrackers on the tails of dogs and then light them.—Eds.] The running for people's work is a necessary [evil].

13TH MAY

While in the mandali's room Baba said that a grim, tragic thing has to happen during or after this period of intense suffering

About Zakir Hussain He said, "His regime seems to live in suspense." Baba did not appreciate the president's visit to one of the centres of Shankaracharya of Shringari and his bowing down to its leader and to Muni Suhil Kumar.

[Adi Shankaracharya was an 8th century Perfect Master in India who established four centres throughout the country. Baba told Elizabeth that He had been Shankaracharya. At that time, Shankaracharya established a revival of Hinduism and did away with many ritualistic practices,

emphasizing *advaita*, or non-dualism. After Adi Shankaracharya passed away, the spiritual authority of the four centres was handed down to different individuals who are like high priests, but not spiritually advanced. Zakir Hussain visited one of these Shankaracharya centres and bowed down to one of the leaders even though he was not a Perfect Master. Muni Suhil Kumar was another spiritual personality in India that Hussain bowed down to. Baba was displeased when He heard this news.—Eds.]

The degree of Baba's pain has intensified and He agreed to call Dr. Gharpure tomorrow to examine Him. [Gharpure was a famous surgeon in Poona who was a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, a high degree that few received.—Eds.] Baba started using the wheel chair this afternoon.

Baba sent the following message from His room at 5 p.m.: "I am God. I have to suffer much for 4–5 months."

14TH MAY

Baba had a "restless" night. His back pained Him too much to sleep. His back has become like a log of wood. Any movement of His back is an ordeal. Baba came in the wheelchair. He referred to His previous remark about the suffering He would have to undergo for 4–5 months.

Dr. Gharpure came at 9:30 a.m. and examined Baba. Once Baba got seated well in His chair He got in a good mood.

Baba's work in Australia is slowly expanding with the efforts of Bill Le Page.

In the United States, meetings of youths are being arranged and Baba's name is introduced to them. Rick Chapman addressed a meeting at Chapel Hill (North Carolina). Allan Cohen is also devoting much of his time to Baba work.

Newspaper reading in the afternoon. The news was read out about 31 guns fired as Zakir Hussain assumed office. Baba casually asked, “How many are fired when a president dies?”

Baba left by 3:35 p.m.

15TH MAY

Dr. Dixit came to take X-ray plates of the area where Baba is experiencing a catch. In the afternoon he phoned that the plates were not clear and that he would come the next day to make fresh plates.

Baba comes to the mandali's room in the wheelchair. It is a great pain for Him just to stand or to sit.

16TH MAY

Dr. Dixit came again to take X-rays. Baba instructed us to give the doctor and his assistant a copy of *The Glow*. Baba then asked them to read it in their spare time. The X-ray plates were clear this time.

Baba said He intends to have a book in Hindi of about 200 pages that would accommodate Bhau's songs. It will contain 10% of the gist of what He wrote in “The Book” while in the Table-house at Meherabad.

Francis had to work on *God Speaks*. There were additions of about 200 pages. Francis said that it was a “headache” for him to edit *God Speaks*. Baba said that it was for this that He had relieved him from his “heartache” i.e., the work in Australia, and remarked, “Imagine ‘My Headache’ to put into words the Reality of My Experience. Compared to this, yours is nothing.”

{By their helping in the editing of *God Speaks*, Baba was sharing with Eruch and Francis a mere fraction of the “headache” and suffering He Himself experienced all the time.}

17TH MAY

Some letters from the West about Baba's work were read out to Baba.

Bhau read out his tenth song. All liked the song very much. Baba told us that this will be the epilogue of the book in Hindi that He had mentioned on the previous day, which is based on points given by Baba, which will later be translated into English and titled, *The Nothing and The Everything*.

The heater was used on Baba to minimize the pain caused by the catch.

At noon Dr. Gharpure came and examined the plates and studied the reports. He gave Baba a mixed novocaine and cortisone injection.

In the afternoon, some news from *Sakal* and *Poona Herald* were read out. Baba left by 3:15 p.m.

18TH MAY

Baba had no sleep last night and Dr. Goher was awake all night, too. However, Baba's mood seemed good. Dr. Goher asked Baba to rest and restrict His movements. Baba said, with exasperation, "Had I known it would be such a 'restless life' I would not have come down."

Baba told Bhau to read all the eleven songs that he had composed on points given by Baba.

Was Deo Kain's letter brought the news that on the 23rd—Buddha Purnima Day—Baba lovers in Delhi have arranged a good program at Bahadurgad. [Kain worked in the President's estate so he had many connections to politicians in Delhi. Sanjeeva Channy Reddy and Jagjivan Ram, both well known, agreed to attend. These leaders were not Baba lovers but Jagjivan Ram had met Baba at Guru Prasad in 1960 [see p. 184] and had great respect for Him. Due to their contact with Kain,

they agreed to attend the program. In a similar manner, out of respect for Amar Singh Saigal, many politicians would attend Baba functions. After Saigal's death, for the most part, they stopped coming.)

In the afternoon, Francis played a song "Jai, Jai Meher" and then read out the lyrics to Beloved Baba.

Generally in the afternoon Baba would hear the headlines from the English newspapers. While Eruch was reading them, and hearing about the tense world situation at the time concerning China and the US and Israel and the UAR, Baba conveyed, "All has come out of Me. It is no one's fault. I have set the things; the time that will reveal this is just coming nearer and nearer."

He then turned to look at us sitting there in the mandali's room and asked, "Do you understand this?" He then gestured, "Because I am God, everything has come out of Me."

19TH MAY

The catch continues to pain Baba, but He looked fresh. He said, "In spite of the severe pain today I am in a good mood and so tease the mandali to make them unhappy!" Baba would put different questions to the mandali and would say, "Do you know why God does ..." then some esoteric question that we couldn't answer. "Do you know why?" God Himself answered, "Because I am God."

Goher had no sleep and felt tired, yet she continues to work. She said, "Baba you are God, but to be your doctor is ... (your ailments are beyond my knowledge) (I tell you things, but you don't follow my instructions)?"

Baba then responded, "Did I not allow you to cut My nails today?" Because of His long nails there were scratches on His body.

It was no joke being Baba's physician. Often whenever Baba was troubled by pain or discomfort of different kinds He would not be able to sleep, and Dr. Goher also would be awake all night. Baba told Goher to take care of her body. She told Baba that she was not worried about her body but the mental tension caused by worrying about Baba's health. "Don't worry," said Baba, "even about the mind. Even if you die, you will see Me, but then who will look after my medical needs?"

Despite Goher's best efforts, she often found herself powerless to help Baba. She would beg Baba to allow her to consult another physician to see what could be done and, invariably, Baba would say no, she should just do her best. Goher felt completely inadequate. She knew that she was not as up-to-date as she would have liked concerning medical treatments, and her experience was limited. But even when a doctor from the outside would come to see Baba, He would forbid Goher to ask him questions.

When Goher's suffering became too intense for her to bear, Baba would console her by telling her not to worry, that His ailments were caused by His work and would go away when that particular phase of work was finished. Goher had seen this many times in her life with Baba and yet she couldn't help but feel it every time Baba suffered and she was unable to do anything to relieve it.

Several years earlier, after much pleading on her part, Baba agreed to allow a famous Poona doctor, named Grant, to visit Guru Prasad. Although Goher was forbidden to consult with Dr. Grant, she was still happy that another doctor would be seeing Baba and might prescribe something to alleviate His pain. Baba welcomed the doctor with a smile and, as the doctor took his seat, Baba began to ask him how he was doing. The doctor looked a bit wan and Baba asked if he was eating enough. He even

suggested some foods that the doctor might eat to improve his condition, such as fish. This was comical (except to Goher) as their roles had been reversed: and Baba was giving the doctor dietary advice!

Given Baba's loving concern for his health, and Baba's seeming robustness, Dr. Grant only casually examined Him and assured Dr. Goher that everything was all right and that there was no reason for her to worry so.

When the examination was over and Dr. Grant had left Baba's room, Dr. Goher said, "Baba, You didn't tell him any of Your symptoms" that He had been complaining about to Goher almost nonstop for days. Baba said, "You're right. Go and catch him before he leaves." For a second, Goher's hopes were raised that He might actually let her tell Dr. Grant all the things that were bothering Baba; but instead He told her: "Run and catch him, and tell him that I will break My silence in nine months."

Baba had recently issued a circular to that effect and had told Dr. Grant this personally as well. Goher had dressed up in a nice yellow silken sari to receive Dr. Grant but she now found that it restricted her movements. So she picked up the edge of her sari in one hand and then ran after Dr. Grant, hoping to catch him before he left.

"Doctor, Doctor," she yelled, panting as she ran outside. Dr. Grant was in his car. He rolled down the window. "Yes?" he asked, looking concerned, thinking there must be an emergency to have Goher running that way after him.

"Baba says not to forget that He's going to break His silence in nine months."

Dr. Grant looked at Goher, a little perplexed. "Yes," he said, "I know." And then he looked at Goher as if she were coming unhinged and advised

her, “Take it easy, Doctor. Don’t worry so much,” and then drove away, leaving Goher feeling frustrated, humiliated and helpless once more.

20TH MAY

Baba came a bit later than usual this morning. Nariman came to Guru Prasad last night.

Baba’s feet were swollen. The pain is intensifying. “Why is this so?” asked Baba. He then replied, “Because I am God—Paramatma.” He asked Nana Kher and me if we believe Him to be so. We both said yes. It is indeed a great fortune to be blessed with such faith!

Correspondence work is less today. The draft of the Family Letter was read out and approved by Baba. “It is excellent,” He said.

Message sent to the Luck brothers: “One day you both will see Me, as I really am—Baba.” How lucky are these Lucks!

In the afternoon the newspaper was read out. Baba left the mandali’s room by 3:35 p.m.

21ST MAY

Baba had a “restless” night but He appeared to be in a good mood. Sunday is a day of hearing jokes from Sohrab, Rustom and others.

Baba added a few lines to the Family Letter that was read out yesterday, saying that “His spiritual and mental suffering will end when He breaks His silence.”

Dr. Kenmore’s long letter was read out. Baba walked a little distance from His room. Sadashiv Patil came in the afternoon. Baba left the mandali’s room by 3:30 p.m. Nariman arrived last night to stay for a few days.

22ND MAY

As Baba came in the mandali's room, He called all inside and again said that He is facing a grim event. He told us that He would suffer much in the coming 4-6 months. In the light of that, there was a possibility that some close ones might leave Him. So He advised all to obey what He said, to try to do 100% what He ordered.

A part of the Family Letter was read out again.

Eruch's reply to Harry Kenmore was read out.

In the afternoon, Baba listened for a long time to a mimeographed book sent by Sheila, a friend of Adele Wolkin's, that was read out. [Sheila Krynski found out about Baba from Adele in the 1960s. She wrote a "book" about her experience of coming to Baba and sent it to Him. She never heard anything about what happened to this book, other than it had been received, until this manuscript was being prepared in 2011 and Bal's note was relayed to her. She was very happy to learn that Baba had had it read out.—Eds.]

Baba walks half the way to His room and then He gets in a chair. His feet are still swollen; it's been about a week now.

23RD MAY

In the morning, Baba told us that the pain regarding the catch is 75% over, but the swelling in His feet is still bad. Dr. Gharpure is expected to visit tomorrow.

Beheram's [Baba's brother from Poona] hernia operation will take place on Friday. Those near Baba have also to suffer much; much indeed.

As for the world situation, Baba told us that everything is getting ready for the final "blowing up" and His Manifestation. It is perfectly

arranged. "Time is near," He said. Baba's humanity manifests His divinity but it hides it as well.

Baba sent the men mandali to see a movie called *Von Ryan's Express*.

24TH MAY

Allan Cohen's cable and [Richard] Alpert's letter to Adi Sr. were read to Baba. Baba's work in the United States is spreading among many young people.

After reading about some accidents in the newspaper, Baba turned to Nana Kher and jokingly said, "Leave [stop] seeing your face in the mirror. For this brought a greater increase in the deaths and accidents."

{Baba was referring to Nana's beard, which was starting to grow, and was teasing him that if he didn't shave surely there would be more accidents. Baba would sometimes say to Nana, "Whose face have you seen today!" He seemed to be asking, when Nana looked in the mirror, who could he see, since his own face was so covered. It is also common in India for one to use the expression, "Whose face have you seen today!" when some difficulty or incident of "bad luck" has occurred.

In such an intimate way, Baba would often tease Nana Kher about his beard. Nana had very rough and thick facial hair. It was a hassle for him to shave it every day, because it would take nearly an hour. We all used the same bathroom and there was only one basin with a mirror on the men's side; so Nana had to get up at 5:00 a.m. in order to shave and complete his toiletries so that we could all be ready when Baba came.

Since Nana was so slow, he thought he would grow a beard so as not to inconvenience the other mandali. But Baba said how nice it would look if he shaved every day. From that day on Nana shaved each morning and would leave seeing his face clean and clear.}

I was on *pabara* [watch] on the verandah, because Aloba was sent to see the movie *Von Ryan's Express*. {I sat on the verandah on the men's side to make sure no one came into the compound, as Baba was in strict seclusion at the time. Baba had clearly expressed that He did not want to be disturbed, but sometimes people could not resist the attempt to see Baba if He were nearby. Luckily no one came that day; I simply sat and kept watch for the afternoon.}

The swelling in Baba's feet is subsiding. He said that He would begin walking fast starting on the 30th of May.

Khorshedmai, Dr. Goher's mother, passed away at 2:00 p.m. When Baba heard this news, He said, "She has come to Me—freed from the round of births and deaths."

25TH MAY

Baba's pain from the catch is much less and the swelling of His feet has subsided. But today Baba is feeling giddy. His forehead and cheeks were a bit warm.

After the telegrams and cables were read to Baba, Francis Brabazon read out his reply to Bill Le Page's letter. {Baba would often take great interest in the news from the Australian Baba group through Bill's letters and would often ask Francis to reply with news from Baba's ashram in India and any messages or instructions from Him.}

Upon hearing Francis's reply Baba looked at him and jokingly said, "You look younger. Your reply to Rick makes Me happy. Your reply to Bill makes Me more happy. And as you look younger, it makes Me most happy." After a little while Baba turned to Francis again and said with a smile, "For the coming 4–5 months, you will be looking younger; I will

look older. After that I will be looking younger and you will be looking older.” Then Baba asked all of us in the room to say “Amen.”

{Baba’s teasing and joking with us was a delight and a gift. However, during those moments Baba would remind us that we should always remember He is God. As the morning would be filled with intimate teasing and fun, that same afternoon, after hearing news of world crisis read out from the newspaper, Baba said, “The real crisis is facing Me.” He would come down to our level to joke and laugh with us, and at the same time would carry the weight of the world. In those times with Him the infinite spectrum of His perfect humanity and perfect divinity were juxtaposed.}

26TH MAY

Last night, Jamshedji [Jimmy Mistry] came to stay at Guru Prasad until Monday evening. Nariman has also been staying here since last week. He may stay a week more.

Today Baba called the Bindra House people and Beherambhai’s family members to Guru Prasad. He was with them for half an hour and by 10:00 a.m. they all left Guru Prasad.

Because Baba was in seclusion and even many of His close ones were not permitted to visit, Meherwan remembers what it was like to be called by Baba in those times:

Baba would ask how each one was doing and want to hear of any news. I did not think ahead of time about what to tell Him because He knew everything. Whatever He asked we would tell Him. Those were periods of intense seclusion so we did not see Him often. It was such a great pleasure to see Him. To be in His presence was all that we could ever hope for.

We didn't want any discourse, only to be there—to watch His face and His beautiful gestures.

He never liked us to stare or gape at Him, so when He would be gesturing we would look at Him. He wanted people to be natural but attentive in His presence. All attention should be focused on Him. He would encourage all who came to make the most of it. He would often tell us, “You won't get this chance later. Whenever I call you, come here and be present. Don't let your mind wander. Make the most of your stay in My presence.”

Mind, being mind, it wanders sometimes. Thoughts would come—you can't stop the flow of thoughts. Baba would tell us to just think of Him when the thoughts came. We would feel so grateful to see Him again after a long time and then would leave filled to the brim with His love.

Baba asked Goher to narrate the last moments of her mother, Khorshedmai. Goher described how her mother was very weak, yet she folded her hands in a *namaskar* gesture. After she passed away, her face appeared calm and normal. The leg, which had purple swelling from gangrene, instead of getting worse, subsided completely. Baba said, “She has come to Me, to rest in Eternal Peace.”

Rick's very fine report of the program in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, was read out to Baba. Baba dictated two cables, one to Rick and the other to Allan. They cost Rs.72 to send. Baba joked, “The cable rate is to be increased so let us hurry up [and send] the cables.”

[Because of the increase in the cost of cables, some lovers started sending “reply-paid cables” that included the cost of a reply. Other lovers would send extra money so that Baba would be able to reply to those lovers who couldn't afford to use a reply-paid cable.—Eds.]

27TH MAY

Baba said that yesterday afternoon [after retiring to His room] He suffered very seriously, as never before. Bhau recounts how Baba asked Goher to check His blood pressure and heart rate because He felt giddy.

When Baba asked me what I was thinking about, I said, “I am happy to note that the swelling in Your feet has subsided, but now some other pain commences.”

Baba replied, “I feel so giddy that I neither wish to close nor to open the eyes. The world is pressing Me down.” Baba explained that the coming period is very crucial. He was not in a communicating mood today.

28TH MAY

Jehangu, Meherwan, Sohrab, and Rustom came, since it is Sunday.

News came that Beheram’s hernia operation was performed today.

{Dr. Gharpure performed the operation. It was discovered that Beheram’s intestines had perforated and it was only Dr. Gharpure’s expertise that saved his life.}

Baba looked very tired.

So as not to disturb Baba, Maharani Shantadevi waited outside at the side gate of the compound until someone came by to send word that she was going to Sawantwadi. She spends about 24 thousand for the upkeep of Guru Prasad and yet she did not wish to disturb Baba in any way [and so she waited at the side gate of the compound until someone came by]. Baba permitted her an audience of 20 minutes. She greeted Baba very lovingly and with such an unassuming manner. Baba told her that He was very pleased with her thoughtfulness to not disturb Him. He then told her that she could come again in a few days if she wanted. She will come again on 2nd and 3rd June.

At noon, Patilkaka [Sadashiv Patil] brought *bhajia* and *gulab jamun* [sweets] to Guru Prasad. Patilkaka told me the story of how in 1919 he accompanied Baba to Sakori, Benares, and Puri [a coastal town in Orissa], where there is a sacred temple of Krishna, his brother Balram, and Subhadra his sister. There is a register there for visitors to sign. Only Hindus are supposed to enter the temple. Since neither Patil nor Baba had Hindu names, Baba told Patil to write his name as “Pandaya” (the temple keeper) and Baba’s name as “Jagat Narayan” (Lord of the Universe). [This happened in 1919 when Baba, Sadashiv, and Upasni Maharaj went to Benares to celebrate a *maha yagna*, a Hindu religious ritual. After this event, Baba and Sadashiv traveled to Puri.—Eds.]

Baba came back to the mandali’s room by 2:25 p.m. The news from *Indian Express* and *The Times of India* were read out to Him.

29TH MAY

Baba was in a better mood today.

Yesterday, the Khilnani family sent some fruit to Baba. During morning discussions, Baba asked Eruch to tell the Khilnanis to see the movie *The Naked Prey*, and to understand how difficult it is to go through the path that leads to the Goal and His Love.

[In the film, a Westerner, in Africa, is caught by a tribal chief and sentenced to death for intruding on his territory. The Westerner is given a head start, and then two expert spearmen are sent after him to kill him. The man runs for several days, narrowly escaping death all the while and finally comes to the boundary where there is a cliff with a river far below. The man jumps off the cliff and into the river to escape.]

A cable from Allan was read out. Baba dictated a reply, “‘Sufi or Gufi [goofy],’ as long as one loves Baba no ‘isms’ matter.”

Bhau and Nana have gone to see the movie *Milan* at Baba's instructions.

Today Baba gave Nana and me some leftover milk-soda—His Blessed Prasad.

At noontime, Baba enjoyed hearing the news from the papers.

30TH MAY

Baba permitted Sarosh-Viloo an audience of few minutes. Baba told them that His preordained time is approaching: "Do not worry. Remember Me wholeheartedly." Baba then added, "I am the only Reality."

Afterwards, some letters were read out to Baba and in the afternoon, only the newspapers were read out.

I was sent to see the movie *Milan* with Pendu. Lately, Baba is in the mood to send the men mandali to see movies in Hindi and English. Baba said, "I am in Seclusion and I send you to see 'cinema.' ... Why? I know."

Goher pleaded that instead of going to pictures she be given a period of 4 hours free to attend to her work, but Baba persisted in His wish that she be kept busy 24 hours a day. Baba then said, "For twenty-four hours, I see the universal picture."

{Such were Baba's ways in relation to the mandali.}

Speaking of movies, this reminds me of the "almost" darshan that Perviz and Shridhar (who had just gotten married) had with Baba that year. Perviz's mother was Dina Talati, a longtime Baba lover. She gave them strict instructions not to visit Baba when she learned they planned to visit Poona in May of 1967. They had all received Baba's circular wherein He asked His lovers not to disturb Him. Perviz and Shridhar brought with them some sweets and weren't sure how to get them to Baba without disturbing Him. Dina told them that they should just take

the sweets to Bindra House and that the Jessawala family would see that Baba got them. Dina also told them not to go anywhere near Guru Prasad or, if that was not possible, to at least avoid being seen by Baba.

So, although they were resigned to the fact that they would not see Baba, Perviz and Shridhar went to Poona and, accordingly, visited Bindra House. In Perviz's words:

Gaimai said, "Why don't you stay for dinner because Eruch is coming for dinner." We accepted the invitation and met Eruch, who suggested that we meet the men mandali the next day, as they were going to the cinema to see an afternoon show. We were to arrive at the end of the movie, so we could meet them as they were leaving the theatre. In this way Eruch introduced Shridhar to all the men mandali.

My mother had told us not even to tell Eruch where we were staying, as the news might get back to Baba and then He would be compelled to call us, which would be against the rules of His circular. So when Eruch asked us where we were staying, we just vaguely answered, "Oh, some hotel in Poona."

The next morning we took a walk down to Bund Garden. On the way, away from the gate, behind the hedges at the sidewall, I pointed out to Shridhar which one was Baba's room. Shridhar had had Baba's darshan during the public darshan day at the East-West Gathering, but he had never been inside the Guru Prasad bungalow. From a distance, I was pointing out the different rooms to him. We later came to know that Baba had seen us and pointed out to the ladies, "See those figures behind the hedge? It is Perviz and Shridhar."

(PERVIZ CONTINUES)

When later that day, the men mandali told Baba that they had met Perviz's new husband, Mehera said that she wanted to see him as well; Baba said, "But they can't come here." Mehera kept on insisting, "Baba, You don't see them, but let them come, I would like to see who she is married to." This was exactly what my mother said would happen, so finally Baba told Eruch, "Find out where they are staying and call them."

"But Baba they refused to tell me where they were staying."

"How many hotels are there in Poona? Find out." Eruch had to call a number of hotels looking for us, but fortunately he missed the one we were staying in. It was called Dreamland Hotel, an ordinary place, across from Poona Station.

When Eruch told Baba that he had tried but had been unsuccessful, Baba was very happy and told him to give up the search. Then He sent a message through Eruch, saying, "You don't know how fortunate you are, not disturbing Me during this seclusion and what you have gained by obeying Me."

It was further conveyed to us that Baba would see us one day, and to wait for it. Thanks to my mother we had pleased Baba.

As a sort of postscript, I add Perviz's account of the day Baba did see them:

Our time to see Baba finally came in 1968 on the occasion of Dara and Amrit's wedding at Meherazad. Before we came, Mani sent us the message that Shridhar and I should dress in our wedding clothes. So when we were called up to greet Baba, we were wearing the same clothes that we had worn on our

wedding day. Baba told us to kiss Him; He gestured for me to kiss Him on the left and Shridhar kissed Him on the right, so we both kissed Baba at the same time. He gave us (and one other) that special chance, as none were to touch Him on that occasion; instead He greeted all from the porch.

31ST MAY

At the end of May 1967, while in the mandali's room of Guru Prasad, Baba looked at Nana Kher and described how Nana's mind was not caught up in the web of *samsara* [worldly life]. A few times, Nana's mother had asked Baba to tell Nana to get married. She wished for her son to have a family and settle down. Nana was not concerned with or drawn to such things. He was totally devoted to and focused on Baba.

Baba then related a well-known couplet of the Maharastrian Master Tukaram: "Don't get caught up in the web of Maya."

Baba then turned to me and gestured, "Of what use is it if you continue to worry?" I paused to think of the meaning Baba was conveying to me of not being influenced by family affairs. Although by Baba's instructions I was not married, my mind worried over family matters concerning my sister's health and her children.

He then said to both of us, "Remember, I am Paramatma. Remember Me." In this quiet moment, Baba spoke with such intimacy and authority.

Just as unexpectedly as He had related these messages to us, Baba turned and asked Aloba to go and purchase two tickets for the latest film so the women mandali could go. Aloba made the arrangements and told Baba with pride that the work was done. When Arnavaz arrived it turned out that she had purchased two tickets less. After some time,

Baba called Aloba back and had him perform *tobah* [meaning to repent while patting either side of one's cheeks] for doing the task with self-importance. It was an example to me that Baba's work should be done with no idea that "I did that" or that "I alone can do that." It was a lesson and reminder to all of us that He alone does His work.

All mandali were sent to see the movie picture, *The Naked Prey*.

After hearing one cable, Baba referred to the Hindi saying, "If the crow imitates a swan, it will never acquire a swan's traits and it will lose its own individuality also." The crow cannot change its black feathers to white like those of a swan. It cannot move like a swan. In the same way, we must live out this life with the particular individuality that we have been given. Each person's qualities or attributes are given as a gift from God and can help us to fulfill what we are to play out in our life.

Baba then related a line from Tukaram along the same theme: "The shoe is put to best use when it is on your foot." This further helped me to see how one should accept and put to use whatever inherent gifts He gives us and to trust their significance and purpose in our journey to Him. Or, to put it another way, if we accept our "crow-ness" we will be just as happy with our feathers as the swan may be with hers.

Later Baba said again: "If the crow tries to imitate a swan, he loses his own gait and can't acquire that of the swan." Baba then looked at all of us and said, "Don't imitate others." Whether crow or swan, one has to live out one's own natural path in life toward God.

1ST JUNE

In the morning Baba said that He felt "restless" because of Universal work. When He repeats the same question it means work.

That afternoon, Baba and His close ones were sitting around the mandali's room. Baba was dictating letters to Eruch in reply to the correspondence of the day. A cable was sent to Australia for the anniversary of Avatar's Abode:

Although I am ever with My lovers individually, I am always happy when they gather in My Love. So celebrate this anniversary at My abode with a bang! And spread My message to every corner of your heart.

Baba then indicated for Eruch to add the following three things to a letter that was being sent to Dr. Ginde:

World situation—wild like fire.

Baba's work in East and West—wild like fire.

Baba's internal suffering—wild like fire.

Baba said to write no other explanation because He wanted Ginde to guess at the meaning.

Later in the afternoon as our session in the mandali's room commenced again, Baba asked if we knew the meaning of the lines that He had written to Dr. Ginde. When we did not have an answer Baba explained that they were describing the intensity of His Universal work and what effect that had on His physical condition.

To lighten the atmosphere and the burden weighing on Baba's mind, He turned to Aloha and asked him to read something. Aloha pulled out a piece of paper and began to read a short poem he had written about work and, of course his favorite subject, tea. [For years Aloha was in charge of preparing tea for the mandali and continued to do so at Meherazad for the mandali and pilgrims alike until the end of his life.—Eds.]

(ALOBA RECITES)

*I am the real grace in the gathering of people,
and my name is Tea.
For those who are tired,
to energize them is my real work.*

Baba gave a beaming smile and said that He was very happy with what Aloba had written. He then teasingly asked: “Had your father ever composed a poem? It is your first poem and you write about tea!” Aloba just beamed back at Baba, who then asked him to write down a few lines from Ghalib. I remember only that the first line was in Marathi: *Ranje o kumar*, which means “anxiety and suffering.”

*Ranje klbugar huvaa insaan toe mit jaataa hai ranj
Mushkile itni padi mujh par, ke aasaan hoga-e
When one becomes accustomed to difficulties,
then difficulties are no longer felt as such.
So many difficulties fell upon me,
that they have become easy to handle.*

Baba concluded, “This can be said about My suffering which has become My constant companion.”

[Such were our times with Baba in Guru Prasad, where we were given a glimpse of His Universal work, as well as His sense of humor.]

It cannot be described how wonderful were those mostly quiet times with Baba's presence prevailing throughout Guru Prasad; to be in the mandali's room in the morning, just waiting for Baba's arrival. I would feel, no matter what the weather or the time, that whenever He

came into the room, it was like the sunrise, with Baba's glowing face warming the heart. Some days we would notice or He would point out, "See, see my feet, how swollen they are." And that would give us a hint, a glimpse of the sort of suffering Baba was undergoing for humanity.

Baba's health was constantly in flux in the 1960s, indeed, since 1956 and the second auto accident. For a while it would seem that Baba's health was improving, and then it would suddenly become much worse, and then better, and so on. Typically, before darshan programs, Baba's health would almost completely give out, only to "miraculously" revive just as the darshan program started. Although, quite often, as soon as Baba returned to His room, his "good health" would disappear once more.

Baba's hip and neck were the chief culprits, giving Him almost constant pain. Although, in typical Avataric fashion, Baba used His suffering to draw Dr. Ginde, Dr. Kenmore, and Dr. Grant (amongst others) into His contact. But then, despite the complaints and the pressure of His work, Baba, for a very short time in 1967 seemed to regain some of His former mobility. Mani describes this in her Family Letter of 1st June 1967:

Two thirds of our Guruprasad stay is over, with four weeks left to departure time. We arrived here on the morning of April 2nd, the usual odd procession on wheels starting from Meherazad soon after breakfast: the large truck carrying all personal and household stuff (including bicycles and lift chair), the hired Station-wagon and the De Soto accommodating most of the Meherazad family, and Dr. Donkin's new Wolseley carrying Beloved Baba and some of us. As good to look at as to drive in, the Wolseley glided over the rough roads like a drake on a lake. During the drive Baba repeatedly remarked how comfortable

(MANI CONTINUES)

He felt, and told Donk to be here with his car on 1st July to drive Him back to Meherazad.

The first thing Baba did on stepping into Guruprasad was something we have not seen Him do for umpteen years—taking a brisk walk up and down its long verandah, His hand on the arm of one of the mandali who was having quite a job keeping in step with Him! Others, usually snail-walking behind Baba, were comparatively running. It made me remember the time we told Harry Kenmore how in bygone days Baba used to walk so fast that the mandali had to run after Him, and Harry had promptly punned, “Well, they’re still running after Him!” Now, I thought, they are beginning to do so literally again.

Each morning and afternoon we have seen the Beloved striding the length of the marble tiled verandah, to and from the mandali’s hall. Added to our joy at seeing Him walk like this is seeing the pleasure it gives Him, when at the end of a stride He may ask with a delighted smile, “How do I walk?!” Just as He asked Dr. Ram Ginde when he was here in April, called by Baba “for five minutes” specially to see Him walking. And Ram’s reply shone from his beaming face with that eloquence which makes words look pale before it. How Baba appeared to him during his fifty minutes with Baba, Dr. Ginde expressed in his letter to Eruch:

“Beloved Baba looked a picture of radiant health with bright shining eyes, rosy cheeks, exuding joy and happiness. He did not seem to have much pain in His neck and His movements were relatively free and spontaneous. His gait was strong. I have never seen

Him walk like that before; one stretch and back along the verandah was enough to make me breathe heavily. It was really a unique and thrilling experience.”

If Beloved Baba appeared in such glowing health and radiance to Dr. Ginde, that’s how He appeared to us. But that is not to say we see Him always in this light, as we do when His radiance is turned on full for those whom He calls for a while. For us who see Him all the time, He often keeps the shade down or we could be dazzled into forgetfulness of His humanity. Baba made a statement on this one morning recently in Meherazad when He was seated with His mandali. Baba said, “I am both divine and human. Those who live with Me feel more of My humanity than My divinity. Those whom I permit to come and see Me for a while see more of My divinity than My humanity. All My intimate lovers whether living with Me or away from Me will, in the end, experience My divinity.”

Baba’s sudden decision to call Dr. Ginde when He did, was explained by His remark: “Later I may not be walking so fast.” We were to remember that casual remark some weeks later, when Baba strained a muscle in His back which made movement painful. But although the back considerably slowed down His pace Baba continued the daily verandah walks, until it became too painful to take a step. The little wheel-chair was unpacked and put into service again after its long holiday—the chair sent by His “Big Ben” (Dr. Ben Hayman) by Air from United States three years ago. Last two summers Baba used

(MANI CONTINUES)

it all the time, but this year it was out of sight and out of mind till the back strain made its use imperative for a while.

The cervical collar too has been hardly in use this summer. With the temperature up to 109°F during May, we didn't dare imagine the discomfort it would have meant for Baba if the collar had to be on longer! Happily, substantial improvement in the neck pain made this unnecessary. Some time ago in Meherazad, when there were darshan-seekers in spite of Baba's repeated announcement that He is in seclusion and none must ask to see Him, Baba said "Only My lovers' love can help the pain in My neck, it can ease only when My seclusion is undisturbed." We can see that even if we learn our lesson the hard way, hard for Him, His Patience and Love help us in the end to learn it well. Now the love of His lovers has indeed begun to help by keeping His seclusion undisturbed. And although this applies to His lovers everywhere, at the moment it applies most to His lovers in Poona. For them the Beloved's darshan is touchingly close, yet they have not let a breath of their longing stir the quiet of His seclusion!⁵⁹

Speaking of the cervical collar, after Baba dropped the body, Mani, and some of the other women mandali, tried wearing the collar to see what it was that their Beloved had had to put up with. They found it almost intolerable, even for a few moments, and were amazed to think back to the hours on end Baba had to wear it. Once again, even this partial glimpse into the enormity of Baba's suffering was overwhelming.

2ND JUNE

The Maharani Shantadevi came at 9 a.m. and left by 10:30 a.m. At the end of her visit, Baba referred [to] the following couplet in Marathi:

*Dam ka sara damdama gar dam to kuch nabin yi sari
dunya heec hai dam nabin to kuch nabin.*

A free translation of this in English is:

*It is said that it is all a game of breath, the moment the
breath stops, nothing is left. As long as I am breathing, the world
exists, and when I am not, the whole world vanishes. The whole
world is nothing but illusion, no life, no world.*

Baba continued, “Till the last breath, one associates oneself with the breath [i.e., mind]. If that link is snapped, there is nothing to worry.”

Jimmy came to stay at Guru Prasad with Baba until Monday evening. Nariman is also here for a fortnight.

Today, the women will go to see the movie *Milan*. Baba commented about how often He sent the mandali to see films during this stay in Poona.

Baba came to the mandali's room at 2:10 p.m. and left by 3:30. Baba's mood was a bit disturbed as Aloba delayed to obey His order. Baba only listened to the newspapers being read out.

3RD JUNE

The Maharani came by 9 a.m. and had an audience with Baba for one hour. Baba told her about a *mast* from Kolhapur, and about Dhondi Buva from Islampur. He described to her how God looks after their

bodies. During Baba's chat with Shantadevi, He quoted the following two lines of Tukaram: "The shoe is put to best use when it is on your foot" and "The casual comments of saints convey spiritual guidance." (*Sahaj bolane hit up desh.*)

Baba used to have a bath daily. But lately, for over a year and a half, He has not taken one. A few days ago, He had a hair wash.

In the last two or three days, Baba has been walking with support—just catching the wrist of one of the mandali.

Baba commented that, "I send the mandali to the pictures often during this stay." He also referred to the oncoming grim tragic event. Today, the "Repentance Prayer" was recited in Baba's presence.

Today is the first anniversary of Avatar's Abode.

When leaving the mandali's room, Baba gestured, "Avatar's Abode Zindabad [Long Live Avatar's Abode]!"

Actually, the anniversary of Baba's visit to Avatar's Abode in 1958 had been celebrated every year. However, in February of 1967, Bill Le Page had been called to India and most of his time was spent in discussion with Baba about Avatar's Abode. Baba declared that He wanted it to be a place of world pilgrimage.

During Bill's stay at Meherazad, he, Eruch, and Francis worked on a charter with all of Baba's instructions on running Avatar's Abode. Bill was to be the chairman of the board since Francis was with Baba. The board members were selected by Baba in consultation with Francis.

One day, while Bill was sitting in Mandali Hall looking very morose, Baba asked him what was wrong. Bill said: "Despite my best efforts in Australia, hardly anyone comes to Avatar's Abode. Wherever I go and talk about You, it's as if people shut their doors and windows to me.

There is no receptivity in the hearts of Australian people to Your love.” Baba heard this and kept quiet for some time.

A little later, Baba said to Bill, “Don’t worry. I will turn the key.” When Bill returned to Australia it was as if people had suddenly flung open their doors and windows to learn about Baba. Baba had really turned the key. Bill was amazed with the transformation and the flurry of activity that started after this point.

Possibly Baba’s remark was an indication that this was the first anniversary of Avatar’s Abode as a place of pilgrimage.

4TH JUNE

Baba came by 8:30 a.m. this morning.

K.K. Ramakrishnan, Rasheed, Dr. Ghani’s nephew, and also the Khilnani family were permitted to be at Guru Prasad. Baba asked Prem Khilnani whether he had gone to see the film, *The Naked Prey*. Baba explained that in spiritual life one has to face more odds than those. He told Ramakrishnan and Khilnani to hold on to His daaman until the very end, particularly until the end of November 1967.

Tapes from Baba’s Birthday Program in New York and *Stay with God, Part IV* were played. Baba appeared very happy when He heard them. He liked Harry’s lecture very much. He looked very radiant while listening.

By 2 p.m. Baba returned to the mandali’s room, and again the tape of *Stay with God, Part IV* was played. Baba liked the voice of J. Fox very much.

I left, to return home, at 4 p.m. As I was leaving, Baba gave me “prasad” to distribute to the Baba families at Kurduwadi.

Generally, when leaving Guru Prasad, I would board the last bogie of the train so as to diminish my separation from Baba as much as possible. The train used to pass by Guru Prasad on its way out of Poona and I would crane my neck through the window, or stand in the open doorway, so as to get a last glimpse.

Baba
leaving Guru
Prasad for
Meherazad

Baba spent the rest of the month at Guru Prasad, returning to Meherazad on July 2nd.



1968



Once again Baba came to Guru Prasad on 1st April, with Donkin driving Him, Mehera, Mani and Meheru in the Wolseley. This summer, the seclusion was even stricter than the year before. Manu recalls:

In 1967 our cooking for Baba had lessened and by 1968 it almost completely stopped. He hardly ate in 1968. Sometimes He only called for khitchree. Sometimes He would say, "I want only soup, or today I want to be on water." He was becoming weaker and weaker. We never knew that He was going to drop His body so soon.

(MANU CONTINUES)

Baba was in such strict seclusion in 1968. We cooked for Baba, but we were not allowed to see Him, nor were we to contact any of His mandali staying at Guru Prasad with Him. Naja was staying at Guru Prasad that year and was not allowed to take one step outside; Eruch also could not come to Bindra House. In the years prior we would eagerly look forward to Eruch coming at night to give us the news—"Baba did this, Baba did that"—and we would all be impatiently waiting for his arrival and the news he would bring. So that year, at first, we were expecting Eruch, but he wasn't permitted to leave Guru Prasad. We didn't see Baba or Eruch again until Dara and Amrit's wedding in December 1968 at Meherazad.

Baba was in strict, strict seclusion on His chair which is now in the museum at Meherabad. It was always in Baba's room and no one was allowed to touch it. After Baba finished His work each day, ropes were tied round the chair to keep people from inadvertently brushing against it. I don't know what work He was doing with it. In the beginning it was an ordinary chair, but in 1968 this chair was strictly off-limits. Eruch told us that Baba used to post him outside the room to see that no one entered. On all sides He posted someone, Aloba, maybe Balaji, to see that no one should disturb Him. Silence was strictly enforced. The mandali had to see that even the crows did not caw. Meheru used to shoo them away.

The summer of 1968 was Baba's last stay at Guru Prasad. We were very sad that we hadn't been able to see His face. He must have been preparing us, making us ready for His

end-coming. After He dropped His body, we looked back on the last time we had seen Him on the Guru Prasad verandah in 1967, when Baba, unaided, had walked up and down the length of the Guru Prasad bungalow. As He walked, Baba would gesture to His lovers that lined the verandah, “See, I’m walking, I’m walking. I’m going, I’m going.” He was showing us how healthy He was, and of course, at that time we couldn’t have known what the true meaning of His “going” was.



Very few people were allowed to visit Baba at Guru Prasad that summer. So much so that Mani used to refer to Baba’s seclusion as “exclusion.” The daily routine was not all that different from years past with this big exception: instead of spending time with the mandali or close ones who came to visit in the mornings, Baba was busy with His seclusion work.

Baba would come from the hall to the mandali’s room at about 6:30 a.m. and we had to finish everything by that time.

After Baba joined us, Francis and Eruch would lead Baba from the verandah to His room where He would sit upon that special chair, which is now known as the Seclusion Chair. At first, it was just an ordinary chair, but once Baba set it aside for His seclusion work, He made a point that no one was supposed to touch it for any reason. Even the women had to be careful that their saris didn’t touch it. No one asked why; living with Him was living with Omniscience so there was no question “Why this?” and “Why not that?” And so Baba would be there for about two hours, maximum three hours. Nana or Aloba would be on watch.

When Baba clapped, Nana would come back to the men's side and tell Eruch and again Eruch would go to Baba's room and attend to Him. Then Baba would come to the mandali's room and sometimes He would look exhausted and be drenched in perspiration. Sometimes Eruch would wring out His sadra and Baba would change into a dry one. No one was allowed by His side. He would be all alone in that room. Coming back, He would walk across the verandah again to the mandali's room and when we would watch Him, I felt as if He were descending from some very high tier, from His eyes, from His expression. Sometimes He would say, "I'm not aware of what's around." He would gesture like that.

In a very slow movement He would come and take His seat in the room. He would be helped by Eruch and Francis even to get seated in that chair in the mandali's room. And then, when He was seated, the first thing He would do is stand up as the prayers were read out. Just the four or five of us who were there would join Baba. Usually when the prayers were read out Baba would stand with folded hands. But during this time, after the seclusion work, He would stand with His right hand inside His sadra, right on His heart, as if everything that He had worked on in seclusion was coming right from His heart and He was giving it out to the whole world.

And I feel that the whole world will know, at the right time, what the Avatar of the Age has done for them through His suffering. Because the suffering was intense. This was the period when Baba used to pound His thigh with His fist until the muscles became like wood. After the "Master's Prayer" we would say the "Repentance Prayer."

One day Baba said, referring to the "Master's Prayer": "This is the best prayer given to this day." And so when I think about it, I don't just think

of it as the “Master’s Prayer,” but also as the “Master Prayer.” Why Baba has said this about the prayer, I don’t know, but it’s a gift from the God-Man to all humanity. Not only that but by repeating these prayers Himself, Baba has endowed them with special force. Baba said, “All those who will be repeating this prayer daily would be helped by Me spiritually.”

I remember one time Eruch was reading out a magazine article that had come to Baba. As I recall, it was a story about a woman who would go from man to man. I wondered to myself whether such a story should be read out to Baba; naturally, I didn’t say anything. But when Eruch was finished, Baba gestured, “We have heard this story in here today. Now go out and wash your hands and face, and I too will wash my hands and then we will come back in the hall and offer prayers.”

We did this, and then stood and said the “Master’s Prayer” and the “Prayer of Repentance.” The atmosphere seemed to be completely changed by the prayers and then Baba went on to the correspondence. This made me feel that Baba’s forgiveness is perfectly natural. All you have to do is say, “Baba, I have done this, please forgive me,” and He will forgive you in that instant.

As a small digression, let me say here that many times Baba lovers, usually from the West, will ask me, “But isn’t it a ritual to say these prayers every day?” I always say that everyone is free to have their own opinion about such matters. But from whatever little I have gathered from Baba, I think this is one of the greatest gifts He has given us—the opportunity to say these prayers.

People tell me that they don’t see it that way, that they feel they are just repeating the prayers mechanically. I say, “It doesn’t matter. Whether

you say them wholeheartedly, half-heartedly, or even if you say them quarter-heartedly or no-heartedly, still the words are there.” And those words have that Avataric intonation attached to them. So even saying them that way is still a wonderful way to bring us closer to Him. We don’t have to understand why Baba made such a point of saying them. Baba used to tell us sometimes, “You say that I am the God-Man, the Avatar, and still you want to understand the meaning behind the statements I have made. You don’t want to know the plain meaning that is there.”

So all I can say is that while He was doing His great seclusion work, there was not a day when He did not have those two prayers recited. And even when He found it difficult to stand for that period of time, He would take part in the prayers Himself.

Later He would have tea and then of course sometimes He would have lunch and by 11:30 he would go back for another, shorter session of seclusion work. Baba would come back to the mandali’s room at 1:30 or 2:30 and there would be some news read out to Him. Baba would call it bogus news, “as what has happened in the entire world despite My working like this.”

One humorous remark I remember. When Baba listened to the newspaper, even though He had spent almost all morning doing His Universal work for all of humanity, He would act like an ordinary person. There was some news that there was going to be a valve from a pig transplanted into a human heart. That amused Baba. He said, “There is a word ‘pig-headed’ so now we should have the word ‘pig-hearted.’”

Sometimes He would ask Francis to regale Him with his ghazals and he would read out whatever he had written lately. I don’t remember

the exact words, but Francis sang a song on Baba's Godhood and the lines were something like:

"I wish you were a bit less God, a bit less Beloved, and a bit more man."

This song described the state of a lover who at times feels baffled by the ways of the Divine Beloved. Baba liked this song very much and remarked, "By writing this song, you have raised Me as a bit more God, because this very tribute you are writing has raised My status."

With a twinkle in His eye He said, "I am God eternally, but when I am fed up with being just that, time and again, I become man, the Divine Beloved, and it is at such times that you may have a feeling that I should be a bit less God and a bit more man."

Mani wrote on 12th May:

The month of May has come. Into the world of Baba lovers it has come with a gale of promise, stirring hope in all hearts, bringing to the surface the question in all minds: Will Baba see His lovers after 21st May? Only Baba has the answer.... [Baba had said that His seclusion would end on the 21st.—Eds.]

More and more we hear of lovers who travel about from place to place, often in groups, telling all men about God on earth, giving His Message to the masses. And we see the Beloved's smile reflected in their love-efforts as long as they are kept unclouded by the breath of disobedience. Never must the lovers be so busy telling the people about Baba, that they can fail to listen to what Baba tells them! This is not impossible, for in love we are children and Baba tells us that Love is no child's play. Take the instance of a group in India's northern

(MANI CONTINUES)

province—some two dozen lovers, mostly new ones, who came to Poona with the determination to have Baba's darshan in spite of Baba repeatedly saying that none must come. Their longing to see Him moved them to "demand" His darshan by staging a silent rally outside the gates of Guruprasad! It fell to the lot of Poona veterans to convince them that this was not love's way, that we who are given the grace to love Him cannot ask for the right to disobey. When at last they left to continue their tour of spreading Baba's Message they were no doubt sadder at heart, but infinitely wiser we hope!

...The favourable weather in Poona has helped to make Baba's work easier.... Perhaps the weather has also contributed toward His health which has kept well on the whole, despite the familiar fluctuations. Now we see Him looking so well and radiant, moving with such a swift stride that the mandali have a hard time keeping up with Him. Now we see Him weighed down and so infinitely tired, that they move along at snail's pace to keep in step with Him. Baba tells us that these ups and downs in His physical health are caused by the shifting pressures of His Universal work.

...The lovers in Poona have helped supremely in this, temptingly close as they are to the place where their Master resides. One of them wrote to Adi, "Just that our Beloved will be in Poona, is the greatest thing for us. We are content to breathe in the air charged with His presence and fill our lungs to bursting point!" He could've been speaking for them all, so united has been their resolve to help by not approaching Guruprasad

in any manner. How the children too have been no less aware of the strict seclusion can be imagined from an amusing incident that concerns Merwan, Baba's three-year-old grand-nephew living in Poona. It happened a few days after we arrived at Guruprasad. Merwan was out for a walk with his daddy, Jehangir [Jehangu] Sukhadwalla, when they came across a dead crow lying on the road. Inevitably the toddler's volley of questions began: "What is this?" "A crow," said daddy. "What the matter with it?" "It has been shot." "Why doesn't it move?" "Because it is dead and gone." "Where has it gone?" "It has gone to Baba." At this, Merwan halted in his tracks and excitedly demanded, "What?! When Baba is in Seclusion? How come a crow can go to Baba and I can't?" I'm still wondering how daddy managed to get out of that!⁶⁰

The 21st of May came and went but Baba did not alter His seclusion to the extent of allowing visitors. Mani wrote Harry Kenmore about this time as well:

There was no respite at all during the last couple of years of Baba's Seclusion and with the ban on correspondence, the more your Ole Man withdrew in His Seclusion and the more His Family "expanded" and the rate with which it continues to grow and spread out is quite stupendous. Baba, I feel, has been more intimately in contact with His Creation during His Seclusion than otherwise.

(MANI CONTINUES)

Beloved Baba's Seclusion ended on 21st May but He has not relaxed the restrictions He imposed on us during the Seclusion period. None of us is permitted as yet to step out of Guru Prasad and none is permitted to step in. The gates of Guru Prasad continue to remain closed. After His Seclusion, beloved Baba has, so to say, stepped into a sort of "exclusion." There is no hint given by Him yet about His wish to permit His lovers for darshan. Personally, I feel that there is no hope of Baba giving darshan this summer, not at least during His stay in Guru Prasad. But who can be sure of Baba's ways! [Bal's correspondence file.]

Those of us staying with Baba in Guru Prasad had orders not to leave the premises, nor send for anything from outside. At that time Eruch was very busy with correspondence, and Bhau would generally be on the second floor writing. I would work on recording the days' events in a diary, or help with any projects, but there was no special work given to me at the time.

So on several occasions it fell to Nana Kher and me to entertain Baba. He would say, "Lighten My mood." So Nana and I would write something, God knows what. Bhau would sometimes help us out by giving us ideas and points. So, this is how Nana and I, who had never been on stage before, would put on skits for Baba in the afternoons. The audience would be just Baba and the men mandali. Baba would laugh and smile cheerily. Whether He was laughing at our clumsiness and incompetence or at the script, I cannot say.

Not being able to send for things from outside proved problematic when it came time to put on a skit for Baba. Since we couldn't leave to

buy nor could we order materials for costumes or props, we had to improvise creatively with whatever we had around Guru Prasad. This also entertained Baba to a great degree.

One skit I vaguely remember dealt with the trouble of rent control and humorously showed a landlord and tenant in dispute. I played one of the tenants. The plot was about the difficulties of getting a tenant to move out, and then the owner's trouble in finding a good replacement. The dialogue contained many puns and subtle humor, which Baba enjoyed very much.

It was only possible through Baba's grace, because we had no acting skills: only a few props; our costumes were thrown together; and often we couldn't remember our lines. However, when we were able to lift some of the weight of Baba's burden by simply making Him laugh, it was such a joy for us, and a gift from Him.

Even during this stage of His intense work, Baba always had a sense of humor or a little joke that was shared with those who were with Him. Even about His work, some days He would come and say, "Oh, today's work was really good." Then the next day He would come and say, "Oh, today's work was better." The third day it would be "best" and what do you think He would say on the fourth day? He would say, "Oh, today's work was better than best." And the next day if He came, He would say, "Oh today's work was so better than the best, that if I were to work again, it would be hard for me to maintain my link with the gross world."

Baba never explained what His seclusion work was, but He would give us little hints about it. One day, in a most casual way He gestured, "Well I am going to end My seclusion soon and then I am going to see

My lovers, My dear ones.” And about this, He mentioned, “Once I start seeing people, it will not be discontinued, then I will be a different Baba and there will be no more seclusion.” And so, after Baba’s dropping the body, naturally I started going through my diaries and when I came across this line, at least to me, I felt that He meant a different dimension of Baba altogether. All these little hints that He had been giving were right from the seclusion period or even earlier than that when He stopped seeing people in various ways.

Of course, at the time, I had no idea what that might mean. As I said, my relationship with Baba was as a child with his loving parent. I never thought about why people were not allowed to come, or what restrictions were being placed on visits or any of that. I was happy that I was with Baba. And, as I was leaving, maybe the first week of June, I said Baba, “I am leaving.” He said, “All right, keep well.” And as usual it was a nice, loving farewell. I knew that I would be seeing him next Diwali vacation, that is October–November.

So I didn’t know when I left that summer that this would be my last stay with Baba at Guru Prasad.

There is no doubt that Baba’s health was poor, but it had been poor for several years and, as we had seen many times during darshan programs, Baba’s health could suddenly improve. Because Baba told us all often that His health problems were because of His work, it was easy for us to assume that once that phase of work was finished, Baba would return to good health. Even so, leaving Baba at the end of each summer was difficult for me.

Just as Baba did not like people to be “garlic-faced,” or to be solemn, or adoring around Him, He also did not like it if we were sad when we were leaving. Therefore, often, when I was getting ready to return home, I would prepare by thinking, “I’m going to be cheerful.” I would then go to Baba and say, “Baba, I’m going now.”

“All right,” Baba would gesture, “go happily. Don’t weep.” He would move His index fingers up and down in front of His eyes—His gesture for crying. Whenever Baba made this gesture, however, and He often did when I would leave Guru Prasad, I would feel overwhelmed and begin to shed tears. It was an automatic response to Baba’s gesture. I didn’t take Baba’s “don’t weep” as an instruction, but as a sign of His loving concern. Perhaps this is why I could not hold back my tears.

Once, I was weeping so much that Eruch had to help me down the verandah steps to the car that was taking me to the railway station. I could not control my weeping. Sometimes, if I had had a long stay with Baba I might be able to keep myself from crying when I departed, because I was so filled with His loving presence.

Baba was like a father to me. And just as a child can tug on the pant leg of even the most powerful and busy father to ask for a chocolate, so I could approach Baba. Inwardly, I would have asked anything of Him.

Another gesture of Baba’s I remember well was also with His index fingers in front of His eyes. He would rotate both His fingers in an upward and circular motion to indicate, “Go inward.” When He was in the mood to give a brief discourse about God residing in one’s heart and inner experiences, He would use this gesture to demonstrate going inward.

Taking Baba’s name lovingly helps one to dive deep within. He will help us and guide us in our inward journey as we dive deeper and deeper into the depth of His silence.

Although earlier Baba had expressed His intention to stay at Guru Prasad some eleven days longer than originally planned, He ended up leaving on 1st July to return to Meherazad, where He continued His special seclusion work.

As I said, I knew I would be seeing Baba again during my Diwali vacation and I did go to Meherazad to be with Baba at that time. Just before I came, Baba met with volunteers at Meherazad and chalked out the big darshan program that was to be held at the beginning of April 1969 for both Easterners and Westerners. Now, it was the beginning of November and I was sitting with Baba and arrangements were being made for Dara and Amrit's wedding and Mehera's birthday, which were to take place on the 22nd and 23rd of December. Baba looked at me and said "You know that Dara and Amrit's wedding is on the 22nd and 23rd of December. Will it be possible for you to come for that wedding?" I said, "Well my vacation begins from the 25th, Christmas Day, and so if I have to come before then I would have to use up some of my summer vacation time. If I do that, then I'll lose the benefit of the whole vacation, so I'll come on Christmas Day."

Baba left it at that.

On the next day, Baba again asked me, "Will it be possible for you to come for the wedding?" Not realizing that Baba, in His gentle way, was asking me to come then, I again said, "I will use that extra vacation next May when you are seeing people." Somehow my thoughts were more on those people seeing Baba than on Baba Himself. And Baba always wanted us to be practical and I thought I was being practical. Baba just looked at me. But that's the beauty of it—had it been Baba's order, then it

would have been different. But He created such a sort of intimacy with us that we were given the scope to make suggestions and to “be practical.” It wasn’t as if we had it in our minds at all times that He is God, and we have to do anything He says at all times and we can’t be free with Him. We knew He was God, we felt it, but at the same time, He encouraged us to be most natural with Him and, on His part, instead of ordering us to do this or that, often He made the most gentle of suggestions, little hints as to what His pleasure was and it was up to us to be alert to them.

Baba merely said, “All right, all right.”

The 3rd of November was the last day of my stay in Meherazad. Usually, I would just offer my respects to Baba and leave, but this time when I stepped out or maybe just came close to the threshold, Baba called me back. I didn’t know, but He did, that it would be my last physical meeting with Him. I never knew or even suspected that this would be my last chance to be with Baba, that these moments, then and there would be my last moments in His company.

He looked at me with all love, and said, “All right, now that you are going, come and kiss Me and then go.” So I went closer to Baba and kissed Him. And I left.

Baba knew I would never see Him alive again, and He made sure I would not have to spend the rest of my life regretting the fact that I hadn’t bade Him farewell properly. In retrospect, I can see what a gift this was.

November passed, December was passing. I was thinking of Christmas. Baba said whenever I wrote to Him, that He would permit me to stay with Him. But this time, when I came at Christmas, I was not allowed to stay at Meherazad. I think that, although He had not ordered me to come to



The last
photo taken
of Baba,
Meherazad,
December
1968

the program on the 22nd and 23rd, He had wanted me to come and I had therefore “disobeyed” Him. So this time, I had to stay with Adi [at Khushru Quarters in Ahmednagar]. I felt all right, it is His wish.

I realize now that I hadn’t been attentive to His wish. He indicates, He gives you a sign, but if you are not attentive to that, if you cannot listen to His call, or whatever you may call it, it’s your misfortune. But it’s also your fortune. I missed my chance to obey Him and I have regretted it ever since. But through this repentance I try to remember Him all the more and that’s His gift as well.

What infinite compassion He has. To take such care for someone like myself. Words fail me.

But at the time I still had no idea what a chance I had missed and that I had had the last kiss—the last seeing of Baba. I went back to Kurduwadi, looking forward to next summer at Guru Prasad.

مژن زچون وچراد هم که بنده مقبل قبول که در جان بر سخن که سلطان گفت

BEFITTING A FORTUNATE SLAVE CARRY OUT EVERY COMMAND OF THE MASTER, WITHOUT ANY QUESTION OF WHY AND WHAT.

پوشتنوی سخن اهل دل گو که خط است سخن شناس نمی دلبر اخطا اینجاست

ABOUT WHAT YOU HEAR FROM THE MASTER, NEVER SAY IT IS WRONG BECAUSE MY DEAR, THE FAULT LIES IN YOUR OWN INCAPACITY TO UNDERSTAND HIM.

بنده پیر مغالم که ز جسم بر باند پیر ما هر چه کند عین رعایت باشد

I AM SLAVE OF THE MASTER, WHO HAS RELEASED ME FROM IGNORANCE, WHATEVER MY MASTER DOES IS OF THE HIGHEST BENEFIT TO ALL CONCERNED.

حافظ — HAFIZ.

JANUARY—FEBRUARY

1969

A few days before my birthday on the 24th of January, I sent money to a Baba lover who lived in Ahmednagar to purchase tea and *kbhari* (a small savory puffed pastry) to be presented to Baba for the occasion. On the 23rd of January I got a birthday greeting from Baba and this helped assuage my heart. I was even more touched by His forgiveness when I got another birthday card the next day. This showed me that Baba wasn't satisfied with just writing once, but remembered me on my birthday as well, and had Eruch write again. He wrote that Baba had not been well enough to even taste the khari, which He generally so enjoyed.

As it turns out, there is an even more touching footnote to this story which I only learned recently. When the women mandali were going through some of their precious mementos from days with Baba, they came across a garland. (I may very well have asked that this garland be ordered along with the tea and khari, but I no longer recall.) This garland was special because it was the last garland they had ever put on Baba while He was in physical form—on January 24th. There was a small note with the garland that gave its history. On the 24th Baba had remarked, “It is Bal’s birthday today. Garland Me for the occasion.” It was only years later that I learned this and was immeasurably touched that Baba had again remembered me and, remembering me, had accepted for the last time, a garland.

But at the time, when I got the birthday greetings from Baba, I had no idea that Baba was soon to relieve Himself of His physical form on January 31st. Instead, on the first of February, I heard, or read in the paper, that Baba had dropped His body. I was at work. I did not know what to do. I just left the school, went home, picked up some clothes and went to Meherabad. I might have reached there by afternoon or so and by this time Baba’s body was already lying in state in the crypt. Eruch met me and we couldn’t say anything.

Then I met Aloba, who said, “Baba remembered you on the 31st.” I couldn’t understand what he meant. I said, “What, what?” The little story behind it is this. In the 1960s, Baba used to quote three couplets of Hafiz. Baba would often have Aloba recite the Persian and then have someone read out the English translations:

*Befitting a fortunate slave, carry out every command of the
Master, without any question of why and what.*

About what you hear from the Master, never say it is wrong, because my dear, the fault lies in your incapacity to understand Him.

I am the slave of the Master who has released me from ignorance; whatever my Master does is of the highest benefit to all concerned.

I thought, why not prepare a board on which I can write these words? So I just spent a quarter of a rupee, got drawing paper, asked one of my students with good handwriting to write out the couplets, brought it here, requested Aloba to write the Persian above the English and said, "If Baba wants, you can just show it to Him sometime."

The next time I came, I found that this very board, I can't even call it a gift as it was more just a passing thought I had, was nailed up in Mandali Hall. And it stayed there. But Aloba told me, on the night of the 30th, that Baba told him to get that paper and bring it to His room on the 31st at 10 o'clock and give it to Him. When Aloba came into Baba's room the next morning, Eruch asked why he was bothering Baba by bringing that to Him. But Baba gestured, "I asked him to bring it." So it was in Baba's room when He dropped His body. It's still kept in His room, that original paper that I had the thought to bring, not as a gift, but with the idea that maybe it could be of some use to Baba. Aloba thought that Baba asking him to bring it was Baba's way of remembering me in those last moments. When I heard that, I felt, what love, what compassion, what unconditional love!



As I remember, there was no electricity on the Hill at that time. After the first two days, a generator was set up but, before that, we had depended on kerosene lamps. There was a pandal of sorts, hastily erected, which consisted of bamboo poles and a piece of cloth. One general meal was had by all. Chaggan would make vegetables, dal and rice, all together, in a huge cooking pot for everyone to share. At night people would just sleep in Mandali Hall at lower Meherabad, some up the Hill in different places and some stayed up the whole night. Bhajan parties [groups] came and they would sing. Six from the West had come: Harry Kenmore, Delia De Leon, Aneece Hassan (who filmed the interment), Rick Chapman, Don Stevens, and Allan Cohen. Then the Luck brothers arrived on the last day just as Baba's body was about to be interred.

No one really knew what was going to happen or when. Nothing had been planned. Dolly Dastur recounts:

The only time I forgot to take the necessary steps for leave was in 1969 when Baba dropped His body. What happened was that I received the call about Baba at the office and I was asked to inform everyone of the Bombay group. I was in such a state, that without thinking, I just immediately rushed home to do this. We fixed a time to meet at the VT railway station, so that we could go to Meherabad. I arranged all that and then I suddenly remembered that I hadn't taken leave from the office. So I phoned one of my friends and said, "Please inform the office. It is very, very urgent. I have to go, so please excuse me for a few days." When I came back, I had to write a letter, "I'm sorry that I didn't inform you." But it was such a momentous occasion, that I didn't think of anything; I just rushed to Meherabad, and we didn't know how long we would be there; we were there for the whole week. But I

remember Baba's words and I feel that I should have just written a note before leaving. Baba wants us to be practical.

As I stood or sat outside the Samadhi during the week that Baba's body lay in the crypt, I saw His lovers lining up to go inside and have darshan. Nobody rushed in, but very respectfully followed the queues, separate lines for women and men. A few were allowed to step down and touch Baba's feet. Everyone else took darshan from above. And it occurred to me that that was indeed what was happening—people weren't just filing by, paying their respects to Baba's inert form, they were taking His darshan and experiencing His living presence. It took many years for my mind to begin to understand that. Of course, I had heard and read many times of Baba reminding His lovers that He was not His body. But the idea that Baba could continue to express His love in intimately personal ways, even after veiling His physical body from the world, was something my mind had to grapple with.

Baba lovers
crowded around
the Tomb the
week Baba's
body lay in the
crypt



There were newspaper reports that we would inter Baba sooner than we actually did, because when to do that was always under discussion. Since there was conflicting news, people didn't know whether they should come or not come.

Meanwhile, quite a few who flocked to the Samadhi began to ask Eruch whether the long postponed darshan program, which had finally been scheduled to begin in April in Guru Prasad, would still be held. Eruch replied that Baba had invited His lovers to come and it was up to them whether they wished to honor that invitation or not.

On the last day, Mehera, supported by Mani, offered her respects to Baba and circumambulated the crypt. The rest of the women mandali also came: Meheru, Naja, Rano, Goher, Arnavaz, Mansari and undoubtedly Katie, although I don't really remember. The close men mandali who mostly stayed with Baba, including Adi and Padri, Donkin, Francis, Adi Jr., Jal and Beheram, had their turn at paying their respects. At 12 p.m. on the 7th, the "Master's Prayer" was recited by Dr. Kenmore. "Begin the Beguine" was played. By this time all the ice slabs that were around Baba's body had been removed. Only a few fresh garlands adorned Him and a scarf given by Mehera covered Baba's face. Eruch went down into the crypt and wiped Baba's brow and was the last to touch His form.

Then Padri and Pendu brought in the wooden box that had been especially crafted without a bottom, as a kind of casket. Using ropes, the men mandali lowered the box over Baba's body. By this time, heaps of earth were ready outside and everyone was allowed to go in and offer their participation in this interment by putting a handful of earth on the box. By late afternoon the crypt was covered and *farsi* [roughly polished] flagstones were laid on top. The women mandali left for

Meherazad. I do not know about the men; they must have left too. Padri was in charge of the next phase of taking care of Upper Meherabad and he remained to guard the Samadhi.

Some of the mandali were themselves so dazed by Baba's dropping of the body that they weren't sure what to do next. But they remembered that Baba had often said, "In March you march to Poona," and so they felt they should do that. As Eruch had expressed, Baba had issued the invitation and it was not up to them to cancel it, but to carry out His orders as always.

And they began to remember little "hints" that Baba had given; for example, in the Life Circular No. 71, which Adi had issued at Baba's instructions on January 15th, 1969:

Beloved Avatar Meher Baba wishes His lovers to know that His three years of intense work has shattered His health.

In spite of this He has invited His lovers from all over the world to come to Him for His darshan next summer for it is the time for them to come to Him and receive His Love.

It is the time, and the place, Guruprasad, 24 Bund Road, Poona, has been fixed.

But, with the present condition of His health, how beloved Baba will give His darshan to the thousands who will come, yet remains to be determined, but it will. He will give His darshan.

This darshan, Baba says, will be the last given in Silence, the last before He speaks His world-renewing Word of Words.

(I have added the italics for emphasis.)

They also recalled that when the event was being planned and Eruch kept expressing his doubts that Baba's health would be up to giving such a large darshan program for two months, Baba turned to Francis and asked whether he thought people would mind if He gave the darshan while reclining.

Francis said that, on the contrary, people would be overjoyed just to have Baba's darshan. Baba turned to Eruch and gestured, "Did you hear that?"

Then Baba asked Francis if he thought people would mind if He gave darshan with His eyes closed. Again Francis replied to the effect that, on the contrary, people would be overjoyed just to have Baba's darshan. Baba again pointedly turned to Eruch and gestured, "Did you hear?" At another point Baba declared that it was the mandali's business to arrange the program but it was His business to see to the darshan. The very clear message Eruch and the others received was that Baba was determined to go ahead no matter what.

Therefore, on February 8th, 1969, the day after Baba's body was interred, Adi sent out the following telegram:

Despite Meher Baba's physical absence those lovers who desire to visit Guruprasad, Poona, to honor Baba's invitation for darshan up to 10th June can still come abiding strictly to the scheduled dates and conditions as per Family Letter dated 1st November, 1968. Journey will now include a half day visit to Meherabad to pay homage at Meher Baba's Tomb.

After 10th June anyone can make pilgrimage to Poona and Meher Baba's Tomb individually or collectively. Understand that all arrangements must be made on one's own. Inform all concerned in your area. Jai Baba!

DARSHAN AT GURU PRASAD, APRIL-JUNE 1969



*T*he mandali drove to Guru Prasad from Meherazad in March. Baba's absence was noticeable. Everything was a reminder of a happier time, when Baba's physical presence made their world come alive. For some, it was too much, and they broke down and wept. Still, they felt it was their duty to arrange for the darshan program.

Inside
Mandali Hall

The volunteers, from Poona, Bombay, and elsewhere, had already received their orders as to the preparations. Just as with the East-West Gathering, Baba saw to all the details. Accommodations were secured for the Westerners, specific times were allotted for their visits, people were

assigned to meet them at the airport, to drive them to their hotels and to Guru Prasad. Doctors were given the duty of seeing to their health.

Some idea of the exactitude with which Baba saw to details can be discerned from the Circular that was issued in November of 1968 and which is given in Mani's Family Letter of 1st November 1968:

On the 13th October some local workers and a few from other places were called to Meherazad to hear this new circular (Life Circular No. 70) informing Avatar Meher Baba's lovers all over the world of His decision to give them His darshan next year from 10th April to 10th June in Poona.

Baba said: "No doubt you people and My lovers everywhere have been wondering why, when My period of intense Work in seclusion has finished, I have still not allowed My lovers to see Me.

"The strain of that 18 months' Work was tremendous. I used to sit alone in My room for some hours each day while complete silence was imposed on the mandali and no one of them was permitted to enter the room, during those hours every day. The strain was not in the Work itself although I was working on all planes of consciousness, but in keeping My link with the gross plane. To keep this link I had to continuously hammer My right thigh with My fist. Now, although My health is good, and I would like to fulfill immediately the longing of My lovers to come to Me—many to see Me for the first time—it will yet take some time for all traces of the strain to disappear and for Me to be 100% fit to see them all; and so because of this, and for practical considerations also, I have decided to give My darshan only to My lovers but not to the general public.

“This is the time for My lovers. The time for the world’s crowds to come to Me will be when I break My Silence and Manifest My Divinity.

“The 1962 East-West Gathering was nothing compared with what this Gathering will be. For while I was working intensely in seclusion, My worker-lovers all over the world were intensely active telling the world about Me, and My Message is spreading in many parts of the West now as a forest fire before a strong wind—as it had already done in many areas of India.

“I will give My darshan for two hours in the morning and for two hours in the afternoon to small numbers up to 500 (five hundred) at a time, but I will not see any of My lovers individually or give private interviews, for it would not be possible. This is My part of the bargain. How the lovers come to Poona and are accommodated will be the concern of each one who comes.”

The following is the text of the Circular (Life Circular No. 70) which is issued and being sent out to all lovers of Avatar Meher Baba as directed by Him.

All lovers of Avatar Meher Baba in the East and the West, are eagerly awaiting word from Him regarding His giving His darshan “sometime, somewhere, somehow.”

Avatar Meher Baba now declares that He will give darshan to His lovers, BUT only on the terms laid down by Him in this Circular.

(MANI CONTINUES)

CONDITIONS for DARSHAN
of
AVATAR MEHER BABA
10th April–10th June 1969

1) Baba will give His darshan in Poona, for a fixed number of hours each day, from April 10 to June 10, 1969.

2) The darshan will be in the central hall of Guruprasad bungalow at 24 Bund Garden Road, Poona-1 (India).

3) The darshan will be strictly for His lovers, old and new, Eastern and Western. IT WILL NOT BE AN OPEN DARSHAN FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC.

4) Baba will give His darshan daily for two hours in the morning to Westerners and for two hours in the afternoon to Easterners separately. Morning hours will be from 9 to 11 a.m. Afternoon hours will be from 2 to 4 p.m.

5) (a) The two hours in the morning will be exclusively for His lovers from the West from 9 to 11 a.m. up to 10th June.

(b) The two hours in the afternoon will be for His lovers in the East, including Pakistan, Iran and Africa. None of these lovers should come to Guruprasad in the morning or wait at the gate in the morning for their time of darshan in the afternoon, from 2 to 4 p.m. up to 29th May.

6) The lovers from the West should stay in Poona for not more than a week. They may see Baba only FOUR times during their one week's stay in Poona.

7) The lovers from Pakistan, Iran and Africa should stay in Poona for not more than four days. They should see Baba only TWICE during their four days' stay in Poona.

8) Lovers coming from anywhere in India should stay in Poona for not more than three days. They should see Baba only ONCE during their three days' stay in Poona.

9) Lovers residing in Poona should see Baba only ONCE during the darshan period.

10) Baba will not see any one individually.

11) Baba will NOT give any private interviews, and no one should ask Baba for any advice or directive on their personal affairs, group activities or spiritual matters.

12) Group-heads may introduce new lovers to Baba. For the purpose of identity of Baba lovers and to prevent infiltration of the public; group-heads of zonal centres should devise and issue tokens to all in their zone coming to Poona for the darshan.

13) As the darshan will be given solely in the hall of Guruprasad bungalow, only a limited number of lovers can be accommodated at a time. Hence the Eastern lovers are divided into zones, and each zonal group must abide by the date allotted to it. The term "Eastern lovers" includes those coming from Pakistan, Iran and Africa, and they must keep to the dates fixed for their seeing Baba and arrive in Poona accordingly.

To enable all of them to have Baba's darshan, particular dates have been fixed for particular groups in the particular zones. Group-heads in their respective zones should divide the number of Baba lovers in their zone into one or two or more

(MANI CONTINUES)

groups according to the number of groups each zone contains, as follows....

[There then followed a detailed list of each zone and when each group within each zone was to have darshan, with the exceptions of Ahmednagar district, Pathardi, Kup, Bhalawani, Padali, Pimpalgaon Malwi, Arangaon, etc., which Baba said He would fix the dates for later. But the directions did not end there.—Eds.]

14) Western lovers should try and spread out their arrivals in Poona over the two months of the darshan period. This is in view of the shortage of good hotels and accommodation suited to Western needs, and to help avoid crowding in Guruprasad hall at darshan time.

15) Baba wants all His lovers, both Eastern and Western, to return home directly on leaving Poona after seeing Him. Therefore, any who plan to do sightseeing in India or outside of India should do so before coming to Poona.

16) Only those who can afford to make the trip for His darshan should do so, and it must be on their own responsibility in all respects and without risk to health or livelihood.

17) No one from abroad should come for Baba's darshan without guaranteed passage for their return home soon after the week's stay in Poona.

18) Baba wants all of His lovers coming for His darshan from overseas to transact their financial dealings through the Indian Banks and authorised agents according to the law of the country.

19) Baba does not wish any of His lovers to bring gifts for Him or for any of His people.

20) No one should seek or expect to receive any special permission or instructions from Baba about coming for His darshan. Any lover who wishes to come, and who can afford to come, and who is well enough in health to come, is free to do so. Each one visiting Poona for Baba's darshan must understand that he or she comes on his or her own responsibility in every respect.

21) Baba does not wish His lovers to write to anyone at Meherazad, or to Adi K. Irani, on any problems or queries regarding their visit to Poona for the darshan.

22) Baba wants all His Eastern lovers visiting Poona for His darshan to make their own arrangements as regards conveyance, stay, food and other personal comforts. These arrangements must be seen to by individuals or their own group-heads concerned without seeking the least aid from Meherazad mandali or from Adi and his office.

23) Western lovers may seek help in fixing hotel accommodation for their stay in Poona from Meherjee who has been appointed to this task by Baba. For this, the individual Western lovers should intimate Meherjee by a short letter as soon as passage has been booked, informing him of date of arrival in Poona and duration of stay in Poona, with his or her full name and address given in clear block letters. Please note his home address: Meherjee Karkaria, Meher Villa, Salisbury Park Road, Poona-1, India. Cable address is: WHITECLOUD, Poona (India).

24) As appointed by Baba, His brother Jal will be in charge as general assistant and guide to the Western lovers during their stay in Poona. Taking the help of some Eastern lovers, Jal will,

(MANI CONTINUES)

on request, assist in arranging transport to and from Guruprasad or a sightseeing drive of Baba-places in Poona for the Western lovers who wish it...

25) Baba says that those who want to come and cannot come to Poona for His darshan should not feel upset or disheartened but remain resigned to His Love knowing that “sometime, somewhere, somehow” His darshan is assured to them also.

26) Baba wants the present restriction on correspondence to continue as now and be MORE STRICTLY OBSERVED.

Kindly share all the information given in this Circular with all lovers of Avatar Meher Baba in your sphere of Baba-work. Please NOTE that this Circular is NOT meant for the GENERAL PUBLIC as Baba has made it quite clear that this DARSHAN is ONLY FOR HIS LOVERS old and new...⁶¹

Telegrams had been pouring in with both cancellations and word that groups were coming as planned. Initially it had been thought that there would be at least nine charter flights from the West but, in the end, four large groups came. There were some other changes as well. As Adi had intimated, there was now a visit scheduled to Meherabad, although, as it turned out, this “half-day” trip turned into a full day and included a visit to Meherazad and the Trust Compound/Ahmednagar Centre as well.

The darshan was scheduled to begin on 10th April with a group from California congregating in the main hall of Guru Prasad

for their 9 o'clock appointment with God. But, just as Baba had done during the East-West Gathering, the mandali asked the Westerners who had arrived ahead of time to come to Guru Prasad late on the afternoon of 8th April. The Western women spent their time with the women mandali and the men with the men mandali in the men mandali's room.

And, as had happened during programs in the past, the mandali found that just as the darshan was supposed to begin, there was a startling transformation of the atmosphere at Guru Prasad. Once again, it became vibrant with Baba's presence. In fact, many Easterners, including some of the mandali, felt that Baba's presence was even more powerful than when He was in the body.

For me, the darshan program had a significance, but not in that sense.

Since the "Great Event" of Beloved Baba's dropping the body, a strange experience of inner void, wherein there is neither delight nor sorrow possessed me for some time. I had left Ahmednagar after my Christmas stay with Adi, looking forward to being back with Baba at Guru Prasad in the summer. But now that I was returning, it was without any great feeling of joy.

I was as if "anesthetized" during this darshan program of 1969, though I felt Baba's presence. I watched for the most part as an observer, in the background.

I stayed at Guru Prasad as usual, with Pendu, Bhau, Aloba and Eruch. Nariman would come during the day. Adi was also often there. Francis was present for the program until he returned to Australia with the Australian group.

The six women who usually came to Poona each summer with Baba—Mehera, Mani, Meheru, Goher, Rano and Naja—were all there. Additionally, Khorshed, her mother, and Arnavaz all came.

There is no doubt that the last darshan weeks at Guru Prasad in the summer of 1969 presented a wonderful demonstration of the vibrating and creating Presence of the Formless Ancient One, who gets enformed, time and again in answer to the need of each age. But although I was aware of this, I was not transported by this feeling.

I remember enjoying parts of the program. I particularly remember a humorous skit performed by Harold and Raphael Rudd, in which one character was lying on the carpet while the other sat on him. And yet, the darshan had far-reaching implications for me personally. This was really the first time that I talked in English to young Baba lovers. Even with Francis and Donkin, I tended to limit myself to the simplest of conversations. But here I often found myself, face to face, with Westerners who were eager to hear of my experiences with Baba.

Thus I was led, as always in a most natural way by Baba, to a glimpse of what my life would be like once I came to live at Meherazad. And, not only that, but seeing the intense interest that these young ones had to hear anything about their Beloved, put the idea in my mind that it might be a worthwhile thing to start writing about Baba's life. Of course, I had little idea then how that would shape my life in the years to come, but the seeds were planted at that time.

[The following is mostly the editors' summary of accounts given in *The Empty Chair*, *The Awakener*, and various taped interviews.]

For most of the Westerners, this was their first visit to India, their first meeting with the mandali, and their first "darshan." Additionally, the heat was intense, the culture shock was great and many suffered from diarrhea. All of these factors combined to make it something of an emotional roller coaster for many of them.

On the morning of the 10th they were again at Guru Prasad. At 9 o'clock, Eruch announced that they had kept their appointment with God. For quite a few, just those words carried a profound emotional impact.

This was followed by the "Master's Prayer." Mehera then said a soft "Jai Baba" to all assembled. This was a dramatic change for Mehera and possibly not all the Westerners there realized it. This was the first time Mehera had ever appeared in public in this way. During Baba's interment, Mehera had been surrounded by men on the Hill, but she was so focused on Baba, in her grief, that it is unlikely she even saw them. Nor did she greet them and, of course, the other women mandali were around her at all times. For most of her life with Baba, not only was Mehera kept secluded, but even the other women were so isolated from the men in the early years that Donkin, in his diary, referred to them as "the invisibles."

Even during the New Life, when the four women, Mehera, Mani, Goher and Meheru, traveled with Baba and the men companions, they stayed apart or in separate quarters if they had housing. As the years passed, the strict seclusion for some of the women was relaxed. Mani would occasionally come to the men's side for work, as would Rano and Goher. Mehera did not, nor did the men go to the women's side, except to escort Baba back and forth or to do night watch. But the

women stayed inside when the men came over, and Baba's room had two entrances to it so that the man doing night watch only entered Baba's room and did not go into the rest of the house.

A very few men had been introduced to Mehera for a very brief greeting, such as Pappa Jessawala shortly before his death. But the pattern was broken on January 31, 1968, when Baba had all the men mandali file past the porch of His house where they all greeted Mehera. This date took on added significance when, a year later, Baba dropped His body on the same date. All the mandali were dazed and grief struck when Baba dropped His body, but none so much as Mehera. She seemed inconsolable.

Ironically, in a way, this helped the other mandali. Instead of focusing on their own grief, because they had promised Baba to look after Mehera and to keep her happy, they concentrated on trying to do just that. It gave them a direction when they felt utterly at sea. As the weeks went by, they then began to think about the upcoming darshan program and that too provided them with something to do. The women encouraged Mehera to be brave and suggested to her repeatedly that Baba had left her behind because He had work for her to do, and that it would please her Beloved if she took up this work.

They reminded her of Ramakrishna's wife, Saradevi, who had been in semi-seclusion for years at Dakshineswar where Ramakrishna lived. After Ramakrishna died of cancer, Saradevi came out of seclusion and

L-R: Mani greeting the many new and old Baba lovers, Mehera garlanding Baba's chair, and Eruch overlooking the crowd on the grounds of Guru Prasad



took over the running of the ashram with all of the male disciples who had been living there or visiting daily. The women suggested that Baba wanted Mehera to also come out of seclusion and had laid the groundwork by having her meet the men mandali the year before.

So Mehera was in the main hall and came to the microphone and said “Jai Baba.” But she was still very shy, even with most of the women. When she met with the women separately, she tended to prompt Mani to tell certain stories. When she met with the men, informally, after the official programs, she tended not to look at them directly when she spoke, but would look at one of the women instead.

But she was there, sitting with the other women near Baba’s chair at one end of the hall of Guru Prasad. Although still grieving intensely, she was determined to do whatever her Beloved wanted of her.

After Mehera’s “Jai Baba,” Mani said a few words on Mehera’s behalf. The mandali sang the artis and then, as “Master of Ceremonies” as one Westerner put it, Eruch made announcements about the upcoming programs. At 10 a.m., darshan at Baba’s chair in the main hall began.

This was another unprecedented event for almost all of the Westerners. Many were taken aback at the idea that they were supposed to bow to an empty chair. Some weren’t sure how to proceed—should they kneel, should they prostrate full length, should they kiss the chair, the sandals? Others weren’t sure if they should proceed and thought, have I come all this way to bow to a chair? Is this a ritual? Is this really

L-R: Meherwan Jessawala, the women on the portico, and Adi K. Irani



what Baba would want? Some decided that they were not going to bow. Others were anxious about what they would experience if they did bow down. Would it be like what they had imagined meeting Baba would be like? Would they have some “spiritual” experience? Or would they be disappointed and then what?

Except for the Sufis (who were a large part of this first Western group), who lined up in an orderly fashion to take darshan, most of the Western groups sat on the floor and individuals simply got up when they felt moved to do so. Many commented on the surprising fact that people seemed to sense when it was their “turn.” For some, their turn came when they realized that almost everyone else had already taken darshan and it was now or never.

After bowing to Baba’s chair, which was on a small platform (with a large photograph of Baba on it), and Baba’s sandals on the platform in front of it, people went into Baba’s room and had darshan there. After that, there was informal mingling with the mandali until the buses came at 11 to take everyone back to their hotels.

Generally, the next two days of the Westerner’s darshan gave them an opportunity to perform for Baba. They often sang or put on skits. Francis would read his “Mighty Beloved” article [see Appendix F] and sometimes some of his ghazals. Eruch might tell some Baba stories or Adi would give a talk. When they weren’t at Guru Prasad there was sightseeing of Baba sites in Poona, conducted by Jal, and a visit to the Film Institute to see some Baba films. Then there was an all day bus trip to Meherabad and Meherazad and Ahmednagar. Many commented about the rigors of riding in a bus without shock absorbers, over rough Indian roads, with

minimally padded seats, for hours on end in incredible heat. On the final day, they would congregate at Guru Prasad for a last meeting with the mandali and a last darshan there. The next day they would head back to Bombay.

This pattern was pretty much followed for the three other Western groups. The second group was from Myrtle Beach and Chapel Hill and their darshan began on 24th April, and they flew home on the 29th. The third group was from Australia. They arrived early and did some sightseeing before coming to Poona. This was done to adhere to Baba's directive that all should go directly home after the darshan without doing any sightseeing on the way. Their darshan officially began on 15th May and they left Bombay on the 20th. Although they got an extra half-day at Guru Prasad on the 21st as Mehera had invited them for lunch.

The women ate with the women mandali in the kitchen while the men ate in the main hall. Baba's favorite dishes had been prepared. They had a notable addition to their group on their return as Francis, who had been living with Baba for the past ten years in India, returned to Australia with the group.

Last, a group from New York came for their darshan, which began on 4th June and ended on the 10th. Of course, due to cancellations and last-minute reservations and such, some people were on flights that were not from their geographic areas and there were small contingents from England and France and elsewhere who showed up, as well as a few enterprising souls who came entirely on their own.

All darshans are unique. Because a darshan is a meeting with the Beloved, it is essentially a private and individual affair even if, externally, there is a set routine. For the most part, it seemed that the majority of the Westerners felt that they had indeed had a darshan of their

beloved, Avatar Meher Baba. But there were those who were deeply disappointed as well. Some of the range of emotions experienced can be seen from this small sampling of excerpts from letters Westerners wrote.

[During the darshan programs at Guru Prasad, the mandali put out pink pages the Westerners could write on. These were then put into a binder which, for years, was kept at Meherazad. In Bal's last few years, he would often have Erica and Amber read these letters aloud to him.]

First day at Guru Prasad (still feeling very happy and "high") started up to Baba's chair for darshan and suddenly felt (was one of last six people that day—was growing late) as if Baba reached out from the chair and "put His hands behind me." This was a definite force enclosing me and jerked me forward—as I knelt before Him, my mind became void and I was aware of nothing till the same force lifted me to my feet and thrust me back the same ten feet or so as [it had] pull[ed] me forward, so fast that I almost lost my footing and I am normally quite agile. Then I walked away, glowing with the light of Baba's love....

Lorenzo Durham

Westerners
and eastern-
ers mingling
in and outside
of Guru Prasad

Beloved Baba's Universal work is totally beyond me—but
the effect of His working—the awakening of the Heart (which



alone is the single solution) is already evident in the conviction of the many, many young people who have had no physical contact with Him—this magnificent Darshan of Beloved Baba's revealed the beginning of His only real miracle.

Love in His Beloved Love to His entire Family,

Henry D. Kashouty, April 28, 1969

Dearest Beloveds,

We came and were overcome by your truly unique Baba love and its creative expression as Beloved's Voice of Silence—as His Arti, as infectious humor, as profound wisdom. We go back greatly enriched in spirit, thankful and resolved to live Baba's life of love and truth.

P.S. We have come here not to be taught but to be awakened. And we have been awakened through Your oceanic Baba love. May I prove to be worthy of Your love, by remaining awake when in the midst of worldly Maya. It was also Baba's gift to His mandali to witness the beautiful love of Baba's love generation—the love He expresses in art forms as well as in prosaic life. May it be the Beloved's will that we meet again and again, in His love and service. Jai Baba!

Dana Field



The “Last Darshan” was as unique as Beloved Baba predicted; in His ocean of Love has started a tidal wave that is bound to touch, one day, every heart, every “droplet” in that Ocean. East and West melted together in the wave of love and perhaps some of our sanskaras have been washed away too. I felt Beloved Baba present with us just as strongly as when His human form, His “visiting cloak” was still visible. I hope we can carry His Love with us wherever we go now. Jai Baba,

Filis Frederick, June 9, 1969

Dear Baba and Mandali,

Thank you for the most memorable experience I have ever had. It wasn't as I had imagined it would be, it was far greater, much more simple, much more powerful and more importantly—much more lovingly than I had dreamed of.

I felt Baba's presence in the people more than the Baba places we visited, and this is important to me.

I am not sorry to leave for I am looking forward to going home and getting stuck into all the everyday stuff. This amazes me and makes me very happy. Thanks to You Baba I feel great strength and happiness about the future.

If I can take back but one inch of the miles of Your love I have seen and been a part of, then I'll take back an inch of Infinity.

Jai Baba! Thanks to everyone.

With love, Paul Smith

Dear Mehera and Mani,

How could one express in a few words one's feelings about this extraordinary Darshan of our beloved Baba? It has been so marvelous, so absolutely beyond description. I am so undeserving and am so grateful for having had the opportunity to share in this wonderful experience of beloved Baba's great Love.

There is no doubt that Baba is here with us. Although His physical presence is not visible to myself, it has been quite easy to visualize Him sitting in His chair as usual directing the "show" in His authoritative manner. And all His lovers seem to be filled with Him. All the mandali have been so wonderful, so loving, so tolerant, so considerate. I don't know how they stand up to the strain, but, of course, Baba is the Ocean, as someone said. Baba is in everyone; He gives and receives His own Love.

This has been a visit to God and to His Garden of Eden. It has given me a very strong wish to become dust at Baba's Feet, and to become an instrument for His Pure Love; at least to some extent! How fortunate we have all been to sit at His (to me invisible) feet and to once again surrender our all to Him.

Baba's Beauty, visible in all His real lovers, is overwhelming; His compassion is too much for one, unfathomable. Jai Baba! In His Love, a grateful, hopefully somewhat reduced,

May L. [Lundquist], May 19, 1969

Beloved Baba,

When my heart is full of sadness and my head is bended low

I think of You Baba and my heart bursts into song.

When my mind is full of thoughts (false and unjust)

I think of You Baba and they're gone with the wind

When my mouth is full of words unkind and untrue

I think of You Baba and swallow them away.

When my heart is full of wants and desires I think: How can I do this Baba when I know how shy You are of strangers, I have driven You away, Oh please come back Baba and help me to rid my heart of these strangers for only by Your Grace can this be done. I am afraid Beloved Baba this is a first and very amateurish attempt at a poem. I hope you and the mandali like it anyway. What I have written I truly feel for when one thinks of You one can't help but feel happy.

Jai Baba with love,

Jenny

Words can never convey what we have experienced these 6 days at Guru Prasad of Baba's Infinite and Compassionate Love. What a unique Darshan encompassing 50 years of Baba's working with all of us His close ones as He lovingly calls us—the love of those who came to Him before He kept silence and the love of so many who have word of Meher Baba but for a few weeks only. This is really Baba's Miracle of Miracles. He once said to the effect that he had not come to perform miracles but to touch the heart and this Darshan has witnessed more

than any earlier Darshan that this one miracle of Baba's has been fulfilled in great measure, is an unparalleled and unique Darshan given in Silence and on Baba's Infinite Terms.

From one of Baba's oldest lovers,

Kitty, April 27, 1969

Guru Prasad, Poona

It is time to go home—it is very hard to go. First, let me say—from an external view—the physical arrangements, planning, program, timing, etc. were faultless—what more can I say—thank you. I believe every spontaneous incident which occurred this week was deeply significant to someone. I will relate an incident that pulled together for me—in my heart—all the experiences of this beautiful week and further back to my first contact with Baba.

At the last Darshan period a story was related about a revolutionary who challenged God. [Probably a reference to Kumar's story.] Once in great mental anguish I cried for some sign that there was SOMETHING to give meaning to life—to suffering. I took two more steps and saw at my feet the most beautiful and perfect of shells. My soul exploded in joy and a great peace came over me. Two months later I heard about Baba and sometime later began to love Him. Not till hearing the story of the revolutionary did I suddenly and fully realize that it was Baba. Thank you Baba for the shell.

Later in my hotel room I was again overcome with happiness. In the months of preparation for coming to India, and with the news of Baba's "death" I felt more and more that I had let go His Daaman—He warned us so often. I felt very sad—that I was

no longer worthy. But I hadn't let go. The feeling of the shell has never left me for a moment. The love of God in my heart is all that matters. Let my foolish mind jump around I will pay no more heed.

I didn't let go—and never ever will! My heart is joyful in Baba.

Jai Baba, Louise Smith

Sheila Krynski was one of those who did not have a “big spiritual experience” and who did not feel “blown away” by Baba’s presence as many around her seemed to. She writes:

Darshan was a wonderful opportunity to come when Baba called. And overall, this is the most important thing.

Personally it has been both a painful and joyful trip. It was painful in that I felt I had lost touch with Baba and experienced emptiness when going through the motions of reverence to Him. I consciously feel Baba’s Love and Guidance more at my printing press than I do in bowing down to a chair. I don’t mean to be disrespectful, but I was shocked at the rituals which for me were only outward gestures.

I was also struck by the deep love of His Eastern Lovers, and relaxed in the knowledge that I am only at the beginning of the journey to Him.

The Darshan Week closed with the precious gift of Baba’s love—a feeling of well-being—despite the awful aspects of my nature that He juggled before me throughout the visit. Overall, the most important part of Darshan was the joy in keeping this appointment with Beloved Baba. On our “date,” to my surprise, He turned me inside out and then put me back together again.

I feel honored and grateful to have met so many who are close to Baba. I leave with the hope that I can devote more time to doing His work, in circulating tapes and printing His Message.

Jai Baba, Thank you Baba.

Despite the seemingly limited time that the Westerners had with the mandali, many had significant encounters with them. As Ann Marie noted:

Coming to Guru Prasad was coming Home. With Baba's Grace I have been privileged to be with His Beloved mandali. This one week has been worth all the days of my life.

A sentiment echoed by Peter Justin:

Thank you thank you thank you for being living examples of Baba's commandments. How far I have searched for the answers of how to live, how to give Baba's message to my fellow man—without imposing upon his free will—the only way I know to do this is by living Baba's words and life—yes—Baba is here very strong but Baba is very strong everywhere if we take the time to ask—"O Lord let me see the God in all." Thank you O beautiful beings by showing, by example, your love for all of God's creation.

Neither did the efforts of the many volunteer Baba lovers go unnoticed by the darshanites even as their attention was focused on Baba:

The volunteer Baba workers and Jal with their untiring efforts for our comfort, transport, requirements and our unending questions has been another experience of love for our dear Baba.

The loving programs at the Poona, Ahmednagar and Bombay Baba Centres have been more reflections of love. And what a feast of musical praise of dear Baba has been showered upon us during these programs and at Guru Prasad. Love, love, love and praise, praise, praise.

Back in Australia I will take your many individual messages of love to sister Joanna together with my loving remembrances of the last week. Jai Baba with my love,

Bernard Bruford

The word came—come April 10th to June 10th. Surprise changed to a joyous goal, a reason to save and do without. The despair and confusion of the 31st Jan 1969 were whisked away with knowledge that the goal had not changed for Beloved Baba had always meant it as such. The months, then weeks, then days, flashed by. The day arrived and after a long flight we walked onto the Bombay tarmac at 2:30 a.m. Our hearts leapt to “Jai Baba” from somewhere in the dark. The Baba lovers of Bombay showered us with their love and warmth during the next few days, we began to glow in reflection. After coming to Guru Prasad and witnessing your love and taking the Beloved’s Darshan the glow has turned to fire. To see Baba as true love in His people often brought a silent tear. Though sad to leave we are anxious to get back to give what we have got. We know the New Humanity of the West rests on our shoulders. In Baba’s love

Roy Hayes

Mani wrote in her last Family Letter:

On the pink sheets and in your letters that followed, you also express such dear praise for all that you received from us at this darshan. And it makes us wonder if you will ever know what we received from you! What it meant to us to be with you in the Beloved's overwhelming presence—to see Him in your eyes, to embrace Him in your arms, to mingle our love's tears and laughter with yours, to welcome Him in you! You brought Baba with you and He was already here to receive you, you took Him with you and He is as ever with us—such is the profound God-humour that makes life's joke bearable. We remember teasing you for taking so much of Baba with you, telling some of you at parting “Isn't it lucky Baba is the Ocean, or we'd have little left of Him to hold to us!”⁶²

The Easterners' experience tended to be a bit different for a variety of factors. They were used to the heat, the diet, the accommodations. Many had met Baba, had even been to Guru Prasad before. Baba's darshan without Baba physically being there would be a new experience for most (although some had already experienced this during the week of Baba's lying in the Samadhi before the interment); however, the idea or even the practice of bowing to something that represented God was not new to them.

Some, like Mehera Arjani [the five year old who had said the prayers at the opening of the Poona Centre], were struck by the fact that Baba's

presence seemed even stronger than it had during the many times they had visited during His life.

Others couldn't help but be painfully aware of Baba's physical absence, just as the mandali had when they first returned to Guru Prasad. But just as the mandali felt Baba's presence more powerfully as the darshan progressed, this happened with others as well. Hardeep Hanspal relates what happened to his group:

At first, as they saw and stared at the chair that used to hold their Beloved, they just felt grief and the atmosphere was solemn, even oppressive. But as they sat there, one woman's young child left its mother's side and toddled up to Baba's chair. There she stood and seemed to be communicating to an unseen person who was obviously sitting there. As the group sat and watched, it became clear to them all that this youngster was clearly seeing Baba, and they realized that Baba hadn't left them alone, He was still there, if they had the unclouded perception of the child. Almost instantly, the heavy atmosphere was lifted and transformed into the joyous atmosphere of a darshan program.

Just as many of the Westerners had cancelled their plans to attend the darshan after January 31, so too there were Eastern groups who cancelled. This meant that sometimes, when their "appointment with God" was struck by the clock, there was no one there other than the mandali to keep it. Still, almost 3,400 Easterners did attend whereas around 700 Westerners came.

Quoting Mani's last Family Letter again:

Although countwise the Eastern darshanees were at times disappointing, lovewise they often added up so high that small

pools of lovers appeared as big lakes—such as the groups from Kanpur, Dehra Dun, Nizamabad, Gujarat. The lovers from Hamirpur district and Andhra state made us realize once more why Baba spoke of them with such love, calling them His “heart and head.” They filled and overfilled Guruprasad on appointed days. They came by special train, and they came crammed in special buses that carried Baba’s picture and Name on the outside and His seven-coloured flag on top. The women brought their little ones with them, including babies just a month old. The children’s voices were loudest when Baba-bhajans were sung, and babes in arms sometimes joined in with their gusty cries. At one time even a bark joined in, for an Andhraite lover had brought along her pet dog, a pretty white Pomeranian, “for Baba’s darshan!”

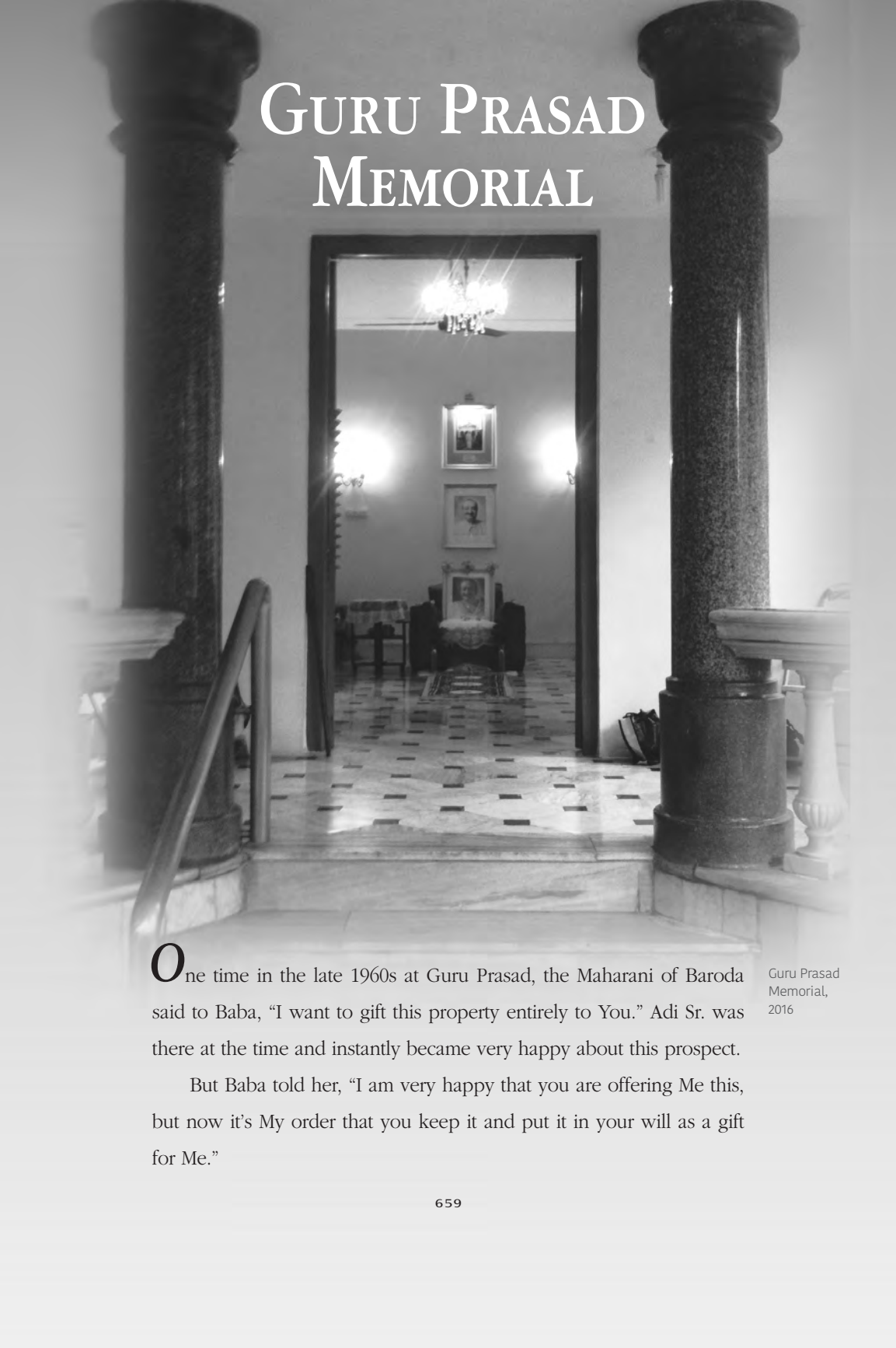
The five hundred lovers that were to come by special train from Guntur district (state of Andhra) for darshan on 21st May, could not do so because of floods that breached rail tracks, broke down bridges, and made roads impassable for weeks. Finally about sixty of them managed to make it by bus on 10th June, the last day of darshan. It seemed ironical that some from nearby places failed to come, while these lovers who were ready to travel such a greater distance were hindered by a whim of Nature—or so it seemed. The lovers of Guntur accepted it as the whim of their Beloved, His Will that rules their lives, and they bowed to it.⁶³

In retrospect, this darshan seems significant for it set the example, as Francis put it, of coming thousands of miles to bow down to Him in

one's own heart. As Lyn Ott observed, "Beloved Baba has called His lovers to His last darshan in silence. But before we arrived He dropped His physical form. This was so that we could learn that the Real Darshan is within." Marshall Hay was another who felt strongly that this darshan was all about teaching His lovers how to take His darshan within.

Now, the wineshop, instead of being closed is, as Baba promised, wide open and darshan continues every day. For the mandali, this darshan also seemed significant because not only did they feel Baba's presence, but in the arrival of so many new ones, flocking to Baba's feet even though they had never met Him, they felt Baba's ongoing work for humanity continuing without a break. Or, as Mani put it, in a way that only she could:

So on March 30 we marched to Poona, our minds bare of expectation, our hearts a desert. Three months later when we left Poona, the desert had changed to a dazzling expanse of flowers which had sprung up in the merciful downpour of His Darshan—it had been a time of Spring for His many lovers, and we had shared in the miracle.⁶⁴



GURU PRASAD MEMORIAL

One time in the late 1960s at Guru Prasad, the Maharani of Baroda said to Baba, “I want to gift this property entirely to You.” Adi Sr. was there at the time and instantly became very happy about this prospect.

But Baba told her, “I am very happy that you are offering Me this, but now it’s My order that you keep it and put it in your will as a gift for Me.”

Guru Prasad
Memorial,
2016

“All right, Baba. Whatever You say.” Soon after the Maharani left, Adi asked Baba why He had not accepted the gift of such a great property. Baba replied, “It would have become like a heavy stone around our neck. What would we do with it?”

Some time soon after Baba dropped His body, the Rani came into financial difficulty. She could no longer afford to maintain Guru Prasad. According to Burjor Bode, the Maharani's son did not want her to give the property to Baba. Since it was five acres of prime property in the heart of the city, the taxes were crippling, and she didn't have much income left. The Rani's brother took charge of all of her financial affairs. He was a sort of brusque fellow and rather materialistic. Since it was her wish, he did offer the bungalow to the Trust, saying, “As per the Rani's word, I would like to gift this to the Trust.” Then he added, “But, we'll only give you the bungalow. We will build a wall all around it and just give you one access road.” So all the trustees met together and decided that they did not want it. The bungalow was so big that it would have been really difficult to maintain. At that time the Trust had just begun functioning and was not prepared to undertake such a responsibility. Also, with a wall built around the bungalow and the land surrounding it being developed, the original charm and grand atmosphere of Guru Prasad would surely have been lost.

Soon after, the entire property was sold to a developer, Atur Sangtani. The land was priceless because of its location in rapidly growing Poona. Atur decided to dismantle the bungalow in order to build large apartment buildings. But before doing so, Atur, who seems to have had some feeling for Baba, again brought up the idea of selling the bungalow to Meherjee or the Trust.

Because Baba had done so much work at Guru Prasad, and had spent so much time there during the last decade of His mission on earth,

there was a lot of sentiment amongst the mandali, especially amongst the women, to save the property. Burjor Bode and Meherjee in Poona were doing the lion's share of negotiating with Atur. Near the end of December 1971, Eruch wrote to his brother, Meherwan, to convey his feelings about the whole matter:

Meherazad

9/12/71

Jai Baba!

Dear Meherwan,

Regarding dear Meherjee's talks with Shri Atur Sangtani in presence of Burjor Bode, we are very happy that Shri Atur has agreed to postpone demolishing Guru Prasad till February 1972. Mehera is very happy about it.

With regard to Meherjee's proposal to buy the bungalow, I am not at all for it as I do not foresee any good out of this deal, more so when beloved Baba Himself had given definite indications that Guru Prasad should be gifted by Shantaben to the Trust only in her Will, and NOT during her lifetime. Even when Adi suggested to Shantaben to gift it to the Trust during her lifetime, Baba at once intervened in presence of Shantaben, and stopped Adi suggesting such a proposal and repeated that she should bequeath it in her Will. All this has been done in my presence and therefore it is not at all possible for me to keep quiet and allow dear Meherjee to go ahead with his proposal of purchasing the bungalow (only bungalow) for Rs.3 lakhs. The understanding with Baba and Shantaben was for the whole property known as Guru Prasad.

(LETTER FROM ERUCH CONTINUES)

Of course, if dear Meherjee wishes to buy the bungalow on his own it is left to him and he is absolutely free to do so in the Cause of beloved Baba—without calling in donations from other Baba lovers to share in the purchase of it. I personally feel that it is no use purchasing it after having had an offer of a gift of the bungalow! Guru Prasad has already become immortal through films, photos, LP records, songs and Baba literature. The building as it stands now is just a shell which will not last for many more years. To add to this, it will soon dwindle into insignificance when it will be surrounded by blocks of residential buildings.

I am fully convinced that Guru Prasad property (whole property) is a matter between beloved Baba and Shantadevi. It is Shantaben's personal responsibility to see that it is gifted to A.M.B.T. The whole of it, and not a part of it and that too not during her lifetime but that it be bequeathed in her Will! Now that it is sold, I consider it to be a closed chapter to be re-opened only by beloved Baba in His next Advent, and it is for Him to settle the score with Shantaben. It is no use beating about the bush and wasting our energy and time and funds of Baba lovers over a truncated property which has lost charm of the love-gift as was settled in presence of the God-Man. If Guru Prasad were to be a place of pilgrimage, it has already become one with the crowds of Meher-pilgrims visiting in 1969 from all parts of the world. We cannot make it of our own! His Will will surely prevail. Let us see what develops. Atur has tentatively offered to sell the bungalow and even to contribute his share!

Whereas he told Prem Khilnani that the bungalow will have to be demolished as he had already sold the plots (on which the bungalow now stands). We don't know what to make out of it!! Baba had stayed in Grafton in Satara, had given big darshans in "Mary Lodge," Nagpur, in Aga Khan's bungalow and in Shapoor Hall in Mahabaleshwar, and so on and so forth. So what? Have we to feel for the loss of all those places? I feel that it is now the duty of all Baba lovers to concentrate one's all to perpetuate the most important of all places—Meherabad, and next to it, Meherazad—if at all we have to take into account our sentiments.

Today I had a telephone talk with dear Meherjee for six minutes on this subject and I plainly spoke to him of my feelings and the feelings of dear Rano which I repeat here below:

"Westerners who have visited Guru Prasad have a vivid picture of the whole property with its approach road, garden and darshan grounds and have a firm impression of the place as it was originally. They see it again and again in films and have vivid memories of it. Those who have not visited Guru Prasad and have not seen the place personally, except in films, also have happy impressions of the vast and beautiful place. Now if Guru Prasad bungalow is bought and retained as a property truncated and surrounded by high blocks of buildings, the image already created will not only not last long but will be shattered and none would feel the same about it as a place of pilgrimage.

(LETTER FROM ERUCH CONTINUES)

So let the Westerners live with their impressions (of Guru Prasad) of the past.

“Where we are concerned, Guru Prasad continues to be a matter, purely personal, between Shantadevi and Baba. We should not allow our sentiments to come into play and intrude upon the personal pledge.

“Equally, if not more important, are many places where Baba did important work and gave darshan!

“Guru Prasad should be treated as a closed chapter of Baba’s work, and the mandali should think mainly of and only of Meherabad!”

The above was expressed by Rano and I had relayed it on the phone to dear Meherjee this morning.

I further feel that it is not proper to deprive the A.M.B.T. funds of full benefit of donations by Baba-lover contributors all over the world by diverting their flow of contributions in our effort to collect Rs.3 lakhs for purchase of Guru Prasad if Shri Atur is really serious about its re-sale, which I doubt—and all this too after the Trust was unable to accept the gift of a truncated property (of Guru Prasad bungalow only). To cover a large sum of Rs.3 lakhs—as gifts of Baba-lover contributors—to purchase a building which is so old and which was originally to be willed by the owner to the Trust of beloved Baba is not at all proper. Also the funds for the upkeep of this building will have to be collected from Baba lovers, as the building being a place where Baba lived, no Baba lover would like to give it on rent to anybody.

Dear Meherwan, I have been hearing a lot on this subject from different quarters and hence despite a lot of preoccupation I thought it fit to put on record my views on the subject. This gives me now a clear conscience as I have made my views very clear without beating about the bush. I had to do and I have done it and now I feel I have discharged my duty to my satisfaction.

I have told dear Meherjee to put the matter before the Board of Trustees during the next Board Meeting on 26th and 27th December 1971.

Please share this letter with dear Meherjee and with whomsoever you feel best and kindly return it to me as I need this letter on file. If you need a copy of it, I shall gladly send it to you after some time, if you send this letter back to me.

Much love to all you dear ones.

Yours lovingly,

Sd/ Eruch

P.S.

If on his own dear Meherjee wants to purchase Guru Prasad bungalow, who would not want to feel happy about it! But the idea of his asking others—Baba lovers in the East and West—to contribute towards its purchase is not desirable. Even so if Meherjee thinks that such an idea is quite all right, I do not have the least objection. Meherjee can of course go ahead with his plan, as Meherjee is absolutely free to do so.

The Trust, partly for the reasons specified by Eruch but possibly equally because of a simple lack of funds, decided it did not make sense

to take on the burden of Guru Prasad with all the upkeep that would entail, even though Bhau and Meherjee tried to figure out a way to save Guru Prasad, which was something Mehera wanted as well.

So the developer went ahead with his plans to build residential apartment buildings, but cognizant of the significance of Guru Prasad, he approached the Trust and said that he wanted to erect a statue of Baba on the grounds. The mandali were not enthusiastic about this. Although Baba had allowed His lovers in several places in India to place statues of Him in temples they had built, it seems He had done this as a concession to their love, but had never liked the idea Himself. Therefore, the mandali were not predisposed to this idea. Added to this was the fact that it is very difficult to create a statue that truly captures Baba's likeness. And Mehera did not at all like the idea of a statue of Baba being exposed to the elements, where it might also be desecrated by birds or other animals. Mehera thought a small memorial would be more appropriate.

So they suggested to the contractor that if he really wanted to have a memento of Baba on the property he should offer a small piece of land on which to build a structure. It happened that there was a triangular piece of land that had to remain vacant in accordance with regulations. The contractor approached Burjor Bode, who was the City Engineer at the time, to see if a structure could be built on this land because the land was zoned only for residential purposes. Burjor Bode loved Baba but he was also conscientious in his job and it was not his practice to seek exemptions from zoning regulations. However, he was very much in favor of building some kind of memorial on the land. As he explained:

The idea came to me when the building was demolished that there would be no trace left. So I thought why not build one room like Baba's bedroom, so that when you step into the Guru Prasad Memorial it would feel like stepping into Baba's room.... I had to get a special exception by the authorities in order to get the land, since only residential use was permissible there. We made a special agreement with the builder that the Guru Prasad Memorial would always remain as a separate entity and would not be destroyed. Legally it is settled for the monument to stay on its triangle piece of land.

After Guru Prasad was torn down, the builder auctioned off the materials and Meherjee was able to buy some items. He purchased some of the tiles, a few of the pink-granite pillars, sections of the marble railing, some of the window panes with "GP" engraved on them, and a few of the doors, especially the door to Baba's bedroom.

The contractor agreed to build the Memorial himself.

As Meherwan recounts:

The original tiles from Baba's bedroom are on the verandah of the Memorial, and the beautiful marble from the front verandah of Guru Prasad make up the flooring inside. It should have been the other way around, but the contractor did not know and was kind enough to build at his own expense. He installed some of the original window panes with the engraving of "GP" on them, and the main door of the Memorial is from the original bungalow.





Mehera breaking ground at the commemoration of the Guru Prasad Memorial

On February 3, 1973, Mehera, Mani and most of the men and women mandali, as well as many of Baba's lovers in Poona, came to break ground for the Memorial. Burjor Bode had the idea that Mehera should plant a mango tree on the property. Being an avid gardener, instead of just making a dignified symbolic dig at the ground, Mehera started to really dig a hole until others told her that she had done enough. Whatever Mehera did for Baba, she did wholeheartedly.

Mehera read out a short speech:

Beloved Avatar Meher Baba, my beautiful Beloved. You are the Beloved of all Your lovers. We love You most dearly, and yet our love is nothing compared to Your sweet love for us, all Your lovers, and for humanity—in fact, for all creation, for

whose sake You have suffered in silence. A day will come when the world will sing Your praises and will love You. You will be recognized as the God-Man, the Beloved of all.

We are standing once again in the grounds of Guruprasad, which holds many precious memories for us who were with You. Guruprasad is sacred with Your beloved presence; it has become immortal in the hearts of Your lovers all over the world. Here You gave of Yourself so freely in Your infinite love for all, giving darshan to Your lovers and to the multitude, again and again, even when Your health was weak. You served humanity in many, many ways, Beloved, and the last seclusion of 1968 was a tremendous strain on Your dear body.... May we love You more and more, Beloved Baba, to be worthy of Your very dear love for us.

Beloved Baba brought so much beauty of love and happiness that His lovers sing to Him, happy in His love. Our Beloved Baba was the most beautiful man, most lovable, and most adorable, and He was most loving. His love was perfect; He was the perfect man, the Beloved God-Man.

Francis also read out a short speech (which was subsequently made into a bronze plaque that hangs just inside the door of the Memorial):

There are in the world many shrines of Masters and monuments to God—prisons in which men keep the divine Beloved because they have not room in their hearts for Him. And succeeding generations bow down to this imprisoned God and implore benefits from Him.

This memorial will not be another such place. For we understand that it is but a sign and symbol of Avatar Meher Baba's

(FRANCIS CONTINUES)

work in seclusion for humanity: a remembrance of the sahavas He gave His lovers here at Guruprasad and of His darshan which He gave the people generally—and especially of the great East-West Gathering when, for the first time in known history, East and West met at the feet of the Lord.

This memorial will remain vital, and therefore holy, by the works of love His lovers do in His Name. It will be a place where those who do not come to ask, but to offer themselves to the Beloved, will have their prayers granted.

The Society for Avatar Meher Baba was also present and Bob Ganz was asked to say a few words as well. He said that he felt the seclusion work Baba did in Guru Prasad, while sitting on His seclusion chair that no one was allowed to touch, had helped many of the Westerners who had been on a self-destructive path with drugs to find Him; so Guru Prasad and the Memorial had special significance for the Westerners. The Seclusion Chair that Baba used at Guru Prasad was taken to Meherabad and put in the museum there.

On February 4, 1974, the inauguration of the Guru Prasad Memorial took place. One of Baba's chairs was put in the small Memorial, where it sits to this day.

AFTERWORD



Bal Nattu in
Meherazad

For me, every place associated with Beloved Baba is precious. Because I spent more time with Baba at Guru Prasad than anywhere else, it is especially full of memories for me. In fact, the feeling I have for Guru Prasad is what prompted me to write this book. I personally feel wherever Baba has worked, anything Baba has touched, has an Avataric quality. If Midas, an ordinary king, could touch anything and turn it into gold because of a boon he had received, what about the Avatar? Anything He touches would be most sacred, most holy. So the fact that the Memorial has been built with materials from Baba's own room, where He worked for the universe, is of great significance.

Still, I am not filled with regret that the bungalow itself was torn down. In His lifetime Baba created so many institutions, schools, hospitals, dharamshalas, *mast* ashrams, and centres that He indicated, at the time, were very important. Then, sometimes years later, sometimes only months later, He would disband them completely, seemingly without a second thought. At one time Baba explained that all of these things were like scaffolding for His inner work. And once that was done, there was no need any more for the scaffolding.

I can't say what Baba's inner work was but, looking back on it, I can see a little of the work Baba did for me at Guru Prasad. I can see how Baba used many such small incidents during my stays at Guru Prasad to bring me closer to Him. It wasn't that Baba gave me deep spiritual experiences or made me feel His love in a new way, because Baba's love was always there. Mostly it was that Baba helped me to overcome my own diffidence so that I was better able to receive His love.

Thinking back on these times with Beloved Baba, I am amazed at the familiarity and casualness with which we interacted and moved through our days. Yet each moment was filled with such incredible significance and love.

I would often think of Baba's question to me, "Of what use is it if you continue to worry?" Especially as it had always been my nature to worry. Once I was sitting on a train, worrying, "Will my brother pick me up at the station when I arrive?" I went on worrying and worrying about it. But then, suddenly, I realized, "What can I do about it? All I can really do is watch the trees pass by and let things happen as they happen." Baba's guiding words helped me to trust the unfolding of His will. Not that I don't still worry. I do. But now, thanks to Baba, I find myself laughing at myself when I worry.

Baba has made it possible for me to worry and not worry simultaneously. In much the same way that Baba's love made it possible to feel His love even when He was expressing unhappiness with something I had done.

I recall being alone with Baba one afternoon when Baidul was on watch outside Baba's room, while I sat nearby on the men's verandah. A car pulled up to the portico and an elegant woman got out. This turned out to be the Princess of Indore. The fact that she was a Princess

made no difference to Baidul. His conviction in Baba as the Emperor of Emperors was such that he held no earthly title in any reverence. In his simple, somewhat brusque manner, Baidul told the Princess that she couldn't see Baba and would have to leave.

Baba must have heard the car, because He clapped, calling Baidul into the room. Baidul must have told Baba that I was also outside on the other side of the verandah, for after a while Baidul came out and told me that Baba wanted to see me.

I went into Baba's room and was surprised to see that Baba was all alone. It must have been just before Bhau's shift, and Eruch, once again, must have had to attend to some work Baba had given him. Baba told me that the Princess shouldn't have been sent away like that. "She should have been given a book." Baba used simple gestures so that I could understand.

"But which book, Baba?" I asked. And then Baba began to spell out a name using His hand gestures. He pointed to His ear for "E," made a sign for "N" which I recognized, then pointed to His eye for "I," and then made the sign for "D." I was not that familiar with Baba's hand alphabet and I mistook Baba's pointing to His eye as the sign for "E" and for some reason thought His pointing to His ear signified "I." Even though there were only four characters in this word I was hopelessly confused and said, "In?"

Baba made the same signs again and I kept asking, "In?" as Baba's face eloquently displayed His annoyance at my inability to follow what He was trying to communicate. Eventually Baba sent me from the room gesturing how useless I was. As far as I can recall this was my only time visiting Baba's room at Guru Prasad.

It was only later that I realized Baba was spelling "Enid," the first name of Enid Corfe, who had been responsible for recently publishing a small

booklet that gave a concise summary or synopsis of Baba's books. Baba was indicating that this was what I should have given the Princess.

Being alone with Baba in such a free manner was such a gift of great intimacy, even when He was scolding me or sending me away.

Whenever I think of Guru Prasad, such memories come back to me. But, these memories live on in my heart, not the marble and statues of Guru Prasad, which is why I don't regret its passing. Maybe it is possible that, just as Baba seemed to withdraw from His lovers in the later years, perhaps teaching them to create and have reliance only on their inner contact with Him, so too He did not want us to get too attached to these outer places. Or maybe I feel the way I do because I do not view Baba's life as having ended in 1969. I feel that Baba veiled His physical form from us, but that His ever-active presence as the Avatar continues unabated. As such, one's relationship with Baba is not something that happened in the past, but is ongoing, ever fresh, always renewing and deepening.

For example, once, in my very early association with Baba, He gestured "women" to me (He moved one hand around His wrist, indicating bangles, which was one of His signs for "women"). He then made another gesture to me which I interpreted to mean, "Do not touch." This seemed like a very straightforward command and I took this order very literally, although at times, for example when I was riding on public buses, it often entailed a fair amount of vigilance and inconvenience. I worked in a co-ed school, and I had to be very careful not to touch any of the girls, and yet do it in a way that didn't let anyone know I was doing this. So I assigned a boy in my class the job of handing out the exercise books, or collecting money from the class. I also had a friend who was a Baba lover. I had confided in him about Baba's order and he would help in situations where otherwise I might have to touch a member of the opposite sex. When

Baba lovers would visit at Guru Prasad or Meherazad, I noticed that the other mandali would embrace them all. Still, I felt constrained and would never, on my own, voluntarily move forward to embrace any woman.

In the atmosphere that prevailed at Meherazad, after Baba dropped His body, many Western women would, however, come up to me and embrace me. I didn't see how I could refuse their embrace without wounding their hearts, and I knew Baba would not like that. Yet I felt troubled because it seemed to me that in allowing myself to be embraced, I was breaking Baba's order. I couldn't see what I could do in this situation. Either alternative seemed wrong to me. There seemed no way out. Then one night Baba came to me in a dream and asked, "Are you married?" I replied, "No, Baba." Then Baba recounted, "Yes, I have ordered you not to marry."

When I woke up I felt tremendously relieved. Baba had Himself clarified His orders to me. He had not meant that I should never touch a woman; He had meant that I should never get married. I had obeyed Him after all. And now I was free to allow women to embrace me with a clear conscience (although it took me many years before I felt comfortable).

Similarly, I feel that Baba, in His most natural way, has guided me to write for Him. I have already recounted how Baba directed me to work on taking notes as He talked and later working these up into proper messages. But I would take my notes back with me to Kurduwadi, try to put them into decent shape and then send them back to Baba for Francis and Eruch to edit further. When *Darshan Hours* came out, it gave me a little confidence in my writing, but the thought of writing about Baba's life never occurred to me. Much less the idea that, one day, I would

compile six volumes of *Glimpses*, three of *Conversations*, three of Baba stories, and *The Samadhi*. Those who know me, and know how limited my abilities are, will more readily understand when I say that this can only be seen as an expression of Baba's loving guidance and timely help, often expressed with His inimitable humor.

So it was that I continued to do my best when Baba asked me to be involved in writing projects, such as "helping" Purdom in 1963, or editing the three-volume edition of the *Discourses*, or the second edition of *God Speaks*, but I was not actually in charge of either project, I was just asked to lend whatever help I could. The fact that in 1967 Baba gave me a pen with His own hands might have given me a hint about writing for Baba, but still the thought of writing a book about Him in English was not there.

During the Great Darshan of April-June 1969, many Western Baba lovers visited Poona, and I shared my life with Baba with them. So in a way my life with Baba was revived and relived. That's when I began to feel that I should share this information with others, as this was all His gift to me. I thought about writing a biography of Baba, but then, after some reflection, I felt it would be better for me to write only about those years of His life when I had contact with Him or His disciples, and had experienced some of the atmosphere around Him.

In the late 1960s, Mani had suggested that I should learn how to type. Sam Kerawala was a seaman and I had heard that typewriters were cheap in Siam [Thailand]. So I asked him to bring one for me. I paid 115 rupees for it. As it turned out, I have a friend who is a good typist, and so, although I did not learn how to type, it was on the typewriter that Sam brought back for me that my friend began typing up the first volume of *Glimpses*. Later on, typewriters were common but in 1969 they were not.

This was the beginning of *Glimpses, Volume I*. I would send each chapter to Eruch for his suggestions and corrections, and then it would be printed in *Divya Vani*, an Indian journal. Later, Sufism Reoriented published *Glimpses, Volume I*, which covered the years 1943–48. I realized at that point that if I were going to write a second volume, it would have to cover the New Life, and I considered this to be a daunting task. But I commenced, and it turned out to be a great joy for me, though quite difficult. It also gave me a chance to think more deeply about the significance of the Avatar's life.

In the late 1970s I had a significant dream. I dreamed that I was with Baba and some of His close disciples in an unknown place. He gestured that His disciples should go to fetch a book, whose title I don't recall. I was left alone with Baba, who gestured to me, "Why have they not come yet?" I said, "Baba, they must be searching for the book." Baba smiled and asked, "Do you have *Glimpses, Volume I* with you?" Feeling proud, I answered, "Yes, Baba." And He asked me to bring it to Him.

Baba was sitting on a cot covered with a white sheet. He beckoned me to sit next to Him, took the book in His hand, and conveyed that He would like to autograph it. I took a pen out of my pocket, and, feeling so intimate with Him, as a son would feel with his father, I said, "Baba, this is a Paper Mate pen! That's why I could write well on the paper!" And I gave Baba the pen. Baba signed His initials on the book, and gave the pen and the book back to me. I felt greatly pleased and woke up.

Actually, I was using that kind of pen at that time, and I still have it as a memento of that dream. I took this as confirmation that I should continue my work with *Glimpses*.

Help came from some unexpected sources, and I also met with those who accompanied Baba as companions in the New Life. Convers-

ing with them helped me a lot. When *Glimpses, Volume II* was nearly finished, I myself was astonished by the way in which the New Life was presented with so many details.

But again the same feelings of incompetence came over me, and I wondered whether I would be able to continue writing about Baba's life. Then I had a second dream about *Glimpses*. I was visiting one of my close friends on Rama's birthday. That morning, in the early hours, Baba appeared in my dream. I was sitting on a cot and Baba came and sat next to me. He had a piece of fruit on a plate in His hand. He cut it open and began to feed it to me. I was so overjoyed that I woke up!

Afterward I wondered, "What kind of fruit was that?" In general, I am not particularly conversant with the names of the more rare types of fruit. After some months, during a visit to Meherazad, I shared this dream with the mandali, and I mentioned that I did not know the name of the fruit Baba had fed to me. However, I did include the fact that I'd had the dream on Rama's birthday. So Eruch suggested maybe the fruit was ramphal, which is a kind of custard apple. And then I immediately realized, "Yes! That's what it was!" It is not a commonly available fruit. What struck me so deeply was that the dream had taken place on Rama's birthday, and that Rama-come-again, as Meher Baba, was the one who had offered me the fruit. The encouragement I took from this dream enabled me to go seriously through my manuscript a second time and make some needed changes, especially in the preface.

In countless ways, over the years since 1969, Baba has made it clear to me that He is still guiding me, comforting me and sustaining me. It was

only when going through some files of my own and rereading earlier correspondence that I became aware of how Baba, from the beginning, went out of His way to help me feel more intimate with Him. Thus I came across a very early letter from Baba which said that, like Eruch, I could come any time to see Him. I didn't even know who Eruch was when I got the letter so the reference did not mean that much to me. But when I reread this letter a few years ago, I was struck by the enormity of Baba even mentioning me and Eruch in the same sentence. This says very little about my worth, but untold volumes about His compassion and love.

This was hard for me to accept because I was all too aware of my own weaknesses and limitations. But, in a very natural way, Baba drew me closer and closer. This does not mean that I no longer have weaknesses. Far from it. Sometimes, as I've said, I laugh at myself, for I am still an inveterate worrier. Time and time again Baba has shown me conclusively that He is watching over me and that He is seeing to it that whatever suffering is my due is minimized in His compassion and yet still I will worry, or will complain to Baba, or cry out to Him to spare me.

I often tell people that Baba will be whatever you take Him to be. If you think of Baba as a stern judge who is watching your every action to dispense punishment each time you misbehave, you will find that He is that. But if you take Baba as a loving companion and friend, then He will be that for you. Which is why I, baby that I am, do not even take Baba as my mother and father. After all, parents, while loving, can also be strict. I look upon Baba as my grandmother and grandfather in one, for grandparents are famously unconditional in their love and tolerance of their grandchildren. And Baba truly has showered more love on me than any earthly grandparents ever could.

To this day, I often see Baba's touch in daily coincidences. This does not mean that any coincidence should necessarily be taken as a direct sign from Baba, for Baba speaks to each of His lovers in a language that has special significance to them. But for me, coincidences are redolent with the scent of Baba's presence.

So often, when writing *Glimpses*, each night I would make a list of the tasks I had to undertake the next day. The next morning I might see that "Ask so-and-so for their story about Baba's 1952 visit" would be first on the list. As my health has generally been poor, Baba has kindly sent various helpers to me. So I might mention to whoever was helping me at the time, "Please write so-and-so and ask them for their story." And then the pilgrim bus would arrive and that person would be on it and, on their own, would come into the record room to tell me their story. This may seem like nonsense, but it is perfect sense for a nonentity like me and it made me feel that Baba not only approved of my passing the time by remembering Him through the writing of *Glimpses*, but that He was helping me to do it. And when I first started working on *Glimpses*, I found that the chronology that I had been keeping as a kind of personal meditation on Baba came in very handy, as if Baba knew I would need this later on and had therefore planted the idea in my mind to do it decades earlier.

I am not a demonstrative person and so it was in these little ways that Baba showed His love for me. One time we were sitting in Mandali Hall and Baba suddenly observed, "Bal, you have strange ears." As I had never noticed this, and no one else had ever remarked on it, I thought perhaps Baba meant that they were strange because my right ear had been pierced (a typical Hindu tradition). I made some comment to Baba to that effect, but Baba said, "No, you have strange ears." I accepted

this as Baba's joke or gentle teasing, and I was happy that Baba noticed me and thought about me enough to make a comment about my ears.

Many years later, after dear sister Mani was cremated, someone took a video of the ceremony. I happened to be around when this person showed us the video. It was taken from behind me, and as the camera panned the crowd, I noticed that there was a fellow standing in the crowd whose ears stuck out at an odd angle. They looked strange, and I realized that that person was me! Baba may have been teasing me, but it turned out He was right. My ears are strange. Needless to say, this was a wonderful reminder from Baba of His loving attentiveness.

Once, during one of my visits to Meherazad, probably in the 1960s, apropos of nothing in particular, Baba gestured, "Bal, you are cracked." I said something and Baba repeated, "No, you are mad." And then after a pause, He added, "But there's a place for you here." Isn't that the essence of Baba's unconditional love? It's not that Baba is blind to our faults. He is aware of them to a much greater extent than we are, but He loves us anyway. Even though we are "cracked," there is a place in His heart for us. And now, whenever I enter Mandali Hall, I remember Baba's words. I do not consider myself a mandali and therefore feel that it is only due to Baba's compassion that I have been allowed to move to Meherazad and live here. And yet, as my room is right next door to Mandali Hall, I also feel that Baba gave me an indication, years ago, that there was a "place" for me here.

I have already told the story about my having Hafiz's couplets printed up and Baba asking that they be brought into His room on the 31st of January. I feel that Baba then underscored this message of intimacy

in a personal way on Christmas Day, 1994, when Mani gave me the following quote from Baba, printed on a slip of pink paper: “Uproot all doubts and remember well that whatever I do is for the best.” (The date happened to be the fiftieth anniversary of my first visit to Meherabad, where I met with Baba on Christmas Day, 1944.)

Perhaps I should add that one reason I find that these subtle “hints” from Baba confirm my belief that He is still actively guiding my life is because this is very much how Baba has related to me from the very beginning. I first read about Meher Baba in April 1943, and personally met Him, after frequent correspondence directly with Him, in November 1944. I had unknowingly traveled for a while in the same train compartment with Him when I was a small child. I had been struck by this stranger’s personality and the reverence with which His companions were treating Him, but I didn’t learn who this person was until after getting down at the station. Before long I completely forgot about this encounter and didn’t remember it for many years. During this period I used to have dreams about Upasni Maharaj and Babajan. As far as I remember they would very lovingly caress me. After meeting Baba in person, the dreams about these two Masters totally stopped.

But I should add that, as a teenager, I had read some malicious newspaper articles about Upasni Maharaj that adversely influenced me, so that I had a very bad opinion of him. After coming to Baba, and learning that Maharaj was His Master, I felt a deep sense of guilt for my prior feelings. I never mentioned this to Baba but, the All-Knowing One, without saying a word to me, wiped away these feelings. This happened in 1954 when I was allowed to accompany Him to Sakori. There, Baba instructed those of us who were with Him to bow down before Maharaj’s Samadhi. I felt that by doing so, especially in Baba’s

presence, I was able to “repent” for my previous bad thoughts and was relieved of any and all guilt I felt.

Ironically, just as my bowing down to Maharaj eased my mind, Baba’s order to us created problems for Darwin Shaw. Darwin was devoted to Baba and loved Him very much as the Christ. But Darwin was a Westerner and, therefore, not as conditioned to accept the whole idea of “Masters.” The thought occurred to Darwin to wonder if he had come halfway round the world to bow down at the tomb of a strange Master. Because Baba had told us to do it, Darwin determined to obey but he was troubled by it. Again, without Darwin having to express his thoughts to Baba, and without Him having to say a word, Baba just stepped forward when it was his turn to bow and placed His hand over Darwin’s forehead. Thus, when Darwin bowed, he could feel that he was bowing to Baba’s hand and his inner turmoil was relieved.

In 1947 when *Spiritual Fragments* by Norina Matchabelli was published, I read them and had a thought that I would like to meet Norina. As it so happened I attended a meeting in Satara in 1947 where Baba and Norina were present. Dr. Deshmukh pointed her out to me and he walked over to discuss something with her. They conversed for some time and I was happy to meet the one whose articles in the *Meher Baba Journal* I had so appreciated. In such simple ways, Baba responded to the innocent desires in my heart and He continues to do so today.

So I do feel that my relationship with Baba is ongoing. Baba’s relationship with every soul in creation continues and, if we allow ourselves to be alive to this possibility, we find that it grows stronger with time as well. So I do not mourn the passing of Guru Prasad. For me, the one place of inexpressible importance is the Samadhi. Not as a tomb-shrine, or a place where one goes on pilgrimage to pay one’s respects,

but as a powerful transmitting station of the Avatar's Universal love. This is now the Center of the Avatar's never-ending work for humanity.

Perhaps Guru Prasad might have been a distraction. But of this I am certain: while I do not know why Baba does any of the things He does, I know that He does all of them out of love for His creation. It is enough for me that Guru Prasad served Baba for all those years, then was torn down, and then part of it, where Baba had done His Universal work, was saved and made into a memorial that anyone can now visit.

For me Guru Prasad lived up to its name; my time spent there was truly an auspicious gift from the Master. And I feel it is a gift that Baba continues to give to His lovers to this day. A gift of intimacy, of sharing His humanity with us so that we may better approach His divinity without fear. A showering of His love on us so that we can feel natural in His presence. The occasional reprimand when we think too much of ourselves, or think we are doing something, instead of realizing that Baba is doing it through us and that it is His gift that allows us to do it at all. A casual suggestion thrown out here or there to help us be more alert to His pleasure. The simple yet divinely profound words of wisdom that have been collected now in so many books that we can read whenever we want. All of this He continues to give us as He makes our hearts into Guru Prasads so that He may reside in comfort, while we learn to accept His eternal gift to us.

For those who lived with Baba as well as to those who want to love Him, the present holds the same unexpected challenge: Remember or imagine Him so vividly that the past overpowers the future and we find ourselves living in the eternal Present with the Timeless One. I hope this book will play a small part in that ongoing meditation, to help us find our way to Beloved Avatar Meher Baba's omnipresence. Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!!!

APPENDICES

- A. Thumbnail Sketches
- B. Bal Natu's 1952 Chronology
- C. Meher Dham Messages,
Meherastana Messages
- D. *The Deccan Queen*
- E. *Mulakat* by S. Jafri
- F. Francis Brabazon's Talk at the
1969 Darshan
- G. Glossary



THUMBNAIL SKETCHES



*B*al mentions a lot of people in this book. Some of the names, like Mehera or Eruch, will probably be familiar to many readers, but others will not. However, by the very virtue of having met Baba, all the people mentioned herein had some role to play in Baba's work. So we have tried in what follows to give very brief snapshots of many of the people Bal mentions so the reader will have at least some context in which to place what otherwise might just be a random name.

Initially, the thought was to distinguish between the mandali and others. In the Baba world, the term *mandali* is most often used to denote those who lived with Baba on a day-to-day basis. Complicating the picture is the fact that there were many close ones who not only lived with Baba on a day-to-day basis for periods but also lived apart from Baba for varying lengths of time, such as Ghani, Meherjee, or Arnavaz. Baba, on different occasions, commented that His mandali were those who loved Him and obeyed Him, whether they lived with Him or not. Baba also said that Harry Kenmore and Dr. Hoshang Bharucha, for example, were mandali, even though neither lived with Baba for any extended periods.

It is interesting that in Baba's time, the women living with Him used the term *mandali* to denote the men who were living with Baba and referred to themselves often as the "women" or, quite often, the "girls."

Given all these details, trying to make a distinction as to who was a member of the mandali and who was not became impossibly difficult. In the list that follows, no such attempt is made. However, in case it is helpful, an asterisk is placed before the names of those who were living with Baba in Ahmednagar during the period this book covers.

Having confessed the impossibility of determining who was a mandali member, nonetheless, we would like to say something about them. Most Westerners, and these days most Easterners, never went to Guru Prasad. Most never met Meher Baba in physical form. But quite a few did meet people who loved Baba deeply and who had surrendered their lives to Him, and what a diverse group it was. Strong personalities in their own right, they had different temperaments, tastes, interests, and even different opinions on such matters as whether Baba had broken His silence when He dropped His body on January 31, 1969.

The one thing they had in common was an uncommon dedication of their lives to please Baba in all they did, said, and thought. Generally, they were extraordinarily loving to those who met them; at the same time, what they considered Baba's work took precedence over anything else. Thus, during Baba's lifetime, many who came for Baba's darshan did not have a lot of personal interactions with the mandali because they were so focused on carrying out Baba's orders. And Baba's presence was so overwhelming, that many have reported that they weren't even aware of the mandali being in the room when they were with Baba. Even when Eruch was standing next to Baba and speaking out in words what Baba was "saying" in gestures, there were quite a few who didn't realize that Baba was silent, or that it was Eruch who was speaking.

They were strong-willed, yet with little ego in the ordinary sense of the word. Their lack of self-aggrandizement also meant that they often displayed a childlike enthusiasm and enjoyment of simple things, despite the keenness of their intellect and perception. After 1969, when pilgrims,

at first mostly Westerners, started coming to Meherabad and Meherazad, their relationships with the mandali were often an important part of their pilgrimage. They felt Baba's love flowing through the mandali to them—a tide of unconditional love most had never experienced before. But they were also made to feel equal to the mandali in some respects. The mandali neither courted nor accepted homage or even what they considered undue respect. They did not try to teach those who came, but treated them as brothers and sisters in Baba's love. They would often reiterate that one needs no intermediary in one's journey to Baba. They shared their lives, they shared whatever they had gathered from Baba in terms of how to please Him, and they gave of themselves tirelessly, despite their increasing age, poor health, and all the other things they had to attend to—work for the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, correspondence with lovers from around the world, maintaining Meherabad and Meherazad, and even mundane tasks, like cooking and cleaning.

These lovers were so vibrant, so remarkable, that it is impossible in a brief sketch to capture their vitality and unique personalities. But it is our hope that the following descriptions may give you a glimpse of them and whet your appetite to watch the many video recordings of them on the Internet. There are also recently published (or about-to-be published) books about Mehera, Mani, Goher, Khorshed, Eruch, Donkin, and Meherwan Jessawala. As a result, less is written about them here and, for example, more about Pendu and Naja, because this material is not readily available elsewhere. The relative lengths of the snapshots provided below are in no way intended to correspond to the relative merits of these Baba lovers or the significance of their roles in Baba's work. Finally, they are listed alphabetically by first names.

Adele Wolkin (1918–2015)

Adele first heard of Baba at the end of 1943 and was very drawn to Him. Not

long after, she and Filis Frederick moved in with Norina, Elizabeth, and Nadine. Adele nursed Nadine in her last years, but it wasn't until 1952 that Adele got the chance to meet Baba.

She wasn't shy about sharing her love of Baba with others and told countless people, including Harry Kenmore and Sheila Krynski, about Him. In the 1960s, she would stand on street corners in New York City, or go to Central Park when musical events were happening, to pass out flyers carrying Baba's messages against the use of drugs.

After the East-West Gathering in 1962, which she attended, she stayed on in India for months so she could be closer to Baba. And, as a nurse, for decades she took upon herself the role of providing Dr. Goher with whatever medical supplies she needed in her clinic in India.

In the 1970s, Adele joined Filis Frederick in Southern California and was everyone's "Auntie Adele" for the next thirty years.

*** Adi K. Irani (1903–1980)**

Many of Baba's Zoroastrian mandali were related to each other. This interrelat-

edness can be seen in Adi's family. Sarosh and Adi, who both stayed with Baba at Manzil-e-Meem (a house in Bombay where Baba lived with His men mandali in 1922-23), were first cousins as their fathers were brothers-in-law. (Sarosh's mother was Adi's father's sister.) Adi's mother, Gulmai, had a sister, Soonamasi, who married Kaikhushru Irani, parents of Khorshed. It was through Kaikhushru that Gulmai became attached to Upasni Maharaj and, eventually, Baba.

Adi's brother, Rustom, married Mehera's sister, Freiny, and their daughter, Meheru, was one of the four women that Baba took with Him on the New Life. Mehera's mother and Padri's mother were also sisters. Adi was related to Goher's family as well.

Adi joined Baba at Manzil-e-Meem, and one of the orders he had to follow there was to always be by Baba's side. Although the discipline was strict, this was a happy time for Adi, especially since, after the New Life, he mostly stayed at his family home in Khushru

Quarters (King's Road, Ahmed-nagar). When Adi became Baba's secretary in 1944, his office at Khushru Quarters became the mailing address for Baba lovers worldwide. (After 1969, Khushru Quarters came to be known as the Trust Compound, as this was where the Trust Office was located and where the trustees would meet.) Adi also acted as treasurer for Baba and, in general, attended to many of the worldly matters that had to be seen to.

Adi played the harmonium and sang in his younger days, and he retained his love of music and especially ghazals throughout his life, often quoting lines of Urdu poetry in the talks he gave. He was a powerful speaker; he radiated authority and he always dressed well, with a shawl over his shoulders and his mane of white hair carefully brushed straight back. At one time, while he was in the United States, he went to visit a person in jail. Afterward, one of the gang leaders in prison approached the person and said, "Who was that? I've seen some powerful men in my day, but I've never seen anyone like that."

Adi came to the United States on several occasions in the 1970s and traveled in India as well, talking about Baba. He was quite willing to

tackle philosophical questions but was adept at getting to the heart of the matter with a simple but forceful answer. He died in 1980 while touring Andhra Pradesh to talk about Baba.

Allan Cohen (1939)



Allan was one of Baba's "Boston boys," working at Harvard with Timothy Leary and

Richard Alpert (Baba Ramdas). Allan wrote to Baba about drug use and was instructed by Baba to spread the word that drugs were harmful physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Allan has spent his life doing this work in one form or another. He moved from Boston to the West Coast, joined Sufism Reoriented, and has traveled around the country giving talks on Baba and against drugs. He also wrote *The Mastery of Consciousness*, which explains Baba and His teachings in the context of a practical guide to mysticism.

*** Aloba-Ali Akbar**

Shapurzaman (1916–2002)



Aloba came to Meherabad to attend the Hazrat Babajan school, which was open to

boys of all castes and religious

creeds. He fell in love with Baba and was included in the Prem Ashram (an offshoot of the Hazrat Babajan school in which emphasis was placed on spiritual instruction). After the school was disbanded, Aloba went back to Bombay and worked in a teashop for many years.

Aloba was allowed to rejoin Baba before the New Life and then spent the rest of his life with Baba. Because of Muslim-Hindu tensions, while he was traveling with Baba on the New Life, Baba decided it might be dangerous to call him Ali and therefore temporarily gave him the new name, Aloba. The name stuck for the rest of his life. Over the years, Baba also gave him the nickname of "Electricity," because he was so instantaneous in his obedience to Baba. Baba joked that He had to be careful giving Aloba an order because he had a tendency to rush off to complete it even before Baba was finished telling him what to do. Baba also called him "snake killer" and "good mechanic." But he may be best remembered for the fact that for decades he was in charge of making tea for all at Meherazad. Perhaps Baba assigned him this task because he had worked in a teashop. Even after 1969, when Westerners would

come to visit at Meherazad, he would ring a hand bell and loudly call all who were sitting in Mandali Hall to "Come for tea!" When there was no milk for the tea (known in India as "weak tea"), Aloba would call it "penal-tea." And when Westerners insisted he make herbal tea, he dubbed it "horrible tea." He was also in charge of ringing the bell at the end of the day and getting the pilgrims to board the bus ("Take your belongings, leave your longings!").

Aloba could be childlike without being childish. He loved to entertain visitors by showing off the Baba tattoo on his chest, making loud noises, meowing like a cat, or suddenly falling to the ground and then jumping up to illustrate some point in a story he was telling. He was fond of predicting the imminent occasion of World War III because it was his belief that the war was necessary to usher in Baba's manifestation.

Once, when advising people to take Baba's name or to pray for something, he said: "If you have 100% faith in Baba, He will help you 100%, but if you only have 75% faith in Baba, He will only help you 75%."

Aneece Hassen (1927–2004)

Aneece heard about Baba in the early 1950s and became a member of Sufism Reoriented in the late 1950s. He met Baba in 1962 at the East-West Gathering. He was one of the people who filmed the event, and he also took a film of Baba's interment in 1969. In addition, he filmed a group interview with Eruch, Mani, Adi, and Francis in 1969, and he made a film of Mani and Eruch demonstrating Baba's gestures. Later, he helped Mani with the films she and Beheram had taken during the 1960s.

Ann Conlon (1932–2005)

Ann heard about Baba from Ginny Sadowski in 1956 right after Ginny and her sister, Liz Sakalis, had been with Baba at the Meher Center in Myrtle Beach. In 1958, when Baba returned, He said that people who loved Him and were ready to obey Him were welcome to come. Ann didn't feel she loved Baba and wasn't sure about obedience, so she didn't go. She stayed in New York and there she had a vision of Baba in her room. As soon as the sisters returned, Ann went to the Center with Liz. Baba had already left, but one day in the

Lagoon Cabin, Ann felt a wave of love come from Baba, go through her, and then return to Baba. After that, her longing to meet Baba in person just kept growing and growing. Ann describes her fateful meeting with Baba at Guru Prasad after she got out of Meherjee's car:

"When I stood up in front of the steps, the door was open and there was Baba sitting at the back of the hall, 60 or 75 feet away from me. Now, in the years that I waited, I only wanted to see Baba's eyes. That's all I wanted. Just once. I was standing there and I looked at Him and all of a sudden, all I could see were His eyes. They got huge. They filled the room. They blotted out everything else. And I saw shafts of light coming from behind His eyes. I thought, 'If He closes His eyes, I'll drown in that light.' Then everything was back to normal, and I brushed Meherjee aside and went running up the steps. When I stepped through the door, I felt again that same wave of love that I had felt in Myrtle Beach in the Lagoon Cabin, only so much stronger that I stopped in my tracks. I couldn't move; my legs froze. Baba looked at me and He

smiled. He put out His arms like this: ‘Come on!’ I went running into His arms and burst into tears. And in that moment of feeling those arms around me, I knew for the first time in my life that I was completely safe and completely loved and completely accepted. There would never be another Being in the world from Whom I would get such total acceptance, such total love.” (Talk given by Ann at the LA Sahavas, 1966, as reported in meherbabatravels.com)

Arnavaz (1918–2009) & Nariman (1913–1974) Dadachanji



Arnavaz



Nariman

Arnavaz was one of the three daughters of Naoroji and Bachamai Dadachanji. Naoroji was Chanji’s (Baba’s first secretary) brother. As such, she and her two sisters, Nargis and Roda (who later married Jimmy Mistry), knew of Baba almost from birth. Although Arnavaz longed to live with Baba, He directed her to marry her cousin, Nariman, who had Baba’s darshan in Karachi in 1929. They married in 1944. Nariman went into business and prospered. They lived in Bombay

in their apartment, “Ashiana,” a place where Baba would visit and even hold darshan programs. Although they were relatively well off, their money, as with everything else they owned, was put completely at Baba’s disposal.

Arnavaz was, in many ways, the most worldly of the close women mandali and was often the one to whom married couples would go with their problems. She never had children, although she took countless numbers of young Westerners and Easterners under her wing. Arnavaz’s surrender to Baba’s will was such that she was unflappable and accepted everything that came her way with quiet poise. At Baba’s request, she moved to Meherazad after He dropped His body to stay with Mehera. She helped Goher run Meherazad and remained there until she died in 2009. Her book, *Gift of God*, recounts her life with Baba.

Nariman had been one of the “Arrangementwalas” during the New Life, and when the Trust was first formed by Baba in 1959, he was made a trustee. He was instrumental in solidifying the Trust after Baba dropped His body. He joined Arnavaz at Meherazad soon after and stayed with the men mandali. He died in 1974.

Asha & D.S. Bhawsar

Asha was the wife of D.S. Bhawsar, a stalwart of the Poona group, who first met Baba in 1952 in Bindra House. D.S. was considered by some to be K.K. Ramakrishnan's right hand in working for the Poona Centre. He was also a ticket collector at the Poona Railway Station, in which capacity he would help Baba lovers traveling to visit Baba at Guru Prasad or in securing reservations.

Baba's Poona family



Beheram (1908–1974)



Perin (1918–2009)



Jal (1902–1982)



Sheroo (1935–2000)



Jehangir (1933–2018)



Gulnar (1936–2018)



Rustom (1945)



Sohrab (1945)

Baba's family was completely devoted to Him, and His siblings wanted nothing more than to live with Baba and serve Him, but Mani was the

only one who was allowed to stay with Baba permanently.

Jal lived with Baba on and off in the early years and traveled with Baba to America in the 1930s, but he was eventually told to stay in Poona. His wit and never-ending jokes were a source of amusement for Baba, who liked the atmosphere around Him to be light and lively. As he did for the pilgrims during the 1969 darshan program, Jal would take it upon himself to show Western pilgrims the Baba sites in Poona when they came to visit.

Beheram also lived and traveled with Baba. Shireenmai often complained to Baba that He had taken all of her children to stay with him and that there would be no one to look after her in her old age. So Baba told Beheram to get married. Beheram asked, "Why me?" Baba said, "Do it for my sake." So, of course, Beheram did. Their father, Sheriar, was the one who suggested Perin as a suitable partner, which she turned out to be. Her love for Baba was so complete and natural that she accepted Him not only as God, but also as friend, confidant, and brother-in-law. Beheram was a talented photographer, and many of the early photos of Baba, which were touched by Baba and sent to

His lovers in the West (and East), were taken and developed by Beheram.

Perin and Beheram had four children: Sheroo, Gulnar, and the twins, Rustom and Sohrab. The family continued to live in one of Baba's boyhood homes (now known as Baba House), which is in a small alleyway off Dastur Meher Road in the Camp area of Poona. Kitty-corner to this house is Pumpkin House, which was another of Baba's boyhood homes.

Sheroo was openhearted and childlike. Baba said Sheroo always told Him the truth. Even if he had done something wrong, he would not try to hide it, and he was in Baba's words, "100% honest with Baba." G.S.N. Moorty once said that he learned obedience from Sheroo. When Baba sent Sheroo to live in Calcutta for some months, He told him to stay there until He called for him. In the meantime, Sheroo's sister, Gulnar, was to marry. G.S.N. Moorty encouraged Sheroo to return to Poona for the wedding but Sheroo refused, saying he couldn't go because Baba hadn't called for him yet.

The family never made important decisions without conferring with Baba first. And so, when it was decided that Gulnar should

marry, Beheram compiled a list of four Baba lover men whom he thought were good choices and was going to send the list to Baba to see whom Baba would choose.

At this time, Jehangir Sukhadwalla was working at the Air Force base in Poona and staying at the Edward Hotel, which was run by Jal Dorabjee. Sheroo was good friends with Jal's son. Jehangu (as he was called) was friends with the two of them and would visit Baba House with them, which is where he saw Gulnar and felt attracted to her. Jal went to visit Beheram and suggested that he consider Jehangu. Beheram asked if he were a Baba lover and Jal said no but that he would be a good match as he had a good heart. Beheram included him on the list he sent to Baba. Baba sent word back that Beheram should pick Jehangu.

Gulnar instantly accepted Baba's choice, but she felt a little sad and apprehensive about the fact that her husband was not from a Baba loving family. When Beheram mentioned this to Baba, Baba called Gulnar and told her, "Jehangu and I have had a relationship for 1,000 years. He is a jewel in my ring." Hearing this, Gulnar was overjoyed, and as soon as Jehangu met Baba he became a staunch Baba lover.

The twins, Rustom and Sohrab (Baba's sign for them was to hold up two fingers and then hold his elbows out to each side, indicating "hefty"), like their Uncle Jal and Aunt Mani, were skilled mimics and talented actors. As children, when they heard Baba talk about the burden of His work, they took it upon themselves to lighten His burden by making Him laugh, and they were successful with all the skits, jokes, songs, and pranks they performed for Baba.

As they got older, Beheram wondered whether they should marry or not. When the opportunity arose, he asked Baba. Mani, who was there at the time, felt that Baba would most likely say no, but to her surprise, with a big smile Baba said they should get married but not for three years. This was in November 1968. After Baba dropped His body, each twin met a woman he felt drawn to and decided to marry, although they told their prospective brides they had to wait until November 1971.

Surprisingly, both women (and their families) accepted this unusual request even though, in the case of Pervin (Rustom's bride-to-be), she and her family did not know anything about Baba. The twins were happy, but they thought it would have been nice if Baba were still there to give His seal of approval in person.

One day, Shahnaz (Sohrab's wife-to-be) came to see him and recounted that the previous night she had had a dream in which Baba appeared at the door to her room, came to her bed where she was sleeping, and kissed her hand. Sohrab couldn't help but feel that in this way Baba was signifying His whole-hearted approval of the match. Rustom was happy for his brother, but a small part of his mind thought, "What about me?"

That afternoon, Pervin called Rustom from Bombay where she lived and told him that the previous night she had had a dream in which Baba had appeared at her door, came to her bed, and kissed her hand.

There was not a glimmer of doubt in anyone's mind when the marriages finally took place, exactly three years after Baba's decision, that this was what Baba wanted.

Many pilgrims who visited Baba House remember Sheroo sitting on the front verandah and also Perin, who dedicated herself to keeping Baba's room open to visitors so they could pay their respect, sitting on a small couch handing out prasad after their visit, although most had no idea who this loving elderly woman was.

*** Baidul–Rustom Beheram
Jafrabadi (1890–1970)**



Originally from Persia, Rustom had gone to India to find a guru or saint. He was running a teashop in Poona in 1922 when Behramji (one of Baba's early disciples) happened to come in and tell him about Baba. Intrigued, Rustom went to Sadashiv Patil's (another early disciple) house to meet Baba and was immediately impressed with Him. He agreed to sell his shop and join Baba in Bombay.

Rustom liked to write poems, which the other mandali did not think were very good, but Baba encouraged him nonetheless. Baba insisted that he would soon be a famous poet and, as such, needed a *nom de plume*. Ghani suggested Agha Baidul and Baba approved. Thus, Rustom was known as Baidul for the rest of his life.

Considered somewhat crude, unsophisticated, and uneducated by some of Baba's more middle-class Parsi mandali, Baidul's complete devotion to Baba was never questioned. Because he considered Baba the "Emperor of emperors," he was not awed by any worldly person's rank or status and would approach anyone and strike up a conversation, quickly learning all the details

of their life. These traits stood him in good stead on his *mast* hunting expeditions and he was known as the "king of the *masts*" for his ability to track them down. He used to treat people with his own brand of homeopathy, which used to annoy Baba's doctors, Nilu and Donkin. And yet, possibly because of the conviction with which he would tell his patients to take Baba's name when they swallowed his pills, he was able to effect cures that eluded the licensed MDs.

Baidul was one of the few mandali who was not only married but had a family. When Baba came to Poona to stay at Guru Prasad, Baidul would come but would stay with his family, who lived there.

***Bhau–Vir Singh Kalchuri
(1927–2013)**



Bhau was born to a wealthy princely family in 1927. He was in the process of earning several degrees simultaneously when he met Baba in December 1952. He was so overwhelmed at seeing Baba that when he was given a banana as prasad, he ate it, peel and all. From that point on, all he wanted to do was to go and live with Baba, which he did four months later.

Bhau left behind his wife and two small children to be with Baba, who told him that they were no longer his family but Baba's and that He would take care of them. Baba later called the family to live at Meherabad and then Khushru Quarters. Being much younger than the rest of the mandali, Bhau was given the job of doing long stints of night watch. He would also answer Hindi correspondence and wrote poetry and plays at Baba's behest.

After Baba dropped His body in 1969, as ordered by Baba, Bhau embarked on his epic task of writing Baba's biography as a dramatic poem in Hindi and then in an expanded prose form, which was later translated into English and published as *Lord Meher*. He did much of the early work for the Avatar Meher Baba Trust behind the scenes, working late into the night and early in the morning. When Mani passed away in 1987, he became Chairman, a post he held until his death.

He could stand and talk for hours at a stretch about Baba. After Adi died in 1980, Bhau traveled often to the West, and he was the only member of the mandali that many of the younger Western Baba lovers met. He stayed in touch with this large contingent through emails and Internet chats, which he held on a regular basis.

Bhikubhai Panakar



Bhikubhai was a Poona Baba lover who met Baba through Shinde.

He was a photographer and the proprietor of Meelan Studios and took many pictures of Baba. When the Poona Centre was inaugurated, many of the pictures that were on the walls had been taken by Bhikubhai.

Bill-William Le Page (1924)



As a young man, Bill was a seeker and his search led him to the Sufi group in Australia.

At a meeting, someone gave him a copy of Volume 2 of the *Discourses* and thus began his conscious relationship with Baba. Bill met Francis Brabazon on Francis's return from America in 1948. Like Francis, he also left behind his association with Sufism and focused completely on Baba. He helped Francis build Meher House and generally worked closely with him. In 1954, Bill got his chance to meet Baba as one of the small band of Western men who stayed with Baba in India for the "Three Incredible Weeks."

Bill was tireless in his efforts to make people in Australia aware of Baba. Despite his efforts, there seemed to be no concrete result

until Baba “turned the key”; suddenly, after almost fifteen years of futile effort, people there started coming to Baba.

Although trained as a psychologist, Bill started an import-export business, which was quite successful for a while; he used the money to finance many needed projects in India. He also continued to work at Avatar’s Abode, to make it a place worthy of world pilgrimage, as Baba had instructed. Although Baba put Bill in charge, saying that Australia was between Baba and Bill, He also told him to do what Francis said, which led to some confusion and even conflict with younger members of the burgeoning Baba community in Australia. Bill has published many books about Baba. *The Turning of the Key* is a recounting of his life with Baba and Baba’s visits to Australia. In recent years, Bill has been going to the Meher Center in Myrtle Beach for several months each year and gives informal weekly talks on Baba.

Charles B. Purdom (1883–1965)



Charles first met Baba at Meredith Starr’s retreat in 1931, and he wrote about his meet-

ing in the *Everyman*, a magazine he edited. He wrote the first English biography of Baba, *The Perfect Master*, which was published in 1937. He later revised this book as *The God-Man*, and he edited the *Discourses* at Baba’s request into a one-volume work, *God to Man and Man to God*. As one of the small group of Westerners who stayed with Baba in 1954, he co-authored *Three Incredible Weeks*, an account of that time.

Keenly interested in literature and the theater, Charles wrote books about producing plays and several on Shakespeare, which was one reason Bal felt intimidated about being asked by Baba to help Charles with his work on *The God-Man*. See *Divine Drama: The Valiant Life of Charles B. Purdom*, by Bob Mossman, 2015.

Dadi Kerawala (1927–2005)



Banumasi (Gaimai’s sister) had two sons, Dadi and Sam. As a boy, Dadi lived with the Jessawala family in Nagpur and later was on some of the Blue Bus tours with Baba. Dadi earned a degree in agriculture and was hired to be in charge of the Horticultural Research Station at Ganeshkhind

Gardens in Poona, where Baba stayed several times.

In the 1970s, Dadi moved to Meherabad and oversaw the reforestation and planting of gardens there. He also became a trustee in 1975 and served in both capacities until his death in 2005.

Delia–Cordelia DeLeon (1901–1993)



Delia, a British actress and founder of the experimental Q Theater, first heard of Baba when she went to Meredith Starr's retreat in Challacombe, England, in 1931. She met Baba a few months later in London and was immediately drawn to Him. She wrote: "From first sight, I had implicit faith and trust in Him."

Delia was with Baba in Europe on several occasions during the 1930s, and she joined Baba in India in 1948. She was one of His companions during His visit to America in 1952 and was in one of the two cars headed west when Baba had His accident that same year.

She wrote a book about her life with Baba entitled, *The Ocean of Love: My Life with Meher Baba*.

Deshmukh–Dr. Chakradhar Dharmanidhar Deshmukh (1908–1982)



Deshmukh, who was studying for his Ph.D. in England, had a dream while at a spiritual retreat there in 1932, in which Baba revealed Himself. Later that year, Deshmukh met Baba in London through various contacts, such as Will and Mary Backett and C.B. Purdom, and recognized Him as the one he had seen in his dream. On his way home to India in 1933, Deshmukh traveled through Italy and saw Baba for four days while He was staying in Portofino. Once back in Nagpur, he made contact with the Jessawala family. Although he did not go to live with Baba, he would visit Him during school holidays (he was a professor of philosophy). Deshmukh wrote a biography of Avatar Meher Baba in Marathi, which was published by Adi K. Irani, and he was the first editor of Baba's *Discourses* in the 1930s. Although learned and intelligent, he was also very childlike, and Baba enjoyed teasing him. He married and had two children, although none in his family lived just for Baba as he did.

Dhavle–Bal Dhavle



Bal was one of the many Poona Baba lovers who heard about Baba from Gadekar,

and he was part of a group Gadekar brought to Meherabad to meet Baba in 1948. Along with Shinde and Kamble, Bal formed a triumvirate of Poona Baba lovers that was so dedicated to Baba and so much in the forefront of Baba activities that the other Poona Baba lovers used to refer to them as Brahma-Vishnu-Mahesh.

Dina (1904–1974) & Naval (Navaroji Curshed) (1896–1938) Talati



Dina

Dina and Naval's contact with Baba went all the way back to Upasni Maharaj at Sakori. Naval used to visit there often and knew Merwan from those days, although he did not understand who



Naval

Merwan really was. In fact, he was jealous of the attention Upasni gave Merwan and used to call Merwan names and treat him badly at the ashram. According to Mansari, when Naval and others were finished eating, they would fling their plates at Merwan and demand that he clean them, which he would do without complaint.

In 1922, Naval and Dina traveled to Sakori with Baba, where Upasni performed an engagement ceremony for them, putting a ring on Dina's finger himself. It was at this time that Upasni told those assembled that they should follow Baba and do whatever He said.

Dina was the one who stitched Baba's first seven-colored flag. Their daughter, Perviz, grew up knowing of Baba from birth.

Dinkar Pote



A frequent visitor to Guru Prasad, Dinkar lived in Poona and was one of the fortunate ones whose homes Baba visited during His house visits.

Don Stevens (1919–2011)



As a young man, Don's interest in spirituality led him to Sufism, and he became a follower of Rabia Martin, who had been appointed by Inayat Khan to head up the branch of Sufism he had started in the West. Having heard about Meher Baba in 1942 from Elizabeth and Norina, Rabia became more and more convinced of His spiritual status. In 1945, she wrote to Baba, not only surrendering to Him personally but also asking Him to take over the Sufi order for her. Thus

Don was also introduced to Baba's teachings, although he had to wait until 1952 for his first meeting.

Don worked as a chemical engineer for Standard Oil. The thought came to him that perhaps he should seek a more spiritual calling, but Baba told him that He had placed him there for a reason and to continue. Over time, Don came to see that the scope of the Avatar's work was not limited to any particular occupation. Also, his job allowed him to travel and visit Baba in India on multiple occasions.

Don worked with Ivy Duce, who had been appointed by Rabia Martin as her successor, to help edit and publish *God Speaks*. He later wrote *Listen, Humanity*, which is an account of the 1955 darshan program Don attended at Meherabad, as well as a collection of discourses given by Baba. He also helped edit *Tales from the New Life with Meher Baba*. Don was very interested in seeing to it that Baba's words were quoted correctly and that proper attribution was given. Wherever Don lived, a small group would form around him, and he emphasized the importance of such groups to help true one's intuition. In his last years, he focused on trying to fulfill Baba's expressed wish to bring together all the world's religions like beads on one string.

***Donkin-William Donkin (1911-1969)**



Donkin met Baba in England in the 1930s, and his first vision of Baba in an effulgent

sphere of light was so overwhelming that he immediately decided to spend the rest of his life in Baba's fold. At Baba's request, Don earned his medical degree in orthopedics before joining Him in India in 1937.

Somewhat shy and self-effacing, Donkin was skilled in a number of different areas. As a gifted linguist, he quickly learned many Indian dialects. As a skilled artist, he worked in watercolors and also designed the New Life logo and the Mastery in Servitude symbol. He also created a wonderful map of India depicting Baba's ashrams and travels. As a young man he was a bit of an adventurer, not only climbing mountains, but also traveling across the Sahara desert. He created the path up Seclusion Hill at Meherazad to make it easier for Baba to ascend.

Fascinated by Baba's work with the *masts*, Donkin once commented to Him that someone should write an account of it, at which Baba suggested that he take it up himself. *The Wayfarers* is the result.

Donkin was meticulous to the point of obsessive. To make sure

that his new car would not fail him driving Baba to Guru Prasad, he disassembled and reassembled the entire motor himself to make sure that everything was in working order.

During the 1969 darshan program at Guru Prasad, it was his job to see that the facilities for the Westerners were adequate, which resulted in him not only inspecting the kitchens of the hotels but also even cleaning the bathrooms himself. He was so unassuming and kept in the background to such a degree that some of the Westerners who met him at that time assumed he was a British man who just happened to be living in Poona; they never realized that he had been living with Baba for more than three decades.

He also had an impetuous side to his character. Eruch used to say that after working on *The Wayfarers*, Donkin became a bit “*mast-y*” himself. Adi would tell of the times when he was living in Khushru Quarters when Donkin would become infuriated at something and end up throwing the furniture out of his room. In her book, *Growing Up With God*, Sheela Fenster recounts that Adi took Donkin to Meherazad so that Baba could properly reproach him for his misbehavior in Khushru Quarters. Donkin was so overjoyed to be in Baba’s presence,

however, that His criticism was taken as loving intimacy, which Donkin enjoyed immensely, much to Adi’s consternation.

Slave of Love by Bob Mossman recounts Donkin’s life with Baba. See also *Donkin’s Diaries*.

Dubash Family—Adi (1919–2001), Rhoda (1921–2001) & Merwan (1947) Dubash



Adi



Rhoda



Merwan

Adi and Rhoda’s contact with Meher Baba goes back to the mid-1940s. Adi was a cousin of Minoo Kharas, who met Baba in 1932. Thus, Adi knew about Baba and was a Baba follower even before meeting Him. In contrast, when Rhoda discovered that her fiancé was a Baba lover, she decided to go ahead and marry him despite this fact, not because of it. It didn’t take long, however, for Rhoda to also fall in love with Baba. She recounts their story in her book, *Surrendering To Him*.

Although they lived in the western part of India, which became Pakistan after Partition, they continued to visit every chance they could get. Adi famously took Eruch and Pendu

for a rowboat ride in 1952 when they were traveling throughout India and Pakistan. This incident was memorable because the boat filled with water and all three ended up in the lake fully clothed.

In the 1970s, they moved to Ahmednagar and Adi became a trustee of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust. Although the trustees, for the most part, followed Mani's lead and there was little dissension, Adi felt it was his duty to Baba to not be a rubber stamp but to speak out his opinion. Even if this brought him into opposition with others, he was only concerned with doing what he felt Baba wanted of him.

Rhoda was equally determined to please Baba, but she was outwardly more accommodating. When they moved to Meherabad, she would help out at the Trust. One of her early jobs was to make a typed copy of the manuscript that would later be published as *Infinite Intelligence*. Hard of hearing in her later years, one day as she was riding the pilgrim bus to Meherazad, she introduced herself to the young Westerner sitting beside her. He said, "Hi, I'm Jeff," to which Rhoda responded sunnily, "That's okay, I'm hard of hearing myself."

Merwan moved to Canada, but he spends six months each year in India

to help the Trust and the mandali. He was named a trustee in 2014.

Eddie (1939–2015) & Irwin (1937) Luck



Eddie



Irwin

The Luck brothers were two of just a handful of young Westerners who got to meet Baba in the 1960s. Their father was vehemently opposed to Baba and did everything in his power to make it impossible for his sons to go to India, but they persevered. Irwin went in 1960, and Eddie finally met Baba in 1961.

They returned in 1962 and 1969, and then again in the early 1970s, during which time they filmed interviews with the mandali and traveled around India filming stories of some of Baba's other close ones.

Elcha Mistry



Although Elcha inadvertently made more work for the mandali, such as when Eruch was sent off to verify his story about a saint who would turn into a tiger and sweep out a temple with his tail, they were always happy when he came because Baba enjoyed his company, humor, and tall tales so much. In fact, in the early 1960s,

when Baba went through a period of appearing withdrawn and disinterested, Eruch would suggest they call Elcha to come for a visit.

Elcha was from Dehra Dun, and he was a first cousin of Naosherwan Anzar's mother. His uncle, Major Bamjee, was a good friend of Colonel Irani, and they were Baba's main antagonists. Elcha would visit his uncle anyway and tell him about Baba.

Elizabeth Patterson (1896–1980)



Elizabeth, along with Nadine and Norina, with whom she was closely associated, met

Baba in 1931 at Harmon-on-Hudson, and she was completely devoted to Him for the rest of her life. A strong yet quiet and calm person, Elizabeth was seemingly a complete contrast to her companion Norina, who was fiery, talkative, and flamboyant.

Although born into high society, she became an insurance broker at a Wall Street firm and she drove an ambulance in France during World War I. In 1931, before meeting Baba, she was one of five foreigners taken on a scientific Arctic expedition on the Soviet icebreaker *Malygin*, traveling within 400 miles of the North Pole.

She drove Baba throughout India during the Blue Bus tours, and she was driving the car in 1952 when Baba encountered His first automobile accident.

Although there are many stories of various mandali having disagreements with Baba or getting out of mood, most stories about Elizabeth simply end with her saying, “Yes, Baba dear” to anything Baba asked her to do.

With Norina, she founded and ran the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, until her death in 1980.

***Eruch Byramshaw Jessawala (1916–2001)**



Starting with the New Life, Eruch generally was the one who was at Baba's side, seeing

to His needs and interpreting for Him, first from the alphabet board and then from His gestures. As such, he was the most visible and public of Baba's mandali. Once Baba declared that if it could be said that He enjoyed anyone's company, He enjoyed Eruch's. After Baba dropped His body in 1969, Eruch would sit in Mandali Hall at Meherazad and tell stories about his life with Baba. He had a unique ability to make almost all who came

feel that they had a very special relationship with him. Eruch was always very matter-of-fact about his role with Baba, and he would make a point of deflecting any attention from himself. He would tell pilgrims who tended to look up to him that he was no different from them: "We're all in the same boat, brother." He always maintained that he had the same temptations and weaknesses as everyone else and that if he were at all different, it was only in that he was determined to be His, a determination that anyone could share.

Although Eruch worked on *God Speaks* with Baba, interpreted countless messages and discourses of Baba's over the decades, and could discuss any philosophical or cosmological question, he always insisted that pilgrims made things too difficult, getting caught up in their minds over what were essentially irrelevant questions. "Just think of Him, remember Him, try to love Him more and more. That's all there is to it."

Feram Workingboxwalla (1901–1986)



Feram was an early follower of Baba, having come to him in the 1920s. Later, he

served as Adi's assistant and lived in a small room in Khushru Quarters. He typed much of Adi's correspondence for him. He also assisted Bhau in translating *Lord Meher* from Hindi and typed it up in English.

Although he was a bit intimidating because of his scowl (caused mostly by his poor eyesight) and his seeming preference to not interact much with visitors, he was a benign presence in the compound for many years. He was a bit eccentric, and he had an aversion to women in general and to one of the servants in particular. One day, while translating Kabir's poetry to some residents, he got carried away, explaining that the gist of the verse was that God is in everyone and everything, and therefore one should love everyone and everything. As he was excitedly expounding on this lofty theme, he happened to see the servant he disliked walk across the compound. He stopped talking, watched her, and then said, "But what to do, there are some people we just can't love."

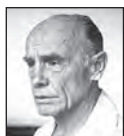
Filis–Phyllis Frederick (1915–1987) See also page 347.



In 1941, Phyllis Frederick and Adele Wolkin met and became fast friends in New York

City. A lengthy spiritual search led them to Meher Baba, whom they met in 1952 in Myrtle Beach. When Baba used his own spelling, “Filis,” in place of “Phyllis,” she adopted that spelling for the rest of her life. Baba also referred to the two young women as “Filadele.” Baba instructed Filis to spread His message of love in California, where she had moved to work as a game designer for Mattel (toy company). She helped found the Los Angeles Baba Center in 1964. During that first visit in 1952, Baba gave Filis permission to publish a journal devoted to Him, which she called *The Awakener* magazine. She lovingly produced the publication from 1953 to 1986.

Francis Brabazon (1907–1984)



Francis was born in England in 1907; his family moved to Australia when he was still young. He grew up working hard on a farm. Without consciously realizing it at first, at a young age he set out on a lifelong quest for beauty and its relation to truth. He was drawn to the arts; he tried his hand as a painter and pianist before finally achieving renown with Baba as a poet.

As a young man, he became a Sufi and studied under Baron Von Frankenberg, who had been appointed by Rabia Martin to lead the

Sufi group in Australia. Through her contact with Norina Matchabelli and Elizabeth Patterson, Rabia Martin found out about Meher Baba and was drawn to Him. Because of her, Baron Von Frankenberg and Francis started reading the *Discourses*.

Francis met Baba in 1952. After accepting Baba as the Avatar, he ended his affiliation with Sufism and began to dedicate his life to Baba. Small but immensely strong (he once held a weight-lifting record in Australia), he built (with help from others) a stone house for Baba on the outskirts of Sydney (now known as Meher House), which Baba visited in 1956. He then started work on Avatar's Abode, which Baba visited in 1958.

During this same time, he worked on the book Baba had asked him to write, which became *Stay With God*; Baba declared it a “perfect book.” In 1959, Francis moved to India and stayed there until 1969. One of his main tasks was to compose poems, which Baba said were the first expression of the ghazal style of poetry in the English language. Many of these poems were later published as *In Dust I Sing*. Francis also often set his poems to music; he invented his own style of notation with which to jot down his tunes.

He returned to Australia in 1969 and quickly became a mentor,

inspiration, and friend to many of the young Australians who had begun to flock to Baba at that time. See *The Water Carrier* by Robert Rouse for more information on Francis. See also *Francis Brabazon: Poet of the Silent Word—a Modern Hafiz*, by Ross Keating.

Gadekar–Ramchandra Gadekar (1904–1959)

See also page 59.



Wherever Gadekar was stationed, he would tell people about Baba and start Baba groups.

He not only told people about Baba but he also physically brought many to Baba as well. He and Dr. Ghani were the mainstays of the Poona group in the 1940s and 1950s.

Gajwani–Kishinchand Ramdas Gajwani (?–1968)

See also page 65.



Gajwani was a wealthy Bombay industrialist who met Baba in 1958 and became devoted to

Him. Along with Sorabji Siganporia, he was instrumental in opening the first Meher Baba Centre in Bombay. The two contributed much to Baba's cause, and Baba used to refer to the two of them as the "twin brothers of Bombay."

Ghani–Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff (1894–1951)



Ghani and Baba were born the same year, lived near each other in Poona, and grew up and went to school together. Baba often referred to him as *langoti dost*, which means "friends from the time they wore diapers."

Ghani lost contact with Baba around the time that He was unveiled by Babajan, but he came back into His fold in the early 1920s and became a devoted member of His circle. Ghani was married with a family but spent long periods of time living with Baba and the other mandali. In addition to being a student of esoteric mysticism, Ghani was intelligent, well read, knowledgeable, and noted for his wit. Because of his cleverness and his long-standing relationship with Baba, it seemed he was given greater latitude than others to complain to Baba about life as a mandali member. Sometimes when others wanted to bring up an issue with Baba, they would go to Ghani, knowing that he could do it in such a clever and amusing manner that Baba would not be offended.

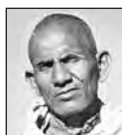
Baba's gesture for Ghani was "big head," although he was referred to by the other mandali as

“Doctor.” In addition to his intellect, Ghani stood out for his aversion to physical exertion. In later years, he would sleep dressed and wearing his shoes so he wouldn’t have to go to the trouble to put them on again in the morning.

Initially, Ghani had been given the task of compiling and fleshing out the notes Baba gave him for a rough draft of *God Speaks*. Given his knowledge of Sufic as well as Vedantic terms and his intellect, this choice seemed logical. Although he produced 14 chapters, Baba was not satisfied with the manuscript, and the task was later given to Eruch.

Ghani died not long after he returned from the New Life in 1951.

Gita Ram



Gita Ram was a lover from the Hamirpur region; he met Baba there in 1952 and would travel with the Hamirpur group whenever they came to Poona or Meherabad. In the 1990s, he moved to Meherabad and stayed there until his death. Many pilgrims remember him from his chanting of Baba’s name at the Samadhi after arti.

*** Goher (1916–2004) & Katie (1920–2009) Irani**



Goher



Katie

Goher and Katie were two of the seven children of Rusi (Pops) and Khorshed Irani, who lived in Quetta. They first met Baba at Rustom’s (Adi K.’s brother) wedding and then again when their mother took them to Manzil-e-Meem. They both remember playing with Baba as small children when He came to visit their parents in Quetta in 1923.

They knew of Baba even before 1923, however, because a few years after his mother died in 1917, Pendu came to Quetta and worked for Rusi in one of his restaurants. Some time later, Baba sent Naja to Quetta to live with the family, and Goher remembers Naja telling her stories about Baba.

One time, while visiting, Baba asked Khorshed how many children she had. She replied, “seven.” Baba said, “No, you have five, two of them are mine.”

Goher moved to Ahmednagar in 1932 and the family came the following year. Baba consulted with Rusi and Khorshed about Goher’s education, but they were reluctant to spend the money for Goher to

pursue a medical degree as they felt educating the boys was a higher priority. So Baba, who wanted Goher to become a doctor, took on the expense Himself and sent Goher in the late 1930s to live with Bachamai and Naoroji Dadachanji (parents of Arnavaz, Rhoda, Nargis, Homa, Dara, and Nozar) in Bombay to attend medical school. Goher rejoined Baba in 1944, but she felt that without a medical internship, her school learning was not of much use and so told Baba she wanted to go back to Bombay for her internship. Baba agreed, but, to Goher's immense regret, once she was finished Baba did not call her to rejoin Him until 1947. Because she was so new to the ashram, she felt sure she would not be one of the four women chosen to be with Baba on the New Life. She was so despondent at this thought that she determined she would commit suicide because there was no point in living if she couldn't be with Baba. Just then, Baba had her called to the porch at Meherazad and let her know she would be coming with Him.

Meanwhile, Katie joined Baba for the Blue Bus tours, and, to her chagrin, she was not chosen to accompany Baba on the New Life; she was sent, at His behest, to Bombay, where she got a job at the Japanese Consulate and lived with

Nariman and Arnavaz. Thereafter, she would visit Baba whenever she had leave and didn't come to stay permanently at Meherazad until she retired in the mid-1970s.

Goher was guileless and it was easy to tease her because she took everything at face value. Mani would love to get Goher to act in a skit for Baba because it was so unexpected and contrary to her nature, which was shy and retiring. Goher would always demur unless Mani convinced her that it would please Baba. Her performances were wooden, to say the least, but Baba was immensely pleased at her efforts.

Goher was exceptionally compassionate, especially to the poor and ill, whom she attended. Although she was one of Baba's doctors (along with Nilu and Donkin), she found that there was little she could do to alleviate His suffering, which weighed on her tremendously. She gave away all her medical supplies after Baba dropped His body, but the other mandali convinced her after some time to open a clinic at Meherazad as Baba had always taken an interest in providing free clinics at the various places He stayed.

She also managed the Meherazad household. She was so meticulous that Bal once noted with amazement that if she happened to pass his

room, somehow, without even going inside, she could notice whether his bedspread was threadbare and needed to be repaired.

Goher was very humble and simple in the way she surrendered to Baba. When pilgrims would ask, "How can we follow Baba?" she would reply, "Just do whatever pleases Him." When asked how she knew what would please Him, Goher could only stammer that she just had always known from the moment she joined the ashram.

Katie apparently was quite shy when she was young, but she seemed very outgoing, even exuberant, when pilgrims started coming to Meherazad in the 1970s. When she first came to stay with Baba, Naja taught her how to cook, and Baba had her prepare all the women's meals. When she retired to Meherazad, she would help Goher in the clinic and Naja in the kitchen; when Naja died, she took over supervising the kitchen herself.

Katie was noted among the mandali, who never wasted anything, as being especially frugal. In the clinic, she would make her own Q-tips out of discarded matchsticks and bits of cotton. She would never throw out food, but would reconstitute it into some new variation for the next meal. She would save food so

long the others would humorously complain that Katie was trying to kill them off with food poisoning.

Eruch especially loved teasing Katie, who was much more outgoing than her sister, because she always rose to the bait with such enthusiasm. It was almost a nightly routine that when Katie would ask Eruch how the food had been, he would find something to complain about, which would send Katie into a loud, finger-waving rant, denouncing his ingratitude and lack of appreciation (which would amuse Eruch greatly). She was also an enthusiastic follower of "The Bold and the Beautiful," a soap opera she watched whenever she could, much to the amusement of the Western residents. Katie had a beautiful voice and loved to sing for Baba. Whatever she did, she did with enthusiasm. She continued to supervise the Meherazad kitchen until her death in 2008.

Gulamasi Satha



A member of the Satha family, Gulamasi was one of Gaimai's three sisters, and, like her

five brothers, she was devoted to Baba from the early 1920s. She lived in Akbar Press in Ahmednagar with other members of the family, and she

also stayed with Baba at times during the Blue Bus tours. In later years, she lived in Bindra House in Poona, and she helped prepare food for Baba when He was at Guru Prasad.

Early on, Baba asked her how many brothers she had; when she said five, Baba corrected her and said, “Six. I am your sixth brother.” Baba often used to walk from Meherabad to Ahmednagar to visit the family who lived at Akbar Press (across the street from the bus station) without letting them know that He was coming. Once there, He would often look through the *pinjra* (cabinet) where they kept food, or in the kitchen to see if there was anything He could eat. One time, all He could find was some stale bread that

Gulamasi had kept for the dogs. Baba ate it and Gula was so mortified that after that she made a point of making food and setting it aside so there would always be something to eat if Baba came to visit.

Harry—Dr. Harry Kenmore (1910–1971)



Harry was a chiropractor from New York City who heard about Baba in 1954 from two of his patients, Adele Wolkin and Christine Wise. He met Baba two years later at the Delmonico Hotel

in New York City. Although he was blind, he traveled to India to treat Baba, who was in a great deal of pain after sustaining injuries in the 1956 auto accident in Satara. For his “Pop,” no sacrifice was too great. Harry brought over a comfortable chair for Baba to use, and it was he who insisted that Mandali Hall at Meherazad be paved so that Baba’s walking would not be impeded.

In addition to being blind, Harry was hard of hearing, which may have partially accounted for his tendency to always speak in a booming voice. His shouted recitations of Baba’s prayers were legendary. On first hearing Harry’s recitation of the Master’s Prayer, Baba said, “I have heard this Prayer many, many times, but I have never heard it said this way. It’s touched my heart very deeply.” Strong-willed and definitive in his opinions, his devotion to Baba and his bold and unequivocal guidance as to how to follow Baba attracted many young people in the 1960s in New York, where he founded the Society for Avatar Meher Baba. He was inconsolable after Baba dropped His body. When he was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at the end of 1970, he talked about how being pounded to dust only made him realize more poignantly the power, beauty, and majesty of

his Beloved. He died in 1971 with “Baba mia, Baba mia” on his lips.

See *Harry: The Story of Dr. Harry L. Kenmore and His Life with His Beloved Pop, Meher Baba*, edited by Larry and Rita Karrasch.

Harry Dedolchow (1926–2002)



Harry was in the merchant marine and his boat would dock in India so he tried to meet Baba whenever it did, but his chance didn't come until 1959. He then had several more opportunities to be with Baba and he also attended the East-West Gathering. Later in life he adopted the name Lance Marlowe as he tried to make a career in Hollywood.

Hazra-Amiya Kumar Hazra (1931–2012)



Hazra heard of Baba in 1954 and subsequently grew more and more attached to Him. He wanted to come see Baba during the planned February 1958 darshan program, but his longing grew to such an extent that he wrote and pleaded to be able to come earlier. Baba relented and let him come in December 1957.

Hazra wrote about his life in the book, *The Memoirs of a Zetetic*.

Hiralal Lodhi

Hiralal was a lover from Nauranga in the Hamirpur area. He met Baba in 1952 during His first visit to the area.

Hoshang–Dr. Hoshang Bharucha (1927–1995)



Initially a follower of Upasni Maharaj and then Godavri Mai, Dr. Bharucha eventually became a staunch Baba lover. It was his habit when he visited Baba to take copious notes, some of which were later printed in the *The Awakener* and used in this volume. Although he never lived with Him, Baba once told him personally that he was one of His intimate mandali, a comment that meant quite a lot to him. After 1969, Dr. Bharucha continued to visit Meherazad and take copious notes of the stories and comments Eruch and others would make.

Hoshang (1930) & Havovi (1936) Dadachanji

See also page 251.



Hoshang



Havovi

Hoshang was one of Nariman's younger brothers. He and his wife, Havovi, live in Bombay to this day. After falling in love with Baba, they took advantage of every

opportunity to visit Him, both at Guru Prasad and Meherazad, and they became active in the Baba Bombay Centre.

Ivy Duce (1895–1981)



Rabia Martin, who had been the leader of Sufism in the West, appointed Ivy Duce to be her successor; Martin also shared with Duce her conviction that Meher Baba was the Qutub of the age. Ivy sought out Meher Baba and accepted Him as the Avatar. Baba reorganized Sufism and had a charter written for it. Ivy continued as Murshida (teacher), and Baba said He would take responsibility as long as the conditions of the new charter were met.

Sufism Reoriented, as it is now known, was originally based in New York, where Ivy lived, and later on the West Coast once she moved there. Ivy helped arrange for the publication of *God Speaks*. Her subsequent questions about it resulted in the book, *Beams on the Spiritual Panorama*. She wrote *How A Master Works* and *What Am I Doing Here?* Sufism Reoriented also published Bal's first volume of *Glimpses of the God-Man*.

Jal (1930) & Dolly (1932–2017)

Dastoor



Jal

Dolly's mother, Soonamasi Engineer, was Bachamai Dada-

chanji's sister. Bachamai was Naoroji Dadachanji's wife and mother of Arnavaz, Roda, and Nargis. Dolly grew up loving Baba from birth.



Dolly

Her husband-to-be, Jal Dastoor, was not a Baba lover until 1952, when he didn't go for Baba's darshan because of his doubts, but then he saw Him everywhere he went.

Jal became one of the stalwart volunteers for Baba and he helped out at all the big darshan programs. He and Dolly moved to Meherabad in the 1970s, where they became second parents to several generations of pilgrims, whom they entertained with their love and hospitality. Jal became a trustee and Dolly quietly and unobtrusively helped the mandali both at Meherazad and Meherabad.

Jal Dorabjee

Jal, a classmate of Pendu's, was a Baba lover living in Poona who ran the Edward Hotel. As the number of people for whom Baba asked Bindra House to prepare food became too large for them to manage, Baba

arranged for Jal to send food for the mandali. Because Jal was devoted to Baba, he charged one rupee per head for the rice, dal, and vegetables he would send each day. Every now and then a sumptuous feast would be made for a wedding or some other function he catered, and he would bring leftovers to the mandali. So the men mandali, accustomed to simple Indian fare, would enjoy delicious Parsi wedding food, which was a real treat for them.

Jal used to send over a fancy menu along with the food, and he would include a list of the ingredients and how they were prepared for each dish and added:

“Secret Formula to make
the dishes more tasty and more
delicious

We must wash and clean the
utensils (pots and pans) with the
powder of purity, sincerity, and
honesty.

Mix all the ingredients with
the Divine Lavender of Love and
continuously go on adding more
and more of the Masala

of “Hari Om
Tat Sat
Om Om Om.”

When Jal’s daughter got married, her husband did not feel attracted to Meher Baba and so he would not permit her to come and visit Baba

often. Even after their young child was born, her husband kept her from taking the child to have Baba’s darshan. Then, in 1964, while on an excursion to the Elephanta Caves, there was a boating accident and Jal’s daughter and grandchild drowned. Although Baba was not seeing people, he made an exception for Jal and his wife; when the son-in-law pleaded with Jal, Jal asked Baba to see him as well.

Bal Natu was there at this meeting, and although he didn’t remember what Baba said, he recalled seeing a change come over the son-in-law. He now regretted that he hadn’t listened to his wife and come for Baba’s darshan the previous year. He left a changed man, having forgotten all his misery and loneliness.

Jessawala Family



Pappa (~1890–1959)



Gaimai (1899–1992)



Eruch (1916–2001)



Manu (1919–2012)



Meherwan (1930–2016)



Meheru (1921–1953)

Byramshaw Dorabji Jessawala (Pappa) married Gaimai Satha in 1915 when she was only 15 years old. One year later, she gave birth to Eruch.

In the early 1920s, several of Gaimai's brothers, who had heard that a holy person had moved nearby, walked the six miles one morning to Meherabad, where they met Meher Baba. They were so impressed with Baba that they wrote their sister that it was as if Zoroaster had come again. Being devoutly spiritual, this set her heart on fire to meet Baba, which she did not long after.

Pappa was an ambitious, competent, practical, and worldly man; as the result of hard work and a reputation for scrupulous honesty, he rose to a very high position as Chief Inspector of Boilers and Factories for a large area in British India. He could be authoritarian and very demanding. Pappa did not believe in showing much emotion; it was only after his death, when going through his correspondence with Baba, that the family realized just how deeply committed he was to Baba. In 1938, Pappa agreed to give up all the worldly possessions he had gained through so much effort so that the whole family, which now included Meheru, Manek

(whom the family called Manu), and Meherwan, could join Baba.

Gaimai, who had no worldly desires, made no effort to hide her tremendous love and devotion to Baba. Baba once said that one of the hardest things for the Avatar to do was to arrange for the soul who would play the part of His mother in the next advent; this time it was done because Gaimai would be His mother next time He took birth. He also used to joke that He should have had Gaimai marry His father, while His mother should have married Pappa, as that would have been a better match of temperaments.

The family, minus Pappa (who had gone back to his job) and Meherwan (who was ill and recuperating at Akbar Press), joined Baba on the Blue Bus tours. Meherwan soon joined them as well; because he was so young, he stayed with the women. Periodically, they would be told to settle down in some city, ostensibly so that Meherwan could go to school.

In 1943, Baba had the Jessawala family settle in Bindra House in Poona, where they stayed until the 1990s. Eruch used to go back and forth between Poona and wherever Baba was staying until the New Life. At that point, and for the rest of his life, Eruch stayed with Baba.

The rest of the Jessawala family would see Baba when He came to Poona or when they were called to be with Him. When Baba stayed at Guru Prasad, they prepared the bungalow for his stay and did most of the cooking for Baba. In 1946, both Eruch and his sister, Meheru, were married to their first cousins, Khorshed and Savak Damania, sister and brother. After that, Meheru lived in Khushru Quarters (Adi's family's residence) in what is now the Trust Office. Meheru was quite outspoken and did not automatically accept everything Baba said without question. At the end of the New Life, when Baba was doing His Manonash work on Seclusion Hill, He insisted that Meheru, who was ill with cancer at the time, personally do all the cooking for Him. She died the following year.

Jimmy (1916–1996) & Roda (1924–2006) Mistry



Jimmy Mistry

See also page 86.

Roda was one of Arnavaz's sisters and thus grew up loving Baba from birth.



Roda Mistry

Jimmy and Roda had three sons: Meherwan, Falu, and Sarosh. Falu moved to Meherazad

in the 1970s to live and work with the mandali and has lived there ever since. He became a trustee in 1996.

After Jimmy retired, he and Roda moved to Meherabad in 1979, and Jimmy became one of the trustees of the Trust. Jimmy died in 1996, and Roda then moved to Meherazad, where she delighted pilgrims with her gentle, laughing presence until her death in 2006.

Judith Garbett (1921–2001)



Judith first met Baba in 1962 and worked for years as a secretary for Bill Le Page at Avatar's Abode in Australia. She wrote a book about her life, *Meher Baba's Love, My Story*, as well as an account of the women mandali, *Lives of Love*.

Kamble–Laxman Ramchandra Kamble



Kamble was another Poona Baba lover whose initial contact was through Gadekar. In 1948, Gadekar brought him to meet Baba at Meherabad. He, like Shinde, owned a shoe store.

Kesar See also page 105.



Kesar was a servant at Bindra House.

Although she would not have been the

family's first choice, Baba told them they should not only hire her, but also they should never let her go. Even when Manu, Meherwan, and Gaimai moved to Meherazad in 1990, they brought Kesar with them, because she was more part of the family than a servant.

Her love and devotion to Gaimai was touching to behold. When the family felt they should hire someone to help look after Gaimai in her last years, Kesar insisted she could do all the nursing that was needed, although she was elderly herself at that point.

Keshav Narayan Nigam (1909–1987) See also page 201.



Keshav, who lived in Hamirpur, was responsible for translating many of Baba's mes-

sages and circulars into Hindi and printing and circulating them. He composed a long poem for Baba, *Meher Chalisa*, which he recited in Baba's presence in 1952. Baba liked it so much that He had Keshav recite it again, and He said that it touched His heart. Over the years, Baba had

Keshav recite the poem several times during darshan programs.

Khorshed Irani (1910–1999)



Khorshed's father, Kaikhushru, was one of the first of the nonfamily, non-Poona

mandali to meet Baba (who was known as Merwan at that time) when he visited Sakori to see Upasni Maharaj. Merwan made such an impression on Kaikhushru that when he returned to Bombay, he immediately told his wife, Soonamasi (a sister of Gulmai, Adi K. Irani's mother), all about this remarkable young man. Khorshed remembers hearing her father enthusiastically talk about Merwan, and she developed a great longing to meet Him herself.

Khorshed first saw Baba on the train when her family was traveling to Sakori, and from that first glimpse, she was totally His. At Sakori, she would play the harmonium and sing for Baba; she was a talented musician whose teacher thought she had the potential to make a career of it. She was one of those present when Upasni told a small group of his followers that he had made Merwan spiritually perfect and that they should now stick to Him until the very end. Khorshed and her parents did just that.

She and Mehera became fast friends and were among the small handful of early women disciples whom Baba allowed to come and live at Meherabad. In those early years, her father would send her expensive harmoniums from Bombay and she would play for Baba, but invariably He would ask her to give the harmonium to some poor singer. After this happened several times, she realized that Baba must not want her to have one. It was almost unbearable for her when she was sent to live in Bombay during the New Life. She kept waiting for Baba to call her back to rejoin the ashram, but He never did, and she had to content herself with Baba's visits to Bombay and her visits to Guru Prasad and Meherazad.

The quality of her one-pointed love for Baba is illustrated by the story of when they were listening to music and a scorpion burrowed into her back; she never said a word because she didn't want to disturb Baba's enjoyment. In the 1970s she moved to Ahmednagar, where she lived in the Trust Compound until her death in 1999.

See *Fortunate to Love Him: Stories of My Life with Meher Baba*, by Khorshed K. Irani, published in 2017.

K. N. Soman



K.N. Soman was a journalist and chief editor of the Marathi newspaper started by Lokmanya

Tilak. He was a trustee of the Poona Centre for many years, and he wrote a biography of Baba in Marathi entitled *Sambhavami Yuge Yuge*.

Kumar-Shatrguhna Kumar Ghildial (1911–1985)

See also page 117.



Kumar's daughter, Amrit, was married at Baba's behest to Dara, Baba's nephew (Adi

Jr.'s son) in December 1968, which was the last semipublic program Baba attended. There is a film of this event.

Madhusudan Yellapa & Subhadra Bendulla Pund

See also page 91.



Madhusudan

An amazingly prolific songwriter, Madhusudan composed scores of songs written for Baba that are sung to this day in the Baba community. He also composed the arti "Divya Sanatana,"



Subhadra

which is often referred to as one of the "Hindi artis."

Many of the pilgrims who attended the 1969 darshan program remembered his song, “We Welcome You.”

Subhadra came from a devoted Baba family and was a very talented singer who performed many times before Baba. She also heard about Baba from Gadekar and first met Baba in 1947. She sang at the inauguration of the new Mandali Hall at Meherabad in 1948. In 1952, barely able to walk, she went to Ahmednagar to have one last darshan from Baba before dying. Baba assured her with His divine authority that she would not die, and He gave her instructions concerning her treatment. She followed them and recovered completely. She was central in the formation and functioning of the Poona bhajan mandali.

*** Mani-Manija Sheriar Irani
(1918–1996)**



Born in 1918, Mani was the youngest of Baba's siblings. Mani's earliest memories of her brothers are of Him as a Realized Being. Although she loved her parents, she always wanted to be able to go and live with Baba. Baba not only made her stay in school but also told her she had to come in first in her class each year. Her happiest times were when, along with her mother,

she would visit Baba during school holidays. She would be so sad when leaving that she would cry all the way home, and the other passengers in the train would scowl at Shireen-mai, thinking she must be abusing her child. Mani's lifelong desire was finally fulfilled in 1932, when Baba allowed her to come and live permanently with Him.

Mani was very active and mischievous as a child, as well as a gifted mimic. Clever, witty, full of fun and life, she brightened up the ashram with her presence. It seemed she could master anything she turned her hand to, from modeling figures out of dough, to making puppets, weaving baskets, playing the sitar, or writing songs. When Baba wanted skits, she would be the one to write, direct, and act in them. She would also read to Baba, making the stories come alive by giving the characters different voices. Starting in the 1950s, she became Baba's main external literary link with His Western lovers, writing long letters to keep them in touch with Baba and His activities. These letters were later collected and printed as *82 Family Letters*. When the first chairman of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust was replaced, Mani took over and remained chairman until her death in 1996.

Baba paired Mani with Mehera, and they were “roommates” throughout the years and whenever they traveled. At times, it was difficult to try to please both Baba and Mehera, but because it was what Baba wanted, Mani lovingly accepted it. After Mehera died, Mani was the first to make a point of always bowing down to pay her respects at Mehera’s tomb site, after first bowing down inside Baba’s Samadhi.

*** Mehera–Mehera Jehangir Irani (1907–1989)**



Mehera’s mother, Daulatmai, was drawn to Upasni Maharaj and used to visit him along with Mehera. Mehera first saw Baba when they were both at Upasni’s ashram in Sakori in 1922. Daulatmai wanted to join Baba, but He said that He would call for them when conditions were more suitable. Once He settled in Meherabad, He did call for Daulatmai and Mehera to come in 1924.

Baba referred to Mehera as His Beloved, and, for His work, He insisted that she be kept happy as much as possible. Whatever she asked of Him, Baba would try to fulfill. It was well understood that one had to obey Baba and to defer to Mehera, which created tension and

difficulty at times. Once, when Baba had been asked to settle a disagreement between Mani and Mehera, Mani exclaimed with exasperation, “If Mehera said the moon were made of green cheese, you’d agree with her, wouldn’t you.” To which Baba replied, “Yes, I would,” thereby teaching Mani a lesson about how one serves the Beloved.

Although Baba was always foremost in her thoughts, Mehera was full of fun, innocent mischief, and humor. She loved horses and going for walks and generally being active, even though she spent most of her life in seclusion to varying degrees. She would spend her spare time tending to her garden (so she could have flowers with which to garland Baba or His pictures and so she could make His home beautiful) or making Baba ornaments and jewelry. She was always thinking about Baba. In the very early years, when she and Khorshed were staying in the post office building, Baba had to order them to go to bed at a certain hour because otherwise they would stay up late just talking about Him.

After the Guru Prasad darshan in 1969, as pilgrims started coming to Meherazad, Mehera grew increasingly comfortable in the presence of men and would sit on the front verandah of Baba’s house and relive

her days spent with her Beloved Baba. She would always remind visitors when they were leaving to take Baba's name and to remember that His love, His sweet precious love, was always with them. She would often say that He loved us so much and suffered so much for us that it was only natural that we should try to love Him in return.

Mehera Kerawalla Arjani (1959)



The first daughter of Sam and Roshan Kerawala, Mehera was known at first as “baby Mehera” to distinguish her from Baba's Mehera. Her ability to recite the Parvardigar Prayer when she was a small child not only entertained and impressed all at the inauguration of the Poona Centre, but also convinced the nuns to admit her to school even though she was underage.

Meherdas (1928–?)

Known as Ramdas, a naked sadhu



when he came to see Baba in 1954, Baba later renamed him Meherdas. Although Baba was in seclusion, Ramdas felt he had been directed by his guru to come and refused to leave. Baba let him have darshan by looking through the window of Baba's

cabin. In that brief glance, Ramdas saw effulgent light surrounding the form of Ram, and Krishna and Shiva. The sight was so overwhelming that Ramdas fainted. After reviving and being sent away, Ramdas decided to spread Baba's message of love in the Hamirpur area.

During the 1955 darshan program at Meherabad, Baba narrated what happened next:

“Ramdas selected an area hostile to love and devotion, but he prevailed upon the head of one village to agree to a *kirtan* (discourse on spiritual subjects, accompanied by music) held in my name at the village head's home.

“It is said that he had agreed to this because one of his children was seriously ill, and that his suffering had made him remember God. But let me say to you that one who remembers God in the hour of happiness, remembers God best.

“My worker arranged the kirtan, and in the middle of it the sick child suddenly died instead of getting well. Despite the ensuing confusion, Ramdas remained steadfast and, taking the dead child in his lap, continued the kirtan with even greater zeal and devotion,

meanwhile offering profound silent prayers to me.

“The child returned to life before the kirtan was ended....

“Because of this, thousands in that village and the surrounding countryside expressed their enthusiastic devotion towards me. But I say that this enthusiasm and devotion were not truly for me, but for the incident which had occurred in their village. Regardless of the fervor of their expression, it was not out of love for God, but for love of an additional illusion which had occurred within the illusion of their daily lives.”

Baba then singled out the one from the audience who had held the dead child on his lap.

“Listen to me, Ramdas, the child did not return to life because of any miracle on my part. Even granting that the child really revived due to your love for me, this is not a great thing. The really great thing would be for you yourself to die in your love for me.”

(*Listen, Humanity*, pp. 84–85)

Meherjee Karkaria (1906–1990)



Meherjee, who was related to the Dadachanji family, came with them on a picnic to see Baba at Meherabad in 1927. Baba invited him to come teach in His school after he took his engineering exam. The idea did not appeal to Meherjee, and he was not immediately drawn to Baba, refusing to bow to Baba the way the Dadachanji family did. But he visited Baba again and he became increasingly drawn to Him.

Meherjee was confident that he would pass his exams and was amazed when he didn't. But he came to Meherabad and started teaching in Baba's school as Baba had suggested at their first meeting.

Meherjee became absolutely devoted to Baba. Although, at Baba's suggestion, he left the ashram, went into business, and eventually married and had a family (living first in Bombay before settling in Poona), he was considered one of Baba's close ones. During the New Life, he was one of the Arrangementwalas. He traveled to America in 1952, taking Eruch's place as one of Baba's personal attendants. He also accompanied Baba to America in 1956. He was one of the original

trustees of the Trust and held that position until his death in 1990.

*** Meheru–Mehera Rustom Irani (1927–2012)**



Meheru was the daughter of Rustom Irani (Adi K.'s brother) and Freiny (Mehera's sister). As a result, she had contact with Baba from her birth. Meheru was quite athletic and energetic and remembered playing cricket with Baba as a young girl. She was another who only longed to be called and allowed to live with Baba, which eventually happened in 1942. Although her siblings had contact with Baba and her brother, Jangu, traveled on the Blue Bus with the women, Meheru was the only sibling who came to stay with Baba permanently. She was one of the four women companions Baba picked to join Him on the New Life.

Her role, especially as she got older, seems to have been mostly as a helpmate to Mehera, which sometimes was difficult. Baba liked things done very quickly, but Mehera was so meticulous in anything she did for Baba that at times it would take her a while to fulfill a task for Him. If Meheru kept the windows closed in Baba's room because Baba did not like drafts, Baba would take her

to task because He knew Mehera liked the fresh air. If she kept the windows open, then Mehera would scold her for not thinking of Baba.

When pilgrims started coming to Meherazad in the early 1970s, Meheru would play spirited games of badminton and *gilli danda* (played by hitting a short stick with a longer one) with them. She survived all the other women mandala, and, in later years, she would tell stories on Baba's porch where Mehera and Mani had presided for so long.

Nadine–Nadia Tolstoy (1884–1946)



Nadine met Baba at Harmon-on-Hudson in 1931 and instantly fell in love with Him and surrendered her life to Him. She was one of the Westerners who went to live with Baba in 1936. She was sent back to the United States in 1941 along with Elizabeth and Norina and lived with them in New York until her death in 1946.

*** Naja–Naja Rustom Irani (1908–1982)**



Naja and her brother, Pendu, were first cousins of Meher Baba; their mother, Piroja, was Baba's mother's sister. Their

father, Rustom Irani, was known as “Masaji,” which means “respected uncle, on the mother’s side.”

They had a house in Poona only a few doors down from Pumpkin House, where Merwan and His family were staying at the time. Merwan was very close to Piroja, who loved Him very much. If she didn’t see Him each day she would cry. She would let Him bring all His friends to her house after school and it became a sort of “club” for them. Shireenmai, Baba’s mother, didn’t want a disturbance in her house because she still had all of His siblings living at home. Naja remembers that Merwan and His friends would play cards or Indian chess or sit around and tell stories. (Mani would recount that Baba always loved stories and that as a young boy He would spend time with an old Muslim man who was a good storyteller.) Naja would quietly sit in the background and listen.

When Merwan came over, He would often want something to eat. So Shireenmai showed Naja how to make a few dishes, and Naja got the idea then that it would be good to learn how to cook because it would be helpful to Merwan. He would stop by early in the morning and say He was hungry. Naja would have the dal on the fire and would give Him some with bread and butter

and He would sit on a flat stool and eat. One day, He got up and told Naja that regardless of whatever her aunties might say, she should refuse to get married. She should just say that she wouldn’t do anything unless Merwan said it was okay.

After Babajan unveiled Merwan, He would tell Piroja when He was going to go visit Upasni, whereas He wouldn’t tell His mother because she would have tried to prevent Him from going. Baba also started spontaneously composing spiritual songs in Gujarati, which He would dictate to Piroja, who would write them down. He would also play cricket and gilla danda in the lane behind their house.

Piroja died in 1917; Pendu was 14 and Naja was 10. They then moved in with another of Shireenmai’s sisters, who also lived in the same little lane. This sister, Dowla, had taken in Jamshed years earlier when Shireenmai had been unable to raise him. The next year, Baba and his family moved into “Baba House,” which was kitty-corner from Pumpkin House. Baba’s father, Sheriar, would get up at four in the morning to say his prayers, and Baba would also get up and pace up and down the long verandah and sing bhajans and prayers. Naja remembers sitting on her bed by the window and listening, enraptured.

When Baba returned from Sakori, having completed His work with Upasni Maharaj, He stayed in Poona for a while before heading to Bombay, where He stayed at Manzil-e-Meem. It was around this time that Naja went to Quetta and stayed with Goher and Katie's family and told her brother, Pendu, about Baba. Pendu rushed off to join Him, but Naja had to wait until Baba moved to Meherabad before she could join Him. She was one of the first women to stay there with Baba, along with Mehera and her mother, Daulatmai, Khorshed, and a few others.

Naja's main duty for Baba was to cook for Him, the mandala, or whoever Baba wanted fed. In the very early years, she could overhear Baba giving explanations to His men mandali on the verandah while she was cooking in the kitchen. In later years, her duties in the kitchen often deprived her of the opportunity to be in Baba's presence. When one of the women did something that displeased Baba, Naja would often be the one summoned and punished. Nevertheless, her love for Baba did not waver, and she also stayed with Him until the end, only leaving Baba during the New Life when He sent her to live with Meherjee in Poona.

In Guru Prasad, when Baba wanted some skits to lighten the

burden of His universal work, Naja would often be one of the main actors. At Meherazad, she supervised the kitchen, cooking for everyone, until her death in 1982.

Nana Kher (~1917–1998)

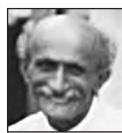
See also page 274.



Nana first heard about Baba in 1941, and he finally got to meet Him in 1945. He was

one of only a handful of people who was granted the privilege of staying at Guru Prasad while Baba was there. For many years, he was the main person attending to Baba's Samadhi after 1969, and he was famous for greeting pilgrims with a long hug and a loving "Welcome Home."

Naoroji (1883–1967) & Bachamai (1898–1946) Dadachanji



Naoroji

Naoroji was Chanji's brother, and Chanji brought him, his wife, Bachamai, and his family to meet Baba at Meherabad in 1927.



Bachamai

That meeting won them over then and forever. They had three daughters—Arnavaz, Nargis, and Roda—and three sons—Tehemtan,

Dara, and Homa. All were devoted to Baba.

Naoroji was a contractor and was called by Baba to help construct the Samadhi at Meherabad because the complexity of building a dome was beyond Pendu's simple construction skills. He had also been previously called to Bangalore to help build Baba's Universal Centre.

One time, when Pappa Jessawala was complaining to Baba that his children didn't show him any love, Baba said it was because he (Pappa) didn't show the children love. Baba held up the example of Naoroji as a loving parent who freely expressed and therefore received much love from his family.

Naosherwanmama–Naosherwan Satha (1897–2003?)



Gaimai's brother, Naosherwanmama, was one of the first in the family to see Baba

when he and one of his brothers walked out to Meherabad in 1923 to see the Parsi saint they had heard about. They were immediately overwhelmed by Baba and wrote their sister, Gaimai, who was living in Nagpur at the time, that Baba was Zoroaster come again.

Although deeply drawn to Baba, Naosherwanmama resisted Baba's

invitations to join Him. He threw himself into social work and he joined the nonviolent fight to win India's independence. When Gandhi came to Ahmednagar in the 1920s, he stayed with someone from the "untouchable" caste who lived in the fields outside the city. As a native of Ahmednagar and a dedicated freedom fighter, Naosherwanmama took Gandhi out each morning for a walk.

As it so happened, they found themselves on the road to Meherabad. Naosherwanmama pointed out that if they continued down the road, they could meet Baba. Gandhi asked if Baba's Master was Upasni Maharaj; hearing that he was, Gandhi decided not to visit Baba because when Gandhi had visited Maharaj, he had been quite rude and dismissive. So the meeting between Gandhi and Baba did not take place until years later on board the S.S. *Rajputana*. When Naosherwanmama told Baba about Gandhi's reaction, He just laughed.

Nargis Dadachanji (1922–1989)



Nargis was one of the three girls born to Naoroji and Bachamai Dadachanji. Like

her sisters, she wanted to live with Baba, but, apart from visits, she was never allowed to join the ashram.

In the 1970s, she was one of the first to open up her home to Western pilgrims when they landed in Bombay on their way to Ahmednagar.

Nari-Nariman Jamshedji Contractor (1934)



Nari was a professional cricket player who was only the second player to score a century in his first two innings of first class play. He met Baba in 1959, when the Indian team came en masse to Guru Prasad for Baba's darshan and blessings, and he became a devoted follower.

In 1962, during a test match against the West Indies, he was struck in the head by a bowled ball. Although he recovered, he never played another test match, which remained his one regret in life. However, years later, when he was asked whether he held it against Baba that his career ended so soon after meeting Him, he replied to the effect that nothing else could ever match Baba's love.

Norina-Eleanora Gilli Matchabelli (1880–1957)



Norina was one of the more colorful figures among the mandali. An Italian beauty, she had achieved fame and stardom using

the name Maria Carmi; she played the role of the Madonna in Karl Vollmoeller's play "The Miracle." She later married Prince Georges Matchabelli and cofounded the perfume company of that name. She met Baba at Harmon-on-Hudson in 1931, and she went to stay with Him in India in 1936.

A flamboyant, larger-than-life personality, Norina introduced many people from high society and the arts to Baba. She gave talks about Baba throughout India at Baba's behest and later, once she moved to New York, at Carnegie Hall.

She felt that she received "thought transmissions" from Baba and often delivered talks and messages as if they were from Baba. This practice created some controversy at the time, even among Baba's close ones, but Baba allowed Norina to continue. With her close companion, Elizabeth Patterson, she founded the Meher Spiritual Center in Myrtle Beach and died at nearby Youpon Dunes in 1957.

***Padri-Faredoon Navroji Driver (1903–1982)**



Padri's mother was Mehera's mother's sister, and his best friend growing up was Jal, Baba's brother. So it would seem

inevitable that Padri would follow Baba, but despite Jal and his mother's pleas, he had no interest in visiting Baba when He was staying in the hut on Fergusson College Road in 1922. He only went to ask Baba a question on his mother's behalf. But meeting Baba for the first time, he was drawn to Him and soon became one of His staunchest lovers.

Padri spent the rest of his life with Baba. His decision to not join Baba on the New Life shocked everyone. Padri gave as an excuse that he did not feel he could control his temper, although years later admitted that Baba had privately asked him to stay behind to look after Meherabad.

Padri continued to stay and look after Meherabad for the rest of his life, even when Baba was staying at Meherazad or Guru Prasad. Padri learned homeopathy. Although Baba teased him on January 31, 1969, that he was a "barber" because his medicine wasn't curing Baba, many villagers and pilgrims benefited from his treatments. Outwardly, Padri was extremely practical and austere, even gruff, but he had a great sense of humor. He stressed absolute obedience to Baba, and his love and devotion to Baba was a silent flame that always burned brightly within.

***Pendü-Aspandiar Rustom Irani (1903-1986)**



As a boy, Pendü idolized his cousin, Merwan, nine years his elder. Raised as a

Zoroastrian, Pendü remembered thinking that it would be wonderful if Zoroaster were to come again, and that it would be perfect if he were to resemble Merwan. He never told anybody this fantasy, but it was always in the back of his mind.

Growing up in Poona, he also had contact with Babajan, who was fond of him and called him "my son." She used to stay in the Camp area during the day and then walk into the city to spend the night. If she saw Pendü, she would call to him and they would walk together. As they walked away from the Camp and into the city, Pendü would become anxious because he was a young boy and it would be getting dark and he was going far from home. The moment that thought occurred to him, Babajan would say, "Go on home, my son," and he would run off.

Although Baba hadn't explained the distinctions between saints and Masters and those on the planes, many in Poona felt that Babajan was "saintly" and that therefore any gift from her was prasad. Once she

gave Pendu a beedi. However, as a Zoroastrian, he was forbidden to smoke. He didn't know what to do. He asked Baba's brother, Jamshed, who said there was no recourse but to eat it, since he certainly couldn't just throw it away. Pendu did, with predictable results, fervently wishing that in the future Babajan would stick to giving him sweets.

A few years after their mother, Piroja, died, Pendu went to Quetta (without permission from his father, Masaji) to work in Goher's father's restaurant. Naja went to live with her aunt, Baba's mother's sister.

Baba returned from his stay with Upasni Maharaj at Sakori and took up residence in Poona. His aunt, with whom Naja was staying, would send food over each day. While there, Baba collected His first mandali and had them sign contracts that they would obey Him and walk to Bombay with Him. Masaji agreed. At some point during this time, Naja went to live with Goher and Katie in Quetta, and she told Pendu that Merwan was now a "Master" and living in Bombay. When Pendu heard this, it was like a dream come true, and the first chance he got he went there to join Baba. His father, who was already staying with Baba at Manzil-e-Meem, was on watch that

day. He greeted Pendu coldly and told him to wait outside while he informed Baba of his arrival. When Pendu was allowed in, Baba said Pendu could stay with Him only on the condition that he do so at once, which Pendu gladly did.

Pendu was given the name As-pandiar at birth, but when Baba and the mandali were staying at Happy Valley in the early 1920s, Baba used to have them get up early in the morning and meditate for an hour. It was difficult to stay awake at such an early hour and they would resort to different measures to do so. As-pandiar used to rock back and forth as he sat, so Baba nicknamed him "Pendulum," which He later shortened to Pendu, as he was known for the rest of his life.

Baba called Pendu one of the "four pillars" of Meherabad. The others were Adi K. Irani, Faredoon Driver (Padri), and Vishnu Deorukhar. Interestingly, all were born the same year: 1903. Pendu was never particularly interested in spiritual discourses, but he was strong and athletic and didn't mind performing any kind of physical labor for Baba. His only desire was to be with Baba; the New Life, despite its physical hardships, was his favorite time because he was able to be with Baba all the time.

For a while, he was the manager at Meherabad and routinely was put in charge of supervising the darshan programs Baba held there. Despite being crippled after the 1956 accident, Pendu continued to be in charge of the darshan programs and, later, the Amartithi celebrations. Pilgrims remember him sitting under the clock at the far end of the verandah at Meherazad, cheerfully telling stories about his time with Baba, although it was difficult to understand his somewhat slurred speech. He called his slow walk down to the end of the verandah and back to exercise his leg “going to Bombay for ice cream.”

Perviz (1933–2008) & Shridhar (1938) Kelkar

See also pages 154 and 593.



Perviz



Shridhar

Perviz was the daughter of Dina and Naval Talati. She married Shridhar Kelkar in 1967. Shridhar became a trustee of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust in 2001 and its chairman in 2013.

Pratap Ahir (1935)



As with many of the younger ones in the Poona Group, Pratap first met Baba in Mahabaleshwar in 1950, when Baba stepped out of the New Life for one day. As it turned out, it was also Pratap's 15th birthday.

Pratap was a faithful member of the Poona bhajan mandali.

Prem (1917–1997) & Girja (1926–2008) Khilnani

See also pages 40 and 332.



Prem



Girja

In the 1960s, the Khilnani family lived in Ahmednagar in Khushru Quarters.

N.A. Nagpal recounted Girja's story in the book, *Journey to God*.

Pukar–Parmeshwari Dayal Nigam (1918–1980)

See also page 80.



Active as a revolutionary fighting for India's independence, Pukar was against Baba until

he met Him on Oct. 29, 1951 in Mahabaleshwar. Pukar was completely won over to Baba after that. He changed the focus of his magazine,

Pukar ("The Call"), from Indian independence to Meher Baba, and he spent the rest of his life dedicated in His cause.

Ramakrishnan-K.K.

Ramakrishnan (1925–2008)



Long-time secretary of the Poona Centre, Ramakrishnan was a bit headstrong in his determination to do what he thought was right for the Centre and for Baba. Once, when he felt that another institution had violated a contract they had made with the Centre, he decided to go on a hunger strike until the matter was resolved in favor of the Centre. Meherjee and Eruch both tried to convince him that this was not the way Baba would have wanted the matter to be settled, but to no avail. The next day, Eruch told Ramakrishnan that the previous night Baba had come to him in a dream and told him to tell Ramakrishnan to desist. Ramakrishnan said, "When Baba comes to me in my dream and tells me directly, then only will I stop."

Because there was not a lot of Baba literature available at a price most Indians could afford, Ramakrishnan began compiling messages Baba had given out on

certain themes, such as love, war, and sex, and had them printed up in small paperbacks so His lovers could more easily have access to His words.

Ramjoo-Abdul Kareem

Abdulla (1898–1967)



Ramjoo was one of Baba's early mandali, meeting Him in 1922 and then staying with Him in Manzil-e-Meem. Although Ramjoo was sent back into the world at Baba's behest and started a business and raised a family, he remained closely connected with Baba for the rest of his life. He became a lawyer and helped establish the Trust for Baba. He also wrote *Sobs and Throbs, or Some Spiritual Sidelights*, an account of Baba's school at Meherabad in the late 1920s.

Ramsahai Yadav



Yadav was a Baba lover from the Hamirpur District. His first encounter with Baba was unusual. Due to an emotional crisis, he spent hours one night calling out to God to come to him and give him some sign of His presence. But there was no response. A few

days later, he was on a ferry getting ready to cross the Betwa River when a car was driven aboard. When the passengers alighted, he was struck by one of them. He had never seen anyone who looked so divine, so radiant, so majestic. He must be from some royal family, he thought.

Two years later at Meherabad, he met Baba and he realized the radiant person he had seen had been God in human form, giving him an anonymous darshan in response to the calling of his heart.

*** Rano-Madeleine Gayley
(1902–1986)**



Rano and her mother, Nonny, met Baba through their friend, Ruano Bogislav, in Paris in 1933. Both were immediately captivated. Rano writes of her first meeting: “I walked into Baba’s room and just stood there. To this day, I do not know who else was in the room. There were only hazy figures, but clearly in their midst was Meher Baba, with the most beautiful expression I have ever seen. Sweetness, love—everything that was beautiful—was there in his face. I stood staring at him until someone finally removed me from the room.” (*Because of Love*, p. 3.) She and

Nonny happily joined Baba in 1937 and stayed with Him for the rest of their lives. Nonny died in 1939.

Rano was the only Western woman to remain after the other Western women left India, and she stayed with the Eastern women until her death in 1986. Undemonstrative by nature, she was practical and down-to-earth. Baba often assigned her hard physical tasks, such as seeing to all their luggage when they were traveling. Under Baba’s guidance, she did several paintings for Him, the most famous probably being the large “Ten Circles Chart” and the chart on evolution and involution.

Rick Chapman (1943)



Rick was one of the small handful of young Westerners who got to meet Baba in the 1960s. He was friends with Jim McGrew, Robert Dreyfus, and Allan Cohen. Robert had met Baba in 1965. (He intended to attend the 1965 darshan program but was traveling overland and had not heard about its cancellation; he was allowed to see Baba anyway.) Jim was in India with the Peace Corps, and, hearing of Robert’s experience, he was eager and hopeful to meet Baba, which He allowed in 1966. Rick went to

India on a Fulbright. He knew Baba was in seclusion, but he hoped to be able to meet Baba lovers while there. He was overjoyed when Baba gave him permission to see Him a few months after Jim.

Rick, along with Allan and Robert, was directed by Baba to spread His message against drugs in the West, which they faithfully did. Rick also started Meher Baba Information on the West Coast, which was one of the early outlets of Baba literature and “Baba cards” in the West.

Rick has written a number of books, including *Meher Baba, The Compassionate One*; *Meeting God In Human Form*; and *Adventures in India with Meher Baba*. He has also edited other books and recently published Meherwan Jessawala’s memoirs.

Roshan (1937–2016) & Sam (1930) Kerawala



Roshan



Sam

Roshan was one of four children of Homi and Pilla Satha. The older three all developed muscular dystrophy, but when the family came to see Baba in 1937, Baba took Roshan on His lap and assured the parents that she would not get the disease.

Roshan continued to see Baba throughout the 1940s. In 1958, at Baba’s behest, she married her first cousin, Sam, and they lived in the Camp area in Poona, almost across the street from Baba House and a few blocks from Bindra House.

Sam was Dadi’s brother, the younger son of Naosherwanji Kerawala and Banumasi Satha. Like Dadi, as a young boy Sam also lived in Baba’s ashram during some of the Blue Bus tours. Later, when he was grown, at Baba’s request, Sam became a radio operator in the merchant marine and got married. Sam and Roshan had two children, Mehera (the little girl who said the prayers at the inauguration of the Poona Centre) and Dolly.

In 1955, while home on leave Sam went to visit Baba in Satara. Baba wanted Sam to go to Wai (a nearby town) to check on Meherjee’s driver in the hospital. Baba offered to give Sam ten rupees to cover his expenses. Sam, who got paid a Western salary because he worked for a Greek shipping line, demurred, saying he had enough money to pay for the trip. Baba was not pleased and said, “That means that you think of some money as yours and some as mine. It is all mine.” Baba further admonished, “When I offer you money, you must

take it without hesitation. And when I ask you for money, you must give it without a thought.”

In the 1980s, Sam and Roshan moved to Meherabad and for years would tell Baba stories each Friday in the Pilgrim Center.

Sadashiv Patil–Sadashiv Govind Shelke (1889–1973)



Sadashiv Patil was one of Baba’s very early lovers. He was the landlord of Baba’s toddy shop in Kasba Peth, and he and his wife lived over the shop. He met Baba, known then simply as Merwan, in 1918, and he soon became attracted to him. He realized Merwan was worthy of respect and started calling him Merwan Seth (a term an older person would not generally use for a younger one). The Kasba Peth group were Baba’s first circle of lovers, and it was they who later decided that “Seth,” although a term of respect, did not begin to encompass the majesty of Baba’s spiritual status. So they started calling him “Meher Baba.”

Sadashiv Patil lived in Poona his whole life, doing whatever work Baba asked him to do until his death.

***Sarosh (1903–1973) & Viloo (1911–2007) Irani**



Sarosh



Viloo

Sarosh’s father and Adi K.’s father were brothers-in-law. Whereas Adi’s father, because of his love for his wife, Gulmai, had some respect for Baba, Sarosh’s father for a long time was adamantly

opposed to Baba. Nonetheless, Sarosh joined Baba in Manzil-e-Meem while he was still in his teens, and he remained steadfast in Baba’s cause for the rest of his life.

After the Manzil-e-Meem period, Sarosh returned to Ahmednagar and lived in Khushru Quarters along with other members of the extended family. Sarosh went into business and married Viloo, who first met Baba at Meherabad in 1927. Despite living “in the world,” Sarosh remained absolutely dedicated to Baba and continued to serve Him in many ways. After 1969, Sarosh became a trustee of Baba’s Trust and served there until his death.

Mani relates that at an early Trust meeting, when a resolution came up and it was time to vote, Sarosh suddenly objected to the motion and argued vigorously

against it. He continued to argue throughout the meeting. Afterward, Mani said, “Sarosh, why did you do that? I thought you were in favor of these motions.” Sarosh said, “Mani, you had been complaining that the meetings were just routine since we always all agreed on what we were going to do, so I thought I would make it more exciting for you.”

Despite Sarosh’s love and devotion to Baba, Viloo’s heart was not touched until she and Sarosh went to Hamirpur in 1963 to inaugurate the Baba temple in Nauranga. She was overwhelmed by the love she felt there. (See also the Maharani of Baroda’s story, p. 353.)

Many Westerners knew Viloo because they stayed at her house (Viloo Villa) while visiting Ahmednagar on pilgrimage. What they didn’t realize was that Sarosh and Viloo opened their home to guests not only to provide a much-needed service for the pilgrims, but also because of Sarosh’s generosity. Sarosh privately gave food and money to many people in need in Ahmednagar. In fact, he helped so many people that when he died, Viloo found she was deeply in debt. She had to work hard to make Viloo Villa a profitable endeavor.

Savak (1904–1989) & Nergiz (1905–1998) Kotwal



Savak



Nergiz

Savak married Nergiz for love in 1927, at a time when almost all marriages were arranged by the parents. Almost immediately afterward, Savak became obsessed with a search for God, or a guru who could guide him. This search culminated in his meeting Baba in the fall of 1927. He started spending all his time visiting Baba or trying to serve Him, neglecting his wife in the process. When Nergiz heard that Baba was coming to Bombay, where they lived, she went to see Him to complain about her husband. Baba was so sympathetic and compassionate that she fell in love with Him herself. Both continued to see Baba whenever they could, but Savak became more and more desperate to join Him. Finally, in 1940, the whole family, which at this point included Najoo (who was twelve at the time), Hilla, (eight), and Adi (three), went to live with Baba.

Baba saw to the education of all three children. Savak and Nergiz continued to live with Baba until He sent Nergiz to Bombay in 1954. Savak joined her there in 1958. The

whole family continued to remain devoted to Baba for the rest of their lives.

Shantadevi–Maharani Shantadevi Gaekwad



(1914–2002) See also page 40.

At the age of 15, Shantadevi married

Pratapsingh Gaekwad of Baroda (now Vadodara) and became the Maharani when Pratapsingh became the Maharaja on the death of his grandfather in 1939. Although her husband was noted for his hedonistic and spendthrift ways, Shantadevi had a strong spiritual side, and she established philanthropic trusts in Baroda. She agreed to let Baba use Guru Prasad in 1951, although she had never met Him. She agreed again in 1957, but she did not get to meet Baba until 1958.



Shinde–Bapu Saheb Shinde

As with many others in Poona, Shinde first heard about Baba from Gadekar. He owned a shoe store and he started holding Baba meetings there. He first met Baba in 1946 in Khushru Quarters in Ahmednagar.

When his shop was devastated by a flood in 1961, Baba asked one

of His lovers to give Shinde Rs.1000. Shinde didn't want to take it, but Baba told him that when He gave something, Shinde had to accept it. He said it was His prasad. Baba told Shinde not to worry about the shop and before long he began to prosper.



Sorabji–Sorabji Siganporia (1898– 1986)

Sorabji met Baba in 1943, but when Baba asked that he leave his son with Him, he went away feeling that Baba was all the negative things he had read about Him. Two years later, he met Baba again at Eruch's wedding. According to the account in *Lord Meher*: "Sorabji was sitting in Akbar Press when Baba called him and offered him paan, telling him to eat it. Although even this time the light of faith had not yet dawned in him fully, Sorabji did as he was told and ate the leaf. While chewing it, he suddenly was overcome by some inner realization, and exclaimed, 'I accept you! I accept you!' Heads turned and all eyes stared at him in surprise. From then on, *Sorabji had full faith in Meher Baba."



Vishnu Deorukhkar (1902–1962)

Around 1918, Merwan was working in a toddy shop in the Kasba Peth

area of Poona. He had rented the room next door and used it as a small “temple” dedicated to Babajan and Upasni Maharaj. Each morning after prayers and artis were performed, He would pass out prasad. One day, a young teenage boy, Vishnu Deorukhkar, came for the sweets. Merwan started visiting the boy’s mother, Saraswati Kakubai Deorukhkar. Vishnu soon followed his mother’s lead and became devoted to Baba.

Because of Vishnu’s mild manner, there are not as many stories about him as there are about some of the other mandali. When Baba traveled, Vishnu was often left behind to do the marketing for the women and other ashram members. It is said that when Baba left for the New Life, Vishnu’s mother died of a broken heart. Vishnu was one of the very few mandali who died in close proximity to Baba and was immediately held by Baba after his death.



**Waman Padale
(1930–2014)**

Waman came to work for Adi K. in the 1940s, and, along with Dattu Mehenarge (who had been a Prem Ashram student), he took over the office when Adi went

off on the New Life. Waman continued to help Adi after his return, doing whatever needed to be done during the week. On weekends, he would go to Meherazad and Goher would give him a list of household items to be purchased in the bazaar and he would then do all the marketing for Meherazad. Waman continued to work for Adi and then the Trust until his death in 2014.



**Yogi Shuddanand
Bharati (1897–
1990)**

A famous poet, freedom fighter, and prolific author, Yogi Bharati had contact with Sai Baba, Upasni Maharaj, Ramana Maharshi, and Aurobindo before meeting Baba in Andhra in 1953. He was chairing the “Parliament of Religions” conference that Swami Shivananda was hosting. (See *Glimpses of the God-Man, Volume IV*, pp. 14–20.) Baba sent Yogi Bharati a message telling him that such conferences could not accomplish anything, that they murdered spirituality.

Yogi Bharati came to see Baba in the late 1950s and 1960s, and he can be seen in orange robes sitting at Baba’s feet during the East-West Gathering.

BAL NATU'S 1952 CHRONOLOGY



The following is an example of the kinds of notes and diagrams Bal kept over the years.

1952.

LIFE OF AVATAR MEHER BABA.

Baba stayed at Meherazad from 1st January to 9th April 1952.

At Bombay, in Ashiana from 10th April to 18th April 1952.

Baba left Bombay on 18th (His 11th visit to the West) and landed at New York on 20th April.

Baba stayed in the United States from 20th April to 31st July 1952.

Baba in Europe—England and Switzerland from 1st August to [blank space] August 1952.

Baba returned to India on 21st August.

Baba stayed at Meherazad from [?] August after [?] return [?] 14th Nov. 1952.

Baba visited places in Hamirpur from 18th to 27th Nov. 1952.

Baba visited Delhi, Khuldabad, Amaraoti, and Saoner in Dec. 1952.

MONTH	INFORMATION	REFERENCE
JANUARY	Baba at Meherazad in Seclusion. The Cabins were brought down from the hill. Five symbols of religions were placed in the manonash cabin. 31st.: Dhuni was lighted and Baba invoked 'Almighty God.' "Dhuni Ash" was placed in tins and sealed as per Baba's instruction. The tins are not to be opened and "ash" is never to be used for any purpose. Prior to the lighting of "dhuni" Baba dictated a few sentences to Eruch about "Rites and Rituals". This note was handed over to Baba and He tore it to pieces and threw them in the Dhuni fire.	A/I/2. G.G.M. -II. N.L. 34. <i>Tales from the New Life</i> pp. 1 to 9.
FEBRUARY	6th.: First Life Circular was issued. (Life Phase explained). A matchless message. 12th.: Baba's remark about His first Real Birthday. This day marked the beginning of 'Meher Samvat' of Meher Brahma Parivar. 26th.: Baba was operated for piles.	L.C. 1. L.C. 2. L.C. 3. (Keshav Nigam's Diary.) L.C. 4.
MARCH	Baba agreed not to see visitors for reasons of health, will meet His disciples, devotees and the people after His return from the West. 20th.: Baba asked Eruch if he would accompany Him to the West. 21st.: First Day of Baba's Complicated Free Life. After this will commence Full Free Life and then Fiery Free Life = LIFE.	See P.T.O. for added add. information.

MONTH	INFORMATION	REFERENCE
MARCH	Baba's Message to all who love Him. 'First and Foremost.' This Message was later versified by M. Schloss. Eruch and Pendubhai were asked by Baba to tour India and Pakistan. I have not lectured till this day. What should I say. Led to this visit - overnight - "I will be a [?] on you." "You want to speak, speak."	L.C. 5.
APRIL	Baba's stay in Ashiana. 10th, 11th: Stay at Bandra Good Friday near St. Mary's Church. Stay in a secluded place near a beach for 2/ days. (To ask Arnavaz.) Baba's 11th visit to the West: Baba left Bombay on 18th and reached New York on 20th. For Baba's stay in the United States refer the article 'Recollections' Part III by K. Davy. Eruch and Pendu commenced their visit to Andhra and Hamirpur.	A/VI/4 pp. 23 to 48.
MAY	Baba at Myrtle Beach. 9th.: Francis Brabazon first met Baba. (Francis Brabazon, Adele, Filis, Barbara and Beryl met Baba for the first time). In this visit Fredella and Joseph Harb met Baba for the first time. For Filis's meeting with Baba ref: 17th.: Darshan Day. A Pamphlet 'Baba Explains' was distributed. A French lady had Baba's vision in the morning and was drawn to the Darshan-place.	Bill's speech about Baba work in Australia. June 1977. A/VI/4. (E.W. [?]) M.N.E. Vol. V No. 3. M.N.E. (June 1978) Vol. 7 No. 1. A/XIV/2/5/1. [?]

MONTH	INFORMATION	REFERENCE
MAY	Norina writes to Adele "How complete the Master is . . . in mind." And by confirmation Baba told with Norina who was ill Baba dictated, "Sit on the porch and look across the ocean and think of My Love as limitless as the Ocean."	A/VI/2/p. 34. A/VI/4/p. 48.
	24th.: The day of auto-accident. Dr. Hopson Ned Burl-son died on February 21, 1977. He opened hospital in Prague in June 1950.	News Clipping in Correspondence File (Westerners June 1977) and MNE-EastWest March '77.
	Baba in hospital and then returned to Dunes.	A/VI/4.
	(For information about the accident refer the letters from Meherji to Vishnu dated 30th May; Adi Sr.'s letter of 3rd June and of Mani dated 10th June.)	A/XII/3/p. 6. MNE Vol. 7, No. 1. A/XIV/3 & 4/ pp.22–27. MNE Vol. 6, No. 1: Dr. Burleson dies.
	For Baba's stay at Meher Centre on the lakes refer letters of Mani, Nilu—in Pappa Jessawala's File.	MNE Vol. 4 No 3 Lud's meeting with Baba and ping pong (1954).
JUNE	17TH.: Reorienting of Sufism. Baba gave a charter to Sufism Reoriented and a Special Message.	A/VII/4. D.V. July 66.
	Baba dictated a Circular about the personal disaster.	L.C. 6.
JULY	Baba sees visitors at New York on 18th, 19th, and 20th at Mrs. Duce's place.	A/VII/4.

MONTH	INFORMATION	REFERENCE
JULY	31st.: Baba left New York (Flew for London). An Article 'Who are your neighbours?' was published.	M.N.E. Vol. 7 No 1 June 1978. (Filis' account.)
AUGUST	First week Baba in London: May Lunquist met Baba for the first time. She was on her way to Sweden. Also Tom and Dorothy Hopkinson. On 6th August Baba flew for Switzerland. Baba's short stay in Switzerland—Lugano Lake. Donkin and Rano asked by Baba to get 6 tickets on one flight. "That is that"—Air France the best company—came after an hour—6 tickets up to Karachi. 21st.: Flew for Bombay from Geneva via Karachi. Subhadra came from Poona to have Baba's darshan at Meherazad.	Rano's words. Tape.
SEPTEMBER	1st.: A Special Circular Letter regarding dedication of money, service, property and life to Baba. All replies were read out to Baba. Madhusudan sent a reply through a poem. Baba sent Bal to Gunjoti. To be confirmed: Gabriel Pascal met Baba in Bombay. For Gabriel's incident regarding sandals of Baba ref. pp. 77-80.	C.L./A.I. <i>The Disciple and His Devil</i> , p. 227.
OCTOBER	Passing away of Jal Kerawala. 17th.: poor fed at M'azad. Baba bowed down to them, in memory of Jal D.	L.C. 7.

MONTH	INFORMATION	REFERENCE
NOVEMBER	1st to 10th.: Programmes at Meherabad. (On the Threshold of the Fiery Free Life by Bal Natu).	D.N./B.N.
	6th.: Daulatmai Jehangir Irani, mother of Meheramai, passed away. She was born on 20-7-1883. She observed silence for 20 years, by Baba's order. She was one of the chief instruments in establishing Meherabad.	
	Baba called a meeting of His lovers on 7th, 8th, and 9th. The Prayer of Repentance was recited for the first time.	Dhanpatty and B. Sathi Raju's account The Glow Feb. 72 pp. 4-12.
	(Refer the article 'The Rhythm of the Fiery Free Life' by Ramjoo Abdulla).	A/I/1, 2.
	14th.: Baba left Meherabad. Baba in Hamirpur from 18th to 27th November. On 23rd first reciting of Meher Chalisa by K.N. Nigam.	M.P. Aug. 64. A/VI/3. D.N./K.N.
	Irene Conybeare with Baba for the first day mass darshan Programme at Hamirpur.	A/I/2/14.
DECEMBER	2nd.: Baba at Delhi. Afterwards Baba visited Khuldabad and then left for Darshan Programmes at Amraoti where He visited 'Temple of Krishna' with Tai Maharaj and leper colony. Baba performed Arti of His Own Picture at Deshmukh's place.	D.N./B.N.
	3rd.: Message on Divine Love.	L.C. 9.
	By the end of the month He visited Saoner.	

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

D.V.	<i>Divya Vani</i>
M.G.	<i>Meher Gazette</i>
F.L.	<i>Family Letters</i>
A.	<i>The Awakener</i> magazine
L.C.	Life Circulars
B.N.	Bal Natu
D.N.	Diary notes (followed by initials of diarist)
M.P.	<i>Meher Pukar</i>
N.L.	New Life Circulars
G.G.M.	<i>Glimpses of the God-Man</i>
M.N.E.	<i>Meher News Exchange</i>

1952.

LITERATURE PUBLISHED AND INFORMATION CIRCULATED DURING THE YEAR

ENGLISH

BOOKS 1) *Ways to Attain the Supreme Reality*. Published in United States.

BOOKLETS 1) *The Fiery Free Life and Other Seven Messages*. Published in India.

 2) *The Fiery Free Life and Other Seven Messages*. Published in United States.

 3) *Mano-nash*. Published in United States.

 4) *Avatar Meher Baba*. Published by the Eluru Centre.

PERIODICALS

NEW LIFE No. 34 / 1st Feb. Lighting of Dhuni
CIRCULAR

LIFE No. 1 / 6th Feb. Mano-nash.
CIRCULARS No. 2 / 6th Feb. A Token, A Free Gift of Love.

 No. 3 / 16th Feb. Baba's Real Birthday.

 No. 4 / 6th March. Baba's sickness.

 No. 5 / 21st March. Three Phases of Life.

 No. 6 / 2nd July. Who are your neighbours?

 No. 7 / 10th Oct. Passing away of J. Kerawala

HINDI

BOOKLETS 1) *Jyotirmaya Jeevan*.

1952.

MAIN EVENTS OF THE YEAR

- 1) First Life Circular.
- 2) Baba's 11th visit to the West.
- 3) Baba had an auto accident in United States. Ref: *Meher News Exchange*.
- 4) Gathering at Meherabad.
- 5) Baba's First visit to Hamirpur.
- 6) Baba's Darshan Programme at Amraoti.

SOME REFERENCES

- 1) Life Circulars 1 to 7.
- 2) *The Awakener*. Vol. I, No. 1, p. 3 to 6 and 24 to 28; Vol. I, No. 2, pp. 22 to 33; Vol. VI, Nos. 2 and 4; Vol. VI, No. 4, pp. 23 to 48 (Baba's visit to M.B.); Vol. VII, No. 1, pp. 34–35; Vol. XIV, Nos. 3–4 (Philip Lutgendorf's article).
- 3) Hamirpur Darshan Diary by Kishan Singh and K.N. Nigam.
- 4) Diary Notes by Bal Natu from 12th to 24th Dec.
- 5) A set of letters about the auto accident in United States by Meherji, Adi Sr., and Mani.
- 6) D.N. by K.N., pp. 38-50, and booklet Mass Darshan: 35 days beginning from 18th Nov. 1952.
- 7) Meher Baba League Newsletter, Dec. 1975 (Fredella's meeting with Baba).
- 8) *Tales from the New Life*.
- 9) Meher News Exchange Vol. 6, No. 1, Mar.77 (Dr. Burleson dies in Prague); Vol. 5, No. 3 (Joseph Harb's first meeting with Baba.); Vol. 7, No. 1 (meeting of Filis/Adele with Baba); Vol. 4, No. 3 (Lud's meeting with Baba).
- 10) *How a Master Works*.

11) *Glimpses of the God-Man, Vol. II.*

A/XII/2/22: Evelyn Blackshaw: Interview with Baba.

A/XII/3/31: Baba, Myrtle Beach Centre and Darwin Shaw.

A/XIV/2/p. 1: Meher Baba on Lila and Humour, 5th Nov. 52 M'abad and pp. 4 to 23 (Filis's and Adele's meeting with Baba); also refer MNE Vol. 7, No. 1 for Phil).

The God-Man: pp. 194–208 (1952).

Much Silence: pp. 96–104 (1952).

The Beloved: pp. 64–67 (1952).

How A Master Works: pp. 80–160 (1952).

Ways to Attain the Supreme Reality: Forward (Interpretations in verse by Malcolm Schloss First and Foremost), p. 15; p. 37 (for External Renunciation); pp. 74–75 (Redemption).

The Life Circulars of Avatar Meher Baba: Circulars 1 to 7, pp. 1 to 17.

Glimpses of the God-Man, Vol. II for Jan. 1952.

Tales from the New Life for Jan. 1952.

The Fiery Free Life and Other Seven Messages.

Mass Darshan.

MEHER DHAM MESSAGES

I belong to no religion. My religion is love. Every heart is my temple. Although it is in love that you have built this house of stone, I am only in it when your heart brings me here.

And inside the building should be carved:

Always remember that ceremonies cover me but pure worship reveals me.

MEHERASTANA MESSAGES

Tear away the curtain of set ceremonies and rituals and you will find that I am the Worshipped, the Worship and the Worshiper.

To clothe simple worship with garments of ceremony and rituals is to expose me to the cold winds of ignorance.

To love faithfully the God-Man is to worship God truly.

To find me here in Meherastan, search the depth of your heart.

Meherastana is built for me with love, but I may only be found here by my lover who brings me here in his heart.

As the heart is, so is the house; as the eye is, so is the Image within the house.

The heart of man has always been the ancient temple for the worship of the Ancient One.

Nothing can house the Ancient One that does not house love.

THE DECCAN QUEEN

*Bus mene ma lleja ajay rupiya pandar
To Deccan Queen ma bestiya jao me Bori Bunder
Rupiya pancees bazaar
Rupiya pancees bazaar
Go Adarji Usli ni Cavas ji Nusli
No tay bedo par*

*Ooh gune na tee ma to tomari pasee O Parvardiagar
Bus mene ma leeja ajay ruiya pandar
To me Jao Bori Bunder
Rupiya pancees bazaar
To Adarji Usli ni Cavas ji Nusli
No tay bedo par.*

If only I could get 15 rupees,
I would sit in the Deccan Queen and go to Bori Bunder
[Formerly, Victoria Terminus, now Chattrapati Shivaji Terminus]
Rupees 25 thousand,
Rupees 25 thousand
Then Adarji Asli and Cavasji Nusli will be saved.

Oh, I am not asking a lot of you, O Parvardigar
Just let me get 15 rupees
Then I can go to Bori Bunder.
Rupees 25 thousand,
Then Adarji Asli and Cavasji Nusli will be saved.

MULAKAT BY S. JAFRI

Some day, the dark clouds will disperse from the sky
 and the sweet night of moonshine will appear.
 Some time, the lamp of love will burn (brightly) and
 some day I will meet my beloved.

In the lonely, silent moments of the sorrowful night,
 if all of a sudden I remember you,
 my hair will spread over my face causing an overcast sky crowded
 with clouds;
 and I shed tears, it would precipitate the rains.

The time of departing is near,
 and as the moments of separation are fast approaching,
 the hearts of the stars are sinking.
 Let me hold you close to my heart at this moment.
 God knows when we will be meeting again!

Why should one lose his senses and energy of mind in love?
 Why should some one waste his precious youth in the pursuit of
 love?
 Had I known that in this game of love, there can only be defeat,
 I would not have indulged in love.

FRANCIS BRABAZON'S TALK AT THE 1969 DARSHAN

Jai Baba.

I am amazed and filled with joy to discover that the Beloved I have been serving for many years is truly a very mighty Beloved.

Of course, I have known all along that He was God. But there are so many Gods. There is the God which people see in a shape of illusion such as a sunset or a mountain view or a symphony, or whose hand is seen in one's not getting caught in a rain-storm or in obtaining a good job; no doubt a very comfortable and profitable God to have—well worth a Christian candle or some Hindu incense but not a God to whom one would offer one's life. There is the God who rules the shining planes of consciousness: but sight of Him would blind one. And the God who is beyond the planes is unknowable except by His own Grace. And He is extremely careful to whom He gives that Grace.

So when beloved Baba used to tell us that He was God, I used to think, "Yes, Baba, You are God all right—the one God and all the Gods—but what good is that to me?" In fact, I used to get so fed-up with Him being God that I wished He wasn't. Or I wished He was a sort-of-an Old Testament God for whom I could slaughter some fat lambs or a spotless young bull in return for some added acreage. I got so tired of His being so much God that I wrote a song about it and sang it to Him. It goes something like, "If only You were a bit less God, and bit more Man, I wouldn't feel so much like someone upside down in a garbage can."

But Baba wasn't going to become more Man just for my sake, so I had to settle for Him as the divine Beloved—one whom I could serve sometimes,

instead of thinking about myself all the time. After all although He is God, and sometimes is a Man, being one's own and the world's Beloved is His main job. Others can become as much God or as much Man as He, but only Baba is more beloved than any other beloved. And is infinitely worth serving.

But now a great problem arises. How to serve that One who is All-beloved; for whatever one does with love is done by Him. All that is done for the Beloved is done by the Beloved. And so one arrives at the painful conclusion that the Beloved alone exists—which means that oneself [one's self] doesn't. And that's a terrible predicament to find oneself in—for one is still there!

The only solution I found was to accept the position: "You alone are and I am not, but we are both here." And having arrived at this acceptance Baba now taught me a poetical form capable of expressing all the shades of the impossible relationship of lover and Beloved. Such a form has not existed in English until now, because the lover-Beloved dilemma was not part of the British-American consciousness. And, of course, beloved Baba being the author of this new form was (or seemed to be) delighted with my exercises in it.

And here is a delicious piece of humor in connection with this. There was a period when Baba had me read a new poem to Him three times every morning. Do you know why three times? Baba was memorizing them. Why memorizing them? So that He could quote them next time He comes back, in 700 years! That is really God-Man humor, isn't it? Then there were His extraordinary orders or commissions. His last was for thirty ghazals—ghazal is the name of the new poetical form He taught me. It happened this way. One morning after the usual morning business was finished Baba said He wanted me to write thirty ghazals, could I do that? I replied promptly and brightly, "No, Baba." This reply seemed to rather astonish Him. He turned to the other mandali and said, "Well, what do you think of that? I ask this fellow to write thirty ghazals and he says, No, Baba." Then Baba turned questioningly back to me. I said, or rather I groaned, "I don't know whether I can write one ghazal—and You ask for thirty. I don't think there are any

more in my head.” Then He says sympathetically and persuasively, “Try, and I will help you.” So it was back to the stone quarry again to cut and build thirty more little poem-houses, each one a bit different; for the Beloved likes variety.

But still I did not know what a mighty Beloved our Beloved is. This knowledge has come to me only recently—since Baba laid aside His body.

Now, the Beloved would not be the Beloved if He didn’t have a thousand whims and moods, if He didn’t play His eternal game of divine pretense; if He was not all ears for the lover’s praise and stone deaf to His complaints; if He was not All-knowledge and All-ignorance at the same time. He would not be the Beloved if He did not decorate the walls of the wine shop with pretty pictures such as “All the religions being drawn together as beads on one string” and “700 years of peace,” and then invite the lover to cross deserts of heart-dryness and oceans of tears to receive the wine of His kiss; but when the lover at last staggers in at the door, the Beloved spends the whole time showing him the pictures and expecting his interest and admiration.

What a Beloved our Beloved is. What a Beloved we have chosen to serve! What is it to the thirst-craved lover if a lot of glass beads are strung on one string? Will that make them turn into diamonds? What if there is 700 years of peace? Will not war again follow?

He would not be the Beloved if He did not tell the lover to stand up and sit down at the same moment; to become footless, and walk; to become headless, and think; to exert himself to the utmost, and leave everything to Him.

Though it is not the time yet for us to know the wine of His kiss on our lips, we have received the kiss of His Word in our hearts. If it were not so, how could all you dear ones who have never seen His Man-form be here now?

Who but the Beloved of Beloveds, could speak His Word silently in your hearts and make you come from across the world to take His darshan, to bow down to Him in your hearts? Such a thing has never happened before. I have been at Mass-darshans where tens of thousands came and bowed down to His Man-form. But to come thousands of miles to bow down to Him in one’s heart, that is of an entirely different order of devotion

Why has beloved Baba given you people this extraordinary privilege? Because He required a few to do what the many, what everyone, must eventually do: journey across the world of illusion to take darshan of Him in their hearts. What a Beloved is our Beloved; what a mighty Beloved. This Word which He has spoken in your hearts, which will be spoken in every heart in the world, will lead you by the hand, and drive you with whips to the door of your Beloved, to the wineshop of your Master—where it will become your own pure song of praise and will cause the beloved wine Master to open the door and bring you and pour for you a glass of the wine of self-forgetfulness and Beloved-alone-remembrance. The very Word with which He knocked on the doors of your hearts and aroused you to set your feet on the path to Him, the same Word will knock on His door and make Him open it to you—Himself. I bow down to this mighty one in each of you.

But you also have your parts to play on this grand journey you have begun—you must not leave it all to your Beloved. For every step the lover takes to the Beloved, the Beloved takes ten to the lover. But the lover must continually take that one step. We must practice taking beloved Baba's darshan, bowing down to Him in our hearts, every day, then every moment until we have continuous sight of Him.

Happenings will happen—even Grand Happenings. But they will not be that Happening which has to happen in our hearts. So do not look to these other happenings to nourish your faith; depend only upon His Word and Its song in your hearts.

Be prepared for a long, long journey to have the Beloved's real darshan. But it may only take a mere 700 years to reach His door and bow down to Him for the last time and merge in Him forever.

Jai Baba. The Victory is His.

GLOSSARY



bhajan(s): Song(s) with a religious theme or spiritual ideas.

bhajia: A deep-fried snack made of chickpea flour, often with onions and chilis.

daaman: The hem of a garment. Baba often used this phrase to emphasize the importance of holding on to Him.

darshan: The opportunity or occasion to see a holy person. In Baba's darshan programs, this usually also included the chance to bow before Baba or embrace Him.

dharamshala: A guest house for pilgrims. In India, these houses are often for specific groups, such as a Parsi or a Hindu dharamshala.

ghazals: A poetic form with rhyming couplets and a refrain, each

line sharing the same meter, which emphasizes the relationship between the lover and the Beloved. Originating in Arabic, the ghazal was spread by the Sufis and the Sultanate and became popular in Dari and Urdu. Rumi and Hafiz are its most famous practitioners. Baba taught Francis to write in this style, and He said these were the first English language ghazals in the world.

kirtan: A devotional musical form of narration, or a call-and-response song, usually around a religious theme.

kusti: The sacred thread that Zoroastrians wear around their waist.

mandali: A term most often applied to those who lived with Baba, although Baba sometimes used

the term to denote any who were close to Him in their love.

majzoob: A soul on the 7th plane, merged in God.

masts: People who seem mad but who are actually, according to Baba, “God-intoxicated.” Their ordinary consciousness is overthrown through an overpowering experience of God’s presence.

nazar: Literally, a glance.

prasad: A gift from the Master, often a piece of fruit or candy.

sadra: A special long, thin, white garment worn by Zoroastrians (sometimes spelled sudreh).

sahavas: Gatherings held by a guru or Master so that his devotees may enjoy His company for extended periods. Often in a more informal setting than a darshan program.

samadhi: A tomb.

sanskaras: Impressions, or habit patterns, that have formed because of our previous experiences and that determine how we will perceive the world and behave in it.

ENDNOTES

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PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
iii	Baba with Eruch and Bal, 1960. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	39	Guru Prasad, Poona, July 10, 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
vii	Guru Prasad, Poona, early 1970s. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.	40	Arnavaz Dadachanji, Meherazad, mid 1970s. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
xv	Bal Natu. Meherazad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	40	Katie Irani. Photographer: unknown.
1	Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Martin Cook. Courtesy of Martin Cook.	53	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
3	Guru Prasad, Poona, early 1970s. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.	59	Gadekar. Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
6–7	Poona street. Photographer: unknown.	61	Parichehr Saadi. Photographer: unknown.
15	Meher Baba in Guru Prasad, Poona, 1957. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	68–69	Guru Prasad, Poona, pre-1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
28	Bindra House, Poona, March 1960. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	71	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
33	Guru Prasad, Poona, 1957. Photographer: Mani. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.	77	Jimmy Mistry and Padri. Guru Prasad, Poona, circa 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
87	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1969. Photographer: B. Huprikar, as arranged by Dattatray D. Rege. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	263	Poona, June 1960. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
89	Pappa Jessawala. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Photographic Collection.	285	Meherazad, 1959. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Kenmore Collection.
92–93	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1959. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	287	Guru Prasad, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
126	Bund Garden, Poona, June 1963. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	294–295	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1961. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
127	Guru Prasad, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.	298	Guru Prasad, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
141	Bindra House, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	306	Ann Conlon. Photographer: Sheila Krynski. Courtesy of Sheila Krynski.
150	Page from Bal's diary. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Photographic Collection.	320	Guru Prasad, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Kenmore Collection.
184	Dolly Dastur. Meherabad, February 1958. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	323	Meherazad, 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
205	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	329	Vishnu. Satara, August 1947. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
210–211	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	333	Girja and Prem Khilnani. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Vinod Khilnani.
		341	East-West Gathering, Guru Prasad, Poona, November 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
344	Guru Prasad, Poona, circa 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	388-389	East-West Gathering, Guru Prasad, Poona, November 1962. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
348	Filis Frederick. L. A. Sahavas, Los Angeles, CA, 1986. Photographer: Anne Giles. Courtesy of Anne Giles.	391	Burjor Bode. Poona Centre, Poona, 1963. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
351	Diane Dimpfl (3B) and Baba. Muir Woods, San Francisco, CA, August 1956. Photographer: Darwin Shaw. Courtesy of Darwin Shaw family.	393	Anthony and Hilda Thorpe. Seclusion Hill, Meherazad, 1980. Photographers: Kelvin and Jill Hobbs. Courtesy of Kelvin and Jill Hobbs.
353	Judith Garbett. Avatar's Abode, Queensland, Australia, 1988. Photographer: Anthony Zois. Courtesy of Anthony Zois.	401	Manu Jessawala. Meherazad. Photographer: Glenn Magrini. Courtesy of Glenn Magrini.
363	East-West Gathering, Guru Prasad, Poona, November 1962. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	420	Bernard Bruford. Queensland, Australia, 2018. Photographer: Leander Bruford. Courtesy of Leander Bruford.
364	Nergiz Kotwal. Photographer: unknown.	424	Charles Purdom. Photographer: Studio Lisa. Courtesy of Purdom Family.
364	Najoo Kotwal, L. A. Sahavas, Los Angeles, CA, 1994. Photographer: unknown.	429	Poona Centre, Poona, 1963. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
366	East-West Gathering, Guru Prasad, Poona, November 1962. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.	447	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1963. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
374	Gokaran Shrivastava. Meherabad, 1998. Photographer: Paul Liboiron. Courtesy of Paul Liboiron.	454	Guru Prasad, Poona. Photographer: Beheram. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
377	Hardeep Hanspal. Meherabad. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of the Hanspal family.	484	Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar, March 1960. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
382	Meherwan Jessawala. Meherazad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.		

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
485	Poona Centre, Poona, May 1964. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	606	Guru Prasad, Poona, July 1967. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
490–491	Poona Centre, Poona, May 1964. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	607	Meherazad, December 1968. Mani Family Films. Courtesy of Sheriar Foundation.
495	Guru Prasad, 1964. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	622	Meherazad, December 1968. Photographer: Rayomand Dadachanji. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
499	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	623	Meherazad, 2015. Photographer: Adair Adams. Copyright Avatar Meher Baba Trust Document Collection.
502	Poona Centre, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	627	Upper Meherabad, February 1969. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
506	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	631	Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Larry Karrasch. Courtesy of Larry Karrasch.
512	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	642	Mani, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Larry Karrasch. Courtesy of Larry Karrasch.
543	Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1965. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	642	Mehera, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Larry Karrasch. Courtesy of Larry Karrasch.
545	Guru Prasad, Poona, circa 1966–1967. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	642	Eruch, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: unknown.
555	Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	643	Meherwan, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Larry Karrasch. Courtesy of Larry Karrasch.
560	Guru Prasad, Poona, 1965–1967. From a film by Mani or Beheram. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	643	Women on Guru Prasad portico, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Tim Barnhart. Courtesy of Tim Barnhart.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
643	Adi K. Irani, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Larry Karrasch. Courtesy of Larry Karrasch.	691	Allan Cohen. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
646	Crowd on Guru Prasad portico, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Cliff Ives. Courtesy of Cliff Ives.	691	Aloba. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.
646	By Baba's Chair, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Chris Riger. Courtesy of Chris Riger.	693	Aneece Hassan, 1983. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
646-647	Francis Brabazon on portico, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: Cliff Ives. Courtesy of Cliff Ives.	693	Ann Conlon. Photographer: Sheila Krynski. Courtesy of Sheila Krynski.
647	Arnavaz and Wendy, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: unknown.	694	Arnavaz, Meherazad, mid-1970s. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
647	Mehera and women mandali, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: unknown.	694	Nariman, Avatar's Abode, Queensland, Australia, June 1958. Photographer: Colin Adams. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
659	Guru Prasad Memorial. Poona. Photographer: Ted Judson. Courtesy of Ted Judson.	695	Beheram, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
668	Poona, February 1973. Photographer: Mani. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	695	Perin, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
671	Bal Natu. Meherazad. Photographer: Chris Pearson. Courtesy of Chris Pearson.	695	Jal, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
685	Meher Baba, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	695	Sheroo, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
690	Adele Wolkin. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Anthony Zois.	695	Jehangir, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
690	Adi K. Irani, Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar, 1970s. Photographer: unknown.		

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
695	Gulnar, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	702	Bal Dhavle, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
695	Rustom, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	702	Dina Talati. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
695	Sohrab, Baba House, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	702	Naval Talati. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of MSI Photographic Collection.
698	Baidul, Andhra, February 1954. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	702	Dinkar Pote, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
698	Bhau, Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar, mid-1970s. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	702	Don Stevens, 1979. Photographer: unknown.
699	Bhikubhai Panakar, Poona, 1970s. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	703	William Donkin. Photographer: unknown.
699	Bill Le Page, Myrtle Beach, 2011. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Sheriar Books.	704	Adi Dubash, Meherabad. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Merwan Dubash.
700	Charles Purdom. Photographer: Studio Lisa. Courtesy of Purdom Family.	704	Rhoda Dubash, Meherabad. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Merwan Dubash.
700	Dadi Kerawala. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	704	Merwan Dubash, 1967. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Merwan Dubash.
701	Delia DeLeon, late 1960s. Photographer: Martin Cook. Courtesy of Martin Cook.	705	Edward Luck, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1961. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
701	Dr. Deshmukh, January 1974. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	705	Irwin Luck, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1961. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
705	Elcha Mistry. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Anthony Zois.	710	Katie. Photographer: unknown.
706	Elizabeth Patterson. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Charles Haynes.	712	Gulamasi Satha, PWD Bungalow, Ahmednagar. Photographer: Hedi Mertens. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
706	Eruch, 1979. Photographer: Chris Pearson. Courtesy of Chris Pearson.	713	Harry Kenmore. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Kenmore Collection.
707	Feram Workingboxwalla, Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar, February 1976. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	714	Harry Dedolchow. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives Photographic Collection.
707	Filis Frederick, L. A. Sahavas, Los Angeles, CA, 1986. Photographer: Anne Giles. Courtesy of Anne Giles.	714	Amiya Kumar Hazra, Jabalpur, circa 2000. Photographer: Sankalpa Shrivastava. Courtesy of Sankalpa Shrivastava.
708	Francis Brabazon, Guru Prasad, Poona, 1969. Photographer: unknown.	714	Dr. Hoshang Bharucha, Upper Meherabad, February 1969. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
709	Ramchandra Gadekar. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of the family of Ramchandra Gadekar. Used by permission.	714	Hoshang Dadachanji. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
709	Kishinchand Gajwani, circa 1965. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	714	Havovi Dadachanji. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
709	Dr. Ghani, Ghatkopar, India, October 1923. Photographer: Keki Irani. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	715	Ivy Duce, 1979. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Sufism Reoriented.
710	Gita Ram, Meherabad, November 1955. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	715	Jal Dastur. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust.
710	Goher, Meherabad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	715	Dolly Dastur, Meherabad. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Eric Teperman.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
716	Pappa Jessawala, Poona. Jessawala Family Album. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives Photographic Collection.	719	Kesar, Meherazad. Photographer: Glenn Magrini. Courtesy of Glenn Magrini.
716	Gaimai, Upper Meherabad, February 1938. Photographer: Elizabeth Patterson. Courtesy of EPPCA Collection.	719	Keshav Nigam, Poona. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
716	Eruch, 1979. Photographer: Chris Pearson. Courtesy of Chris Pearson.	719	Khorshed Irani. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.
716	Manu Jessawala. Photographer: Hedi Mertens. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	720	K.N. Soman, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
716	Meherwan Jessawala, Meherabad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	720	Kumar, Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
716	Meheru Jessawala. Photographer: Hedi Mertens. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	720	Madhusudan, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
718	Jimmy Mistry, Meherabad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	720	Subhadra Bendula Pund, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
718	Roda Mistry, Meherabad. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	721	Mani, Meherabad, 1980s. Photographer: Glenn Magrini. Courtesy of Glenn Magrini.
718	Judith Garbett, Avatar's Abode, Australia, 1988. Photographer: Anthony Zois. Courtesy of Anthony Zois.	722	Mehera Jehangir Irani. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.
718	Laxman Ramchandra Kamble, Poona, May 1960. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	723	Mehera Arjani, 2012. Photographer: Robert Ahrens. Courtesy of Robert Ahrens.
		723	Meherdas, Meherabad, November 1955. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
724	Meherjee Karkaria, Meherazad, November 1964. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	729	Padri, Meherabad. Photographer: Isabella Ellis. Courtesy of Isabella Ellis.
725	Meheru Irani, Meherazad. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Jenny Keating.	730	Pendu, Meherazad, 1972. Photographer: Meelan. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
725	Nadine Tolstoy, Upper Meherabad, August 1938. Photographer: Hedi Mertens. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	732	Pervis Kelkar, Meherabad. Photographer: Homyar J. Mistry. Courtesy of Homyar J. Mistry.
725	Naja Irani. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	732	Shridhar Kelkar, Meherabad. Photographer: Paul Liboiron. Courtesy of Paul Liboiron.
727	Nana Kher, 1972. Photographer: unknown.	732	Pratap Ahir, Poona, 1960. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
727	Naoroji Dadachanji, Bindra House, Poona, 1954. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	732	Prem Khilnani. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Vinod Khilnani.
727	Bachamai Dadachanji. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Mehera Dadachanji.	732	Girja Khilnani. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Vinod Khilnani.
728	Naosherwanmama. Photographer: Win Coates. Courtesy of Susan White.	732	Pukar, Upper Meherabad, February 1969. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
728	Nargis Dadachanji, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1960. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	733	K. K. Ramakrishnan, Poona, November 1965. Photographer: Art Centre Studio, M. G. Road, Poona. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
729	Nariman Contractor, Guru Prasad, Poona, April 1959. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	733	Ramjoo, October 1923. Photographer: Keki Irani. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
729	Norina Matchabelli. Photographer: Hedi Mertens. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.		

PAGE	DESCRIPTION	PAGE	DESCRIPTION
733	Ramsahai Yadav, 2002. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Jaichand Yadav.	737	Savak Kotwal. Photographer: unknown.
734	Rano, Meherabad, January 1976. Photographer: David Fenster. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	737	Nergiz Kotwal. Photographer: unknown.
734	Rick Chapman, Poona, 1966. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Rick Chapman.	738	Maharani Shantadevi, Guru Prasad, Poona, May 1963. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
735	Roshan Kerawala, New Jersey. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Glenn Magrini.	738	Bapu Saheb Shinde, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
735	Sam Kerawala, Meherabad, 2007. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Glenn Magrini.	738	Sorabji Siganporia, Meherabad, February 1958. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
736	Sadashiv Patil, Mudaliar's Center, Poona. Photographer: Meelan. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	738	Vishnu Deorukhkar, Meherabad, circa 1928. Photographer: Shah. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
736	Sarosh Irani, Khushru Quarters, Ahmednagar, 1970. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.	739	Waman Padale, Meherabad, December 1955. Photographer: Panday. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.
736	Viloo Irani, circa 1971. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of the Bea Muller Collection.	739	Yogi Shuddanand Bharati, Meherabad, February 1958. Photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Meher Nazar Publications.