

The Divine Humanity
of
Meher Baba

By Bill Le Page

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook May 2020

Copyright © 1999 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust

SOURCE: This eBook is based on the book Published 2002 by:
Meher Baba Foundation Australia
Avatar's Abode, P.O Box 22, Woombye, Queensland 4559 Australia
Printed by:
Meher Mownavani Publications, Hyderabad Andhra Pradesh, India

eBooks at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Web Site

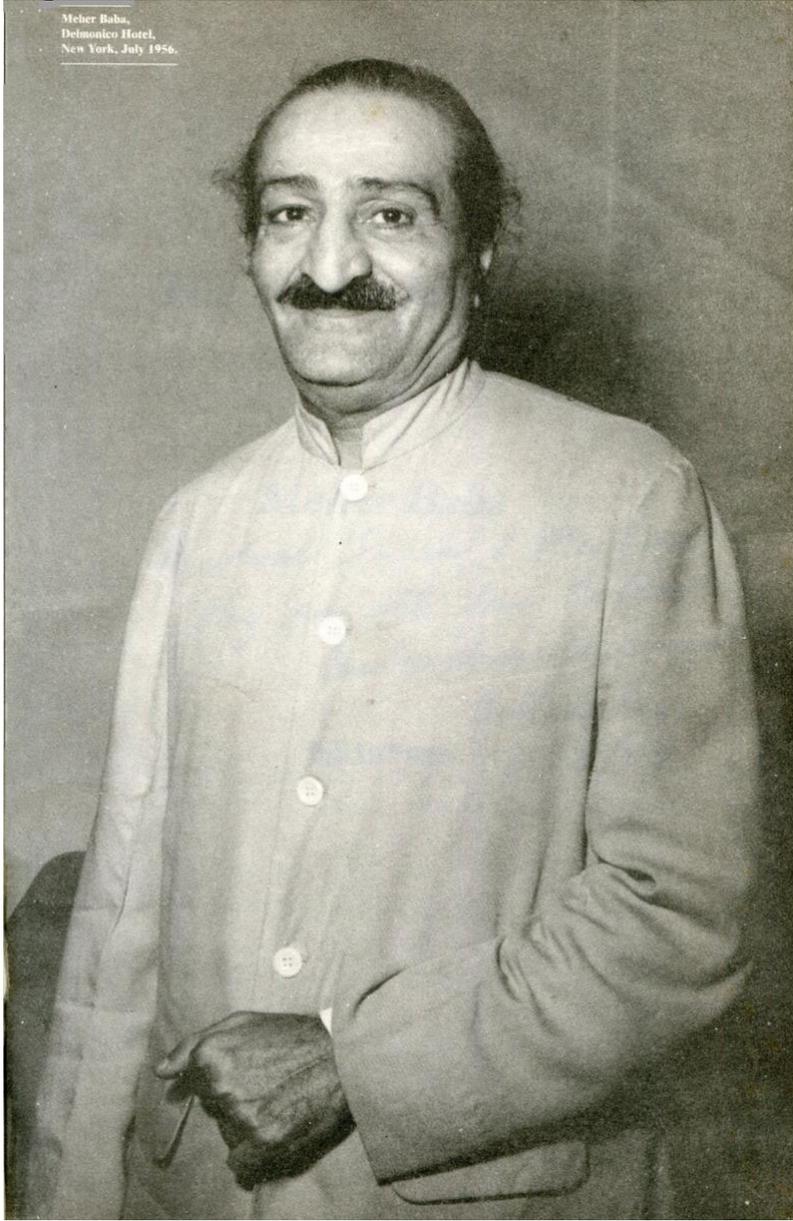
The Avatar Meher Baba Trust's eBooks aspire to be textually exact though non-facsimile reproductions of published books, journals and articles. With the consent of the copyright holders, these online editions are being made available through the Avatar Meher Baba Trust's web site, for the research needs of Meher Baba's lovers and the general public around the world.

Again, the eBooks reproduce the text, though not the exact visual likeness, of the original publications. They have been created through a process of scanning the original pages, running these scans through optical character recognition (OCR) software, reflowing the new text, and proofreading it. Except in rare cases where we specify otherwise, the texts that you will find here correspond, page for page, with those of the original publications: in other words, page citations reliably correspond to those of the source books. But in other respects—such as lineation and font—the page designs differ. Our purpose is to provide digital texts that are more readily downloadable and searchable than photo facsimile images of the originals would have been. Moreover, they are often much more readable, especially in the case of older books, whose discoloration and deteriorated condition often makes them partly illegible. Since all this work of scanning and reflowing and proofreading has been accomplished by a team of volunteers, it is always possible that errors have crept into these online editions. If you find any of these, please let us know, by emailing us at frank@ambppct.org.

The aim of the Trust's online library is to reproduce the original texts faithfully. In certain cases, however—and this applies especially to some of the older books that were never republished in updated versions—we have corrected certain small errors of a typographic order. When this has been done, all of these corrections are listed in the "Register of Editorial Alterations" that appears at the end of the digital book. If you want the original text in its exact original form, warts and all, you can reconstruct this with the aid of the "register."

The Trust's Online Library remains very much a work in progress. With your help and input, it will increase in scope and improve in elegance and accuracy as the years go by. In the meantime, we hope it will serve the needs of those seeking to deepen and broaden their own familiarity with Avatar Meher Baba's life and message and to disseminate this good news throughout the world.

Meher Baba,
Delmonico Hotel,
New York, July 1956.



The Divine Humanity

Of

Meher Baba

Bill Le Page

All quotations from the words of Meher Baba are reproduced with the permission of the copyright holder,
© 1999 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust,
Ahmednagar, M.S. India.

Meherwan Jessawala and *Sam Kerawala* sections are produced with the permission of the copyright holder,
© 1999 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust,
Ahmednagar M.S. India

The Talati Family section is produced with the permission of the copyright holder,
© Meherwan S. Kelkar and Manije S. Kelkar

Cover painting of Meher Baba by Diana Le Page

Published 2002 by:
Meher Baba Foundation Australia
Avatar's Abode, P.O Box 22, Woombye, Queensland 4559 Australia

Printed by:
Meher Mownavani Publications, Hyderabad Andhra Pradesh, India

Dedication

My salutations to Him who has come to help the helpless humanity.

My salutations to Him who, though born an Emperor of Emperors, lived the life of a true Fakir.

My salutations to Him who took all the abuses of the world and in return gave blessings only.

My salutations to Him who offered the cup of immortality - even to those who considered themselves His enemies.

My salutations to Him in whose house there was no trace of any gold nor any trace of silver.

My salutations to Him for whom the mother earth was His bedding roll and a brick was His pillow.

My million-fold salutations at the lotus feet of my Beloved.

(Dedication sung in praise of the Prophet Mohamed who was the Avatar 1400 years ago - to which could be added the following lines from the Perfect Master Hafiz which Beloved Avatar Meher Baba had displayed for his Mandali and lovers:)

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 own incapacity to understand Him.

I am a slave of the Master who has released me from ignorance - whatever my Master does is of the highest benefit to all concerned.

Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	v
<i>Meherwan Jessawala</i>	1
<i>Sam Kerawala</i>	87
<i>The Talati Family</i>	111
<i>Epilogue</i>	

Introduction

It is a most beautiful day here as I write this at Beloved Baba's Place, Avatar's Abode. From my office I gaze up the long, grassed slope bordered by trees towards His home and the meeting hall we built for His visit. The sun, the gentle breeze, the solitary quietness bring forth reflections, slow thoughts and feelings of memories of those days with Him, and although you could say that my mood is centred on Beloved Baba, it does make me think of moods and of their effect on my state of mind.

It seems so easy for a mood, initially passing but then unchecked, to grow and slide into some form of self-doubt and self-indulgence which then overshadows my faith in His all-pervading presence. Not to allow such a mood to disturb my efforts to serve Him, leaves me to think how difficult it must have been for the close mandali living with Him to drown all moods in their love and service for Beloved Baba. No wonder it has been said that to be able to live day and night with the Incarnate Lord takes hundreds, even thousands of years of service. But as Baba has said in regard to saying His Name with one's last breath, 'If you do not begin now to take My name with each breath, you will not remember to do so at the last.' So too with moods. I remind myself that if I do not learn to drown my varying moods in my desire to serve Him, I may not have the opportunity to be closer to Him next time He comes.

I return to my thoughts of Avatar's Abode: it is primarily a Place of pilgrimage, a 'stopping place' as Francis Brabazon has said, where we can pick up or strengthen 'the scent of the quarry - Meher Baba,' as Eruch has said of all Baba's places of pilgrimage. It is also the spiritual centre for Australia, a place where the tone,

the atmosphere, the pace, the manner and nature of all activities conducted here will be a guide, an inspiration for all in Australia. The underlying basis must be Love and Service, the key-words Baba has given us for the spiritual path for this Age. It is a place for re-focussing one's life, assessing where one is at, and where one is going. Because He is here more potently than in the general environment, we may better gauge or 'measure what [we] may become.' Here we may rest and meditate, absorb His atmosphere, and assess how we can serve others more truly, more generously, better able to take stock of the course of our life, and renew again the real purpose of it: 'To love God, to live for God and die for God.'

In my youth I sought God as the source of meaning of life, and in the process, attached myself to men who I sensed knew more of this quest than myself. These were in the beginning Baron von Frankenberg, Australian head of the Sufi Society, and Francis Brabazon the Baron's 'right-hand', but more particularly an ardent follower of Meher Baba. Through the Baron's agency, I found Meher Baba and from that time on I was His - although the attachment deepened and clarified over a long period of time. In looking back, I realise I never did have a conscious interest in God-Realisation, in the acquisition of powers or spiritual or occult experiences. I was in my youth drawn to serving others, but realised, fortunately, that He alone could truly serve the downtrodden, the bewildered ones, the poor, the seeking ones, so I sought to serve Him by endeavouring to obey Him and please Him. That aim does have self interest - the hope that He will permit me to have more of His physical company whenever He is on earth. I loved His presence, loved His responsiveness to my efforts to love and obey Him, and loved the companionship of those close to Him. Now that He is no longer physically with us, I try to live and endure and learn in such a manner that I will be better equipped to be with Him next Advent.

Among the changes that Meher Baba in His compassion has

wrought in me, one of the most important has been an ever-deepening appreciation of those men and women who were close to Him in His life, who shared in His hardships through participation in His orders, and who equally shared His divine humanness. They responded to His example of love and service, and sought happily to share in His burden of suffering for the liberation of creation whenever He permitted. They represented the world and in their unwavering, whole-hearted cheerful obedience to His wishes, they became a medium for His work and a channel for the world to benefit from His suffering. He loved them, and they loved Him unconditionally. They were true to the trust He reposed in them.

Countries vary in their overall spiritual maturity, but the one that surpasses all is India. As Meher Baba has told us, India is that point in creation nearest to the Creator, the first to issue forth from the Om point. It was in India that Meher Baba first gathered the men and women who dedicated their lives to Him, and it is there that the majority of His close lovers live. He entered fully into their lives in a most natural and loving way as literally father/mother: guiding, comforting, chastising, at one time divinely human and another divinely God; from determining their very intimate lives such as concern for the privacy of newly-married couples in small, crowded homes, to determining the entire course of their lives.

A beautiful example of one such involvement by Baba is the story of a young Hindu woman, gravely ill in the final stages of TB. She was like a skeleton - just skin and bones. The doctors had thrown up their hands over the case and suggested to the family that she return home from the hospital. The young woman realised from this that she was dying and resolved to see her Beloved Baba once more at whatever cost and effort. That night she rose when the house-hold was asleep and with great difficulty, supporting herself on walls and crawling, went to the nearby house of her cousin. She roused him and persuaded him and another young man to take her to Ahmednagar and then Meherazad. They

travelled by bus and then in the early morning went by taxi to Meherazad where Baba was at the time in seclusion. The mandali member on watch at the gate refused her entry, saying that Baba was not seeing anyone at present. As they pleaded with this man, Baba, hearing the taxi arrive, sent another disciple to see who had come. On being informed, Baba directed that she be brought to Him. Supported on each side by the two young men she approached Baba seated in the garden of Meherazad. Some fifty feet from Him, Baba gestured to the two men to leave her, and such was her determination that she walked the remaining distance unaided, and weeping, fell at His feet. Baba asked her 'Why have you come?' 'For your darshan before dying' she answered 'Now that I have seen you I can die in peace'. 'What do you take me for' Baba asked sternly. 'Paramatma (Almighty God)'. 'So as Paramatma I tell you, you will not die. Have faith in Me. I tell you this with divine authority. Even if someone were to literally bang you against a stone - as washer women do clothes - you will not die!' Baba then continued, 'Return now to Poona and receive treatment for two months from the first doctor you come across, re-enter hospital and do exactly what the doctors order. With every medicine you receive take My name. I will be with you. You will get well.'

The young woman did as Baba directed and recovered completely. She is now a great grandmother.

This book will be, Beloved Baba willing, the first of a series about the lives of some of those men and women of India, of stories of their love for Meher Baba.

Acknowledgments

A large part of this book is entirely due to the tireless and highly competent work undertaken by Ward Parks in Avatar Meher Baba's Name for His Cause: over some period of time in the midst of a heavy workload of both parties, whenever an hour or so could be fitted in, Ward interviewed Meherwan Jessawala at length on his life with Baba. The recording was then transcribed principally by Kay Walker, and secondly by Sandra Brown. I am deeply grateful to these people for providing me with the means and therefore the joyful task of re-writing and editing the transcriptions.

Sam Kerawala's life with Baba was largely recorded by me, and again transcribed by Kay Walker and Sandra Brown, or typed from my handwritten notes.

The Talati family's life with Baba was given me by Perviz Kelkar (nee. Talati) and her careful writing and clear details made my task of re-writing and editing a relaxed and easy one.

Jenny Keating particularly, Keith Gunn and Elizabeth Hearne, all generously gave time to check typing and grammar, and in the process, made many helpful editing improvements.

Janene Pierce undertook most willingly the task of cover design and layout of the book.

I bow happily to the love that these lovers have for their Beloved Baba, and which prompts them to so cheerfully give of their time for His Cause.

Meherwan, Sam and Perviz have all spent much time in reviewing and approving the finished writing, and I am most happy that the material is a further true record (if ever one is needed) of the Divine Love and Compassionate Humanity of our Beloved Meher Baba. It is His love which inspires a Meherwan, a Sam and a Perviz and it is His love too that sustains them in their unflagging efforts to fulfil His wishes.

*MEHERWAN
JESSAWALA*

Avatar Meher Baba was born in Poona, India, but the hub of His work was at Meherabad, an ashram established by Him in Arangaon village close to Ahmednagar, an agricultural town some 75 miles north east of Poona. In this town lived a Parsi family named Satha, on a large property known as Akbar Press. It was a cotton-pressing mill. There were five brothers and four sisters and they all became deeply devoted to Baba. The eldest brother, Meherjee, was described by Baba at one time as a 'true celibate' - so much so that He once remarked that He would not have minded His Mehera seeing Meherjee even when she was strictly secluded from all men. Meherjee was given the repetition of Baba's name, and He said to him, 'You will see My real form when you pass away.' Meherjee smiled and said 'Oh Baba, You make these promises but do not keep them', but Baba reassured him that it would be so. Well, in time he died, and four days after the death another member of the Satha family had a dream in which Meherjee came to him and said 'Baba has kept His promise.' (Baba has said that after four days the soul finally severs the connection with the body).

It was two of the Satha brothers and their elder sister who first had contact with Baba. It was in the early 1920s and Meher Baba had not yet begun His 44 years of silence. The two brothers were fond of taking long walks everyday in the countryside all around Ahmednagar. One day they decided to go along the Ahmednagar Dhond road and as they approached Arangaon village they happened to see to their left a group of men on the wayside.

They were all sitting around a lean person wearing a long white sadra. As they stood wondering whom He could be, He beckoned to them. They approached somewhat cautiously not knowing what to expect. It was Meher Baba who had arrived there only a few days earlier from Ahmednagar. During the conversation that ensued Baba asked them how many were in the family and they replied that they were 5 brothers and 4 sisters. 'No,' said Baba. 'You are six brothers and four sisters, I am your sixth brother.' Before parting Baba embraced them and told them to keep coming. So the Lord began to gather the Satha family to Him. The old abandoned military camp near this village became Meherabad and the location of His Tomb-shrine.

Soon after this contact, one of the Satha sisters, Gaimai, married to Beheramshaw Jessawala and living in Nagpur, was informed by her brother that they had recently met a person whom they felt was like Zoroaster and that she should definitely come to meet Him. So during the summer vacation she came to see Baba at Meherabad with other family members. They included her first born, Eruch, who was destined to become 'the friend of God-Man' as He Himself described him. And yet, like Vivekanand with his Master Ramakrishna, Eruch did not have the scope to enjoy Baba's divinity until after Baba had dropped the body. Perhaps that is ordained in order for such a one as Eruch to fulfil His role as right hand to God-Man. Baba once said to His close mandali 'Your great fortune is in being close to Me and seeing My humanity. My lovers away from Me, see My divinity. But when I drop My body, all My lovers will flock here and clamour to know from you about My humanity, and you will see My divinity reflected in their eyes.'

Gaimai had four children, Eruch the eldest born 1916, followed by Mani (re-named Manpur and later shortened by Him to Manu to distinguish her from His sister Mani) and Meheru, and then about 10 years later, Meherwan. He was named Meherwan by Baba, among one of the earliest ones to be done so, and this, and

the circumstances surrounding his birth, indicate the depth of his connection with Baba.

In 1927, two to three years before Meherwan was born, the family visited Akbar Press and of course, while there, would go to Meher Baba at Meherabad. On one of those visits Baba said, 'Make a point of returning to Nagpur via Poona and pay your respects to Babajan.' This they did. It was the height of summer and the crowd around Babajan, women on one side men on the other, was very large with a great deal of pushing, jostling and movement. Babajan had a coconut in her hand, looking as though to give it to someone, and because to be given a coconut by a Perfect Master was a most auspicious event, all the women were seeking to be close to Babajan. The family was seeking only to have Babajan's darshan, and as there was much confusion and turmoil and to avoid further hassle to Babajan, Gaimai said to her sister Gulamasi, 'Let us take darshan from a distance,' but Gulamasi insisted that they at least approach and have closer contact with Babajan. So with great difficulty they approached and the crowd of women became more hostile, until Babajan herself became very annoyed and demanded, 'Let My children approach.' As soon as Gaimai came close and bowed down, Babajan placed the coconut in her hand. The surrounding women then exclaimed louder still, and Gaimai was inclined to give away the coconut, but her sister was emphatic, 'What are you doing?! This is Babajan's prasad, you must keep it.' It is believed that such a prasad will bring a great blessing, and it could be said that the birth of Meherwan a few years later was that blessing.

After the nine months had passed, it was clear that the delivery would not be normal. The doctor was anxious, the baby's position had changed, and it appeared a caesarean operation was necessary, and there was concern for the life of both child and mother. But the doctor was a very conservative old lady, and giving Gaimai anaesthetic she somehow manipulated the baby, and with

forceps delivered Meherwan safely. While Gaimai was under the anaesthetic she had a vivid dream in which Meher Baba and Babajan together gave her a huge egg, and in it she saw a male child. Gaimai felt intense joy in the dream and as the egg was given to her, Baba and Babajan disappeared. Returning to consciousness, even before seeing the child, she told relatives there that the child was male, and refused to believe when one of the elders in attendance told her that she had delivered a baby girl!

Meherwan's Early Years.

Particularly as a child Meherwan was quiet, withdrawn and shy, but when approached directly he displayed surprising warmth and a sharp, keen intellect. He was, you could say, a river running deep and Baba even pointed to Meherwan once as someone who tended to be 'in the world but not of it.' His first clear memory of Meher Baba was during the time of His visit to Nagpur and to the Jessawala home in 1937. A 3-day public darshan program had been arranged, the first by Baba for Nagpur, and the crowds were very large. The Jessawala estate was very extensive and yet Meherwan remembers it being flooded as it were with people. The darshan was held in the large main dining-cum-sitting room of Mary Lodge - the Jessawala home - Baba sitting at one end on a sofa, with the family and the mandali behind Him. Meherwan clearly remembers Baba with His hair loose and flowing, looking particularly radiant and beautiful. Even at that young age, Meherwan had Baba firmly in mind as Lord Krishna come again. So much so that at the time, to Baba's delight and pleasure, Meherwan would call Baba 'Krishnaji' and Baba would make Meherwan repeat that often.

One time before the darshan days commenced, when there was a smaller gathering of only the family and some friends, Meherwan had prepared a small garland for Baba. He sat in a

corner as usual very shy and not knowing how to go and place the garland on Baba. Finally he broke the garland and put it aside. But with Baba nothing howsoever seemingly trivial went unnoticed, and at this point asked Gaimai to bring the child and the garland to Him. Baba helped Meherwan tie the garland up again, and bent down so that Meherwan could easily put the garland around His neck. Then He gave Meherwan a very warm embrace.

How beautifully does God-Man orchestrate such intimate moments in the life of each lover, instructing or strengthening and feeding the connection - how wonderfully He abides in that moment when the heart of the lover is pained but open and ready for the next lifting of the veil of ignorance. He becomes divinely human, so naturally at the level of the lover and then finally giving the consummation of the healing embrace.

This little episode made Meherwan less shy and a little more bold with Meher Baba. One time during this visit, Gaimai was asked to press Baba's feet, relieving the immense pressure on Him from the darshan program, and while she was doing so, Meherwan slipped quietly into the room and also pressed Baba's limbs. Another time, watching Baba during the program with his flowing hair, Meherwan had an intense longing for a strand of that hair, so he crept carefully behind Baba and with scissors actually dared to snip off a strand! But Baba in His compassion feigned ignorance of the situation.

About a year after this darshan program Baba called the whole family 'to leave all and come to Him'. The huge estate with all its various buildings, expensive furnishing, ornaments, furniture and extensive gardens - in short everything except a few trunks of personal items such as clothing was sold at any price in order to fulfil Baba's order for all to be with Him in a little over two months. One of the main memories Meherwan has of this period is his mother Gaimai 'floating on air', ecstatic that Baba on His own had called them. He also remembers Dadi his cousin, who was staying

with the family, inspecting the price tickets on items, and upset at the low figures, altering them. (This story of the Jessawala family coming to stay with Baba is covered in more detail in my book *Over the Years with Meher Baba*.)

1938 – 1949

Meherwan began his stay in Meherabad separated for the first time from his mother. He was eight years of age. At first it affected him, surrounded by what seemed to him to be rugged, hefty men, outspoken and maintaining a very strict way of life. But Baba soon took the place of his mother. Each time Baba came to the men's side, He would cuddle and comfort Meherwan and for example, in front of everyone, ask Meherwan, 'Who am I?' and when Meherwan would proudly reply, 'Krishnaji' Baba would show all how delighted He was with this child. Baba had his own unique way of dealing with each one - children and men alike - so there was always underlying joy. And Meherwan was always amazed at how transformed these men would be in Baba's presence - from tough lions to mild lambs you could say. Kaka Baria, for example, was one such giant, very strong physically and mentally, not afraid of anything or anyone, but he would weep like a child at times when Baba was particularly displeased with him. To give one an idea, many years later when Kaka was well past his prime, all were seated in Meherazad Mandali Hall and a huge yellow band wasp flew in past Baba and settled on the wall nearby. Kaka just quietly rose and swatted it with his bare hand lest it hurt His Beloved. Baba gestured to all to say, 'See how brave Kaka is!'

In speaking of the relationship between Baba and the mandali, Meherwan recalled a delightful scene he witnessed in his boyhood. It was at a time, 1944 or '45, when Baba had called a large number of disciples or mandali to be with him at Meherabad. All were seated in the old Mandali Hall of those years, a very

ramshackle building with four crooked wooden pillars supporting the roof and Baba was being loving and divinely human, and there was much merriment and laughter. Baba was reclining on a type of divan at one end of the hall. Ghani, Meher Baba's old school friend was present and as was often his way when with Baba, he would have fun with Baba saying for example, how Baba professed love yet was harassing the poor mandali so much. Ghani was very witty, very skilful with words and all his teasing taunts about Baba's ways were a delight to the intellect.

Now Kaka was not at all amused at these apparent attacks on his Beloved Master, especially when Baba would pretend to be helpless before them. Baba would glance at Kaka with a helpless air: 'Look Kaka, Ghani is saying all these things and you remain quiet.' Kaka would just unhappily put his head down, and as he did so Baba would gesture to Ghani to continue more and more with his barbs and complaints, not directed at Baba, but about Baba's ways with the mandali and the conditions under which they lived.

Finally Kaka could not endure more and stood up, and Baba prompted him, 'Come, Kaka, to My rescue, this fellow is not shutting up at all!' Kaka advanced on Ghani like a great warrior, and a hush came over the whole hall. Then Kaka started to bellow at the top of his voice, Ghani interjected with some remark, and Kaka shouted, if anything, louder than ever. Kaka faced Ghani, looking as if he wanted to eat him alive and he did not notice Baba's delight at all this play. Baba was laughing so much, His whole frame shook and Meherwan remembers the scene particularly because Baba was rubbing his feet on the divan as small children do when they cannot contain their mirth and laughter. Eventually Kaka subdued Ghani into silence and everyone hailed him as victor. Kaka then strutted back to his seat like a conquering hero.

In those early days, Meherwan also remembers Baba rolling up His sleeves and thin cotton pants in the morning, and with His

own hands, cleaning the pans in the latrines, putting all the faecal matter in a receptacle, then with a small broom clean the pans. Masaji, one of the older mandali, would hold an umbrella over Baba as He worked.

Meherwan had been in Meherabad for four months (August to December 1938) when Baba began the Blue Bus Tours. When this occurred, Meherwan was sent to Akbar Press to live with his uncles and to attend school in Ahmednagar, but he found it difficult living with them, separated as he was now from Baba as well as his mother, and particularly so because he was still recovering from a severe illness he had contracted at Meherabad. He had much pain and discomfort from boils as big as small tomatoes on his body, and these had to be regularly drained. Because of this, the Akbar Press household restricted his movements and particularly his playing with other children. He became unhappy and uncooperative. So a letter was written by the uncles to Gaimai, on tour with Baba, complaining of Meherwan's behaviour. This of course affected her and although she sought to hide any reaction, Baba usual, drew the matter from her. After reading the letter, Baba asked her, 'Do you feel angry with Me for leaving your son behind?' She replied with deep feeling, 'No Baba, I would sacrifice a thousand sons like him for You!' Baba was extremely pleased with her response and said, 'No, I want your son to be brought here.'

So Meherwan was sent for, and Baba's uncle Masaji, another elderly but hefty man, was given the task of bringing him and a considerable amount of luggage of the men and women mandali to where Baba and party were staying. Because he was warned to be very careful of theft on the way, Masaji would run to the goods carriage of the train at each station to check on the luggage. At one station, the train stopped a very short time, and Masaji was not able to re-board after checking. The poor old man ran the length of the platform to catch up but failed. In desperation he pleaded with the Station Master, and he taking pity on Masaji, had the train

stopped at the next station and had Meherwan and the luggage taken off the train. Now separated, Meherwan spent some hours in the middle of the night in a deserted wayside station, until a distraught Masaji arrived on the next train.

Meherwan still remembers in amazement how this giant of a man, overwhelmed that he was now reunited with his charge, embracing him as though he was the greatest treasure, and then weeping like a child himself as he told Baba later of what had happened. 'What would I have done if this child was lost, how could I have faced You?' Again Meherwan was so impressed by how wholeheartedly each of the mandali undertook every task given them by Baba.

Now began a period of travel with Baba, broken for some months when Baba directed that Gaimai, Manu, Meheru, Meherwan, Banumasi and her two sons Sam and Dadi, stay in Jabalpur and that the three boys attend school there. But apart from that period, Meherwan was with his mother among the women mandali, the only male to have seen Mehera over many years. He remembers that Shireen, Baba's mother, would come and be with them for varying periods from time to time. Shireen took a particular liking to Gaimai, and Baba granted her wish that she should have Gaimai look after her. Baba said to Gaimai; 'Do whatever she asks of you.' There was a very loving relationship between the two women, and perhaps this was a part of Gaimai's Preparation to be the Avatar's mother next Advent, as Baba once said she would be. Gaimai delighted in hearing stories from Shireen of Baba's early life, and often she would ask Shireen to repeat them. Once when Gaimai did so Shireen in exasperation began to scold her. Just then Baba came in, and upon coming to know the reason for His mother's outburst, told her that His stories were always fresh no matter how often they were told, and exhorted Shireen to keep repeating them!

As Baba's mother she had certain prerogatives, yet she was

also required to accept restrictions in line with Baba's orders for the ashram. She was a very strong-minded woman, lively, very intelligent, with a zest for life and an enjoyment of the good things in life. The following is a delightful example of these qualities. Gaimai was asked by Baba to write to her sister Banumasi in Bombay to bring her two sons for the Thread Ceremony of Sam and Meherwan. On the side, Shireen asked Gaimai to add a P.S.: 'Please bring two nice fresh fried pomfrets (fish) with you.' Now at the time there was strict vegetarianism in the ashram, and in any case everything coming in and out of the ashram had to have Baba's permission. But of course, Gaimai did as Shireen asked, because of Baba's order for her to do whatever Shireen wanted. So Banumasi duly arrived and with her came the fish.

Shireen was very happy and after Gaimai had heated the fish, Shireen sat down to enjoy them. Just as she did so, and was about to take a morsel, two cats suddenly jumped on her shoulders, one on each side, and Shireen, not liking cats, screamed loudly and threw the fish onto the floor to distract them. They promptly made off with the fish, and at that point, Baba came into the room saying, 'What is this smell of fish?, How is it that the ashram has fish?' Gaimai became very frightened, 'Baba, Shireen asked that it be brought from Bombay.' Baba as usual professed total ignorance, 'But without my permission!' Now Shireen flared up, 'Yes Merog, I called for it! How could You do this? You did not want me to have the fish and You sent those cats to harass me!' 'But mother you know that there is strict vegetarianism here, so without My order, how could you do that?' 'You know I like fish, and I am Your mother.' 'Yes, you are My mother but remember, I created you!'

What a delightful relationship existed between Baba and Shireen! Gaimai told of a time when she was massaging Shireen's feet. It was evening, and suddenly Baba came into the room, inquired of something, and then said, 'Mother I would like to sit on

your lap.' Gaimai described the scene as very touching and very lovely. Shireen was shocked, 'Merog, behave yourself! There are people here, what will they think, and in any case you are too big, too heavy!' But Baba said again, 'I want to sit on your lap,' and proceeded to do so. It was, Gaimai recalled, such a delightful scene.

As a contrast to that scene, Eruch has told of a time when Shireen had written to say that she would stay for a period with Baba. She was permitted to come and go as she pleased, even though Baba would complain that her presence disturbed His work, that she would be unhappy with this or that of ashram life, and would involve Baba in her complaints. This particular incident occurred in Lonavla, and it was during the wet season when there were many snakes and scorpions. So Baba sought to take advantage of the season and the fact that Shireen was extremely afraid of snakes, and He told Eruch, 'Mother is coming, meet her at the station, and give her a vivid picture of the very heavy rains here, and of the many, many snakes and scorpions. Do it to such an extent that she will hesitate to stay. But be very careful, mother is very shrewd!'

Eruch met Shireen and when she asked for news, he took the opportunity of saying 'Everything is fine, but the weather is awful, raining all the time and because of that there are many snakes, and only the other day the watchman killed three.' Shireen said quietly 'Really.' and Eruch went on, 'And the scorpions are huge, six inches long, dark green and black with hair on their bodies.' Shireen quietly responded, 'Oh really - and what else did Merog tell you to tell me!' Eruch sought to look innocent, but Shireen again said, 'And what else were you told to tell me to scare me away from here. I am His mother, I know His ways.' Once more Eruch tried to bluff his way out of this predicament but Shireen said, 'Oh keep quiet, you are but a youngster and don't know anything!' Later when Eruch told Baba of the exchange He said, 'See, as I told you,

she is very shrewd. You could not have said it convincingly enough!

There would be at times, Meherwan recalled, friction between Shireen and Baba, and at those times it was best to be absent. But there was one such occasion which had an amusing twist. Shireen sought to find out from Baba certain incidents in the ashram life, and Baba kept giving her evasive answers. Finally Shireen said, 'Merog, call Meherwan and if the child says it's so then I will believe it.' So Meherwan was called and immediately Baba gestured to Meherwan to look at His face when replying. But Shireen, noticing Baba's gestures and knowing His trickiness, said, 'Merog, he is a small child - don't teach him to lie. It doesn't behove You as God to lie and You mustn't teach the lad the same. Baba protested, 'Did I tell the boy to lie? I never said any such thing!' But Baba would wink at Meherwan when a question was asked and Meherwan, responding to Baba, would say anything that he thought would please Him. So mother and son would interact, sparks would fly, yet of course there was also such a deep love between them.

* * * * *

In the ashram at Bangalore there were many animals: rabbits, deer, pigs, dogs, a calf, and others; and there were many interesting incidents with them. The pigs, a male and a female, had a litter and afterwards Baba gave them to a good household so they wouldn't be slaughtered. Among the incidents some stand out particularly in memory - and one such concerned a tiny monkey called 'Lucky'. Lucky had been sent in a crate from Bombay by a Baba lover to Baba who was at the time at Meherabad. There were many people in the tin shed at Meherabad with Baba when the crate arrived and was opened. The monkey jumped immediately out of the cage and went straight to Baba, ignoring everyone else.

He climbed onto Baba's shoulder and began to chatter volubly to Hirn as though telling of all the hardships he had to endure. And while this was going on, Baba was nodding as though He was understanding the monkey's chatter and was very sympathetic. It was, Meherwan said, a very beautiful scene to watch.

The western women with Baba liked Bangalore and were happy when Baba said they would settle down there. Baba then directed that all the luggage which had been left in Meherabad when they set out on the Blue Bus Tours should now be brought to Bangalore. But even before the large carriage of baggage had reached them, Baba announced, 'My work here is over and we need to move.' Norina exclaimed, 'But Baba darling, we have just called for our luggage!' 'No, no, this place will not suit My work now.'

That was Baba's way - He would appear to give in to their wishes, get them involved in certain activities, then cut those activities short so that they learnt just to be with Him and accept whatever He wanted and decreed. Baba said they should return to Meherabad, and so the bus plus two cars began the return journey. This journey was the first time that Meherwan was a part of the Blue Bus Tours, although he travelled mostly in the second car, not always in the bus itself. Baba was in the lead car driven by Elizabeth with Mehera, Mani and Korshed. Then followed the bus, luggage piled high on the roof, pushed under seats and in every nook and cranny, and some twenty-five women packed into a vehicle designed to carry fourteen! Then came a smaller car with a driver, Meherwan and Gustadji in front, Meherwan's aunt Gulamasi and two others in the back.

The journey to Meherabad was not direct and proceeded via the coast and many interesting places. Kaka sat alongside the driver of the bus and he was told by Baba not to depart from the road, not to take any detours, and that the women occupants were not to get down from the bus under any circumstances. All

proceeded well on a certain part of the journey until the bus was stopped by a gaily decorated archway across the road. It was probably part of a decoration for a wedding procession that was to pass through it. Anyway, it was too low for the hill of luggage on top of the bus, and so Kaka directed the driver to do a slight detour around the obstacle. He forgot Baba's instructions at that point and the inevitable happened. The bus immediately sank into soil on the side of the road which looked firm, but was not. No matter how the driver manoeuvred the bus it remained firmly stuck.

By this time the car with Meherwan had arrived and all were aware that they should not lag too far behind Baba's car. Kaka then asked the women to get down and so lighten the weight of the bus. They refused, citing Baba's instructions to them. Kaka explained his predicament but they answered, 'That's your problem, not ours!' Kaka really started to sweat now, suddenly remembering his instructions from Baba. The women were hot and cramped in the bus and to add to the discomfort Mehru's baby brother Jangoo began crying incessantly.

Then Kaka asked some nearby villagers to bring bullocks and ropes, but in trying to pull the bus out of the rut, the ropes continually broke. The women in the bus grew increasingly unhappy and Kaka really began to sweat and inwardly prayed to Baba for help. Then Baba did help. He directed Elizabeth to turn around, and an hour or so later, came across the bus and its predicament. Baba alighted and gestured to Kaka, 'Why is the bus here? Didn't I tell you ' Meherwan remembers Kaka crying out loudly 'Baba, forgive me for forgetting Your orders.' prostrating himself on the ground at Baba's feet, 'Forgive me, Baba, I forgot!' Baba then ordered the women in the bus to get down, and with a small cable Elizabeth had in her car she was able to use her car to pull the bus onto the road again almost effortlessly!

Baba then left, instructing Kaka not to lag too far behind. Kaka heaved a sigh of relief thinking his troubles were over. But it

was not to be. As darkness fell the bus approached a forest in a mountainous area with hairpin bends, and to Kaka's dismay the headlights failed to come on and the bus had to proceed with him sitting on the front mudguards lighting the road with small torches. Probably the lights failed because a cable had snapped when the bus was stuck in the ditch.

The journey continued to the coast and then on to Goa, which was Portuguese territory at the time. The Portuguese customs officials, who were very strict and officious, insisted on everything being examined. They did so - checking everything except, inexplicably, a small hand-bag. This was in Khorshed's care, with orders from Baba that it was not to touch the ground, nor was anyone except Khorshed to even touch the bag itself.

As with everything in the period of Meher Baba's ministry, His work was paramount. As He said once: 'My work is greater than God.' So on this journey He passed through places such as Goa, sometimes appearing to linger, and sometimes no sooner arriving than departing again. His work was central to everything else. In Goa Baba visited the Church of Saint Xavier and somehow arranged for Himself and the group to see the Saint's embalmed body. Again in Goa Baba suddenly had the car stopped and an old man with a beard opened the door. Because the women were in strict seclusion, one tried to push the old man aside, but Baba gestured to let him be, and then after signs between them both, the man went away. Later Baba mentioned that he was His agent and that he had come to Baba by appointment!

Meherwan recalls that the journey continued with another stop at Karwar on the coast. Here Baba permitted the women to swim and He enjoyed watching Meherwan's sister, Meheru, trying to swim through the waves instead of diving beneath them, and so not managing to get beyond the first breaker and being repeatedly swept back to on to the beach.

After returning to Meherabad, Gaimai, at Baba's behest, took

Meherwan and his sisters back to Bangalore to resume his schooling. For the next few years, they were called to stay with Baba during school vacations.

Looking back on that early period with Baba, one of the things that stands out in Meherwan's mind is the mystery of Baba's all-knowingness and yet at times His not-knowing. As Baba Himself said: 'I am both total absolute ignorance and infinite knowledge. You will never understand My state - just do what I tell you to do.' To them, Meherwan says, it was inexplicable - the inner assurance that Baba knew everything, yet making them feel that at times He did not know. Of course, this very mysterious state made Him endearing to them, made Him so approachable, absolutely one of general humanity in its state of ignorance, and yet at the same time conveying that inner conviction that He was All-power, All-knowledge and All-bliss.

Meherwan recalls an incident from his childhood that illustrated to him Baba's touching humanness. Meherwan was friends with Nilu, and observing him doing physical exercises and obviously benefiting from them, Meherwan asked Nilu to teach him some. Nilu agreed and told Meherwan to watch for him the next day and he would instruct him in the exercises. So the next day Meherwan kept coming and going from his room, anxious not to miss Nilu when he appeared. On one of the occasions when Meherwan rushed out of his room, there was Baba on the verandah. Baba gestured 'What's up? Why did you rush out of your room?' Meherwan felt awkward and hesitant; 'No Baba it is nothing.' Baba then took Meherwan by the hand and walked to and fro on the verandah gesturing, 'Come, let Me know what it is, let Me in on your secret.' Meherwan remained embarrassed and said, 'Nothing Baba, nothing.' but Baba persisted. 'No, there must be something for you to rush out like that, let Me hear what's going on.' After several rounds of the verandah Meherwan finally stammered out the story. 'Well,' said Baba, 'why didn't you tell me

that before?' 'Baba it was so trivial, I felt awkward and odd.' 'No, you must tell me whenever I ask,' gestured Baba, and then called Mani to tell Meherwan how happy He was that Meherwan had told Him, how Meherwan had a good heart, generally praising him and giving him a good embrace. It showed Meherwan that no matter how trivial something may seem, if Baba wanted to know, there should be no hesitation to speak out.

At about the same time, an itinerant magician came to the ashram and said that he had tremendous hypnotic powers. So Baba called him in and pointed to Meherwan as someone to use to demonstrate his powers. The magician took Meherwan by the hand, and with his back to the women audience, quickly whispered to Meherwan 'When I clap you become dumb, and when I clap again, start speaking, that's all, very simple and do not be afraid.' He said this very casually so that no-one suspected a trick. He then went into his routine, 'I am now going to demonstrate my hypnotic power. When I clap this child will become dumb' - he clapped and then called on the audience to test his skill. They all tried, 'Speak Meherwan, can you hear us.' Even Baba clapped and gestured 'Speak out Meherwan' but Meherwan did not think that he should give up the game. Again Baba gestured, 'Alright Meherwan enough - now speak,' but Meherwan remained silent. Then the magician said, 'Now I will clap again and the boy can speak.' This he did and the women called, 'Meherwan can you hear us?' and now Meherwan responded 'Yes I can speak.' Everyone was very impressed.

After the show, Baba called Meherwan to His room and said to Mani, 'Ask him what happened.' Meherwan replied, 'Baba, nothing happened. It was a simple trick. He asked me to be silent and I did that.' 'No,' Baba gestured, 'I am sure you were hypnotised.' 'Baba, I just wanted to keep the show going so I kept silent.' Again Baba gestured, 'No, no you looked quite hypnotised to Me.' Thus the All-knowing continued to query Meherwan,

asserting that he had been hypnotised.

As a little contrast to these incidents, there was, Meherwan recalls, an occasion in Rishikesh that showed Baba's omniscience. It was summertime, with intense heat created by the towering mountains surrounding the place. But in the evening there was relief in the temperature, and Baba allowed the women to go to the Ganges River to bathe in the icy waters if they wished. The water was from the snows of the mountains and was, as remembered by Meherwan, of a milky white appearance, and tasted unusually sweet and refreshing. On this particular occasion Baba was sitting on the sandy bank with His back to the river and most were gathered around Him. He had given permission for Meheru and two or three others to swim, but the rest were enjoying an interesting talk from Baba. Suddenly Baba rose, turned and moved swiftly to the river, and pulled Meheru out of a whirlpool where she would surely have drowned. Her cries were not audible to the group, but Beloved Baba knew and responded.

From Rishikesh, Baba took the group to Hardwar, back to Dehra Dun, and then to Lonavla. Here Baba gave Meherwan a lesson in detachment. It was in the monsoon period and Meherwan was required to accompany Baba from his visit to the women's quarters to the men's quarters. He would carry Baba's alphabet board, shawl, etc and hold an umbrella over him. This would always happen at breakfast time (toast, butter and tea). Meherwan would invariably be half finished, and by the time he returned the tea and toast would be cold and covered in flies. Meherwan decided he would not start breakfast that morning but wait, accompany Baba, and then have his breakfast in one sitting. Well, he waited and waited and no Baba. So finally he decided to eat after all and sure enough, exactly halfway through Baba arrived! As Meherwan points out, what trouble God-man undertakes for Himself in order to awaken, in this case, detachment in His disciple. It was not in this instance, but at other times Baba might

even comment, 'Oh your tea has gone cold, that's too bad!' This would intensify the disciple's feelings of annoyance and thus hasten the process of learning.

'Yes,' Meherwan said, 'Baba was our very life, and to be with Him was all we wanted. So naturally we sought to please Him so that we could continue to be with Him.' 'The family life we had,' Meherwan continued, 'was of inestimable value in learning to please Him and to be with Him.' He recalls a time when he purchased membership in a Musical Society in his college, and it so happened that the first concert to be held was the night before Baba was due to visit Bindra House. Meherwan enjoyed music and was keen to go, but Gaimai counselled against going, saying that Baba might come early and that he should stay and help in preparations for His visit. But Meherwan insisted on going, saying it was his first program, and that in any case he had done all his chores. So he went, and on his return found that Baba had indeed come early, and worse still, had not stayed and did not return. Meherwan was devastated and greatly reproached himself for not having listened to his mother. To cap it all, he had not even enjoyed the program and did not attend another. It had come between Baba and himself, and that he could not tolerate.

So it was through such seemingly small incidents that Beloved Baba was established immovably as the central object of Meherwan's life. For him, Baba superseded everything, and this realisation, as Meherwan says frequently, was helped greatly by the family life he enjoyed. It was a very strict life, very disciplined, and yet, particularly through Gaimai, also very loving. As was natural with children growing up, there were moments of rebellion and breaking of rules, but Gaimai had a gentle, loving, yet firm way of dealing with such times, ensuring that all the children lived as Baba would wish. Her most effective weapon, which she used only occasionally, was to stop talking to the culprit. It was a most unpleasant punishment in this close-knit family.

Meherwan commented that in his experience and observation, children definitely benefit from guidance and some form of discipline during their formative years. This gives them a grounding and framework of strength and knowledge of values to help in meeting life's problems and challenges. As Meherwan pointed out, in his case, the parents, particularly Gaimai, constantly built upon awareness of Baba's wishes, upon awareness that Baba was always inwardly available, and upon the knowledge that Baba would know if one's behaviour was displeasing to Him or contrary to His wishes. But Meherwan emphasised that all this moulding of himself, for example, was done very naturally and lovingly, so there was underlying happiness and contentment with no sense of burden and unnecessary restraints. It was the relationship between Baba and himself that was of paramount importance, not his relationship with the family. With the focus entirely on Baba as He wished, all else fell into place. A beautiful example was Eruch's first meeting with Baba at the age of nine years.

In 1925 Gaimai and her family along with other members of the Satha family travelled in a big horse carriage from Ahmednagar to Meherabad to see Baba. As they neared Meherabad, Gaimai saw Baba waiting for them and suddenly, concerned that He might think the carriage overloaded for the two horses, called to Eruch 'Jump.' Eruch promptly obeyed his mother, but seated as he was on the rear of the moving carriage, he fell badly on the hard dirt road, bruising and cutting his elbow. But his mother had no idea of what had happened, and that Eruch was lying on the road. All her attention was on Baba.

As all the family gathered before Baba, He alone noticed Eruch coming, limping and holding his elbow, and He beckoned for him to come forward. Baba sat Eruch on His lap and lovingly inquired of him what had happened. Then He took Dhuni ash and applied it to the elbow and tied His own handkerchief around it. Baba was so loving and gentle that Eruch thought, 'Who can this

Person be who is even more attentive to me than my own mother.' Baba kept Eruch on His lap, and when somebody brought a huge basket of sweetmeats to Him, He began to distribute them as prasad with a big handful to Eruch. Eruch with his good appetite, was again impressed with this person who was not only kind but also generous!

* * * * *

After Bangalore, Gaimai and family moved to Poona and began their long stay in Bindra House. (Again there is more detail of Bindra House in my book *Over the Years with Meher Baba*.) Until the New Life which began in 1949, Baba made innumerable visits to Bindra House. Whilst in Poona He would visit Baba House, but He always stayed at Bindra House, eating, bathing, and sleeping there. These were largely private visits and when He moved around Poona His hair was braided and hidden under some headdress or another, and He wore dark glasses. Despite all this camouflage, passers-by would almost invariably notice Him, gaze at Him, somehow drawn by His personality and presence.

Baba and the few Mandali who were with Him, Meherwan recalls, would arrive at Bindra House from a mast trip, looking a sorry mess, - dirty, unshaven, clothes full of sweat and grime, and starved for lack of adequate food or sometimes none at all. There was, for example, one occasion Meherwan remembers, when Baba sent word from Gujurat that He would be coming to Bindra House. Meherwan bought fresh fish for His arrival, but for three days He did not come and each day fresh food was prepared. Gaimai and family grew increasingly anxious, and it was only when Baba arrived late on the third day, that they heard what had happened. The train, on the Gujurat side of Bombay, had been stopped by unprecedented floods which had washed away the tracks. Baba and the mandali were thus confined to the compartment, and they

played cards as another way of passing the time. In the morning they needed hot water for their tea, so Baba sent Eruch to the engine driver to seek some from the boiler of the steam train. The driver was a Parsi and very happy to give the water. He then followed Eruch back to the compartment, and seeing the cards, asked if he could join them in the game. Baba gestured that he be allowed to do so, and the addition of another boisterous, jovial Parsi with a ribald sense of humour made the games immensely enjoyable for Baba. The train driver was never aware that Baba was silent, even though the games were noisy with much laughter and shouts. And so the hours passed. But when they finally arrived at Bindra House they were all physically depleted, exhausted and drawn.

This account of the Mast tours reminded Meherwan of another incident of those years. Baba and Eruch arrived at Bindra House from a Mast tour, Baba had His bath, and Eruch laid out the table for Baba's lunch. Baba then said that Eruch should have his bath, but Eruch said, 'No Baba, You eat first and then I will have my bath.' 'No, no.' Baba replied, 'you go, have your bath and relax.' But again Eruch refused saying, 'Baba I know you will do something that will give me more trouble.' 'No, I'll just eat My food and do nothing else.' Eruch was still reluctant, 'Look Baba, I tell you I can go later.' Gaimai was by this time exasperated by Eruch and said, 'Baba is telling you to go, do so now and stop having this attitude to Him!' Baba assured Eruch, 'You go, I tell you I won't touch anything.' Meherwan explained that, because of the circumstances of their travel, often in darkness, Eruch so arranged the contents of their bags that he knew precisely where each item was by feel.

So Eruch went for his bath, Baba had His food and after eating asked Gaimai to get the little bottle of Hewlett's from the bag (Baba had a little teaspoon of Hewlett's after each meal to aid His digestion). Then He stopped Gaimai, 'No, no wait, I'll get it out, otherwise if Eruch knows you have handled it, there will be

problems.' So with Gaimai's help, He tried to get the bottle out and in the process it dropped on the stone floor and broke. 'Oh', said Baba, 'look at what has happened, something that should not have happened - and now your son will be angry with Me'. This was too much for Gaimai. 'How dare he say anything to You! Who does he think he is to be annoyed with You!' 'No, no' Baba said, 'he will get really angry with Me. He told us not to touch, we did, and look what has happened.' And Baba took some cloth and began to actually swab the floor, with Gaimai protesting and annoyed about Eruch, and at the same time attempting to do the cleaning instead of Baba. But Baba continued, 'Let's clean it up so that Eruch will not know what has happened. You don't know, he'll get really annoyed.'

While this is going on, Eruch heard the commotion and shouted, 'Has someone touched the bottle?' Then he quickly dried himself and came out, 'Baba, I knew You would do this, You did not listen to me and see what has happened! That is why I said I would go for the bath later.' Gaimai was very upset with Eruch for saying such things, but Baba apologised a number of times and so gradually placated Eruch. Gaimai continued to show extreme displeasure at Eruch's behaviour, until Baba eventually convinced her that Eruch was like a mother to Him.

These are, Meherwan says, the sort of incidents that he witnessed in his life with Meher Baba. They showed, he said, the human side of Baba that endeared Him so much to them. Here was the Lord of the Universe and yet He would show, in such a touching way, His 'concern for His own creation.'

In speaking of Baba's Mast tours, Meherwan pointed out an interesting dimension of Baba's love for Mehera. Baba went to great pains to keep Mehera ignorant of the extreme physical strain and hardship He endured during, for example, the Mast tours. One of the main tasks for the women Mandali was to ensure that Mehera was not displeased or disturbed. Baba gave orders that if the women displeased Mehera they would displease Him and this

would in turn disturb His work. Mehera had to be happy so that He could work undisturbed. This extended to keeping Mehera ignorant of the effect the work had on Him.

The New Life - 1949 – 1951

The 1940's passed and now Meherwan recalls the beginning of The New Life. He remembers the stunning, numbing, shock Baba's announcement of The New Life had on them - why? - particularly because their Beloved Baba said that He would sever all connections with His old life, and that they, His old life disciples, were never to set eyes on Him - even that they were to turn their faces away should they happen to come across Him in His wanderings. In short, they were expressly ordered to make full, conscious effort to never, ever see their Beloved again. It was devastating to them. Yet it was Baba's wish, so there was no other recourse but to obey, and that, in time, provided the strength to accept Baba's order. With Baba there were no soft compromises, you learn, as Meherwan says, to accept His wish and then He gives the strength to carry it out.

Meherwan spoke of the effect that Baba's announcement made on their household as an example. Papa Jessawala was present at the meeting Baba had called at which each disciple was asked to decide to accompany Baba or not on His New Life. It was conducted with Baba at His most serious, and Papa accepted everything including the fact that he would not see his eldest son again. It was acceptable at the time in the full force of Baba's presence, but on returning home to Poona the full impact of the change came to Papa. The mood in the household was most sombre and heavy. One day they were at lunch and suddenly some argument occurred between Manu and Papa. In the midst of it Papa got up and gave Manu a tight slap. Everyone was stunned - Papa had never raised his hand to his children before. But Papa

was even more distressed. He pushed his plate aside, left the table and sat on the floor a little distance and wept. He said to Meherwan, 'What is happening to me? I am so confused. I have never lifted my hand to my children before.' He was utterly distraught, said Meherwan.

As an aside to this, in preparing for The New Life itself, Meherwan spoke of the tremendously hectic pace Baba set in the preparations. Meherwan remembers his sister and her husband with a tailor working practically day and night to complete special clothing for The New Life. He also remembers Eruch telling of a journey from Meherabad to Meherazad late at night. He was driving a car at full speed and so dazed and overworked was he, that he recalls he had no consciousness of doing so, and all his actions were purely mechanical. He was suddenly brought to awareness by a splash, and he realised that he had driven through a flooded causeway near the village of Shendinagar. It was monsoon time, the small river was in full flood, and he knew that he could have been easily swept away. Such was the strain that all were enduring to fulfil Baba's orders.

Baba came to Poona before beginning the New Life and met the families of Bindra House and Baba House. His parting words to Meherwan were, 'Eruch I am taking with Me. His duty will be to look after Me, and your duty is to look after the family,' - a very practical arrangement where Meherwan feels Baba freed Eruch from concern for the family, and transferred it to himself.

Meherwan continued, 'Well, we did not see Him, nor did we hear much about Him. There was a little consolation in that Ghani and Nilu were instructed by Baba to send out a circular of news of His 'New Life' once a fortnight. But we would often bemoan the fact that the circulars were sketchy - perhaps mainly about the weather! - of course this was because Baba had forbade any details of the New Life to leak out.

'In later years,' Meherwan said, 'we did hear more of the New

Life.' One story that came to light many years later is an interesting one. It was perhaps 1950 or 1951 and Baba was walking the roads of India with four companions. In the early morning when Baba would see smoke from a nearby village indicating cooking He might send Eruch to beg for food. Then, whatever had been given in alms, was distributed by Baba between Himself and the companions. Now of course the food given varied in quality and variety, and on this particular occasion it must have been poor. They were seated beneath a spreading tree and above them in the branches was a family of monkeys chattering. One of the companions remarked idly, 'I wonder what those monkeys are saying?' And another, in humour but with a twist of sarcasm, replied: 'Just look at the food these humans are eating.' Baba did not say anything.

Many years later towards the end of His physical life, Eruch was alone with Baba and massaging His limbs. Suddenly, Baba gestured to Eruch, 'I know what little food you had so often, perhaps no food at all, or only a chapati, tea without milk or sugar ...' Baba paused, and Eruch wondered at His words, such reflections being unusual with Him. Then Baba continued, 'But the time will come when men will give a handful of gold for a morsel of bread, and you My mandali will be inundated with food!' Another pause from Baba, then, 'That wasn't what the monkeys were saying by the wayside! What they were saying, was, 'How fortunate those people are to be eating with the Lord!'"

The course of Meherwan's life was set, and he continued his college studies while playing his part in looking after the household. Apart from the Jessawala family, there were also, on Baba's orders, Baidul's wife and daughters staying in Bindra House, and Valu, one of those who had been with Mehera and Mani up the Hill from the early nineteen-twenties.

Months passed by, and in the early months of the following year Adi Senior and Ghani were sent home by Baba. Ghani

particularly would visit Bindra House and thus the household would hear something more of the New Life activities. Then in April, a telegram came from Baba that He wished to come to Poona for a rest period, and a suitable place should be found for Him. Meherwan found a new bungalow in a quiet, secluded place for Baba. He remembers the family came in the early morning, before Baba was due to arrive, to give the house final touches, and while tying the mosquito net on Baba's bed, they heard to their consternation, the horn of Baba's car. So they just put their heads down, and fled for their lives down the stairs, out of the house and out through the back gate. They did not want any possibility of displeasing Baba by coming face-to-face with Him. There was the chance that Baba might then return to Mahabaleshwar without staying. Actually Baba did spot them and sent word that they need not rush off, but they had already disappeared.

During 1951, Baba paid more visits to Poona and although the household did not see Him on these earlier occasions, they were good times because they were required to obtain a bungalow for Him and to prepare and send food for Him. All were so eager to see Baba, but none would even dream of disobeying His order of making every effort to never, ever seeing Him again.

In early 1951 Baba undertook a most taxing seclusion of 100 days at Mahabaleshwar, and in the midst of it, He asked that a suitable bungalow be found in Poona where He would continue it. The army of Poona Baba lovers swung into action, and Adi Senior came from Ahmednagar to join in the search. Meherwan was due around this very time to do final exams at his college, and it was essential that he study for them. But as he recalls, 'I thought, to hell with studies when Baba calls,' and he joined in the search. Now Adi had an old school friend in Poona, Jamshed Irani, who was not a Baba lover but still had a very close friendship with Adi and great respect for Baba. Through Jamshed, an Iranian real estate businessman was approached by Adi, and it so happened that they

recognised each other as friends from long ago. Well this bobdaa (one who stammers) Irani offered without cost a very good bungalow, fully furnished and newly renovated, and available for one month. Adi and Meherwan were delighted. It was perfect, and it was arranged that they should collect the keys in two or three days. A telegram was accordingly sent to Baba that a beautiful house was available for Him.

After a couple of days, Adi and Meherwan, went on bicycles to get the keys, and Meherwan waited at the entrance of the long drive while Adi continued to the house. Ten minutes, fifteen, then twenty minutes passed and Meherwan could hear loud shouting coming from the house. Then Adi appeared, obviously furious and without the keys. After a while Adi calmed down and explained that the owner's father had unexpectedly visited Poona, and when he heard that his son was giving Meher Baba the use of the bungalow, he said that the arrangement was to be cancelled or his son would never see or hear from him again. The father was totally against Baba, declaring He was a charlatan, and a slur on their community. Although the son pleaded with him, saying that he had given his word, and that Baba would be arriving soon, and how could he renege on the arrangement, the father insisted and unfortunately, as Meherwan says, the rnan went back on his word.

Now the Poona Baba community was in a state of desperation. A telegram was sent to Baba stating what had happened. Baba replied, 'Your failure to get that bungalow is your concern. I am coming on the day specified, and see that a bungalow is ready.' Sarosh from Ahmednagar was called for and joined the search, and everyone scattered in all directions seeking accommodation for Baba. At one stage Meherwan was cycling alone, and he noticed a very large, obviously unoccupied, house with a long driveway. The front gates were locked so Meherwan climbed over the wall, and rather nervously approached the imposing palace-like building, calling out, 'Is anyone there?'

Suddenly a door opened, and a man rushed out shouting, 'Who are you? How dare you come in!' No matter how Meherwan tried to explain that he was seeking a house to rent, the man continued, 'You must have intention to rob the place! I do not believe you and your story! This place is certainly not for rent. It is the palace of the Maharani of Baroda, and you just get out or I'll call the police.' Although humiliated and badly shaken, Meherwan continued his search, and again the same situation occurred with another seemingly unoccupied house as had happened with the Maharani's palace.

The Baba lovers grew increasingly desperate, and in their desperation they rented, or were given, a number of small bungalows and a larger one, old, decrepit and situated so close to a leather tannery that there was a most sickening and nasty stink. Although they thought that Baba would not like the smell of the tanning works, the house was larger than the others, so an army of helpers thoroughly cleaned and hastily renovated it. Finally, with no other alternative, they cabled Baba the address, and He moved into it.

In the meantime, Gadekar, also searching, had contacted a friend, Sardar Raste, a man of wealth and position. Sardar Raste had known the Maharani of Baroda since her childhood and in fact, as an adult, had entertained her as a child. Gadekar would speak to him of Baba and so, learning of their need for accommodation for Baba, he was happy to help. He remembered that the Maharani's palace was usually vacant, so he took Gadekar, Meherwan and Adi to see it and check that it was suitable. On their arrival, the caretaker who had so unceremoniously thrown Meherwan out, was now all humility - with much bowing and scraping - but only to Sardar Raste and the others, carefully ignoring Meherwan. Of course, Gadekar and the others were delighted with the interior and every aspect of the place, so a telegram was drafted by Adi to the Maharani that Meher Baba was

coming to Poona and would she make the house available to Him. This was signed by Sardar Raste, but posted by Adi and Meherwan to ensure that it was sent.

When the affirmative reply came, Baba had already arrived the same day in Poona. The reply, with the food from Bindra House for that day, was taken by servants to Baba, and He immediately decided to inspect the house. He liked it immensely, and promptly moved there with the men and women mandali. Thus began the long, glorious association with the palace known as Guruprasad and its owner the Maharani of Baroda, Shantadevi. As Meherwan points out, the story illustrates that every bad thing, in this case a man not keeping to his word, has a good ending. Of course, it also shows that wholehearted effort undertaken in His name brings joy to the devotee and fulfilment of His wishes.

The joy in this case particularly was that Baba permitted all who had helped in finding the accommodation to see Him for a short time at Guruprasad. Mind you, the joy was almost dissipated when they beheld Baba's physical condition. Meherwan recalls that he had never seen Baba so physically depleted. He was in a terrible state, so thin and frail that His neck was like a chicken's and He had to be supported to walk. Because of the treatment and final removal of His piles, He could not even sit, and for the duration of their visit, Baba stood. He was totally emaciated - yet the smile He gave to greet His lovers was His usual one and He embraced all one by one saying how pleased He was with all of them. Then He spoke to Meherwan, 'I hear that it is the time of your exams. Will you pass?' Meherwan replied, 'Yes Baba, I'll pass,' although he did not know what made him say that, considering that to date he had done no study. Baba again said, 'You will pass?' and Meherwan again replied, 'Yes Baba.' Then Baba said, 'Alright, now go and study as much as you can.'

The exams were four or five days after meeting Baba and they proved harrowing for Meherwan. He said 'I was studying in a

small room near the kitchen, and Naja and the other five or six women of the household would prepare food for Baba and all the men and women mandali at Guruprasad. The hubbub this created was most disturbing, and I also did all the marketing - this when I was to do the finals for Bachelor of Science in Physics and Chemistry - difficult subjects indeed! There were 92 elements and I was required to know them all by heart. So with little time for everything, taking Baba's name, I opened one page and decided to study that one element, and that was the one element I was asked about in the exam! Naja would assemble all the people of Bindra House before Baba's photograph and pray that I would pass. But for years after I would have dreams of appearing in exams, and not being prepared. Somehow I scraped through all the papers without ever really knowing anything! It was obviously by Beloved Baba's grace that I was able to do so.

At one time at Guruprasad, Meherwan recalls Baba had Nilu tell the following story to lighten their mood on seeing Baba so pulled down in health. Baba began by pointing to Nilu, who was exceedingly fond of sweets, and said, 'See, he is getting fatter and fatter, and I am getting thinner. If he continues to put on weight, he could meet the fate of a man in earlier times, so Nilu, tell the story of that man.'

Nilu began 'There was a Master who wandered the country with his disciples, and they lived on whatever was given them. It was a very hard life, yet the disciples clung to the Master. One day they entered a certain kingdom and found a very strange situation. The King was very capricious and despotic, and his decrees were most odd. For example, a bundle of vegetables and the costliest sweets were the same price and the smallest crime and the greatest merited the same punishment - hanging! The Master gave his disciples permission to eat as they wished, and with what money they had, they enjoyed the richest food at the lowest price. This was a wonderful change from their usual fare, so much so,

that when the Master said it was time to move on, one disciple pleaded that he be allowed to stay. (Here Baba interjected that this disciple was like Nilu - exceedingly fond of sweets.) Although the Master warned him that this Kingdom was very strange and strongly advised him to come with him, the disciple would not agree. So finally the Master gave his permission but said, 'Well be happy here, but if some real difficulty occurs, remember me and I will help you.' The disciple was delighted and inwardly could not imagine that he would ever need the Master again. The food situation was the best he had ever encountered. So he continued to thoroughly indulge himself and he grew fatter and fatter without a care in the world. But he was the only one in the Kingdom to do so, because everyone else lived in constant fear of doing even the most minor crime, aware that it would bring about the punishment of hanging!

As a result of this fear, everyone except the disciple, was totally emaciated. But the carefree disciple continued to eat to his hearts content. (Here Baba again interjected, 'See, despite My telling him not to do so, Nilu keeps eating and fattening.' All the mandali and visitors were now quite caught up in the story, and the heavy mood that had been created by Baba's frailty lightened considerably).

In the Kingdom some construction work was being done, and in the process a wall collapsed and a donkey was crushed beneath it. The donkey's owner went to the King seeking justice. So the builder was called, but he protested that the fault lay with the man throwing water on the wall because he did not throw enough. So he was summoned, but he said that the goatskin water bag had a hole in it and therefore the goatskin supplier was to blame. That fellow was then called, but he maintained that it was the stitcher of the skin who should be blamed ... and so it went on until some poor wretch was sentenced to hang. But now that person was so emaciated and thin that no rope was able to hang him!

The King was not to be thwarted, someone had to hang, so he ordered that a fat man should be found in the Kingdom. The only fat man in the Kingdom was the disciple, so he was hauled, bewildered, before the King and told he was to be hung. The disciple pleaded, 'Sire, what have I done wrong?' 'You are the only fat man in the Kingdom!' Then the disciple, in his desperation, remembered the Master and called inwardly for his help: 'Oh Master help me, I erred in not heeding your words.' The Master suddenly appeared, and told the disciple to ask to be hanged and leave everything to him. The Master then approached the King, and sought to know what was happening. The King explained, and the Master cried out, 'No, no! please hang me instead!' But at that the disciple came forward, 'Sire, you said I was to be hanged, and I beg you to do that'. So there upon the Master and his disciple appeared to have an argument, each seeking the right to be hanged, until the King intrigued, intervened, 'Why are you both so anxious to be hanged?' Then the Master said, 'Today is a most auspicious day. Death by hanging today means a direct path to heaven. So naturally we are both seeking the privilege.' The King was thrilled, declaring, 'The prerogative is mine' and he gave the order for himself to be hanged. All the people were delighted to carry it out and get rid of him, and they promptly did so before he had another caprice and changed his mind!

Nilu, with little asides by Baba, gave a very comical account of the story, and everyone had a hearty laugh.

Baba continued to come from time to time to Poona from Mahabaleshwar for treatment after His piles operation. He would however only come for the day, and He did not stay again at Guruprasad for quite some years. Meherwan said, 'My cousin Dadi had recently graduated and after obtaining his Bachelor's Degree in Agriculture, he got a position in the Horticulture Research Station in the government gardens at Ganeshkind where he was allotted a nice, secluded cottage. So in the intervening years before

He returned to Guruprasad, Baba used to come and stay in Dadi's cottage. It suited Baba's requirements ideally being secluded with beautiful gardens and a flowing river nearby.

1952 – 1954

From Mahabaleshwar, Baba moved to Hyderabad for His Manonash phase, and it was not until early 1952 that He came again to Bindra House after a period of nearly three years. There was great rejoicing in the household. He had come to see a dentist, because Mehera had persuaded Him to have dentures before His trip to the West in April 1952. Baba did not like dentures, but to please Mehera He agreed.

Meherwan recalls that He looked much better in health. He had been building Himself up in preparation for His visit to the West. He would do the same before His long fasts, and He would then extract that last ounce of energy from His body. In speaking of this, Meherwan mentioned that Baba liked soft food and would eat very fast, and at the same time, telling those with Him not to eat fast! Eating as He did, the food tended to be scattered as a child's would when eating. This is the reason Mehera later used to tie a full length bib to prevent spillage on His clothes. Within an hour, sometimes less, He would have a motion. His bodily functions were most unusual. He would have several motions in a day, and if He did not have several, then He would say He was not normal. Even when He was on a fast, with perhaps one cup of coffee each day, He would have several motions a day. One day Eruch commented on this to Baba, asking how it was possible to excrete so often with no food, and Baba answered, 'Don't ask silly questions!'

His mother Shireen commented to Gaimai at one time, that even as a small child, Baba had a delicate stomach, and much to her exasperation, He would leave excreta in various places.

Meherwan had by April 1952 graduated from college, and on one of his visits to Bindra House, Baba told Meherwan to see him after lunch and He would decide on Meherwan's future. Meherwan was very excited and quickly ate his lunch, which brought a rebuke from Baba, 'I asked you to eat slowly.' Then Baba continued, 'Do you want to do more study?' 'No, Baba.' 'Then what is it you want to do?' Meherwan replied, 'Baba whatever you decide.' Baba thought for a moment or two, and then asked, 'But what would you want to do?' Meherwan again said, 'Baba, whatever you decide'. But in his heart Meherwan was hoping that Baba would tell him to come and live with Him. Again Baba asked Meherwan what he would like to do, and this time before Meherwan could answer, Baba said, 'Alright I'll decide for you. Do not enter into business, take up the first job that is offered to you, and be of help to the family.' And before leaving Bindra House, Baba said to Papa, who was concerned about Meherwan's future, 'Don't worry about Meherwan, I have decided for him and every thing will be alright.' And He shook Papa's hand, perhaps to signify that Meherwan's fate had been accomplished and sealed.

Some little time later, Meherwan was employed as a clerk in an insurance office the first job offered to him, despite his Degree in Science. He began on the 20th of May and a few days later news came of Baba's first car accident. As Meherwan pointed out, it was significant that in the accident in America (the West), Baba was with His women mandali, and was injured the length of the left side of His body: and in His second car accident in India (the East), He Was with His men mandali, and He was injured on His right side. Meherwan also commented that Shiva's form sometimes shows the left side as female and the right side as male.

Meherji was one of the Mandali who accompanied Baba on that fateful visit to the U.S. and he later told the Bindra House family how serious Baba was in specifying to the men Mandali that the trip was to be no picnic. He said 'I have some very serious work

to do, and you must pay great attention and care to the duties I give you. I am warning you now that it will not be a picnic or joy ride'. Then He said to Meherji 'You will have to be with Me, and look after all My personal needs, because of Eruch's absence'. And Meherji said he had a sense of foreboding when Baba said this.

After the accident Meherji was given the task of attending to Baba's personal needs and Baba reminded him of His words that He would be required to do this. As Meherwan commented, 'See how well Baba had planned everything. In the beginning of their journey Baba had even delayed getting into the car, so that the car would be in the determined place at the determined time for the accident.' Meherji then confessed how grateful and forever beholden he was to Baba to have been given the opportunity of personally caring for and serving Baba. He had never attended a sick person, let alone Baba, but Meherji put his heart and soul into it and Baba, even in His weak condition, would help and guide him in his service.

In speaking of this, Meherwan was reminded of a Jivanmukta, a Perfect one without duty in the world, who came to their home in Nagpur, and taught Gaimai, Eruch, Manu & Meheru how to personally serve as they were required to do with Baba later in life. The Jivanmukta was named Mukka Baba which means Silent Baba. He would not speak but communicated by signs. Yet with the family He spoke, and at one time Eruch had the opportunity of asking why Mukka Baba spoke to them, but not to others. He replied; 'You expect me to speak to dumb animals? I speak to humans, not to animals.'

The first time He appeared was during a hockey match in which Eruch was playing, and after the game He accosted Eruch, 'Son, I am hungry. Can you give Me a good meal?' Eruch invited Him to the family home in Nagpur, and in due course He came. He was almost naked, only a small loin cloth on His body, the skin of which was not only filthy but hard and wrinkled like a crocodile's

from exposure to the elements. Yet He entered with great authority as though the place belonged to Him. He sat on the sofa in the drawing room in a very regal posture, and said, 'Before you give Me a meal, I need a good bath, so arrange for hot water.' After the bath, He asked for butter to be rubbed into His skin, and He would only accept food prepared by Gaimai and the family, not the servants. Fortunately, as Meherwan commented, Papa was not present on Mukka Baba's first visit, but subsequently when Papa was present, he would be very perturbed at His imperious and lordly manner and requirements. When He ate, He directed Eruch and Mamma in serving Him, and Manu and Meheru in how to stand and fan Him, and again how to serve Him. Thus He prepared them for their role in serving Baba.

After Baba's return from America, He rested for a time in a rented bungalow in Poona, and during that stay He visited Bindra House, and held a darshan program for one day. Meherwan remembers Baba sitting on Papa's bed in His shorts with His foot still in an elastic bandage, the people coming in one door, taking darshan and then filing out the other door.

In early November, Baba called a special meeting at Meherabad, and then before the beginning of His tours of Hamirpur and Andhra Pradesh on 15th November, Baba said that He wished to bow down to His three Perfect Masters who were most associated with His present advent. So He went first to Sakori, bowed down at Upasni Maharaj's Samadhi, then to Shirdi to bow down to the 'grand old Man' as Baba referred to Sai Baba. Still on the same day, He came to Poona and went to Babajan's Samadhi late at night or just after midnight. He then directed the rmandali, except for Eruch, to proceed to Bombay, and He, Gustadji and Eruch came to Bindra House. He occupied Papa's bed as normal, the door was shut, and Eruch sat in attendance in a chair just outside the room. Although Baba directed that the household should sleep, Meherwan and the others were conscious of Eruch

awake all night, and hearing from time to time Baba's clap, and Eruch rushing in to attend to Him.

The next morning was very cold, and Baba asked Gaimai for a warm coat. She found a long buttoned coat with a high collar and reaching to the knees, known as Sherwani that belonged to Jal Kerawalla. It fitted Baba like a glove and Baba was delighted saying, 'Now Jal, My very close one, who has passed away, will be accompanying Me after all in this work,' and He continued to wear it throughout the tour.

This reminded Meherwan of a touching incident concerning Jal's passing away. Jal Kerawalla, a high Government official, loved Baba very much and was one of those close to Him and often called by Baba to be with Him. On one such occasion, Baba sent a telegram to Jal in Nagpur (where he was stationed) to bring a thousand rupees to Him at Meherazad. So Jal immediately came, handed Baba the money and stayed at Baba's request for a delightful, satisfying week. Returning home, Jal travelled via Pune in order to visit the Bindra House family with whom he was very close. While there, he suddenly said to Gaimai 'It has just occurred to me - why did Baba ask me to bring the money to Him personally, it could easily have been sent by telegraphic transfer'. Gaimai replied 'What are you saying?! How very fortunate you are to be called into His presence on any pretext!' Jal of course agreed, but wondered. A week later he suddenly died of a heart attack. So Baba had given him a last blessed darshan in this lifetime, on the pretext of wanting a small sum of money for some work.

Meherwan was not able to accompany Baba on His tour, but he gathered from Eruch that there was a tremendous feeling of love that Baba gave out, and a wonderful response from the people to that love. He recalls Eruch describing one scene in the south where the main offering of the people to Baba was bananas. The chief Baba-lover and organiser of the program, a lawyer, had built a platform just big enough for Baba to be seated and a few Mandali

to stand beside and behind Him. As the people filed before Baba, the lawyer stood to the side of the platform, and piled the offerings to Baba around him to keep the platform clear. Hour after hour the people came, each bringing bananas, and steadily the mound around the lawyer grew, until incredibly he was submerged in bananas, with the people then frantically throwing their love offering onto the mound when they realised the darshan program was ending. When the Baba lover was unearthed from the mound, he was quite dazed from the experience, from the atmosphere of Baba's love and the people's devotional response to Baba's presence. For days he roamed the streets unable to work, became Mast-like and died a year or two later.

Baba returned from the tour and stayed at Meherazad. During this time Meheru, Meherwan's sister, had considerable health problems, and before shifting to Dehra Dun, Baba visited her in hospital. Baba comforted her, reminding her to remember Him, and to repeat His Name. Soon after this, He came to Bindra House for one night before proceeding to Dehra Dun for the next six to seven months. During that time Meheru was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and despite treatment she suddenly passed away. It was, Meherwan said, a great shock to Gaimai and Papa, particularly Papa, and after Baba returned from Dehra Dun, Papa gave vent to his feelings, expressing anger that Baba had allowed his daughter to die. He was very upset and the family tried to pacify him, but Baba, so lovingly, allowed him to express his feelings, and thus in time Papa quietened down. Baba then consoled him and the whole family.

Wadia Park 1954

Meherwan was able to get special leave from the insurance company to attend the Wadia Park darshan in 'Nagar and the men's meeting at Meherabad, both in September 1954. He remembers

the beginning of the darshan program when Baba bowed down to the congregation of men on one side and then to the women on the other. Then He said 'Now I will be one amongst you and I will sit with you.' He sat first with the women and then with the men, and as He did so there was a wild, overwhelming stampede of the people to touch Him. Meherwan said that he was very nearly trampled down. It was frightening, such was the fervour of the people, and he lost a shoe in the melee. When Baba began giving prasad, Meherwan was able to have a clear view of Baba giving with both hands, so that as many as possible of the tremendous crowd could receive His blessing. From morning to evening, with only a brief break in the afternoon, Baba gave prasad, at an incredible pace, and Meherwan could see that His coat was drenched with sweat. Both this program and the men's meeting later in the month were filmed by Sam Kerawala with a primitive 8mm movie camera, Meherwan helping him.

The late monsoonal rains, known as the 'Elephant Rain' began the night before the commencement of the men's meeting of the 29th and 30th September, attended by 900 from the East and 18 from the West. The rain poured for hours, and the ground, soft after harvest, became a quagmire. In the morning when Baba walked towards the pandal where the meeting was to be held, His sandals became stuck in the mud and He walked barefooted the rest of the distance. That little incident was significant at least for one pilgrim - he was but sixteen years of age and very disgruntled with the mud, especially when his sandals were stuck in it. He thought, 'Does Baba even know of our discomfort? He will come in His car wearing comfortable sandals.' The next morning he saw Baba walking, and the same thought came back to him. At that moment Baba lost His sandals, but continued walking barefooted in the mud, and the young pilgrim deeply regretted his thoughts.

During 1954 Meherwan had several visits to Baba at Satara - on one occasion Baba had requested that the projector be brought

to show film footage of Baba taken by Sam Kerawala and Deshmukh. When he entered Rosewood Baba was busy cropping the hair of a mast, and Baba called Meherwan to hold a torch while He was cutting the hair. After the haircut, Baba took the mast to a bathroom, and gave him a good, rigorous bath. After this was completed, Meherwan remembers setting up the projector and screen, and how Baba came and helped. But Meherwan said with a quiet smile, 'The help would be Baba's way - for example He would say 'That's right now,' and I would protest, 'Baba, the screen is a little crooked' and Baba finally saying, 'Enough! Let it be!'

* * * * *

In 1956, Meherwan was under extreme pressure in his work at the insurance company. This pressure, and the long hours late into the night, took a toll on his health. It created a mental condition in which he had episodes of strange sounds in his head, disorientation and a momentary blacking out. Baba heard of this, and sent word that Meherwan should take a month's sick leave, and spend it at Meherazad with Him. The company allowed this because the pressure of work in the office had eased. This was the first time Meherwan stayed for an extended period at Meherazad.

Baba was at the time preparing for His visit to the west, and as usual the pace was hectic. One of the tasks to be completed was the preparation of messages for the West. Eruch said to Meherwan 'Here are some unpublished discourses from the 30s and 40s. You have time now, so extract small passages from them, as Baba does not want to give long sermons.' So Meherwan, who was there for rest, was also caught up in the busy pace, and he would be busy from morning to evening. Sometimes Baba would come and say, 'Why are you doing all this? You have come here for rest, and instead you are working too hard. Now stop typing.' 'But

Baba,' Meherwan replied 'Eruch wants it done and there isn't much time.' And again Baba would sympathise, when actually He was pleased and happy with Meherwan's devotion.

On one occasion Baba came into the room where Meherwan was typing and said, 'Again you are typing!' At that point Meherwan had one of his blacking-out episodes, and it was a few moments before he could respond to Baba's query,. 'What is wrong with you?' Meherwan tried to describe his condition, and Baba said 'It is good that it happened when I was here.' He said to Meherwan 'Call Gustadji.' and when Gustadji had come, He directed him to put his hand on Meherwan's head and to bless him. Then Baba said that Meherwan would not experience another such attack. Meherwan confirmed that that was true. So the typing and retyping continued.

Eruch then suggested that Deshmukh who had originally typed the long discourses, should be called to do the final editing of the messages. When it was done, and the result was read to Baba, He really liked them. The messages eventually became the book *Life at its Best*. It was during this stay, that Baba suddenly dictated the life circular in which He stated that a great personal disaster was awaiting Him. Mandali Hall was then still no more than a stable, and He would sit with the mandali in one of the side rooms. It was on such an occasion that Baba dictated this message to Eruch emphasising that the disaster would test the love and faith of His lovers.

This stay at Meherazad, Meherwan said, was a happy, intimate time, and there were some delightful moments for him, - and too some counselling that would be with him forever. When he first arrived Baba said to him, 'You have long ears, listen well. Let everything that is said by others go in one ear, and out the other.' Baba was advising Meherwan to be an observer - not to harbour and dwell upon what is said and done by this one or that one. Be a witness to life, listen, observe and do not get involved.

One such delightful time was when Baba gave Meherwan the

book Kon-Tiki, the account of the journey by Thor Heyerdahl across the Pacific on an open raft built in the ancient tradition of the Polynesian migrants. He said, 'Read this, it is a very interesting book.' So in the midst of the editing work he was doing, he also had to read the book - and every day Baba would say, - 'How far have you read?' Perhaps Meherwan would say, 'Baba, I'm half way through it,' and Baba would answer, 'Hurry up, hurry up, there isn't much time left!' He took great interest in Meherwan reading the book, asking 'How do you like it?' 'Yes, Baba, I'm really enjoying it, and that is why I am reading slowly.' 'There,' replied Baba 'I told you that you would like it! But hurry through it!' Meherwan said that it was a wonderful book which he did enjoy, as he indeed enjoyed the whole stay with Baba. Meherasad was very open then with few buildings, and wide open fields. The sunsets were beautiful, and one evening as he was admiring it, Baba passed by, stopped and stood too looking at it, saying 'What a beautiful sunset!'

As said earlier, Baba was preparing for His visit to the West and He was eating well and going for walks. Some one would accompany Him and He would walk at an amazing pace. Once Meherwan was with Him, and he had to almost run to keep pace. On their return, Baba said, 'I feel quite sweaty!' and Meherwan said, 'But Baba You walk so fast!' Baba replied, 'This is nothing compared with the pace I set in the early days'.

Chhagan, one of the old mandali, was called by Baba from 'Nagar for night duty. He had an Ayurvedic practice in his house, so he could finish his daily work and come on bicycle to Meherasad at 7pm and be on watch throughout the night. Then he would return home, have perhaps two to three hours sleep and conduct his work for the day. He was one of the early, rugged disciples who could endure such routines - of course, as Meherwan commented - Baba gave him the strength to do so and he had the blessed opportunity of being with Baba. In this case, Meherwan remembers, from 7pm the time for arrival of Chhagan became 6.30pm and after a few

more days Baba instructed that he should come at 6pm. So He would increase the time of duty and Meherwan was given the task of telling Chhagan of the changes. When speaking of this, and commenting on the toughness of Baba's regime for His mandali, Meherwan remembers Eruch asking the family, 'What is the most difficult weight to lift in the world?' When they could not guess he said, 'When you are really sleepy, to lift your eyelids'.

It was during such a period with Baba as this one in 1956, that Meherwan saw again that understandable, natural humanness of his Beloved Baba. While allowing him to see it, He also never allowed him to forget His divinity. With His forthcoming visit to the West in 1956 He would, for example, show a sort of nervousness that any human being might experience, and would exhibit little butterflies, as it were, in the stomach. Baba would say, 'How will I be able to face these journeys? My health is not good. How will my lovers see Me? Will I look wan to them?' And the mandali would assure Him, 'Baba, You look fine, and as usual whenever the programs begin You will begin to look radiant, glowing and most loving. Your lovers will see that and rejoice.'

So Beloved Baba would exhibit characteristics of a normal person, and His close lovers particularly would witness this humanness, and along with that His suffering, yet when He came before the world, He was divinity in action. Reflecting on this, Meherwan paraphrased Baba's words: No sooner does He take on the mission of Avatarhood than He begins to suffer - taking on the suffering which the world must go through because of its karma. He does so in order that the world is not, as it were, drowned in its karma. Those very close to Him saw and felt intensely this suffering of His.

Another delightful occasion for Meherwan concerned Gustadji and his ways. During his visit to the West with Baba in 1952, Meherjee bought Gustadji a handsome gold watch showing date and time. Gustadii chose it, and Meherjee bargained with the

Western shop keeper as though he was an Indian, purchasing a number of watches at a very good price. Gustadji wore the watch during the visit together with his fine Western style suits, and it is said that he looked like a visiting continental professor or dignitary.

On his return to India the watch and the clothes were carefully locked in a trunk, and Gustadji resumed wearing his old patched and re-patched clothes.

During this stay Baba suddenly said to Gustadji, 'Meherwan has been here for some time. Have you shown him your watch?' Gustadji immediately gestured to Baba, 'shh, don't say this in front of all. I would like to show him, but people mustn't know of it.' Baba played along, and looking around said, 'Yes, yes! So Meherwan, Gustadji will call you when no-one is around and you go quietly to him!' To Gustadji, He said 'Show him what a beautiful watch it is, show him the alarm, and the date and all about it.' And Gustadji hurriedly responded 'Yes Baba, I will show him.' After some time Gustadji clapped and brought Meherwan into his room - a very small room filled completely with trunks and boxes and piles of old papers, and even scraps of paper and empty cigarette boxes collected from wherever he was. Then he closed the door and the one window, looking around at the same time to make sure no-one was watching. He just had the trunk open, when there was a knock on the door, and he hurriedly shut the trunk and hid it again. When he opened the door it was Baba - 'Have you shown Meherwan yet?' 'No Baba, I am about to'. Baba came into the room and Gustadji then showed Meherwan the watch. 'See,' Baba said, 'how beautiful it is. Now show Meherwan how the alarm works.' Meherwan admired the watch, and the sound of the alarm, 'Yes Baba it is indeed a beautiful watch'. After this, Gustadji then said 'Now you go, and I will pack up the watch so that nobody gets hold of it!'

The old papers which Gustadji collected, he would send to Meherwan's sister Meheru to sell, and then buy sweets for him. At one time when staying in Satara, the papers had not been sent to

be sold for months. Gustadji asked Adi Senior, who had come to Satara for a meeting, if he would take them with him in his car. Adi, thinking that only a few bundles were involved, agreed. But to his consternation, bundle after bundle appeared, and his luggage rack, boot, back and front seats were overflowing. At this point, Adi threw a fit. 'Gustadji, this is a car not a truck! It's a new car and I don't want all this rubbish in it'. And in exasperation he began to throw the bundles out, with Gustadji, crestfallen, looking on. At this point, Baba appeared: 'What's going on here?!' Adi said, 'Baba he asked me to carry bundles, I agreed and now look, the car is overloaded.' But Baba gestured, 'No, you agreed to take them, so now you must reload the bundles into your car and carry out your word.' 'Yes Baba.' So Adi grudgingly reloaded, cursing the day he ever agreed to take the old man's bundles of junk in his new car.

But as Meherwan remembers, Gustadji wasn't the only eccentric one among the close Mandali by any means. He recalls a very amusing incident involving Pendu, Donkin and Aloba. Pendu had been left in charge at Satara while Baba was at Meherazad for a month's rest and change before he left for the West in 1956. During this period Pendu wrote a long letter to Baba, and even in the midst of the hectic preparation for the journey, Baba asked Eruch to read it.

The letter began by hoping dear Baba and His companions were having a very peaceful time while he, Pendu, had been left in charge of seeming lunatics. The situation had got on his nerves, but it was also so humorous that he had wanted to tell Baba. He then wrote of Donkin who had, since the tremendous strain of writing the epic 'The Wayfarers', become quite eccentric. He had in a sense become like the Masts that he had described so vividly in his book. He would perhaps talk to a person and go on talking ad nauseam, often of irrelevant, unimportant things; or he would shut himself in his room for days. But this time, Pendu wrote, Don's eccentricity had almost reached a climax: Early in the morning Don

began talking to Pendu, the hours passed by, lunch came and still he talked continually. Throughout the afternoon and right up to retirement for the night Don talked non-stop.

The next day Pendu tried to avoid Don but was again caught by him. Fortunately for Pendu, and unfortunately for Don, he mentioned the Shah of Iran. Aloba, originally from Iran, happened to pass by, heard Don's words, and immediately began to relate the entire known history of Iran. Aloba now went on talking non-stop. On and on he went, until Don tried to escape by fleeing to the toilet, but he didn't escape. Aloba followed him and continued to talk loudly through the door. Finally Don could not stand Aloba any longer, and rushed out of the toilet and into his room, slamming the door after him and locking it. Aloba was not so easily deterred, and for some time shouted and banged on Don's door. Don did not respond, and in fact did not come out for some days. Pendu wrote in great detail, and Baba was very amused and entertained by the account.

Baba's second car accident

During the early 1950's, up to the second car accident in 1956, Baba did many lightening tours all over India. It was on one of these tours that Eruch drove hundreds of miles on Indian roads north from Satara, and was then asked by Baba to drive straight back and reach Satara within 24 hours. Eruch said 'I'll try Baba' and he drove non-stop for more than 24 hours; during that time he felt as if he had lost all control of the car, that he was in a tunnel through which the car was speeding and someone or something else was controlling the car, and he would often momentarily pass out. Eruch was so fatigued and concerned after the tour, that he told Baba that he would not drive again. Baba responded, 'Why? What is wrong?' and Eruch replied, 'Baba, it would be very serious if I continued to drive. At one point I had the urge to just drive the car

into some ditch and end everything as it were!' Eruch felt that something strange was occurring within himself, yet could not describe it. But Baba said, 'Don't be foolish. Nothing will happen.'

But something did happen - shortly after that journey, Baba had His second car accident, and Eruch was driving.

Speaking of the accident and of Baba's preparation for it, Meherwan was reminded of a cricket match that Baba requested be arranged in 1954, some two and a half years before the accident. In expressing His wish for the cricket match, Baba said that He had some very important work to do through the match and it was to be taken very seriously - and this was at a time when Baba was still troubled with the piles operation, and He was not in good physical condition. Baba then dictated the names of the men He wished to take part in the game, and letters were sent out accordingly. The first site selected by the mandali for the game was not approved by Baba, but the second one was. It was about 13 miles out of Satara on the road to Poona, and was a very large open area surrounded by mango trees, a part of the compound of a government rest house at Udtara.

The open area was levelled and prepared over several days; and Baba inspected the work two or three times. This, as Meherwan pointed out, showed the seriousness which Baba gave to the match. To the men participating it might have been just a game, but apparently not to Baba. (From boyhood Baba had loved the sport of cricket, and in His travels He would even have the car stopped for a little time in order to watch some kids playing on the roadside.) Everyone was called one day in advance, and there were in all some 24 or 25 men. They were divided into two teams, Baba on each side, and all were exhorted by Baba to play to their utmost capacity, each team really trying to win. Nariman and Sarosh were the rival captains. Sarosh won the toss and decided to bat first.

Well the game began. Sarosh had mostly younger men on

his team, and they piled on the runs. Baba acted as wicket keeper, and knowing how agile Baba was, Meherwan thinks that perhaps he helped the batting side by not catching or stumping the batsman out. Eventually the team was all out, and Nariman's team then batted after a little tea and refreshments. But the batsman on his team were not too good and the wickets were falling fast. It looked at one stage as if Sarosh's team would easily win. During the game there was much shouting and merriment and protests on the umpire's decisions - and the more there was, the more Baba enjoyed it.

Then Baba came on to bat, and He absolutely devastated the bowling. He was, you might note, 60 years of age. Sarosh's bowlers really tried their best, but Baba hit the ball to all corners of the ground. Despite His physical condition, Baba was extremely fleet-footed running between the wickets, and the score rapidly increased. It was impossible to dislodge Him, and when the scores were equal, Baba called a halt to the game. It was a tie!

The game lasted about five hours, and although Baba had asked various ones from Bombay, Poona etc to bring choice refreshments, many were too tired to really enjoy the food that Baba gave personally to each. The next morning was even worse for the men - many unaccustomed to physical exercise, had difficulty getting out of bed! - but Baba was extremely happy with the day, and showed that He had enjoyed it immensely.

It was exactly opposite the place of that game, that the second car accident occurred. Meherwan remembers that the section of the road where it occurred was visible from the playing ground. So, as Meherwan points out, Baba selected the spot two and a half years earlier. It was, as Beloved Baba said later, all meticulously planned when He was Mohammed.

Another interesting point that Meherwan mentioned was that the monsoon rains began the day after the match, so again it was perfect timing.

Although after the second car accident Meherwan did not see Baba for some days, he recalls many details of the accident and of subsequent events in good detail. He recalls Eruch describing the number of times Baba changed his position in the car and then, as they approached Udtara, how he felt as if the car was on a very slithery and slushy surface, taking away all control of it. The car then lurched suddenly to the left, ploughed through a culvert and landed in a ditch until, with great effort, Eruch got it partially back on the road. At that point Eruch passed out. In later discussion, it appears that while Eruch was moving the car out of the ditch, it hit a culvert, turned over the culvert back into the ditch, turned again and finished facing the way they had come. Despite many broken ribs, Eruch, with tremendous effort, got Baba and Vishnu transported in a passing car to Satara, and Pendu and Nilu (who was dead) in a truck shortly after. He then passed out again and awoke in hospital, his whole chest heavily bandaged with elastoplast. Every breath meant excruciating pain.

Some days later, Meherwan and Nariman brought an ambulance to Satara as per instructions; and that was Meherwan's first sight of Baba since the accident. Meherwan describes Baba's face as all black and blue with the right side particularly bruised, eyes swollen so that he could barely see, and his nose smashed and also badly swollen. His leg was in plaster because of the fractured hip joint. It was most distressing to see Baba at this time. Kaka came from Meherazad to see Baba and after doing so was so affected that he fainted whilst at the toilet. Meanwhile Donkin was frantically trying to determine the best treatment and condition for Baba. Meherwan says Don showed little outwardly, but it was clear that inwardly he was most agitated. It was particularly distressing to him that the normal hospital beds gave Baba so much discomfort, and so little help for His condition. So Don came to Poona and devised a bed from junk which he bought in the flea-market - a special bed which he continued to modify and

adjust so that Baba would have minimum disturbance and maximum comfort. While working on it, he would have Meherwan lying on it, and then at times go into a reverie and leave Meherwan lying there for an hour or more in the sun. But the end result was a remarkable piece of medical engineering. He was, of course, an orthopaedic surgeon as well as a medical doctor, and was helpful in both of Baba's car accidents.

When Meherwan went to the hospital he found Eruch and Pendu in an old stable. It was the only vacant spot in the hospital for them, and a dividing wall was hastily constructed to create two rooms. Both men were in terrible shape. Pendu had a fractured leg and hip and severe concussion in the head, - so severe that he was delirious with hallucinations. When Sidhu, who was attending him, came into the room Pendu went into tantrums seeing Sidhu as satan or a devil come to take his life. It was by Baba's grace that Pendu was not permanently brain damaged. When he was partially recovered, he was brought on a stretcher to see Baba who was recuperating in Poona, and he wept loudly, 'Baba I am totally crippled!' But Baba gestured 'Don't worry, you will start walking before I do. Now go to Meherabad for good rest, get well soon and you'll walk before I do.' Pendu however continued to groan.

Baba, after a time, moved from Satara to Poona to a bungalow called 'Silver Oaks' for better treatment and for rest. Then He returned to Meherazad, and thereafter during 1957 he visited Poona and stayed either at Guruprasad or Ganeshkhind Gardens where Dadi Kerawalla had now been promoted to Superintendent.

The number one condition for a stay at Guruprasad or in fact any accommodation offered by a devotee, was the exclusive use of the premises for Baba and His mandali. During one of His early stays at Guruprasad, the Maharani's brother came unannounced and demanded use of a vacant room. Baba did not confront him, but the next morning He moved to Dadi's cottage at Ganeshkhind

Garden. When the Rani came to know of this she wrote to Baba apologising and begging Baba to return to Guruprasad. Baba replied that He would surely come again some time in the future, but only on condition that none should disturb Him. At this point the Rani had not even met Baba, yet never again was Baba disturbed during His stays at Guruprasad. In fact, an interesting incident occurred with the Rani. Later she was passing through Poona, and she wished to give a message to the caretaker of Guruprasad, but, although the owner, she would not break Baba's order, and she stood outside the gate some 200 feet from the house. Eruch, passing along the verandah, noticed the figure standing at the gate, and then aware that the figure remained so, approached and found a very well dressed lady. 'Are you waiting for someone?' asked Eruch. 'No, I am the Rani of Baroda, and I wish to give a message to my caretaker'. 'But then why do you not come in?' 'I dare not enter and break Baba's instructions. Could you please give the caretaker this?' But Eruch sent the man to her and in the process Baba heard of the incident, and was very touched to hear of this obedience from one who had not even seen Him.

Meherwan commented that the Rani's love for Baba was very deep, and at times when she was called to Baba, she would not hesitate to prostrate herself before Him in full view of her servants and staff.

It was during 1957, Meherwan recalls, that Harry Kenmore first came to India to treat Baba with chiropractic adjustment. He was the one who first detected that Baba's right foot was slightly shorter than the left after the accident. He had special chappals made for Baba by an old Baba lover in Poona with cork padding inserted in the right one. By Baba's Grace, Harry's whole-hearted treatment enabled Baba to commence walking again, although the doctors had predicted that He would not be able to do so ever again. This seeming miracle made it into the local newspapers,

and they hailed Harry as a modern Namdev.

The story of the saint Namdev is a famous one in Maharashtra. His father was the priest of a temple dedicated to Lord Krishna. Each morning the mother would prepare food, which the father would sanctify by offering first to the statue of Lord Krishna in the temple, and then be eaten by the family. One day, when Namdev was but a small child, the father was out of town, and so the mother directed the child for the first time to take the food to the Lord. This the child did. He put the food before the Lord saying, 'Come Lord and begin to eat.' But there was no response. After some time the child again said with some insistence, 'Come on, it's getting late, and I have to take whatever remains home.' Still no response - and the child began to plead, 'If you do not eat, my mother will think I haven't offered you the food'. 'Please eat or I'll be beaten at home'. Again no response and Namdev became very annoyed and said: I will beat you if you do not begin to eat. And with that, he went outside searching for a stick. While he did so, it is said that the statue of the Lord came to life and began to eat the food. Namdev returned and seeing the Lord eating, was happy, saying, 'It is good that you are eating. Now finish quickly so I can take the remainder home'. But when he did return home with the remainder, his mother scolded him: 'Is this the way you offer food to the Lord? You ate some! This is very naughty of you!' Namdev was bewildered: 'No mother, I did not eat, and I had great trouble getting the Lord to eat.' 'Now stop this nonsense! Tell me the truth - you felt hungry and ate the food!' 'No mother, I am telling the truth.' In the meantime the father came home and on hearing of the child's assertion, beat him for telling lies. But still the little child stuck to his story, and he said to his father, 'Please take me tomorrow to the temple and you will see what happened.' So the father agreed, and the next morning the child offered the food to the statue to eat. But the Lord did not respond because of the presence of the father. Then the child

pleaded with the Lord, and finally wept in anguish and distress, saying, 'If you do not eat, my father will not believe me, and now I will break my head if you do not comply.' So because of the love and faith of the child, the Lord revealed Himself. The statue came to life and it is said that in doing so the father was also able to have the Lord's darshan.

Thus the newspapers said that like Namdev, Harry's love and faith had made Baba walk again when the doctors had said he wouldn't.

In 1957 Baba stayed at Ganeshkhind Gardens, and sometimes He would call Meherwan there to fan Him, although normally He never liked breezes. At Guruprasad, the construction of the building and the size of the rooms was such that the atmosphere, even in summer, was cool and airy, and there was no need for fans. But then when Baba would retire for the night, all doors and windows were firmly closed, and Baba would rest or sleep with blankets completely covering Him.

On one stay at Guruprasad Harry Kenmore had the mandali obtain an old - fashioned pram with large wheels and a high handle. This was stripped inside, and a large stone put in it to give it ballast. Baba then pushed the pram up and down the verandah, and this gave Him needed and reasonably comfortable exercise. At one time, whilst Baba was thus walking, Deshmukh remarked, 'Baba how fortunate that stone in the pram is!' Baba stopped in His tracks, 'What did you say?' 'Baba that stone is really fortunate to be pushed along in the pram by You!' 'Is that so?' said Baba, 'Are you jealous of its good luck? Come then and you sit in the cart!' 'Oh no Baba! Not like that!', protested Deshmukh. 'Come now, into the cart' ordered Baba. So there was Deshmukh perched in the cart, and Beloved Baba pushing him! What a sight it was! Everyone laughed, particularly at Deshmukh sitting in the pram unperturbed as usual that he was an object of mirth and perhaps a little of ridicule.

But that was Deshmukh - no matter what his Beloved Baba asked him to do, he was totally prepared to do it. Meherwan recalls an occasion when Baba gestured to Deshmukh before a large group of mandali and devotees, 'Would you like to marry Dr Alu? If I tell you to do so, would you do it?' Now Deshmukh was married with children and Dr Alu was elderly and had never been married. Deshmukh immediately leapt to his feet and said, 'Yes Baba, right now!' 'But' said Baba 'What will your wife Indu say about that?!' 'Baba, that's not the point. If you want me to do it then I'm ready now.' Dr Alu by this time was sweating profusely at the prospect. Then Baba looked at her, 'Are you afraid that I will ask you to marry him?' She was totally nonplussed and speechless. Baba after a few moments gestured, 'No, no, relax, I will not ask you'. But Deshmukh was ever ready to do his Master's bidding whatever it may be and he had no concern with people's reaction, their laughter or their ridicule. He was definitely one of the characters in Beloved Meher Baba's court.

His marriage to Indu was an example of his nature and of his intense love for Baba. He brought a set of photos of various girls and asked Baba to choose one for him as wife. In Baba's informal gatherings of His mandali and others that He called from time to time, Deshmukh would often jump up and begin giving a speech, or what was much worse, insist on singing during a singing program. He would suddenly rise during a program and say, 'Baba I have the urge to sing also!' And would proceed to do so. This was painful for Baba because Deshmukh had absolutely no singing voice, and Baba would order him to sit down. This became so frequent that Meherwan remembers a memorable time for all when Baba gave Jimmy Mistry an order, 'It is your job to restrain Deshmukh and if you fail to do so and he rises and utters even a single word or a single note, then you sing with him before this audience' - which of course was the one thing Jimmy feared most in life, as he could not sing a note and did not know any songs. Baba repeated the threat,

'Deshmukh says one word and you sing!' So Jimmy spent the whole day of programs concentrating on Deshmukh and having no enjoyment or even awareness of them. He had to physically restrain Deshmukh at times, and even while sitting Deshmukh would try to speak and Jimmy would rush to put his hand over Deshmukh's mouth. For Baba and everyone around it was great fun - but not for poor Jimmy. Deshmukh was irrepressible and impervious to Jimmy's physical restraints and even insults and curses.

On the other hand there were times when Baba would suddenly ask Deshmukh to speak as He did once with a group of children. Meherwan remembers that Deshmukh gave a beautiful talk to the little ones, and Baba remarked, 'All you people think Deshmukh is a goofy person, but who amongst you would have given such a good impromptu talk, coming down as he did to the level of a child's understanding.' (Dr. Deshmukh had a doctorate in philosophy and lectured post-graduate students.)

* * * * *

In 1957 Baba returned to Meherabad and Meherazad from Poona, and whilst at Meherazad He announced to a small meeting of selected people from Poona, Bombay etc. that He was entering a very deep period of universal work. To each one He gave certain orders, including the repetition of the name of God. These were written down by Bhau and handed personally by Baba to each with the words: 'From your heart, follow what I have given you here. It is a very critical time for Me.'

It was during this same period that Eruch was sent by Baba to Meherabad on a forty day water-only fast. Baba gave Eruch certain orders with the fast, and then drove with him to Meherabad where he was to stay. On returning, Baba said that it would be very difficult for Him without Eruch as his companion, but that Eruch's

stay at Meherabad was very important for His work. At the end of the forty days Baba Himself returned to Meherabad and in a ceremonial way, brought Eruch back to Meherazad.

It was also around this time, in 1957, that a cousin of Meherwan's, the daughter of Gaimai's elder sister, was married to a Baba Lover. Meherwan said, 'I mention this because this event illustrates the importance of doing exactly what Baba says to do.' Meherwan then continued, 'The marriage was to take place at Akbar Press, and Baba gave permission to the Bindra House family to be there four days before the event in order to prepare for it. But Roshan said to Baba, 'Being younger than others in the household we should not go so late to help in the preparations.' When Baba then asked what did she suggest, she replied that they should be there ten days in advance. Baba agreed and the matter was settled. The very day after their arrival, the mother of the bride came down with severe influenza, and all the household followed suit except for Roshan - and so she had to spend the entire time attending to them! But Beloved Baba of course saved the day, and ensured the wedding was a very happy occasion. They all recovered four days before the wedding, and all the preparations were completed just as Baba had originally decreed! Baba sent Chaganmaster to assist with the cooking.

It was acceptable Meherwan said, to speak up if Baba asked for suggestions, but if He did not, then even a seemingly casual remark by Baba must be followed to the letter.

Meherwan is vague now about dates, but he thinks late 1957 or very early 1958, Baba had a sign painted which was apparently carried and displayed wherever Baba stayed. The sign said that there was to be no discussion of any personal matters with Baba, and that Baba would not involve Himself in personal matters. However when He came to Bindra House, He Himself expressed the wish that Sam should marry Roshan! Eruch then said, 'Baba, why are you saying this when at the same time we are displaying

Your sign?' But Baba simply said, 'This is an exception!: Now Roshan is a nice girl and I would like her to marry Sam'. Banumasi said that she had no objection, so March 21st was fixed for the wedding - a big day for the Zoroastrians, being their New Year's Day in Iran. Baba also specified that the ceremony be in Poona and that He would come especially for it. This He did, staying in Dadi's cottage in Ganeshkhind Gardens and sending Eruch to attend the wedding. It was a very big affair with many people and by the end the organisers were exhausted. When it was over, Baba sent Sam and Roshan to Kashmir for their honeymoon, and said to Meherwan and Dadi, 'Seeing how tired you two are after the wedding, you can have a honeymoon for a few days with Me at Mahabaleshwar.'

There were, Meherwan remembers, a few others invited by Baba and they all stayed with Kohiyar Satarawala in his Rippon Hotel. The hotel was at the time a rather run-down hotel, serving ordinary vegetarian meals, but the Satarawala family loved Baba very much and it was located close to Florence Hall where Baba was staying.

Meherwan remembers when they first arrived that Baba was working with Kaikobad in another room. Baba would bow down to Kaikobad hundreds of times, thousands of times while Kaikobad would repeat some Name of God. Meherwan and the others sat quietly until Baba came out of the room. He looked rather tired, but then fresh after washing His face. Baba, after greeting us, said, 'Now you all go and rest, come the next day and we'll have a nice time together.' So they settled into the hotel and were made welcome by the family.

The next day Baba greeted them, sat them down and then asked each how they slept, how was their health, did they eat well, etc. Everyone replied happily until Jimmy Mistry said, 'Yes, Baba, everything is nice, but the food Baba is nothing but grass.' 'Well' replied Baba 'grass can be good for the system, so the food there

will be good for the health. Do justice to it for the duration of your stay.' Just a passing remark, as it were and they all had a good laugh. Then Baba continued 'Now you are all in Mahabaleshwar a place of great scenic beauty and so I give you a choice – go sightseeing or stay here with Me and have fun playing cards, etc.' Of course it was unanimous that they stay with Baba and so the day was spent there. Meherwan often expressed surprise when he recalls days spent in Baba's company - how the time would slip by so quickly, what joy there would be in doing simple activities with Baba, and the natural way He would join in and participate with them. Well, in the evening they returned to the hotel, thinking how they would be given rather insipid food, and they began to talk of going and eating in a restaurant. Although Meherwan pointed out that Baba had mentioned- that He would like them to eat at Rippon's, the others then said that Baba had not given any orders that they must do so. It was agreed therefore that they would eat out and they went to a place - 'Silverine' famous for non-vegetarian snacks and meals. They had a lively party there with much tasty chicken and meat kababs and cutlets. After a good nights rest, they returned the next day to Florence Hall and Baba. He lined them all up and began with Meherwan, 'Well, what did you eat last night?' He replied 'Chicken Baba.' 'What!' exclaimed Baba as if he could not believe His ears. 'Chicken isn't served at Rippon's - how did you eat chicken?' Then Meherwan told the whole story. Baba was upset: 'I asked you all to eat at Rippon's, so how could you go out and eat elsewhere?' They all stood there like naughty schoolchildren. Baba said, 'You shouldn't have done that. However casually I spoke, it was My wish that you eat at Rippon's. It is not good that you to have done otherwise.' Then Baba continued, 'Alright, I forgive you, but don't eat out again. Now let us play cards.' All the guilty party was in one team, and Baba was with the others. At first the guilty ones won a few games, but after that they lost repeatedly and were made to rub their noses on the floors

before Baba. As they did so, Baba made remarks such as 'Now the chicken is protesting in your stomachs!' and 'Remember all the chicken you have eaten and it serves you right having to rub your noses on the floor!' The whole day, Baba reminded them of the chicken eaten the previous night, but otherwise to rub noses on the floor was a mild and very acceptable penance for the group.

In relating this incident, Meherwan commented that usually Baba did not like the close ones to him eating chicken, but particularly if an animal was especially killed for a person. To do so meant all the sanskaras of the animal were absorbed by the person. Baba also said that an animal, which had become a pet, should not be killed and eaten by the persons making the animal a pet. In the early days Baba maintained a very strict vegetarian diet (not even eggs) for all the close ones, but later He relaxed this rule.

Meherwan also remembers looking out the large windows of Florence Hall with Baba towards Pratapgarh Fort where Nehru, India's Prime Minister was to inaugurate a statue of Shivaji. The fort was Shivaji's main fort and headquarters and from Florence Hall, it was perhaps only a mile across as the crow flies. However a journey between the two places would take hours because of the 4000 foot deep valley separating them. There was a large crowd with Nehru and Meherwan remembers it as a memorable occasion and one when Baba spoke feelingly of Nehru. Baba described Nehru as a true Karma Yogi [that is one who unselfishly seeks to do good to others]. Nehru, said Baba, had integrity and a vision of a harmonious, united India, and the country was most fortunate to have a leader like Nehru at that time. Baba expressed sympathy for Nehru, battling as he was divisive and selfish factions around him.

* * * * *

In June 1959 a child was born to Sam and Roshan. A

telegram was sent to Baba, and He was asked what name should be given to the girl child. He called her Mehera, and she became known as 'Baby Mehera' to distinguish her from Baba's Mehera. Shortly after the birth Baba came to Poona and stayed at Guruprasad. Anxious to see the child, He came soon to Bindra house where Roshan and Baby Mehera were staying, and He held her in His lap. Then, despite summer heat of around 110 degrees Fahrenheit during the months of March, April and May, Baba came almost daily saying: 'I have not come to see you all in the house, I have come to see Baby Mehera.' He would dip His little finger in a cool sherbet drink (fresh lime juice with sugar and salt) and place it in the baby's mouth. Francis would murmur 'Lucky Baibee' in typical Australian accent. Papa Jessawala was particularly fond of the child because in Baba naming her Mehera, he thought it was his daughter Meheru returned. Baba did not disillusion Papa, but to the others in the family He said that the baby was not her, but some one very close to Him, one of His old disciples.

On one occasion when Baba sent Dr Goher to check the child's health, she reported to Baba that it was the time to pierce her ears. But Baba was anxious that this would be painful, and had to be assured that it was a very simple operation, a prick only. Yet He said, 'Wait till I come, and I will hold the child.' Later Dr Goher said that she had never felt so nervous as she did doing this piercing, with Baba holding the Baby in His lap and gesturing anxiously, 'Don't do it too quickly ... be very careful ... don't hurt her ... she will feel it ... ' Despite assurances to Baba, sure enough the baby gave a loud cry with the first piercing, and Baba gestured immediately, 'Stop, that's enough, no more, you've caused too much suffering to the little one, and I cannot bear to see it.' It was, Merwan recalled, as though Beloved Baba was experiencing the pain Himself. But then the baby quietened down, and 8 days later with Baba again holding the child, the other ear was pierced without fuss.

In recounting this beginning of baby Mehera's life, Meherwan remarked what a wonderful beginning it was, and how fortunate she was and is. She proved a brilliant child, and at four years of age she could recite the Parvardigar prayer by heart and with excellent diction. This ability stood her in good stead when she was taken to be enrolled in school. The family sought enrolment for her in a very famous school, The Convent of Jesus and Mary School, one which both Mehera and Mani had attended. But the Mother Superior said that the school's enrolment was totally full. So Roshan asked if Mehera could recite a prayer, which she did and the Mother was so impressed with the child's fluency with such big words, that she made an exception and installed an extra desk and chair in the classroom. So Baba's Parvardigar prayer gained her admittance in a Catholic mission school!

Earlier, she had recited the prayer before the packed opening of the Poona Centre and Beloved Baba, present Himself, was impressed and happy, 'See how well she says the words!'

* * * * *

During Baba's stay at Guruprasad in 1959, and in each subsequent year until 1968, He sent Rano and Naja to Bindra House to stay there, and to assist in the preparation of food for Him and the mandali. Whilst there in 1959 Rano became very ill with constant diarrhoea and vomiting, and the doctors were unable to stop the symptoms. At the same time Papa began to have indifferent health, and although there appeared to be no specific ailment, he continued to grow weaker, lying often in bed which was most unusual for him. His usual regime was prayers around 4am followed by an early breakfast, and he would then walk, no matter what the weather was, to visit old pensioner friends. He would return about 11am, and after an early lunch, rest for an hour, and then again walk to visit more friends in the afternoon. But now,

Papa stopped that routine, complaining of a heavy sensation in the chest. Meherwan suggested a cardiogram but Papa said, 'No, I do not like to waste money like that, depriving the family of such a sum'. When Meherwan pleaded, Papa replied, 'No, son, I feel my time is now very near.' 'Papa' rejoined Meherwan, 'You have been saying this for many years.' 'See you people do not take me seriously. I tell you I am not feeling well.' This continued over some days, and then as Rano got worse, Papa began to worry of the trouble the death of a foreigner could create.

During this period Baba came each evening and went to Papa's room where Papa would be sitting quietly in a chair, waiting for Baba to come to him. On this particular occasion, Baba took with Him a glass of sherbet and told Papa to drink it. When Papa began to speak to Baba about his concern of Rano's possible death, Baba said, 'Put a match to all those thoughts. Now is not the time for you to worry about such things: now is the time to repeat My name. Everything will be fine.' So Papa was pacified and he drank the sherbet. Then Baba saw Rano and also consoled her.

But that night Rano's condition became very serious. She continued to vomit, and despite the efforts of a local doctor it went on all night. It was a most distressing night for the whole household. Baba came in the early morning and an interesting incident occurred at the time. The car door was open and Baba swung round, still sitting on the car seat, quiet and withdrawn. He then drew three crosses on the ground in a row with His walking stick, sat for a while still withdrawn looking at them, and then rubbed one of the crosses out. He did not say anything, but later reflecting on the subsequent events, it was thought that the three crosses represented Papa, Rano and baby Mehera who was also ill at the time.

On Baba coming into the house Manu said, 'Baba, Rano is on the point of passing away. She is in Your hands.' Baba then poured a large glass of sherbet and came to Rano's room. Rano

could barely open her eyes, she was unable to speak and she was extremely thin and frail. Baba dipped his fingers into the sherbet, and then said to her: 'When I pour this teaspoon of sherbet into your mouth try to retain it.' Manu held Rana's mouth open and Baba poured the sherbet into it. The liquid almost came out, but Rano was able to retain it. Then Baba gave her a few more teaspoonfuls, and turning to Manu said 'That is good. Now that she has retained the drink she will take a turn for the better. Have no fear. Now slowly feed the rest of the sherbet to her.' He left instructions to Manu to see that Rano drank the whole glass spoonful at a time and both to repeat Baba's name with each spoonful.

Baba walked again the length of the veranda to Papa's room. Papa again expressed concern over Rano's condition, and again Baba assured him and reminded him, 'Leave Rano to me. This is not the time for you to be thinking of anything but Me'. Then He said to Meherwan 'Tonight go to bed at 10pm. That is My order to you. You have had little sleep and that will affect your health. So bed at 10pm.'

In the afternoon Baba came again to Bindra House, and on His way back to Guruprasad He stopped at Meherwan's office. Meherwan was called to the car, and with all the office staff at the door straining to see Him, Baba reminded Meherwan to go to bed at ten o'clock. As the car departed Baba repeated the sign for ten.

That same evening Baba returned to Bindra House, and while leaving the house, gestured to Meherwan, 'Remember to go to bed at ten.' During the evening, Papa was restless and often called to Meherwan to come to him. At about 9 o'clock, Eruch and Goher, on Baba's order, came to check on Papa. Goher found no specific thing wrong except a general restlessness in Papa. Eruch fed him some soup, while Goher administered saline injection to Rano, after which they returned to Guruprasad.

At five minutes to ten Meherwan took his pillow and sheet to

Meherwan Jessawala

his bed on the verandah where he was sleeping because of the heat. At ten o'clock he was on his bed and at that moment, Papa called out, 'Meherwan come quick!' Meherwan rose, torn between Baba's order and Papa's needs. So he just lay down, put his head on the pillow and then went to Papa. That cry was Papa's last and he had a massive pulmonary embolism - a big blood clot in the lungs. His breathing was very heavy and laboured and his body was wet with perspiration. Meherwan realised this was serious, and ran for a doctor. The first did not come, but the second, a woman doctor did come. While Meherwan went for the doctor, Manu and Naja sat with Papa rubbing his chest and exhorting him to take Baba's name. Papa, with great difficulty, said 'Baba' twice but could only bow down to Him the third time. They continued to say Baba's name in his ear and imploring him 'Papa take Baba's name.' But he gave no sound again, and he died with his head on Naja's shoulder.

Eruch was phoned and he went into Baba's room to tell Him. Baba had the sheet as usual over His head, but after Eruch quietly called to Him, He emerged, listened to the news of Papa's passing and immediately went back to His rest without comment. But a little later he clapped for Eruch, and directed him to phone Meherji and tell him to assist Meherwan in the funeral preparations. While Meherji did so (he came from a priestly background and therefore was familiar with the procedure) Meherwan obtained the necessary death certificate, so that the funeral could take place that morning.

Papa's body was taken to the place where it was bathed and clothed, and special prayers were said by a priest. After this, the body was taken to the tower of silence for disposal. As it happened, the funeral ceremony was attended by a very large crowd, because the day that Papa had died, Baba had called His rmandali from various places for a meeting the following day. That morning He directed that all should attend Papa's funeral. So it proved to be a very big affair with all the local friends of Papa's in

Poona and also the mandali present.

At Guruprasad, still early in the morning, Baba decided to go to Bindra house. On arrival Baba told Manu, 'I am hungry, quick prepare rice and dahl for Me'. Then He said to Eruch 'Let's go to the baker. I would like burun bread with the dahl'. Burun is a brown, crusted, shaped loaf, very tasty, and the Irani bakeries are famous for it. The shop where Eruch took Baba was situated on the same road as the place of the funeral ceremony, and as they passed, Baba had the car stopped, and He said to Eruch, 'Go quickly and pay your respects.' So Eruch hurried inside, bowed down to Papa's body, and then continued with Baba to the bakery.

By the time Eruch had purchased the bread and they were returning, the body of Papa was being brought out on an open trolley. So Baba's glance fell on Papa's body, and that is most auspicious. As Meherwan said, 'Papa was most fortunate.' Baba had the car stopped and they sat watching the body being wheeled away. 'What' gestured Baba, 'are you seeing here?' Eruch replied, puzzled, 'Papa's dead body Baba'. 'What is a dead body?' Still puzzled, 'A corpse Baba.' 'But what is it? It is the excreta of the soul' explained Baba. He went on, 'You take food for the body, you extract nourishment from it, excrete the remainder and you experience relief and lightness: so the body is food to the soul and the dead body is the excreta of the soul, and the soul experiences relief as the body is excreted.' Then Baba was driven back to Bindra House gesturing, 'My work is finished here.' Baba had His food in the house which is also auspicious at such a time, and He said, 'I have done My work for Papa. Now, apart from the fourth day ceremony, nothing more needs to be done.'

Meherwan reflectively commented that outwardly Papa was a very hard man, exacting and practical, short of temper, never showing emotion, but inwardly soft and loving and totally devoted to his family and to Baba. He was very touched by the love and respect that Papa had expressed in letters to Baba, that he read

recently in the old records. Baba's gesture for Papa was that of a pistol because of his quick temper. For some time Meherwan and the rest of the family felt Papa's absence very much but, as Meherwan recalls, they were also comforted remembering Baba's presence so much at the time of his passing.

Shortly after Papa's passing, Baba's stay at Guruprasad that year came to an end and preparations began for His return to Meherazad. Meherwan and the family were very involved in the move from early morning. Everything, crockery, furniture, utensils etc had to be accounted for, packed, put away or returned to the place where they had been hired. And in the midst of it all was Eruch, responsible for seeing that every minute thing and every order of Baba's was properly handled and carried out. He was as a result under more than the usual heavy pressure.

Baba was sitting in His chair in the big side room off the main reception hall, and He called Meherwan, Gaimai, Banumasi and Manu to Him. He embraced Gaimai and gestured, 'Don't worry.' At that she burst into tears, and then continued weeping, kneeling with her head in Baba's lap. Baba lovingly caressed her gesturing 'What is it? What is on your mind?' In between sobs she said, 'Baba, Eruch is behaving strangely, He is so brusque with You. I can't bear to see that. I feel He will become your Judas!' Baba looked askance, 'What are you saying?!' and He called Eruch. But Eruch was impatient at being called, and then exasperated and even more impatient as his mother continued to weep and wail about him to Baba. Eruch flared up, 'Baba, this is not the time for such things! There is so much to do! I don't know what has come over Mama.' But Baba stopped him saying, 'No, stay here, light a match to all those other things, this is more important than all that.' So then Eruch grumpily stayed in obedience to Baba's orders, and Baba gestured to Gaimai to repeat her wail, 'Baba he behaves very rudely with You these days and I can not bear it!' 'She was', said Meherwan 'very flustered and depressed,' and he thought that she

was probably affected by Papa's passing, and now by Baba's departure from Poona. All this, and Eruch's intense preoccupation with Baba's wishes and needs, was too much for her, and triggered her outburst. 'Baba I fear that Eruch will become your Judas and what will happen!' 'No No!' said Baba 'He is my Peter, my right hand! Have no doubt or worry about that. You are most fortunate to have such a son'. In the midst of the hurry and scurry going around Him, this small yet powerful drama was being enacted. Gaimai was thus consoled by Baba, and as she calmed down He said, 'You must not feel in that way. Be brave. I am always with you, and now I have in mind to call you to Meherazad very soon.' That quietened her down even more, and Eruch was thankfully able to return to his chores. He knew that if anything was not done, not done properly, there would be trouble, and botheration for him later.

After leaving Guruprasad, Baba travelled in Adi senior's car to Bund Garden, and sat in a chair beneath the huge mango tree that Babajan would sit under in years past. This was the pattern set by Baba as He departed from Poona. Many lovers would gather there with Him, and He would be with them for some time. Then arti would be sung, Baba would wave to all, and He would depart for Ahmednagar and Meherazad.

First Gaimai, then Manu, and later Meherwan in turn were called for short stays at Meherazad.

* * * * *

1960 and again Baba ordered: 'In March we march to Poona,' and Guruprasad was made ready by Meherwan and family after sanction had come from the Maharani for Baba's occupancy. So three months of virtually constant darshan programs followed, much to the great joy of lovers throughout India. During the week it was mainly lovers outside Poona who came, and on the weekends

local and Bombay Baba lovers. The mandali were happy over these three months, despite the constant flow of lovers and the consequent lack of privacy. To see Baba in a different sort of mood was a great relief to the close mandali: Baba in seclusion meant Baba withdrawn and demanding no disturbances what-so-ever. In Guruprasad the mood was relaxed and the pattern of the day varied and changing.

After Baba returned to Meherazad he again called Gaimai and then Manu to stay for a period. It was during Manu's stay in that year that she witnessed Beloved Baba's intense physical suffering. Baba was struck with Herpes-Facialitis a very painful form of the illness on the face involving inflammation of the entire tri-geminal nerve. Manu told Meherwan that it started as a small pimple on the chin and because Baba said that it was painful Goher applied some cream to it. Within a couple of days it had spread over one side of the face, even part of the eye but fortunately not into the eye. It also went inside His mouth, into the throat and into the ear. It was extremely painful for Baba and of course He said that it was part of His work for creation that He had to suffer. Manu helped Mehera and the other women mandali with Baba and she found the stay a most painful one.

After she returned to Bindra House, Meherwan was called to stay at Meherazad. By this time Baba had more or less recovered from the main symptoms of the illness, but the after effects was still very much there, and Baba was very withdrawn. It was the first time that Meherwan had seen Baba so completely withdrawn. There was no verandah on the men's side in those days, and Baba's chair would be placed in the open and the men mandali would sit around Him and not a word would be spoken. Eruch would try to create a conversation but Baba would not respond, sitting with His head down and only occasionally forcing a smile. It was very painful, very distressing, especially for Meherwan who had never seen Baba so withdrawn, so much devoid of His usual

sense of humour. Baba would express stray remarks such as 'You have no idea what I'm suffering'. It all became so unbearable that Eruch one day burst out saying, 'We do not care for Realisation, we do not seek any benefit for ourselves, burn us all up, but we request You, please ease the burden on Yourself! We can not bear to see You suffer like this.' There was a hushed silence, and then Baba looked up with a slight shadow of a smile and dismissed Eruch's plea saying he should restrain himself and not be carried away. That was the only response that Baba gave. And another time, Eruch asked Baba, 'Baba we have arranged a drive to the water pumping station (a picturesque series of buildings near the city's reservoir). Meherwan has not seen it - wouldn't You like to show him around?' Baba agreed, although it was clear He was no mood for the outing. Still He walked around the station with Meherwan and two or three of the mandali and showed Meherwan - 'See how the water is filtered, see how it is pumped into these pipes etc.' But it was really no pleasure for Meherwan, he was conscious only of Baba's suffering, and Baba enduring the outing for his sake and to please Eruch.

The pain continued, the rash had subsided, but the disturbance of the nerves was such that the pain persisted in what is such a sensitive area of the body. He had difficulty swallowing and of course the pain of His fractured hip joint was always with Him. It all brought about a depressed physical condition, and yet He continued His work in seclusion creating tremendous pressure on Himself. Finally at the request of Goher, Nariman, living in Bombay, contacted a doctor Ram Ginde - acknowledged as the top Neurosurgeon in India at the time and among the top in the world. He persuaded Ginde to come and examine Avatar Meher Baba in Ahmednagar - although how such a busy surgeon ever agreed to come would be a mystery except that he was destined to meet his Master.

He was duly driven by Nariman and Meherji, arriving late

morning at Meherazad. He was taken to Baba and after examining Him, Ginde said, 'Baba, I am afraid I do not know how long the pain will last. It may continue for many months. There is one remedy - but it is not a good one.' Baba gestured, 'What is it?' 'If I give you an injection of alcohol in the precise place in which the pain originates then the pain will cease. But to do so is very dangerous: If a mistake occurs it could cause blindness or paralysis, and yet the pain will persist. Really I would not recommend my own father to have the procedure.' But Baba asked that he administer the injection, and although Ginde again and again expressed his grave concern, Baba persisted in asking that it be done, saying, 'This condition is interfering in My work. Go ahead and do it.' Then Ginde said reluctantly, 'All right, but then we must go to a hospital.' 'No, no.' Baba replied 'Do it here in my bedroom!'

Finally Ginde was persuaded to do it there and then, already overpowered you could say by Beloved Baba's presence and personality. The procedure was a very difficult one and was normally done in a well-equipped surgical theatre with x-ray guidance to monitor the location of the needle to the correct spot. Ginde had the room highly disinfected, gave certain instructions to Goher, and then had Eruch help him wash his hands as surgeons do, instructing Eruch in his talkative way. Before he began the injection, he said to Baba, 'Baba, I have no means of knowing when I have reached the correct spot - How will I know that?' Baba replied 'I will give you the sign when you have done so.' This was possible because Baba did not agree to take an anaesthetic as would normally be the case. This top neurosurgeon was taking an incredible risk in accepting all these conditions, but indeed the whole incident, as Meherwan comments, could only have occurred with God-man in total command of an otherwise impossible situation!!

Kaka told Meherwan later that he almost fainted as the long, hollow, thick needle went into Baba's right temple. Baba sat the

meanwhile immobile on an ordinary chair. Then the inner needle was inserted down the first when Baba indicated that the spot was reached, and a drop of alcohol was injected on that spot. The moment that was done, Baba gestured, 'The pain is gone.' It was a wonderful moment. 'How do you feel now?' asked Ginde. 'Excellent' replied Baba, 'I have no pain now at all.' Ginde was most impressed. 'It has to be by Your Grace alone!' he exclaimed spontaneously, 'I have never done such an injection in my life as a surgeon, in these surroundings, without exact measurements and constant monitoring by a screen in a hospital!' It was, as Meherwan comments, a seemingly impossible feat.

Ginde then asked Baba to walk in order to check His balance. Baba took Ginde's hand and they walked up and down the room. Baba gestured to Goher that food should be brought for Ginde and when it arrived, Baba fed the first mouthful to Ginde Himself. Then, freed from pain after so long, He too had a hearty meal. After eating Ginde departed. He could not have gone more than a short distance to Ahmednagar when the pain returned. Baba said to phone Adi senior to stop the car as it went through 'Nagar, and inform Ginde that the pain had returned. This Adi did, and Ginde was extremely happy to hear the news! 'It is so good that this has happened - now there will be no facial paralysis. Nothing further can be done.'

It seemed apparent that the whole episode - painful as it was to Baba - was designed to bring Ginde into the net of His love which it indubitably did.*

* * * * *

Earlier in this year of intense seclusion and poor health, Baba had sent a message to Ben Hayman and Joseph Harb that they

* For a full detailed account of this visit of Dr Ginde, refer to *That's How It Was: Stories of Life with Meher Baba* by Eruch Jessawala.

could come to see and be with Him. This invitation was then frequently cancelled or postponed because of His seclusion and health, until finally a cable was sent to Ben-Jo (As He referred to them) offering them the option of five days now or seven days in February - possibly of the following year. Immediately a return cable came stating that they would have the five days now. They followed the wise old maxim of a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush! The reaction of the mandali was mixed - happy that they were coming and yet concerned that the poor fellows would come all the way from the States and only experience Baba in such poor health. A few days before they left the U.S., Eruch expressed his concern saying, 'Baba, why not cancel their visit?' 'But if I cancel it now their hearts will be broken - so let them come.' 'But Baba, will you be able to attend to them?' 'We will see - let them come.'

Even on the day of their arrival Baba seemed to be particularly pulled down in health, and at the same time very restless. Every so often He would ask Eruch, 'When will they come?' Then the queries became more frequent. 'Why not phone and find out if they have left Bombay?' So messages began to be passed back and forth - first to Bombay, then to Poona, and then after an interval they learned that they had left Meherji's house with Adi jnr. 'Why has the car not come yet?!' 'Baba it will take some time.' 'I hope,' gestured Baba, 'that they do not have an accident'. Baba continued to be restless. Finally He sent Meherwan in the De Soto car to see if they were on the way. 'Make them come quickly so that I can retire into the house.'

Meherwan said that he had only gone a mile or so when he saw Meherji's green car approaching. He slowed them down, shouting, 'Quick! Go quickly - Baba wants you there as soon as possible!' Adi jnr. who was driving, increased the speed, and Meherwan hastily followed to witness the meeting with Baba. Ben-Jo and Adi jnr entered the room with Meherwan following, and Meherwan said, 'You can not imagine the change that took place in

Baba's physical appearance as we entered. From a picture of pain, with pale, drawn features and quiet withdrawal which had been the pattern for some time, Baba became a picture of health and vitality. Baba said to them, 'How do I look?' They responded happily - 'Baba you look radiant and beautiful!' The mandali just looked at each other - they had seen this transformation many times before, yet they never ceased to be amazed at the breath-taking change that occurred when Baba so willed it.

For the five days the three were present at Meherazad, the whole atmosphere was lively, with Baba giving discourses, being loving and humorous, listening to music records. Baba might say to them from time to time, 'You have no idea what I am suffering: you see me radiant, glorious, but you have no idea what I am passing through inwardly.' But it was, you could say, so many words to them. They did not see Baba at the end of the day, and the effect that all this effort He was making during the day was having on His body. The fact that Ben was very deaf for example, did not help. because it meant an additional strain for Baba in creating conversation. But on the other hand, Ben, as an osteopath, had the rare and precious opportunity of adjusting his Beloved's neck and spine, and Baba said after the adjustment that He felt much better. Ben also showed Eruch how to do the adjustment, using Meherwan as the patient. In all respects it was a happy five days for Ben-Jo.

* * * * *

1961 and again Guruprasad was prepared for Baba's stay. This time Baba stayed in seclusion, and all His lovers were warned that if they disturbed Him He would abruptly return to Meherazad. So Guruprasad remained quiet, and all took great pains not even to go near Guruprasad in case they in any way displeased Him. However, much to the joy of the mandali, one day Baba suddenly

announced that He would give darshan to all the small children of His 1overs. Then it was pointed out that small children would need a parent or guardian, and so Baba agreed that one adult should come with them. This was done, and it was a happy time for children and guardians alike, and so too for the mandali who welcomed the relaxation of His severe seclusion work even for a day.

After that, Baba decided that all His adult lovers could have His darshan - but with very strict guidelines. Each could see Him once only within a two week period, each could bow to him and then return home, with no questions and no disturbance of any kind. This led to a great rush of people, despite the prospect of only a glimpse of their Beloved. Amongst that rush came Harry Kenmore from New York for just a glimpse of his Beloved 'Pop' and in accordance with His wish, he returned that night to New York.

That year, 1961, there was phenomenally heavy monsoonal rains in Poona and the earthen-work dam gave way. There were devastating floods, in some areas more than 20 feet deep. One such area was a hospital where Naja, one of the women mandali, was recovering from a delicate operation. Before the flooding Naja thinks Baba visited her, but whether He did or He sent word, Naja was instructed against the expressed wishes of the surgeon, to leave the hospital the next day. She said to the protesting surgeon, 'I can not explain but I must leave this place.' She returned to Bindra House in the rain, but before the flooding occurred. The flood, when it happened, was sudden and completely submerged her room at the hospital, and thus if she had remained she would have surely drowned. The floods caused great damage and some loss of life and when recounting this, it prompted a memory in Meherwan, of his mother telling him many years earlier that Baba's mother said to Baba, 'Merog, you say that there will be widespread destruction, so when you destroy Poona do so with water, not fire.' She asked this because she was afraid of fire. Baba simply

responded 'Yes, yes mother. Don't worry.'

* * * * *

In general, Meher Baba did not like Indian classical music, but Meherwan remembers one particular program during the summer stay of 1962 at Guruprasad which Baba liked. Again the stay was at first very quiet, but later there were gatherings which included some good musical programs, and the one from Vinayakrao Patwardhan, a leading classical singer of India, really stood out in memory. Baba liked his performance very much and gave him His handkerchief as a reward. Baba also asked him to give a performance at the upcoming East West Gathering which he did. In classical music Baba especially liked a certain raga. Usually this particular raga was sung late in the night as a finale, but in the program Baba asked Patwardhan to sing it for Him then. It is a raga that is very moving with the lover singing to His beloved with the heart breaking in longing. Patwardhan sang it with great depth of feeling, and many at the time, Meherwan recalls, were on the verge of tears. Meherwan also said how Baba's obvious enjoyment and elegant gestures in such musical programs brought out the best in the artist, and in fact probably proved to be the best performance of their life.

Perhaps it was this year or the next at Guruprasad that a farewell concert by the Poona Bhajan Mandali was particularly memorable. Baba had called for them, and then asked Madhusudan to sing some ghazals. He sang with such depth of feeling, and Beloved Baba gave out such an outpouring of love, that it was difficult for the mandali and lovers to hold back their tears before Him. This was even more the case when Madhusudan sang in the program a farewell song to Baba. It seemed that Baba opened a little the window of His heart and all were flooded with His love. The sadness of His departure seemed more intense than

ever before. One of the Poona lovers, Palmar, a tireless worker for Baba, told Meherwan that he had cried like a child on returning home from Guruprasad. He said, 'I had never wept like that before. I don't know what came over me, Baba seemed to have flooded my heart with love, and I wept and wept.'

The main theme and preoccupation during 1962 was the pending East-West Gathering, and with the Mandali it was not only because of the detailed preparations, but particularly because of the physical condition of their Beloved Baba.

Baba returned to Meherazad at the end of June, and then between that time and His return to Guruprasad towards the end of October, the pressure of work for the coming gathering grew in intensity. Accommodation for 150 odd Westerners was a problem, but even more so for the much greater number of Easterners. There was so much to attend to - travel arrangements, to and from the places of accommodation, medical facilities, preparation of the Gathering site, and above all the constant flow of correspondence and telegrams. As the work was rising steadily in intensity and quantity, the real cause of worry was the steady deterioration in Baba's health. He grew weaker, and more and more unwell, and Eruch would suggest cancellation of the program. But Baba would reply, 'It must take place come what may.' Then at times even Baba would ask if it could be cancelled, and after all the mandali agreed, Baba would again say, 'No, no, it must go on!' It increased the tension and all thus shared in His suffering.

When Baba returned to Guruprasad, He specified that all the workers helping to prepare for the Gathering must have lunch with Him. He fixed the menu, a very simple one for all - tea and sweet buns! Nothing else - but it was a time of great joy for them, to be in His place and in His presence.

The first day of the Gathering dawned, a cloudless bright blue sky overhead, the pandal matching the sky in its brightness with different coloured cloths, and under the pandal rows upon rows of

chairs for the 5000 plus lovers, and the most wonderful spectacle of all - a total transformation in Beloved Baba's appearance. Now He was radiant, His cheeks pink and rosy, His beauty and vitality stunning even the mandali who were accustomed to sudden changes in His health and appearance.

During that period of 14 days in 1962 when He allowed His Eastern and Western lovers to come and be with Him, the strain on His body was immense. He did not measure the giving of His love to each, and at the end of the day after leaving the dais He would be totally exhausted, and would not even be able to walk without support.

* * * * *

Before the present Poona centre was built, meetings were: held in Bapu Shinde's small shop in the heart of the city. Each Monday the shop was closed and Baba lovers would gather and sing bhajans. In time the shop became too small and a Baba family, the Mudaliars, offered their cottage for the meetings.

In the early years, Baba's birthday celebrations were also held in that cottage, and the family would lovingly decorate the house and rooms. One year while the son of the family was busy decorating, he fell from a height on his head and died in hospital. It was a terrible tragedy for the family, but such was their love for Baba, they continued the preparations and then participated in the celebrations. Baba sent them a loving message which consoled their hearts, and later visited the house. Meherwan remembers that for this visit the family and neighbours spread lovely saris strewn with rose petals the length of the road to the house. What a treasure to treasure! - saris on which the Lord has walked.

In that same year there was also tragedy for another Baba lover, Jal Dorabjee. He was a school friend of Padri, Pendu, Adi and others, and they brought him to Baba. He had a good singing voice,

and in the early nineteen twenties he often entertained Baba with songs. On one such occasion, at Baba's hut on Ferguson College road, Baba seemed especially pleased with his singing and said, 'Come and be with Me and I will make you a man!' Jal thought of his mother and sister totally dependent on him at the time, and he declined Baba's invitation. He always expressed great regret over that decision, realising in time that with faith in Him, Baba would have taken care of everything. He continued to love Baba, and was from time to time very helpful in Baba's Cause. One instance of this was in the early nineteen sixties. With Baba calling more and more people for lunch at Guruprasad, the pressure on Naja and the Bindra house family to provide the food, became too much of a burden. So Baba decided that only His food should come from Bindra house and the rest was to come from an outside source. Jal Dorabjee came to know of this and immediately offered to send the food. He had a hotel nearby and he told Baba that providing extra meals would be no trouble to him. Baba insisted that some payment be made and Rs.1 per head was agreed upon. Meherwan commented that those meals were truly feasts.

In nineteen sixty four the news came that Jal's daughter and one year old grand-daughter were drowned in a boating accident. Baba called the family and consoled them. The husband, who had refused the previous year to come with his wife for Baba's darshan, now regretted that decision. He said later how he wished he had come with his wife then, and that a tragedy had been necessary to bring him. In Beloved Baba's presence he said the grief and pain simply disappeared, and a great feeling of peace was experienced.

Again in 1964 there was yet another tragedy in the wider Baba family. Shatrugan Kumar was a very close lover of Baba from Dehra Dun, but who often stayed with Baba for periods of time. Kumar's son, in his late teens or early 20's, worked in some mine in Bihar. He was not well and Kumar mentioned to Baba that he was to return home for rest, but Baba said that he should instead come

to Guruprasad. The day he came he was obviously not well, and the next day he had a high fever. Kumar took him to the hospital and he was found to have leukemia. Beloved Baba in compassion had called him in time to have His darshan and company. Baba visited him in hospital and told him not to worry and to constantly think of Him. Shortly after this he died. Baba directed that a telegram be sent to his mother asking her to come and see Him, but not saying anything of her son's death. Subhadra came very happily, and then in Baba's presence, Eruch and Gaimai gently told her the news. She cried but at the same time remained resigned to His will; and gradually with more time she was consoled and happy to be in Baba's healing presence. Kumar, on the other hand, showed no emotion. Subhadra stayed some days with Baba, and during that time Baba asked Kumar to do a dance with a big hoopla ring. This Kumar did very energetically and spiritedly - celebration, as it were, of his son's final time in his Beloved Baba's company.

Baba's stay at Guruprasad in 1964 was a secluded one, so He decided that His lovers could have His darshan at Bund Gardens as He left Poona for Meherazad. When this was announced there was great rejoicing. But about a week before He was to leave, the monsoon rains came and such was the downpour, that Baba decided to give darshan at Guruprasad instead of Bund Gardens. People came in droves, and Guruprasad was packed. Baba, seated in the hall, was aware that Ramakrishnan had not arrived, and signalled to Meherwan in one corner of the hall to see if Ramakrishnan was coming or not. Somehow Meherwan made his way through the mass of people, walked the distance to the gate, and looked along the road for sight of him. There was none, and he made his way back to report to Baba. Then he returned to his corner. After three or four minutes Baba again signalled: Go and see if Ramakrishnan is coming. It is getting late. Why does he not come? Meherwan again with difficulty and some reluctance,

went to the gate. Still no sign of him, and he returned to Baba to report accordingly. Meherwan had forgotten that he had been with Baba all day, and he felt growing resentment towards Ramakrishnan for depriving him of Baba's presence. Sure enough, after another few minutes, Baba signalled to go out again. Meherwan's exasperation with Ramakrishnan grew, and after reporting to Baba that there was still no sign of him, Meherwan remained outside the hall thinking that there was no point in returning within when Baba would only send him out again. Suddenly he realised how foolish he was being, when the important point was to obey Him, no matter the nature of the order, and not to seek selfishly to be always in His presence. So he returned and waited for Baba to send him out. But Baba did not do so - the lesson had been learnt. How patiently Baba would attend to the gradual awakening of His lovers, even in the midst of the hustle and bustle of a big gathering. Meherwan was reminded again to be subservient to His wishes - just that. Ramakrishnan did finally arrive. Baba gave him some final instructions and then the gathering was over with everyone kissing His hand in farewell.

On His return to Meherazad, but somewhat later in the year, Baba complained of pain in the neck, and numbness down the shoulders and arms. X-rays showed that the problem was cervical spondylitis. When Meherwan came to Meherazad for his annual month-long stay, Baba's condition had become more serious and the various treatments tried had no effect. It was thought by the local doctors that traction should now be given to relieve the pressure of the calcified vertebrae. Goher was anxious to start this treatment, but wanted Dr. Ginde to come and oversee it. He was notified and as usual came immediately despite his extremely heavy work load. He examined Baba and the x-rays, and emphatically ruled out the proposed traction. He said Baba's body needed rest, that He should not be sitting and moving about, and instead He should lie down even during the day. Then he asked

Baba to lie on the bed and he instructed the mandali on the correct pillow, the height of it and its placement, and how Baba should lie on His side with the feet supported to minimise the strain on the neck. He took so much care and concern for Baba. He also that Baba should have a surgical collar. He then departed and returned a few days later with a man who specialised in making cervical collars. This man prescribed two - one, a type of traction collar and the other a plastic collar with foam lining for use generally through the day. The traction collar was adjustable with two horizontal metal rings lined with foam, and with screws that could be used to adjust the height of Baba's head and thus ease the pressure on the vertebrae. This collar was to be worn by Baba for at least two-three hours in the morning and evening. Meherwan was given instruction in fitting the collar and adjusting it correctly. Baba was also asked not to turn His head, but when necessary to turn from the waist. The usual graceful neck movements were no more, and it was most painful for all to see Baba so restricted and so obviously in severe, nagging pain.

A few days later Ginde returned with a highly trained masseur, a Mr. Joshi from a Bombay hospital. He gave Baba massage daily for some days to keep Baba's muscles in trim, and in doing so trained the mandali to continue the massage after his departure. Whilst Meherwan was at Meherazad he massaged Baba's body, but because of its extreme sensitivity, Eruch would do the area around the neck. In recounting such days, Meherwan commented on his great good fortune in being allowed to massage His body every day. He said Baba's body was very delicate, extremely tender, the skin like that of a very young baby with a sort of translucent sheen. He found it impossible to put into words the beauty of His body. Great care had to be taken in handling His body, otherwise nerves could be pinched leading to paralysis of those nerves. It's condition was the result of a very hard and demanding life in which He never spared His body in the service of

His work for His creation. Despite the intense efforts of Ginde, Goher and the mandali, pain persisted. As a result Ginde would become very upset, and Baba would tell him to persist in his efforts but not to worry, because the pain was a reflection of His universal work. He would also say that it would go away when His work was finished; in the meantime Ginde should do his best to alleviate the pain - and He would do His best to increase the pain! The pain did continue for a long time, but eventually just disappeared.

Sometimes as Baba sat in mandali hall, with perhaps Meherwan and Bhau each massaging His feet, Kaka would be sitting nearby, totally intent on Baba. Because of his heart attacks and more recently a failure of his renal functions, some irreversible damage to his brain had occurred, and his behaviour was rather like a little child with almost incoherent speech. Yet despite this condition, Kaka's focus and manner towards Baba was as it had always been, and if given night duty with Baba, he would perform as he had earlier in life. It showed the depth of his impressions of love and service to Baba.

In speaking of Kaka, Meherwan was reminded of him and Baidu!, and the rivalry and the quarrels that persisted between them even into old age. Meherwan remembers how they would push and shout at each other, and this could happen in front of Baba and He might comment, 'Look at these old fellows - at it again - fighting like small children.' Meherwan recalled a particular incident that occurred around this time.

Baba did not like beards but Baidu!, as an old man, was permitted one - a long white beard. (Speaking of beards reminded Meherwan that he as a young man in college had one. Gaimai said it did not look nice on him and to shave it off, but Meherwan would not listen to her. Well, Baba came to Bindra house and as soon as He saw Meherwan's little beard, said, 'What is this, you haven't shaved today?!' and took him to Gaimai, 'Why did you allow him to grow this beard? I do not like it.' So Meherwan was sent off to re-

move it.) Each morning as Baba walked a few times the length of mandali hall supporting Himself on Francis' or Kaka's arm, He would pass His hand through Baidul's beard, and Baidu! would be so obviously happy in receiving this attention from Baba.

One day Baba did not do this. Baba sat down in His chair and the mandali then did the same, taking their usual positions on the floor each side of the hall facing Baba. Baba said, 'Baidul, you noticed that I did not caress you today. I am displeased with you.' But He spoke gently, 'You have not been behaving well. You keep fighting with Kaka, and I don't like it. You shouldn't be doing this.' The actual offence has been forgotten, perhaps a more serious quarrel with Kaka than usual, but in any case Baidu! wept at his Master's rebuke. Meherwan reminisced that it was unnerving to see these tough, rugged men who would bow to no man, but who would weep like small children at cross words from Baba.

'Only Baba,' continued Meherwan, 'could have such an effect on these men. Baba could cut through them like a knife through butter, when not even an earthquake would disturb them. With infinite patience Baba would deal with the moods, the bickering, the little dramas, and bring out the hidden depths of each one. I remember Francis once saying to me whilst on a walk at Meherazad, 'I cannot bear this Man's infinite patience! This Man with just His patience is grinding me to dust! I can't bear it any longer.' I was very impressed with Francis' words - Beloved Baba's infinite patience.'

'There were times when Francis would be in a very grumpy and grouchy mood, and Baba would lovingly ask him to recite one of his ghazals 'Because of love' which Baba liked very much. In this way Baba would often change Francis' mood. But once he exploded in front of Baba, somehow his frustration and anger overcame him, and he spoke in a loud voice. Everybody was distressed and Baba was very unhappy. He looked very sadly at Francis, and said, 'Francis I never expected this from you.' There was such a sad

expression on Baba's face, that suddenly Francis, as it were, came to his senses, and he began to sob loudly. He wept his heart out in front of us all, and it brought tears to our eyes. It was a very poignant time. There must have been something inside affecting him, and Baba was working it out of his system. Baba then called him, embraced him, and so the situation became as it was before the outburst.'

* * * * *

In the early sixties Dr.Ginde had a massive heart attack, but he continued his work as a surgeon. When he came with the masseur for Baba's neck pain, he asked Baba's permission to stay over-night at Meherazad and ensure that the masseur was doing his work well. In the evening after Baba had retired, Ginde expressed a desire to visit Seclusion Hill. Eruch, knowing of Ginde's heart attack, voiced some concern, saying that even the track to the Hill was rough and meant some climbing. But Ginde assured Eruch of his fitness, and so together with Meherwan, they set off. As they proceeded Ginde was inspired by the great serenity and beauty of the area, the immense silence, and after reaching the base of the Hill, he said he wished to go further. Eruch asked, 'Are you sure you are alright?' 'Oh yes Eruch do not worry.' Ginde had fallen in love with the Hill. So little by little, despite entreaties from Eruch to please consider 'should he not stop and return,' Ginde reached the top, even the last part with the narrow ledge.

In the meantime the women mandali saw them going towards the Hill, and reported this to Baba. Now Baba became restless, gesturing, 'Has Eruch no sense, taking a heart patient there?! What if he has a heart attack?!' So He continued fretting and fuming, constantly sending Bhau and others to see if they had turned back. While Baba was extremely restless and concerned, Ginde was assuring Eruch not to worry, and was thoroughly

enjoying himself. There was also a beautiful sunset, and the three of them stayed at the top for some time. When they returned to Meherazad and Baba was told that all were safe, He gave a sigh of relief, but then sent word to Eruch that he should have shown greater sense before taking Ginde up the Hill. Eruch reported what had happened and finished with - what else could he have done?

Sam Kerawala

Banumasi was another of the four Satha sisters and like the others, also came to Meher Baba in the nineteen twenties. She was married, lived in Bombay and had two sons Dadi and Sam Kerawala. Her husband had been left penniless and without training in any profession by his father and the family consequently experienced financial difficulties. But as Sam said, 'My early life was difficult, but a difficulty that could be very easily borne. There was never a single day when my Beloved did not give me a roof over my head, nor food for my well-being.' But because of the financial difficulties, the elder son Dadi lived with his aunt Gaimai from a very early age until Gaimai and family joined Baba in 1938.

During Sam's summer school holidays, he and his mother stayed with the women mandali on upper Meherabad, and during these periods Baba would come on occasions, recline on the Gadi under the tin shed and all the women, even the servants, would gather around Him. Sam was a small child at the time and his memory is very vague, but he does recall that Baba sometimes gave discourses, sometimes there was just chit-chat, casual talk and sometimes He asked for music. Sam remembers the setting of these occasions, but does not remember any details or incidents, including the following which he heard from Mani in recent years.

There was, Mani said, rivalry among the thirty or so women in the ashram for progress on the spiritual path in the form of spiritual experiences and the acquisition of powers. Baba of course knew this, and one day, He took Mani aside and said that the next day He would announce to the women that He had given certain powers to

her, and that they could ask questions and that she would answer. He then taught Mani a series of answers and a few signs would indicate to her the particular answer to the question. At 4pm, everyone was called, and Baba told of Mani's powers and invited them to ask her questions. This they did and with signs from Baba, Mani answered and all were impressed - she did have some power. A few days later, with everyone again present, Baba told them the show with Mani had all been pre-arranged. Baba loved to play such tricks - but the interesting point, which Mani only realized years later, was that Baba knew beforehand what questions would be asked!

Sam's first clear memory of Baba was during a stay at Jubbulpur. He remembers Baba clearly, emerging from the bathroom in His long loose sadra, and with His hair loose. Sam continued, 'Baba saw the three of us, Meherwan, Dadi and myself playing and called us to Him: 'What are you doing?' Then He turned to Gaimai or my mother Banumasi and gestured, 'All day they play and make mischief, and do not even once come for My darshan. You people should train them properly.' He turned to us, 'What you- take Me to be?' I think Meherwan replied, 'You are Lotd Zoroaster' and I said 'You are God'. I do not remember Dadi's reply.

But, Baba knows, perhaps the whole episode was for my benefit, because I do recall saying, 'You are God' in a rote fashion with no awareness of the meaning of the words.'

From his earliest years, Sam was guided by Baba. He was born into Baba's orbit and Baba would remind him, 'Remember I am taking care of you (although Baba said in a moment of divine exasperation to Eruch after one episode of negligence by Sam 'What I have to put up with from this cousin of yours!')' There is a story that Beloved Baba Himself told to illustrate the absolute importance of connection on the spiritual path. Baba said there was a business man, very successful, very busy, and his one recreation was a very occasional walk in the nearby forest.

On one such outing he was more than normally absorbed in nature, travelled further than usual, and became lost. Still he walked and then with dusk falling, he saw through the trees a faint light. Thankfully he came to a small hut and an old man who graciously invited him to share his scanty meal of water and dry bread and to stay the night. This the business man did and during the evening the old man asked him what he did for work. Then with sympathetic questioning the old man learnt of the man's problems, and quietly offered solutions. The insight shown by the old man in worldly affairs, surprised the man. In the morning with direction from the old man, he returned to his home and business, but even in his absorption in the business he remembered the peaceful and loving atmosphere of the old man in his hut, and of his thoughtful words. So at his first opportunity he went again to the old man, and to the same atmosphere. Now as he worked in his business he dwelt more and more in memory of his visits to the hut in the forest.

Time passed by and so drawn was he to the old man that he finally made up his mind to seek to stay permanently with him, and he handed over the business to his sons and left the world. The old man welcomed him warmly, and for the next 20 years the man tended a small vegetable patch, drew water and in general, happily acted as a servant to the old man. There was no mention of spirituality, but after those 20 years he was given God Realisation by the old man who was a Perfect Master. It was all, Baba said, because of connections of long standing. Aeons ago the two men were dogs together in an Egyptian palace, and because of the connections formed, the Master was bound to give his companion Realisation.

To return to Sam - he was a boy at the time, and Baba was at Bindra House. Sam was standing near the door of Baba's room and Baba said to Sam, 'What are your plans when you grow up?' Having read many detective stories, Sam answered, 'I would like to

be a cat burglar.' But, as Sam reminisced, Baba being the loving God, did not laugh or be sarcastic to the boy as any ordinary person would have done, said 'Very good, now do one thing – catch my middle finger. If you can do this then that line of work is for you. If not, forget the idea.' Then Sam said 'I have never seen a middle finger move so fast - it was like lightning and I had no chance of catching it.' So that was that.

Later Baba told him to study medicine, and so in college he took the subjects leading to medical studies. But at this time he became very friendly with a group of wealthy fellow students, and as he says regretfully, 'Like a fool I wasted my time and subsequently failed. But by Baba's grace common sense then prevailed, and I remembered a Gujarati saying 'a crow (myself) cannot afford to dance like a peacock.' and he never repeated that mistake. Baba called him and asked, 'Well, what has happened? But instead of being open and frank with his Beloved, Sam blurted out 'Baba I have lost confidence in myself.' As Sam says, 'It is not easy to confront those luminous, penetrating eyes of God-man'. Baba then said, 'Business is not in your destiny, if it had been I would have financed you in a toy shop.' As Sam took the remark, it could have been Baba's sly reference to Sam's 'playing about.' Then Baba continued, 'Electronics is the up and coming thing, so go to Bombay immediately and get the entire syllabus from the Jesuit college there, return with it and I will give you further instructions.' So Sam did that, and two days later Baba took up a pen, pointedly bringing to Sam's attention that he never touched a pen except for His signature, but that He was doing so now for him. Then, going through the entire list of subjects, marked three: radio-physics, radio-engineering, and wireless telegraphy. Then he said to Sam, 'Now no more fooling around with friends - study carefully, get through the exams and leave the rest to Me. Remember I am taking care of you.'

During the next three years of study, Sam had a very severe

attack of smallpox, so bad that he almost died. Sam should normally have been quarantined in hospital, but Baba gave strict instructions that he remain within the large compound of apartments where he lived. Baba assured the doctor that no one within the compound would suffer, and such was the doctor's faith and respect for Baba, that he did not order Sam to the hospital. Baba also sent one or other of the mandali to check on Sam at regular intervals. Sam remembers Eruch, Vishnu, Dr Nilu and Adi jnr. visiting him. He recovered in time and resumed his studies.

The exams for wireless telegraphy in India were at that time extremely competitive, and hardly five or six passed each year out of more than 300 students. Yet Sam was so confident of his Beloved's blessing that he was the only one of the class to stand up when the class was asked, 'How many of you think you will get through in your first attempt?' Sam did succeed in His exams, and again through Baba's grace he obtained an excellent, well paid job as wireless operator with a British shipping company. This was in 1950, and so for two years Sam enjoyed his post, earning good money and sending a regular monthly amount to his mother. Whereas he had boarded the ship with a small suitcase of clothes that were second-hand from Meherwan and other cousins, now he was able to buy a quite expensive camel-skin suitcase as a present for his mother.

This was sent to her in 1951 via a fellow crew member, and that gesture had an interesting sequel. In 1952 Baba took His women mandali to the USA, and on the way to Bombay brought them to Bindra house. During lunch there Mehera casually remarked that here they were going to the west, and yet she did not even have a good suitcase. At this Banumasi jumped up from the table, and brought back the camel-skin suitcase saying, 'Sam sent me this, it has never been used and it is doubtful that I will ever need it. Please have it if you wish'. Sam was told that Meheramai immediately loved it, and standing at the dining table raised her

hand and implored: 'Beloved Baba give blessings to Banumasi and her children.' and she named Gujarati in this blessing and that, unaware that with each blessing, the Lord of the three worlds was standing right behind her, gesturing 'Amen, Amen.'

* * * * *

Near the end of 1952, Sam received a letter from Meher Baba, 'Baba is worried about His Sam ... has Sam become such an important person that he does not write Me a single letter nor even a birthday greeting? What has happened to him? Has he become so important that he has forgotten Me?' From that time Sam wrote nearly every month and would send birthday greetings too.

In recounting his early history, Sam recalled Upasni Maharaj saying that it is very simple for people to lay their heads at the Perfect Master's feet, but they have no idea what the Master then has to shoulder - everything connected with such people becomes the Master's responsibility and likewise their shortcomings insincerity, ignorance are revealed and forgiven.

Sam then remembered the following story from Sufi tradition: Early on a Friday morning Junaid the Perfect Master announced that He and all disciples would go to the market place that morning. Now it was the tradition (and it is still so) that after their Friday prayers the criminals are brought from the prison, and the declared punishment is carried out in the market place for all to see. On this particular day a thief had been hung, and when Junaid and his disciples entered the area, Junaid went to the scaffold and very humbly bowed to the man. Then rising he immediately signalled to the disciples, 'Now we return to the ashram.' Junaid was highly regarded in the great city of Baghdad and this action of His provoked snide and disparaging remarks from the general populace. The disciples did not like this, and they

eagerly awaited an opportunity to ask the Master the reason for His action. Unlike the Avatar where the atmosphere around Him is very democratic and He allows those with Him to speak freely, the court of the Perfect Master is a very strict one, and only at certain times does the Master permit questions to be asked.

So when they found the Master in a good mood, the chief disciple said 'Please Master, I have a question to ask you.' 'Yes what is it?' 'Master why did you behave like that on that Friday bowing down to a common thief? The crowd made very insulting remarks about you.' 'Whatever the crowd said about Me is of no concern to Me: My concern is your welfare at all times. That thief gave up his life for his profession - you profess yourself to be lovers of God, so something more is expected of you. That is why I bowed down to that thief.'

This led Sam to recall another story told him by Meherwan, who had heard it from Baba. It was during an evening walk from Bindra house with Meherwan that Sam was told of Khwaja Mohein-Ud-Din Chisti and how He became Perfect. He was the younger brother of Nizam-Ud-Din Chisti who was a Perfect Master. His Shrine is at Delhi. Nizam-Ud-Din Chisti had an enormous following among whom was his younger brother, but He knew that most of these were plain free-loaders. One day He called a mass meeting of His followers and He then addressed them, 'I am going to enter this room and I will come out after a few hours. All of you sit quietly and do not move.' So He entered the room. Hours passed by, days passed by and months passed by: slowly people began to leave, and as the years went by finally there was only one man left and that was His younger brother. Nizam-Ud-Din came out of that room after 12 years but as a final test of His brother He emerged as a complete leper with His clothing absolutely filthy and stinking. He removed His clothes and said to His brother, 'Go and wash them on the bank of the river Jamuna.' His brother took the clothes, washed them clean with a bucket of water from the Jamuna, but in doing so

had a feeling of utter revulsion for the smell and the sticky oozing substance that came out of the clothes. That he could have such a reaction in relation to his brother's clothes pained him so much that he drank of the water as an act of penance. The instant he drank he became God-Realised.

Sam also recalled an interesting example of the lover becoming the total responsibility of the Master. Murli, a close lover of Baba and also living at the time with the mandali, was sent on some errand to Hyderabad, a predominantly Muslim city. Now a characteristic of Muslim women is their physical beauty and as Sam said: 'Even the best of minds could take a gallop at the sight of them.' On this occasion Murli passed by the racecourse at a time when rich and aristocratic Muslim women were riding horses for their morning exercise. Murli's glance fell on a young woman and his mind suddenly became overwhelmed with thoughts of her, but then he controlled his mind and went on to complete his work.

In Mandali Hall, Baba was at the same time telling the mandali, 'Remind Me when Murli returns to circumcise him.' Murli returned and Eruch or one of the others said to Baba, 'You told us to remind You to have Murli circumcised.' but Baba gestured, 'Now forget it, he has returned home safely and that is enough.' and Baba went to His room. Murli asked the mandali what that was all about. The mandali replied, 'At a certain time Baba suddenly told us to remind Him to circumcise you'. Then Murli thought back, and realised that that was the time he was attracted to the Muslim woman. That is an example of how the Master is ever watchful over those who have put their heads on His feet.

Baba was at one time in Lonavla for some months. He would call everyone to be with Him, and sometimes after these meetings, someone would find one of their shoes missing. This was reported to Baba and He asked the watchman to be more vigilant and find what was happening to the shoes. Sure enough, the culprit was caught - a very scrawny dog, full of mange and so starving that it

would take a shoe and eat it. The watchman brought the dog to Baba and Mehera happened to learn of the matter and pleaded with Baba, 'Baba can we not do something for that poor animal?' To please Mehera, Baba called Eruch and told him to look after the dog, and to apply curd and sulphur to its skin. Eruch did this and over a month or so the mange began to disappear and hair started to grow again. After some time he became a beautiful clean dog with fine brown hair and quite plump. Mehera was delighted. Baba named him Faifoo.

When Baba left Lonavla, He sent the dog to Padri in Meherabad. Faifoo mated with one of the other dogs there and from the first litter, Baba selected a pair of puppies male and female. Baba gave them to Meheru, Eruch's sister, to look after, but they grew up totally unmanageable, and they were then sent to Bindra House where they were renamed Princie and Brownie. Princie died fairly young from poisoning, picked up in his wanderings from home. Brownie did not wander, was a very good watch dog, and lived until she was sixteen or more years. Whenever Baba came to Bindra House, Brownie would try to jump on His lap, but being quite big, her hind legs would be on the ground with her front paws trying to embrace Him. She would then lick Baba all over.

On one occasion when Baba was leaving the house and Brownie was lying asleep across the threshold, Adi Senior, Baba's secretary and very close disciple, gave the dog a shove with his foot so that she would move and not cause Baba to trip or stumble over her. Baba stopped immediately, very upset and said to Adi, 'What's wrong with you? Why did you do that - kick the animal?' Shaken Adi replied: 'Baba I did not mean any harm. I was afraid you might trip over her.' 'What do you think?! That I am blind?!' And Baba then told Adi, 'Now bow down to the animal and ask her to forgive you.' Adi did just that and Baba departed.

Eruch once described Baba to Sam in this manner: 'Consider

Meher Baba to be electricity of say a billion watts, so brilliant that you would go instantly blind with one glance. So He covers up that intense brilliance with layers and layers of cotton until the light is subdued and hardly visible. But electricity has two properties, light and heat. And that is the reason we are attracted to Him - we do not see the brilliance, but we feel the heat. That heat warms our heart as nothing else can, and we fall in love with Him.'

* * * * *

June 1954 and Sam came home to Bindra House on his first leave. He was called into the dining room by Baba, and there had a general talk with Baba of his sea life, of his habits and he was given certain injunctions.

Baba later returned to Satara and called Sam to be with Him. It was then that He first raised the question of marriage for Sam. Sam recalls, 'At Satara I decided to stand before Him as I did before the Captain of my ship. He gestured to me to sit. I answered 'Baba I'll stand.' Baba looked annoyed, but Eruch was really angry and said, 'Sit down when He tells you to sit!' So of course I sat, and there was some more discussion of my sea life. Baba asked me about marriage, 'What about Roshan as a wife for you?' Now because of the progressive dystrophy in Roshan's brothers and sister, I commented, 'I understand marriage between first cousins which we are, is dangerous.' At this Baba became positively angry, and turning to Eruch, 'Every time your cousin comes, I start having a headache! He is crazy!' Eruch interceded, easing the situation, 'Baba he is simply expressing his point of view.'

But there was another scenario behind this one. Mehera, Baba's Beloved, was especially fond of Roshan, and asked Baba that she not have the same fatal disease that her brothers and sister did. Baba granted Mehera her wish, promising that not only

would Roshan not have the disease, but she would also marry, and herself have healthy children. This of course did happen, and later after the marriage, Baba gestured to Gaimai and Banumasi, 'Now the burden of My promise is over.'

'But to return to Satara. Baba turned to me: 'What do you take me to be?' I answered 'You are God' - although the significance of that statement only penetrated much later in my life. 'Yes' said Baba, 'I am God and as God I am telling you that you will have children with no health problems, and with very high intelligence. When you go back to Poona get the family to make arrangements for the wedding.' When Baba said this, Eruch was very upset and with strong feeling, said, 'Baba, Sam is hardly 24 and Roshan is 17. Why do you want to put worldly responsibilities on such young shoulders!' Baba answered, 'Alright. I wanted you married as soon as possible, but Eruch has now come in the way. So go back to your sea job, and on your next leave we will see about the marriage.'

Later on that same visit, we were all sitting at Baba's feet, and He suddenly snapped His fingers at me, 'Do you know Me?' I answered: 'Of course I know You.' 'There you are,' said Baba turning to the mandali, 'you have been with Me thirty - forty years and you still do not know Me - and here is Sam who came from Poona yesterday and He knows Me!' They all had a good if rueful laugh.

* * * * *

November 1957 and Sam was again on leave. Banumasi, brother Dadi, Eruch, Gaimai, Meherwan, Roshan, Nusserwan, one of the Satha brothers, and Sam came before Baba at Ganeshkhind Gardens, and Baba said, 'It is My wish that Sam and Roshan marry, but it should not happen because I say so.' He gestured to Roshan and Sam, 'Are you happy to be married to each other?' They both

said 'Yes', but Baba asked them a second time to be sure that it was their wish and not just His, and was happy when they said 'Yes' again. Then He turned to Nusserwan, 'Roshan's father is not here so you as Roshan's uncle is his proxy. Are you happy?' He said he was. Next Baba turned to Dadi: 'The son has lost his father, so as the elder brother takes the father's place. Are you happy?' Dadi answered: 'Yes Baba.' Then Baba called Sam and Roshan together, and after joining their hands with His for perhaps half a minute said, 'Before God, the marriage is done. But if you want a Zoroastrian wedding, then do so, but I want it done very quickly.' When it was decided that the ceremony would be in four months time, Baba was not pleased with the delay, but gave in to the people of the family.

Before the wedding Baba called Sam, Roshan and Banumasi to Meherazad, and they were told to bring with them all the wedding clothes. In Sam's case, he had Eruch's wedding clothes which had been kept for the past thirteen years, and which had now been washed and dry-cleaned for him. Baba carefully inspected each item, and then told Roshan to take her sari and jewellery to the women mandali with the instruction, 'Tell Mehera to wear your sari and jewellery. When I come for lunch I want to see her wearing it.' So Roshan departed, and Sam and Banumasi were alone with Baba. The other mandali had gone for their lunch. A chair was brought for Banumasi, and Eruch and Sam sat at Baba's feet. Sam remembers the moment vividly with Baba gesturing to them, 'Do not look at this broken-down body of Mine, but remember well that I am the Lord of the universe. There is no shadow of doubt about that. So hold fast to My daaman.'

Then He asked Sam, 'Have you thought of a honeymoon?' When Sam said that they intended to go to Delhi, to see the Taj Mahal, Baba smiled and said to Eruch, 'What a fellow! - he goes all around the world, and doesn't even know the Taj Mahal is in Agra.' Then Baba said, 'Since you are going that far north, go to Kashmir also.'

Mehera had put on everything of Roshan's just as a bride would, and Baba, when He came for lunch, was very happy. 'Mehera you look very sweet' He said. 'When you take them off, fold them nicely and give them to Roshan now for her wedding.'

After the wedding, March 21st 1958, Sam and Roshan departed for their honey-moon to Agra and Kashmir with the money that was given to them as wedding presents. March in Kashmir is not a good tourist time normally, being too cold and wet, yet for the week they were there, the weather was warm and sunny. But then as Sam reminisced, the Lord Himself had told them to stay there, so they were delighted and grateful but not surprised.

On their return, after a five week honeymoon, Baba called them and was very disappointed to learn that Roshan was not pregnant. Again Eruch interceded, 'Baba why place such a burden on young shoulders!?' Baba replied: 'Look at your cousin - what worry has he got?! It is I who am carrying the worry of the whole universe, the whole creation. He has no worries - so keep quiet!'

A little later Baba went to the West, May 15th 1958, and the whole family went to see Him depart. The moment He saw Roshan, He *gave* a sun-smile and put His hand on her head. Then He *gave* Sam His hand to kiss, and Sam felt, in those moments, that Roshan had already conceived.

Before the first daughter, Mehera, was born, Baba told Roshan to stitch a dress so naturally the whole family accepted that the child would be a girl. When Roshan was again pregnant, Baba did not say anything, so the family assumed that this time the child would be a boy. Before returning to sea, Sam was sitting amongst the mandali with Baba and the conversation was proceeding smoothly, when He suddenly turned to Sam and gestured, 'Would you be disappointed if it's a girl?' Sam replied cautiously to God, 'No Baba, I don't think so.' Immediately the conversation continued as though there had been no question. Sam returned to sea, and a couple of months later, he received the news that a second

daughter had been born.

The words of Baba to Eruch that He carried the worry of the universe, reminded Sam of a very beautiful story in the life of Prophet Mohammed: It was during the early years of Mohammed's Advent, and He was still in Mecca where the people sought in every way possible to humiliate and denigrate Him. One day He was standing near the Kaaba, and an elderly woman returning from a journey asked of the people there, if a porter was available to carry her luggage to her home. Seeing this as an opportunity of belittling Mohammed, they pointed Him out to the woman as a porter. When she approached Mohammed and asked if He was indeed a porter;- He replied: 'Yes Mother. I am the One who carries the burden of all.' Not understanding His words, but happy that He was a porter, she had Him carry her goods. As they walked, she expressed surprise that He was a porter: 'You are such a fine upright man, you do not seem to be the usual porter - surely you could do better than this work.' But Mohammed simply replied to her concerns: 'No Mother, I am the One who carries the burden of all.'

So they walked and then the woman said: 'Well you are not like that scoundrel Mohammed that I have been told about - what a terrible man He is, so intent on destroying our religion. But you are obviously different.' So the walk continued with the woman still speaking against Mohammed. They reached her home and the woman sought to pay Mohammed, but again He only said: 'No Mother, I am the One who carries the burden of all.' Then she said: 'At least tell me Your name that I may thank you personally. Your company has given me joy.' Mohammed replied: 'I am Mohammed.' With that the woman fell at His feet, weeping: 'Forgive me, Lord, I did not know You.' She wept and Mohammed comforted her. She and her whole family became Mohammed's devoted followers.

* * * * *

After the three and a half years on board ship Sam had saved a good amount of money, and in that June of 1954 he and his family bought a second-hand car, paying far more than he should have - the body of the car was very solid, but the engine was in poor condition. Baba was of course informed, and He sent a message that He was happy to hear of the purchase, but that the car should be thoroughly overhauled, and that he would use it on His next Mast Tour in September or October of that year. Sam undertook the overhaul, but the process took so long with Sam sitting all day, every day with the mechanic and the car in order to ensure honest work, that he completely lost his desire to have a car. At one stroke Baba wiped out that desire in Sam.

At last the car was ready, Baba was informed and a message was returned that Sam must bring the car to Satara, and because Sam was new to driving a driver must be engaged. So Sam set off, and on the way he felt very relieved that he could now leave the car at Baba's feet and be free of all further expense and hassle. It would all now be Baba's headache. (By the way, in the meantime there was a tussle between Nariman, Meherjee and Baba. They both had nice large late-model American cars, and they could not understand Baba selecting an old English dreadnought of a car for His tour. But Baba held to His wish for Sam's car).

Sam arrived at 'Rosewood' (where the mandali lived), Satara, and Baba told Eruch to drive the car and see if everything was OK. Eruch reported favourably on the car and Sam again felt great relief to be rid of it. Then Baba asked about breakfast, and Sam said he had not eaten although Gaimai had given him two chapattis with omelette when he had set out from Poona. (He did not tell Baba but he confessed in telling his story that he was shy about eating them sitting alongside the driver.) Baba told him to have lunch with the mandali and in addition have the two rolls. But the rice and dal were so delicious that he only ate that, and not the rolls - even though Eruch hinted 'aren't you eating those rolls?'

After lunch when Baba returned He asked Sam what he had eaten, and when told rice and dal only, he became very fiery and for five to ten minutes gave Sam a horrendous dressing-down. 'Do you think My words mean nothing?! What do you take Me to be?!' It went on and on with Sam feeling more and more 'absolutely worthless'. Baba then calmed down, and He stretched comfortably on a chair with His feet on a stool. He chatted for a while, and then said, 'As soon as you board the bus for Poona, eat those rolls.' 'Yes, Baba.' Now he had to eat the rolls with 50 people present, not just a driver! More chatting, then Baba suddenly said, 'Look here, that great black monster you have brought and thrown on My chest, who is going to pay for the gas, for the repairs if anything goes wrong?' And whilst saying this Baba turned out the pockets of the coat He had on, 'You can see I have no money! So from the money you have with you, keep enough for the bus fares for you and the driver, give the rest to Eruch and he will inform you regularly of the expense incurred, and you are to send the amount to Me.'

This is what happened during the Mast Tour that Baba did in that car. Later the Mandali told Sam that the good thing about the car was that it usually broke down when they stopped at a town and they were able to repair it! They held the opinion that it was only Baba that kept the car going between towns.

Baba called for the car for several of His mast trips. Pendu would praise it, saying: 'The car might be a ramshackle thing, but on the highway it overtakes all other cars. There is no problem with it - until it senses a garage - and then it stops dead!'

It was given another major overhaul and then used by Pendu during the preparations for the Meherabad Sahavas. This time it did not let him down. After that Baba ordered that the car be sold and to the first person who made an offer. This was done and thus ends the story of the one and only car owned by Sam.

* * * * *

On another of Sam's periods of leave from his ship, Baba was at Meherazad. He called Sam to Him, and Sam stayed at Meherazad with Baba for a few days. After awhile Baba said: 'If you stay here at Meherazad others will get jealous instantly, so it would be best to come each day and return to Ahmednager each night.' This Sam did happily for about ten days. Then Baba said to Sam, 'Still, coming each day as you do might still make others jealous, so it would be best to come every second day.' So Sam, the next day, did not come. On his arrival the following day, he was greeted at the gate by a very irate Aloba, 'Where have you been?! Why didn't you come yesterday?! Every five minutes Baba sent me out looking for you!' When Sam reached Baba, he was asked the same question, 'Why didn't you come yesterday?' Sam pleaded with Baba, 'But You told me to come every second day'. Baba looked thoughtful and replied: 'Look, it would be best to come every day - Aloba gets too upset at your absence!'

While sharing that incident, Sam remembered another story from spiritual tradition, this one with a practical twist. It concerns, Sam recalled, a very successful business man - so successful that he was totally occupied with either his business affairs or with his family, staff and business people, and he seemed to have no time alone and unburdened. With the passing years, this business man felt keenly the lack of opportunity to be alone with God and repeat His name, and in distress he consulted a very close family friend. This friend suggested that they seek the advice of his spiritual Master. The Master graciously listened to the man's heartfelt concern, questioned the routine of his day, and concluded, 'The only time you are truly alone and undisturbed is when you go to the toilet and take your bath in the morning: so the moment you begin to pour water over yourself take the name of God audibly, and continue repeating it with sincerity and fervour until you have finished.'

This advice the man happily accepted and he began in

earnest the daily routine. Years passed by, many years, until one day the man suffered a severe stroke and lapsed into a coma. With time it was clear that the man would not come out of the coma and would surely die. The family were naturally distressed, but particularly so because by tradition if their father died without taking the name of God then he would not go to God. In distress they turned to their father's old friend, and he advised them to seek the advice of the Master. The Master listened knowing the daily routine of the man said, 'Let us go to the man.' This they did, and the master directed the business man be taken to the bathroom. He called for a bucket of water, and began to pour the water over the man. With the first touch of water the man in his coma began saying aloud the Name of God, and with the last drop of water gave a sigh and died. Such was the impression of years of heartfelt remembrance of God.

During another period of leave, Sam was with Baba and a large gathering of Mandali and lovers. Baba suddenly gestured towards Sam and then addressed the room, 'You know Sam earns very good money in his work yet he never thinks of giving us all a treat. I think he should take us all to the pictures!' There was of course a chorus of approval from all of them. So they proceeded to the theatre where Sam purchased 26 tickets, and they seated themselves in the back two rows. Sam was seated directly behind Baba and Eruch, and he could detect that Eruch was enjoying the Laurel & Hardy film, and in fact it seemed all were enjoying it. But with Beloved Baba, His work was paramount, and sure enough before the film had finished He gestured to Eruch 'Let's go!' Eruch gave a very half-hearted response, 'Baba ... another five minutes, and I think it will be over' Baba gave a gesture of assent, and, incredibly as it may seem, with that gesture, the power went off! After sitting in the dark for a few minutes Baba again nudged Eruch, 'Do you still want to wait or shall we go?' Eruch knew he was defeated 'Yes Baba, let us go!'.

During this same period of leave, Baba was staying at Ganeshkhind Gardens in Dadi Kerawala's quarters. Dadi was superintendent of the gardens. Adjoining the Gardens was the Seventh Day Adventist Mission school, where students from all over the world studied religion and a regular curriculum of subjects. As Sarn and the mandali were sitting with Baba in Dadi's quarters, two Indonesian youngsters from the mission approached, and Eruch spoke to them, 'What can I do for you?' They were very polite and said that they had heard the living Buddha was there and they had come to visit Him. Eruch informed Baba, and He called them in, embraced them and told them to sit down.

As was usual in coming into Beloved Baba's presence, the youngsters seemed quickly at home, relaxed and comfortable. Baba asked them, 'Are you Christians?' 'Yes Baba' 'Do you love Jesus?' One of them replied emphatically, 'Oh, yes Baba!' A little later Baba asked, 'Do you have any questions?' 'Yes Baba, please explain 'God is Infinite.' Baba pointed to a large black ant crawling on the floor, and said, 'Can this ant ever comprehend a human being? Can its consciousness grasp the significance of the world of humans?' 'No Baba.' Then Baba said, 'An even greater chasm divides your state of consciousness from My state of consciousness, so if I were to define for you the word 'infinite' you would not grasp it.' That seemed at the time to be the end of the matter. A general conversation broke out, when suddenly Baba said to one of His close ones, 'Take down what I say - whatever is, is God.' The conversation continued and again Baba gestured, 'Take down this - whatever is not, is God.' After a short while Baba said, 'Take down this too - on the off chance that anything is left over, even that is God.' Then He turned to the young men and said, 'This is the true definition of the word 'infinity', and this is My state from My beginningless beginning through to My endless end.'

* * * * *

In Satara Baba had two houses, 'Grafton' for the women and 'Rosewood' for the men mandali. On the night before giving up the alphabet board, 7th October 1954, Baba said that they would have an all-night Qawali program. The men came from Rosewood in the dark of the early evening, and on entering the big room in Grafton found cups and a huge kettle of tea. Aloba presumed that this was for the men, so he distributed it. At this point Baba came, and seeing the soiled cups, suddenly became upset: 'Who told you to have the tea?' His mood was such that some of the men trembled, and there was stunned silence. Then Eruch spoke, 'Baba, the kettle was here and we all thought it was there to be drunk and Aloba served it.' 'Who is Aloba that he takes it on himself to serve the tea?! Eruch, tell the singers to leave immediately, and you all return to Rosewood!'

Eruch somehow gestured to the other men that it was a passing storm, and said to Baba, 'We are so sorry. We presumed that the tea being here, it had been left for us'. 'Yes, I did keep it for you and with these tablets it was to ensure that you stayed awake all night. Alright, I forgive you, but all of you bow down and rub your noses at My feet.' The men of course were delighted, the storm over and with the added joy of being at His feet. It was, in a very strange way, a victory for the men. Then Baba directed that the women, who were behind a curtain in the same room, prepare another kettle of tea. Baba was by now His usual loving self, chatting in an easy flowing manner, unique to Him, never forgetting anyone - 'make sure there is sufficient tea for the Qawali singers.'

Well the program began, and everything was fine until one or two in the morning, when suddenly Aloba came running to Baba 'Kill me immediately' so overcome was he by the words and music of love for God. Baba took Aloba's hand and held it very tightly; gesturing at the same time 'calm down, calm down, calm down ... '. Then He ordered another cup of tea, and Aloba gradually calmed down, and the program resumed until about five or six in the

morning. Baba told Eruch to pay the Qawali singers extra which was always the way with Beloved Baba. As Mohammed the prophet, He had said: 'Pay your labourer ere the sweat has dried on his brow.' Baba then told everyone to depart, fold their hands to Him and go - no embrace as He had earlier specified.

Sam who was returning to duty and this was therefore his last visit to Baba, felt keenly the absence of an embrace. He returned to Poona early afternoon, and in the afternoon mail delivery was a beautiful letter from Baba, saying Sam should not feel disappointed that he was not embraced and to remember that he was embraced long ago - as it were, in the very beginning of his life with Baba. Sam was amazed - how could the letter have reached him so soon, when normally mail took 24 hours or more.

It was at Guruprasad that Sam experienced one of the best moments of his life, although the richness of the moment did not occur to him until years later. Sam cannot remember the year, but the time was three in the afternoon and a few mandali and himself were sitting at Beloved Baba's feet. It was in such small gatherings that he felt the greatest intimacy. Eruch came into the room and said, 'A family has come from Bombay, husband, wife and two children and they want Your Darshan.' Baba made a wry face, but Eruch said, 'No Baba, please give them some time.' Baba then gestured, 'Alright, but sit them down, and when I clap, bring them here for five minutes.'

Baba turned to us and said, 'I haven't had a bath for the last seven days, and now they will embrace Me and there will be body odour.' On a small table alongside Him, was a stack of handkerchiefs (He would only use a handkerchief once and then take a fresh one) and a bottle of Yardley's Eau de Cologne and a tin of Yardley's talcum powder. Baba picked up the Eau de Cologne and applied it behind His ears. At the same time He gave me an unfathomable glance and made a casual remark in Gujarati: 'Sam is one of our family/household members' and Sam knew that

Beloved Baba was saying that he need not be formal and reserved with Him.

Recalling that moment made Sam remember the words of Bayazid of Bistam:

In the early years I was wrong in four respects:

I thought I loved Him;

I thought I remembered Him;

I thought I sought Him; and

I thought my knowledge of Him preceded His knowledge of me.

Now I know absolutely that:

He loved me long before I ever loved Him;

He had remembered me long before I ever remembered Him;

He had sought me before I had ever sought Him; and

His knowledge of me was always there from His beginningless beginning to His endless end.

It may have been during the same period of leave, 1963, that Meherjee's driver was injured in a car accident and hospitalised at Wai, a town quite some distance from Poona. Baba asked Sam to go and check on his condition and treatment, and directed that Rs.10 be given to Sam for his expenses. Sam replied that he had his own money, but Baba said, 'No, your money is not yours, it is Mine. And My money is yours, so take the Rs.10. When you return, give an item by item account of your expenditure to Eruch.' This Sam did, finding that the amount was ample for the expenses of the journey.

'Yes,' said Sam, 'these stories may mean repetition for many, but for me one thing is certain - no matter how many times I repeat them, I continually enjoy them, feeling that they are as old as the ages, and yet as young as eternity. So let me now finish these memories of my life with Beloved Baba with a story that had a profound effect on me, especially in this role of story telling that Baba seems to want me to fulfil. Baba has given me a talent for story telling, and this story reminds me to express it exclusively for

my Beloved.

There was a great musician during the time of Omar, the second Caliph of Islam after Prophet Mohammed. This musician was most talented, and he became very famous and sought after by the rich and powerful during his life, but he gave no thought to God as the source of his gift. Towards the end of his life, and as his talent declined he realised that it had come from God, and that he had never used it in praise of God. So on a certain day he went to a graveyard, and now old and half-starved with a broken sitar and his once glorious voice cracking, he sang one or two songs to God. Then exhausted he lay down on the ground and fell asleep.

At the same time, Omar sitting in his small house instead of the palace that had been built for him, was overpowered by desire to sleep. Knowing that this urge to sleep, not usual with him, was significant, he allowed himself to do so. In his sleep, he dreamt that Prophet Mohammed came to him and said, 'Go to a certain graveyard, and offer one thousand pieces of gold to one there who is very near and dear to Me.' Omar went to the graveyard, but the only one there was that old man with his broken sitar and fast asleep. Omar, head now of a large empire, waited patiently for the man to awaken. When he did so, on seeing the great Caliph, he was frightened, thinking he had done wrong. But Omar assured him and then gave him the one thousand gold pieces with the message of love from Mohammed. The old man reflected on this message that touched profoundly his heart of hearts, and he said: 'Just one day I sought to entertain my Beloved, and He offers me one thousand gold pieces. But now that I have Mohammed as my Friend, I have no need of money.' And he departed to devote his remaining days to praise of his Beloved.

That story changed my life, continued Sam, and it reminds me to live exclusively for my Beloved.

'You know, I tell these stories and some people laugh saying, 'Do you really believe such stories?! Do you really believe them to

be true?! I tell them I do not doubt a single word. What is not possible for Him? Nothing.

Once I came home on leave from my sea job and during my leave was called to Baba. He was at Krushru Quarters in the room that became Mani's office. As I entered He said to the mandali present, 'Look at this miser! He has given me an electric shaver!' I asked Him 'What would you like?' And he replied 'You should have brought Me a donkey with six legs, so many horns, this, that and what not!' I said seriously, 'Yes Baba' and Meherjee exclaimed, 'Look at this idiot! He just says, 'Yes Baba.'" Even Baba seemed to, look at me questioningly - was I pulling His leg? So I told Baba that my mother had taught me one thing, 'The words of God can never go wrong: perhaps You had already created such an animal.' Baba smiled, and gestured that He was very happy.

*Navalsha and Dina Talati
and Family*

During a darshan program at Guruprasad, Beloved Baba said that two souls do not come together haphazardly either in marriage or in birth; and that he had to search the entire universe to bring together the right souls at the right time. He continued, 'You have no idea what trouble I have to go through to bring the right pair together. Then the couple's child too has to have the right connection with both parents and with Me.'

There are many most fortunate close ones who were brought together so beautifully in marriage and in birth by Beloved Baba. The Talati family was and is one of those fortunate ones.

* * * * *

The grandfather on Dina's side, Aspandiarji Wadia, was a most sincere seeker of God. At a very young age he left home in search of God, going on pilgrimage to all holy places in India. Then he accepted a guru in Rishikesh and stayed with him for a number of years and from him learnt herbal medicine and was offered spiritual powers. But he did not want powers, and with his guru's acceptance, joined another guru in Benares from whom he learnt astrology and spiritual practises, hoping all the time to be given what he was really seeking, sight of God. It was not to be, and his guru, after some years, sent him back into the world, saying, 'From all that you have learnt here, you can see for yourself that you will not achieve what you seek, but I predict that your child and

grandchild will see Him. Now return and live an ordinary worldly life.'

So Aspandiar returned to Bombay, married and settled down as a householder. Because his guru had told him not to accept money for some years for his medical or astrological work, he became an actor in an Urdu drama company. Acting in those days was not a highly regarded profession, but due to his character and bearing, he was deeply respected and honoured.

He had five daughters and two sons and all of them, in time, followed Upasni Maharaj. Later the second daughter, Rupamai and her children, followed Meher Baba. Aspandiar himself remained with his Rishikesh guru, although he knew of Upasni Maharaj and Meher Baba: and he never sought to interfere in the faith of his children in either Upasni Maharaj or Meher Baba. He also never used his knowledge of astrology with the family, but counselled them to be happy and content with whatever God gave, emphasising that life was a gift of God and should be used to come closer to Him. He gave no clear indication of which child and grandchild he thought would fulfil the prediction of his guru, yet. Dina, with her mother Rupamai, loved Beloved Baba very much, and she remembered her grandfather at one time patting her on the head and saying in response to her query of the future, 'No matter what ups and downs in life come, do not lose faith in God. He will be with you always, He will not fail you: see that you do not fail Him. You are truly blessed; you have no idea what is in store for you.'

Long after his death in late 1925 or early 1926, his horoscope for Dina was revealed, and this showed that he had predicted her life would be entirely in the hands of a very great Master.

It was through Aspandiar's son, Nariman, that all the children came to Upasni Maharaj. Nariman, like his father, left home at a very young age in search of God. He wandered the length and

breadth of India, acquiring some powers, some knowledge of tantric, and much of herbal medicine. Restless, he would return home for a time, and then again wander. In his wanderings he came to see Sai Baba of Shirdi, stayed there for a time and then resumed his wandering. Again he came to Sai Baba, and on his third or fourth visit, Sai Baba told him, 'I cannot give you what you want, go to Sakori and seek it through Upasni Maharaj.' But Nariman did not like this advice and continued travelling. But again he was drawn back to Sai Baba, and again told to go to Sakori and serve Upasni. This he eventually did, and in response to Upasni's invitation, stayed in Sakori. From time to time he would visit his home in Bombay and try to induce his sisters to come to Upasni. Of all the sisters, Perviz's grandmother Rupamai, through her brother's words, was most drawn to Upasni, but was very reluctant to go to a Hindu Saint, especially with her husband Hormasji's strict orthodoxy. However, eventually, with Hormasji on tour, she took courage and went with her brother to Sakori. She was very drawn to Maharaj, and returned home after two days elated and happy. Surprisingly Hormasji did not object to her visit, and on her following stay, Upasni asked her to bring her children when next she came. Thus it was during a school vacation in 1921 that Rupamai and her brother brought almost all the family to Upasni Maharaj. There were in the party four sisters, Nariman, one husband and five children, four of whom were Rupamai's.

It was a long and tiring journey, especially for the girls with the usual strict parental supervision to ensure that they remained very prim and proper. To cap it, the journey finished in a creaking, unsprung bullock-cart. They were a middle-class Parsi family, unaccustomed to such travelling and they arrived in Sakori bone-aching and very dirty. But no sooner were they there, than Rupamai marched them promptly to Upasni's hut to be confronted With a semi-naked old man, a gunny sack only around His waist. He spoke in Maharati which the children could understand but

could not speak well, educated as they were in an English school. Dina, then about 16 or 17 years of age, described the hut as small with a door so low that one had to bend to enter. Opposite Maharaj's seat was a small opening, a sort of window through which He viewed the activities of the ashram, and could also see if someone was approaching for His darshan.

The two older girls of Rupamai, Dina and Aloo, were particularly moved by the love and kindness they saw in Upasni's eyes, and with His words as He inquired of each one and of their journey. They quickly forgot His nakedness and the usual apprehension they experienced conversing with most adults: and when He said that while in Sakori they could do what they wished, and were answerable only to Him - no parents, uncle or aunt, only to Him - He gave them a wonderful upliftment of spirits and a sense of freedom. At home, not only were they afraid of most adults, but particularly of their parents. Upasni Maharaj's love and understanding, even in a short time, won their hearts and gave them a feeling of great well-being. As instructed by Maharaj the family had a meal and then retired for rest in the rooms already prepared for them.

Dina awoke at some point in the semi-darkened room to the sound of a person singing at a distance. She was extremely fond of music, and was a student of music with a renowned teacher, yet she would often subsequently say that the singing she heard that night, was beyond anything she had ever heard before or since, and she had no words to describe it except that the effect was sublime, and unforgettable. All the others in the room were still asleep, and she got up quickly, and quietly went out in the direction of the voice. Some distance away a young man was seated singing with a little group of girls facing Him - it was none other than Meherwan, later known as Meher Baba. Dina sat with the group, and joined in singing a single line 'Hai Radhe Krishna Radha! Radhe Krishna Radha, Radhe Krishna Radha!' Dina often said during her life that

the timbre and melody of that word 'Hai' was extraordinary, coming as it seemed from the very depth of His being. She subsequently heard Baba singing on a number of occasions, but that first experience was what she cherished most. She also enjoyed the Arti of Upasni Maharaj as sung by Baba, and she remarked that even the bell that He also rang during the Arti was most rhythmic and especially memorable.

On the second or third day of their stay, as Dina walked towards Maharaja's hut, a crow suddenly appeared and pecked her right in the centre of her head, and then immediately flew away. She cried out in pain, and at the same time Maharaj who was watching from His window, called, 'Come here girl, come here, don't cry!' She went to him, and He pressed her head down and held it in His lap. He said, 'You do not know how very fortunate you are to have been struck by the crow in this manner, and that too in My presence.' Dina admitted that at the time she didn't feel blessed! Later that day He also said something like: 'You will always remain a virgin' - but the significance of that remark was never understood.

On that first visit, they stayed a few days. Then, whenever there was a school vacation or a few free days, Rupamai took her children to Sakori. Later her husband, Hormasji, joined the family whenever possible.

During one of the family visits to Sakori, Nariman told his sisters that he would like to invite his friend Meherwan for lunch and so it was arranged. Everything was kept ready and at the appointed time the men arrived. Wishing to serve the food piping hot, the women started reheating it, but the guest of honour had no patience and kept asking Nariman why He was being kept waiting. However when the food was finally served, He was most gracious over the meal. Only Rupamai of the women was present, and in the course of the meal He mentioned to her that He liked 'patrel' (a preparation made from Alu leaves rolled like a swiss roll, steamed cooked, then sliced and fried). Since it was the season for the Alu

leaves Rupamai agreed to make it for Him. Accordingly He was invited again after a few days.

Knowing how impatient He was on the first visit they took no chance and kept everything ready. In those days cooking was done on a coal or wood stove. Patrel is usually fried and served immediately crisp and very hot, and so the oil was put aside until the Guest arrived. On this occasion for some reason He was late but as soon as He did come the oil was put back on the stove while the other food was served. But as was typical of Baba even in later years, He was impatient and told Nariman that if the patrel was not ready why was He invited and threatened to leave. Nariman tried to pacify Him by going to the kitchen talking to the women, and then explaining to Meherwan that the oil was being reheated, and would be ready soon. But Meherwan did not want to wait and again threatened to leave. Dina as one of the cooks overheard this, and although only a teenager but with quite some temper, shouted 'Let Him go if He wants to - are we expected to sit on the fire!' (Javoo hoai to jai, hame soo chulla per basiye). Her voice carried to the next room, and Meherwan got up to leave. But Rupamai stopped Him and begged Him to stay. By this time the patrel was ready and served and so peace was restored. The entire drama did not take more than five minutes, yet in that time He created quite a commotion!

Thereafter the family made it a point in serving Baba not to keep Him waiting even for two minutes. And perhaps this early lesson was for Dina to help her serve her Master in the future.

* * * * *

During the course of his visits from Sakori to Bombay, Nariman befriended a young man, Navaraji Curshidji Talati, who was also inclined towards spirituality. This young man became in time Dina's husband and Perviz's father. Navaraji was known to

close friends and family as Navalsha. Baba's mandali called him Naval but Baba always called him Navaroji or Navalsha - a more respectful form of address than Naval.

Navalsha used to visit some holy places around Bombay, but his favourite was the Dargah or tomb of Saint Haji Ali. The tomb and the mosque next to it, is built on a rock ledge jutting into the sea, and until the early 50's it was accessible only at low tide. Navalsha would sit alone just behind the tomb, sometimes for hours, and sometimes in the tomb itself into the night, when the tide would come in and isolate him. An old disciple of Haji Ali was the Mujawar (i.e. caretaker) of the tomb, and he would at times talk to Navalsha about his Master.

Another of Navalsha's favourite places for solitude was the Chowpatty Beach, especially after sunset and on moonlit nights. Here he sometimes met an elderly sadhu always dressed in a white robe, and he loved to listen to the old sadhu's talks, particularly when they were on the Bhagavad Gita.

Sometime in 1925 or '26, after a considerable period Navalsha visited the Haji Ali tomb. The caretaker immediately spoke to him, 'Why have you stayed away for so long? For three months now I have waited to give you a message from Hazrat Haji Ali. Repeatedly in these three months Hazrat has been asking me to give you this Name which he wants you to repeat constantly'. Navalsha replied that he was grateful to Hazrat for his message, but he could not promise to repeat the Name because he had accepted Meher Baba as his Master and he followed only Him. The caretaker surprisingly replied, 'Hazrat knows this! Ask Meher Baba's permission and if He allows it, then say the Name given to you.'

At his next meeting with Baba, Navalsha related the entire incident and asked what he should do. Baba then explained that every Saint, even after passing away, has his presence on earth for a certain number of years, the length according to his spiritual

status. Since Hazrat Haji Ali's presence was still there, it was as if Hazrat had given the Name directly to Navalsha, and it would be disrespectful to dishonour the request of the Saint. So Baba said that he should take the Name, but never reveal it to anyone and never visit the Dargha again.

The family often noticed that Navalsha's thumb would move over his fingers as if repeating some name, but whether it was the name given by the Saint, and whether it was said only a certain number of times, Navalsha never revealed. Navalsha also never visited Hazrat's tomb again, but while passing by would bend his head in reverence.

Nariman, Dina's uncle, was not only much older than Navalsha, but with his greater experience in visiting holy places, he assumed the role of guide to Navalsha. Before taking his sister, Rupamai, to Upasni Maharaj, he had taken Navalsha to Sakori. There Maharaj asked Navalsha to visit Him whenever he had time. This he did frequently, and on those visits he met Meher Baba or Meherwan as He was still known then. But because Nariman became jealous of the attention Maharaj gave Baba, he belittled Baba and Navalsha, as a result, gave no importance to Baba, and in fact often referred to Him as Meherwan-Gando (mad!).

On one occasion Baba made arrangements for the celebration of Maharaj's birthday, and Nariman and Navalsha were , among a group who pulled down or destroyed all the decorations. Maharaj was most annoyed and asked who was responsible for the destruction. Navalsha, a very honest person, admitted that he was one of the group responsible. When asked by Maharaj why he had done so, Navalsha said that it was at Nariman's insistence that the destruction took place. Maharaj was very angry, and said that they had no idea of the spiritual status of Meherwan and emphasised the wrong they had done to even attempt to destroy His work. He then ordered the group to redo all the decorations, even if it meant staying up all night. This incident proved the turning point in

Navalsha's life, and from then on he refused to side with Nariman against Meherwan, accepting Him as Maharaj's special disciple. While Nariman would often wander off to the Himalayas and other places, returning to Sakori from time to time, Navalsha had fully accepted Upasni Maharaj as his Master, and continued to visit Him only. The depth of his acceptance of Baba grew with time, and when Maharaj asked him and a few others to follow Baba, Navalsha had no hesitation in doing so.

It is not known for sure on what specific occasion the following incident took place. It was either Maharaj's birthday or some other festive time when there was a large congregation at Sakori. Maharaj was giving darshan, and a short distance away Meherwan stood watching Maharaj. Rupamai like all the others was in the queue for the darshan. When her turn came she bowed to Maharaj, and then for some reason inexplicable to herself she walked to where Meherwan was standing and bowed to Him. He protested loudly, 'Arey, arey Rupamai, what are you doing?! But Maharaj, watching them, looked most pleased and called, 'Excellent Rupamai, you have done well, excellent'. Some other lovers then followed suit. Thus it was that in the very presence of the Lord's Master, Rupamai was the first person to bow at the feet of the Avatar of this Age.

* * * * *

On one occasion Maharaj asked Navalsha if he had thought of marriage and if so, was there anyone whom he liked. Navalsha said that he liked Dina, but that Nariman opposed the marriage. Maharaj brushed aside Nariman's objections and called Rupamai and asked her if she had any objection. Rupamai was agreeable to whatever Maharaj said, and so the marriage was fixed. Then Maharaj fixed the date for the engagement ceremony.

At this engagement ceremony Dina's father was absent, so

Maharaj and Rupamai represented her parents, and Baba and Gulmai (Adi Snr's mother) represented Navalsha's parents. The details of the ceremony are not clear, but it is known that Maharaj Himself put green glass bangles on Dina's hands, applied the kum tilak to her forehead, and put a ring on Navalsha's finger. Baba put a ring on Dina's finger. After the ceremony Maharaj instructed both parties that plans and the date for the marriage ceremony were to be as Baba determined.

The next morning Baba left Sakori with one or two persons. In the afternoon Navalsha was to leave Sakori with others, selected by Maharaj, and they were to join Baba. Dina wished to say farewell, and left her room to see the party before their departure. But there seemed at first to be no-one around. She was perplexed. Then she noticed a small group standing inside a small room to the side of the Khandoba temple. This room had two doors, and Maharaj was standing near one of them. At first she hesitated go in, but seeing Gulmai standing to one side, she took courage and slipped in the other door to stand next to her. As she did so Maharaj began to speak.

'All of you who are present here I hand over to Meherwan (Meher Baba). From this moment you are to follow Meherwan and obey Him. Stick to Him as a stamp sticks to an envelope, and no matter how many post office seals pound that stamp it should not come off, and wherever the envelope goes the stamp goes with it. Likewise you all stick as firmly to Meherwan no matter what befalls you: do not leave Him and I assure you that He will take you with Him to the very end and the ultimate destination. Whatever I had, I have given to Meherwan. You have no idea who He is, but never mind, just stick with Him through thick and thin and He will take you with Him. A time will come when I speak things against Him, but do not pay any heed to what I say - it is part of My work. I shall sift to clean the grain, and the husk will fly off. (His exact words were 'Me pakhrayala basnar je halke asal te udoon janar'). If you

are strong and firm in your hold of Him, you will be able to withstand it all and will win. If I tell you to do something and Meherwan tells you not to, do not listen to Me but do as He says. I shall repeatedly contradict Him - I may even call Him names or call Him a fraud, do not listen to me. To those of you who are here today, I repeat most emphatically that Meherwan is everything and from now on I want you to follow Him and Him alone. Now you can go as per His instructions and join Him. I give you all My blessing!

Each one then approached Maharaj, took His darshan and quietly left the temple room. Some He embraced. After the men had departed, Gulmai took darshan and finally Dina. This group who Maharaj handed over were the first group to join Baba as his followers. Gulmai and Dina did not leave with the men, but stood outside the temple with Maharaj and bid them farewell.

The next day Rupamai and her family also left for Bombay. In later years Baba instructed His followers not to visit Sakori, and consequently Navalsha and Dina did not see Maharaj again. However, Rupamai continued to go, her argument being that Baba had not told her anything personally, and until such time when He did, she did not consider that she was disobeying Him. On her visits she would sometimes go to Sakori first and then to Meherabad, and sometimes Meherabad first and then Sakori. Whichever Master was visited first would give a message for the Other - but if there was no message, then the second Master would always inquire of the Other. Because of this routine Rupamai did not feel she was doing anything wrong.

In later years Maharaj did make anti-Baba statements, and Dina and her children had to face considerable criticism especially from Rupamai's sisters who were all followers of Maharaj.

* * * * *

During the early days when Baba centred many of his activities in Poona, Navalsha worked as an electrical contractor on the Bombay-Poona railways. With Baba in Poona, Navalsha took every opportunity to visit Poona and see Baba, and be with Him as much as possible. There were two evening trains to Bombay, and Navalsha would generally take the later one in order to be with Baba longer. This routine was well known to his workers and colleagues. On one visit to Poona Baba told him to return home that day on the earlier train. Navalsha accepted Baba's words without question. The next morning at his office some people expressed their surprise at seeing him alive. On close questioning he found out that certain people, jealous of him and harbouring grudges against him, had plotted to kill him at the station when he arrived on his usual later train. When these people learnt that it was Navalsha's spiritual Master who had directed him to take the earlier train they felt shame, and some even scared that Navalsha was obviously under such a powerful Master. Navalsha, for his part, acted normally as if nothing had happened, and gradually the ill-will faded. At the end of the contract with the railways Navalsha arranged for one of the plotters who was a good worker to be promoted, and even to be given an independent contract. Throughout his life, Navalsha endeavoured to live in such a manner that no shame or slur would come on his Master.

Navalsha was very particular about his daily prayers: after his bath first thing in the morning, he said the Zoroastrian kusti prayer and the Arti of Upasni Maharaj and Baba. In later years it was the kusti pray and Baba's Arti and prayers as given by Baba: these were repeated just before going to bed no matter how late the hour. At the end of the prayers, he always bowed down to Baba, saying, 'Baba themari laj mahare hath! - loosely translated: 'Baba let me be a worthy keeper of Your good name and honour'. The night prayer was also a thanksgiving for the day no matter the course of the day. His faith in Baba was 100 per cent; to him Baba could do no wrong

nor have any shortcomings. For Navalsha we may fail Baba but He never fails us; and if things were not right, it was because of our shortcomings and failures. Often Dina would argue with him; why did he pray thus? - why did he not ask Baba to help him, but Navalsha always replied: 'Why should we ask Baba for anything? He gives us everything without us asking. Yet I do ask, it could be said, I ask to do what is right at all times so that no-one points a finger at Baba because of my behaviour. I try to live in such a manner that people will be drawn to Beloved Baba.' To those who were not inclined to prayer, Navalsha would say, 'Never mind - do not pray - but at least keep one photograph of Baba somewhere in the house, and at least once in 24 hours be with Him there.'

In the 1930's an incident occurred in Navalsha's life that bore out his professed way of life and attitude to his Master. He had a Jewish business partner in Nasik named David, and although many people warned Navalsha that David was unscrupulous, Navalsha in his usual open and trusting way, continued to hold David to be trustworthy. For a few years the partnership flourished, and when Navalsha was called by Baba, David managed the business in Navalsha's sometimes lengthy absence. Sometimes at the last moment before Navalsha's departure, David would ask for Navalsha's signature before preparing the letter. After some years, the partnership was dissolved and Navalsha began to receive registered letters (which of course he had to sign for) from David, but which contained nothing of any note. Thinking it was some joke, Navalsha paid no heed to these letters.

But then one fine day he found that David had filed a law suit against him demanding payment of 10,000 rupiahs (a very considerable sum in those days). In court David produced a number of signed I.O.U's, and although Navalsha explained his side of the case, with no documentary evidence in his favour, he lost the case. However, the judge made a lengthy observation during his judgement, pointing out that, while David was known to

be crooked, all Meher Baba's men were known throughout Nasik be honest and truthful. He knew Navalsha to be one of those men, but advised him to be less trusting of others, having in mind that not all were followers of Meher Baba. The judge concluded that it was a painful verdict, but he had to give in favour of David. Navalsha was, in a sense, happy with the verdict because the judge had upheld the greatness of his Beloved Master. It can indeed be said that Navalsha followed and obeyed Baba to the end, and that in the course of his life he gave no-one cause to accuse or belittle Baba.

* * * * *

In 1923 Baba was staying in Manzil-e-Meem in Dadar, Bombay. This was situated adjoining the railway line and Baba, when displeased, would often order things to be thrown over the wall onto the railway area. One such occasion was during a discussion on Navalsha's and Dina's forthcoming marriage. Baba, who was to arrange the whole ceremony as ordered by Upasni Maharaj, had called Dina's father, Hormasji, to discuss the arrangements. Now Hormasji was a hot-tempered person, accustomed to giving orders, not taking them, and at some point he started arguing with Baba. Baba quietly, politely but firmly insisted on the point, and Hormasji flatly refused to agree. After some time of this, Baba lost patience, and ordered Navalsha to throw Hormasji's hat and shoes onto the railway track. In those days of absolutely strict conventional behaviour, for a future son-in-law to do this, was unbelievable, but Navalsha without a moments hesitation, picked up the hat and then left the room for the shoes. He was on the point of throwing them over the wall, when he was called back into the room by Baba. Baba then proceeded to scold him, 'Have you no sense! Do you have no respect for your prospective father-in-law!? How could you do such a thing!'

Navalsha said nothing. Baba turned to Hormasji: 'Do you now agree to all that I have said?' Hormasji only started to say: 'But Meher Baba...' and Baba at once turned to Navalsha and said, 'Go! And make sure that this man's hat and shoes are thrown over the wall and don't come back until it is done!'. But Hormasji had had enough, and hurriedly exclaimed, 'Baba, I agree to everything You have said!' Baba was most pleased with this reply, and told Navalsha to escort Hormasji with all respect to the gate of the property.

The wedding of Naval Talati and Dina Karani took place on the 9th of April, 1923 at Camabang, a traditional venue for Parsi weddings and navjote (thread ceremonies). The main road is on one side of the building and by-lanes on the other three sides. Throughout the ceremony Baba, with Gustadji, drove round and round the Camabang in a Victoria (horse) carriage. All the mandali, ordered by Baba to attend the ceremony, were seated respectfully in the front row. Among them were Padri, Adi Snr, Ramjoo and Homi Vajifdar. Baba also ordered that the Mandali were to leave and join him immediately the ceremony was completed, and that they were to have no refreshments there whatsoever. They left as instructed, and Padri recalled that at the point they reached the gate, Baba also came round the corner and they then joined Him. Baba was pleased to learn that they had consumed no food or drink at the ceremony as He had ordered.

Navalsha's sister, Jer, was also married on the same day at the same place. She and her husband lived at Kalyan, an outer suburb of Bombay.

In accordance with tradition, the day after the ceremony the bride spends with her parents, and the son-in-law then escorts her to his home at night. The following day after Navalsha's wedding, he left in the early morning to join Baba at Manzil-e-Meen as Baba wished. Dina joined her now sister-in-law, Jer, and travelled with her to Kalyan.

Two days later, in the early morning, Baba called Navalsha to Him. He was thoroughly displeased and asked, 'Where is Dina?!' On being told where she was, He ordered Navalsha to go and bring her to Him at once. This Navalsha did, and when he told her how displeased Baba was, they tried to think of anything they had done that could have provoked this mood in Baba. With the intense love they both had for Baba, they anxiously sought an answer, but none came.

As soon as Dina was before Him, Baba scolded her, 'Where have you been?' Dina explained that with Navalsha's knowledge and permission she was staying with his sister. Still stern Baba said, 'I know all that, but what did you do there?' So Dina detailed how she and Jer chit-chatted whilst doing embroidery work. But Baba kept on asking, 'And what else?' Dina became more and more confused and anxious about what she had done to so upset Baba. At last Baba asked: 'And what did you do yesterday afternoon!?' It was only then that she remembered, 'Oh, yes Baba! While we were sitting on the porch a Brahmin astrologer approached us.' Baba, very sarcastically exclaimed, 'And of course you showed him your hand!' Innocent, Dina replied, 'Yes Baba, both of us did' - because with her upbringing in the house of her grandfather-astrologer, she thought nothing of consulting one. She could not understand how such a thing could so upset Baba. Then Baba asked her what the man had said, and she replied that he had predicted a grave, prolonged illness for Navalsha, and a severe financial loss in Jer's husband's business. Dina went on and said how they had both asked how they could help their husbands, and the man had given elaborate instructions to give to some temple and to distribute food, etc in order to avert the disasters. Since they could not themselves carry out the instructions, the man offered to do it all for them asking 10 Rs. each. They finally agreed on 5 Rs. each.

Baba listened to all this and again sarcastically said, 'So 5

Rs. each!' Do you think that paying some astrologer Brahmin some money can change your destiny? How could you believe such stuff?!' Then in all seriousness and intensity, Baba said, 'You have placed your head on My feet and I have accepted you, now I am responsible for you and for everything in your life. Your stars and planets no longer govern your life. For those who lay their head at My feet and are Mine, I put all their stars and planets in My cup of tea and drink them up! Remember, from this day, do not consult any astrologer for your horoscope or show your hand to anyone. Just leave everything to Me and obey Me.' While speaking he had gestured as if holding a cup and saucer in his left hand, adding the stars and planets with his right hand, stirring it with the right hand index finger and then lifting and drinking from the imaginary cup. After speaking, Baba embraced Dina as a sign of forgiveness.

Baba has said on a number of occasions, that during His lifetime He takes His followers through a number of lives, that He blindfolds them and leads them avoiding all temptations on the path. Perhaps it is for this reason that horoscopes and hand readings of His lovers did not prove correct.

* * * * *

Before his marriage, Navalsha lived in a flat with his eldest brother Pirosha, his wife Dhun, their three children Hilla, Meheru and Behram, his younger brothers Pesi and Kaki, his father, an aunt and a cousin. After marriage Dina joined Navalsha in this extended family. The flat was in a building called 'Shivalal Motilal', situated diagonally opposite the Bombay central railway station. A few days after Dina had moved in, Baba came in a victoria horse carriage to the building. He did not come in, but called Navalsha and Dina to Him. He sat in the carriage while the two bowed to Him with love and reverence. Baba blessed them and gave them a number of instructions before leaving.

The Talati Family

Although Navalsha and Dina were the only members of the joint family who followed Meher Baba, there was no objection to His subsequent visits to their simple home in the building. In fact every effort was made by all to make these visits comfortable. The large front room which was normally partitioned to make small rooms, was emptied and given entirely for His use. Although Dhunmai would not go forward to meet Baba, she would help Dina to prepare for the visit. She would also ask her children not to go to Baba and disturb Him in any way. However Hilla, Mehru and Behram would sometimes sneak behind a chair or other furniture to watch Baba, and sometimes Baba would catch their eye and beckon to them, and although afraid of their mother, they would go to Him and He would give them some fruits or sweets.

Hilla, the eldest of the three, had vivid memories of those early visits of Baba. At times when Baba called them and gave them something to eat, He would urge them to eat fast and run back lest their mother caught them. On such occasions Hilla said, Baba's eyes had a wonderful sparkle. Sometimes the children would be there a long time, watching Him, with Baba apparently not aware of their presence, but suddenly He would look and gesture for them to go, just in the nick of time before their mother caught them. Yet, if they did get caught, her only admonition was not to pry into the affairs of others, and not to disturb Baba or His mandali. There were occasions when the hall was full of people sitting in pin drop silence, Baba resting with His eyes closed but with a glow on His face, so beautiful and beyond words to describe. Everyone would sit absolutely still, lest He be disturbed and that spellbinding moment be broken. On another occasion Hilla remembered being alone with Baba in the room, and Baba was reclining with His eyes shut and behind His head was a bright glow as though a light had been placed behind Him.

For a girl of seven years and onwards, these were most cherished impressions. Although circumstances never allowed her

to come openly to Baba, He was always most special for her, and her love and trust in Him was very strong. Padri and Chanji were the two mandali most responsible for encouraging the children to come close to Baba. Throughout their life Hilla, Meheru and Behram held special regard for those two mandali.

On one occasion Baba was very upset with someone, and Hilla described Baba at the time as a blazing fire - so much so that the two younger children promptly ran behind Hilla, yet were glued to the spot and they could not take their eyes off Baba. She said that the brilliance and radiance of His face and eyes was so intense it seemed that everything would be consumed in fire. Yet suddenly Baba changed and it was as though nothing had happened, and the electric atmosphere disappeared immediately. But those few moments left a lasting impression on the children and on all who witnessed Baba.

On every occasion that Baba spent time in the house, Baba gave Dina strict instructions that He was not to be disturbed, and that she was to answer the door. She was to tell anyone seeking darshan that Baba could not be disturbed, and that He was not giving darshan. The house had stairs to the first floor and on this level the first door was the kitchen door, and at the end of the long corridor was the main entrance door. The visitor would come to the main door, be greeted by Dina who would tell the visitor, sometimes even pleading, that Baba was not to be disturbed. The visitor would turn away disappointed, sometimes annoyed with Dina, and the door would close. A moment later and the kitchen door would open, and a very courteous Chanji would beckon the visitor in and escort them to Baba. Sometimes darshan would be brief and sometimes lengthy, but always they would depart full of joy and praise for the Master and mandali - and most harsh words and looks for Dina. She developed a thoroughly bad name with adjectives such as proud, snobbish, mean and liar.

This pattern of events became a regular one, and it was

accepted that Dina would refuse entry, but that they would get in through the kitchen door. So a visitor would not bother to argue with Dina, but would walk very, very slowly towards the kitchen door, even lingering there, waiting for it to open. Rarely were they disappointed, but on those occasions Baba would ask Dina to go and make sure the visitor was actually leaving, and wait to see them descend the stairs. Then it might also happen that Baba would send one of the Mandali after the visitor, and very courteously bring them back to the Master. This of course increased their anger towards Dina, whilst increasing their feelings of love and respect for Baba and His men.

One day Dina decided she had had enough of this situation, and began to admit any and all who came seeking darshan. Baba accepted them, they were very happy and they were also happy and grateful for the change in Dina. But after a few of these groups had been given darshan, Baba called Dina and roundly scolded her for breaking His order. Dina began to argue with Him that there was no point in His order when He admitted all, and at this Baba became really upset. 'What right do you have to decide who to admit and who not!' Dina pleaded that she would like everyone to have darshan and be happy; and let there be no refusal. Baba replied that He may not want to give darshan to all, perhaps on one day everyone, and on another, one or two as He wished. The choice was His, said Baba, and His alone. She was not to interfere in His work, she was simply to carry out His instructions, refuse entry to all, and not be affected by the abuses and backbiting of those who came. Then He embraced her and said that acceptance of the abuses that came from following His orders, was His blessing to her, and of great benefit. The abuses were His prasad to her. Her concern was to obey Him, and to remain steadfast no matter the reactions of others.

This lesson from her Beloved Baba stood her well throughout her life, and in doing so, that quality of steadfastness to the Master

was conveyed to her children.

During Baba's visits to Dina's family home He also gave her instructions to cook for the Mandali and for those who stayed the full day, in total 40 persons. The quantity cooked had to be just enough and no more. She was allowed to take the help of anyone she wished. But she was to cook separately for Baba, and in this, no-one was to touch anything, not even the spoon that was being used. At times Baba would ask some visitors to stay for lunch, and although she would only cook for 40 persons as instructed, still the food, perhaps with a little extra water in the dhal or curry was proved sufficient - particularly accompanied by the joy the visitors experienced eating with Baba.

However on one occasion Baba allowed everyone who came to stay on, and the hall filled to capacity. Dina, noting this, became more and more worried. No-one was leaving, and when the hour for lunch came, and Dina was asked to serve the food, the hall was so full that the Mandali had to stand behind Baba. Dina retreated to the kitchen and looked at the food - one vessel of okra (lady fingers) and a basket of chapatis - there was no way such food could be stretched to feed so many. Then she also realised she did not have enough plates apart from the food. As she stood there indecisively, Chanji came for the third time to ask her to serve the food. She was by now on the verge of tears, and she went and stood in the doorway to the hall waiting to catch Baba's eye. When Baba saw her, He said, 'Why are you standing there? Why are you not serving the food?' Very reluctantly and hesitantly she begged Baba to come to the kitchen. Baba arose and Dina, taking Him by the hand, led Him to the kitchen. Almost in tears she pleaded with Baba, 'Baba, there is only this much food, and You have invited so many! What shall I do? Why didn't You ask me - I don't mind cooking for more people.' Baba patted her: 'You have been right; don't ever break My orders by cooking for more than I have asked you to. Now don't worry there is enough for everyone.' Then she

pointed out that there were not even enough plates. Again Baba assured her, and reminded her to leave everything to Him. Then He had two of the mandali carry the food into the hall. He directed that everyone should approach Him, and as they did so, Baba gave each a chapati and on it a good helping of the lady fingers. Dina, standing in the doorway watching, thought that the okra would be sufficient for perhaps 15-20 people, with Baba being so generous. Yet when all had been well fed, He called Dina to look into the vessel, 'See there is so much left - now who will eat it? You?!'

The next morning when Baba reminded Dina to cook for the usual number, she joked with Him 'Baba as long as You serve, I do not mind cooking for just 2 or 10 as You wish!'

The lessons that Dina absorbed in those early years with Meher Baba, stood her in good stead throughout her life. So she held, despite all hardships, to absolute obedience, to the importance of the first order given by Baba, and to maximum effort towards perfection in any and all tasks undertaken for Him. Baba's visits to the family home made it a well known landmark in those days. The horse carriage drivers referred to it as the 'Lakri pool' house of Meher Baba, and many old lovers of Baba remember it with great fondness. Mansari for example, recalled this incident from one of her visits: the hall was quite packed with people and Baba sat reclining against some cushions with both hands behind His head, fingers interlocked, palms visible and with His eyes closed. There was complete silence, and just above His head was a round bright glow like a sun or a bright ball of fire. Pin-drop silence continued, and all were mesmerised by the glow and radiance of His face. Then, after some little time, Baba opened His eyes and all became as normal. Mansari often related this incident as one of the unusual and special events of her visits.

Two children, Curshed and Jeru, were born to Navalsha and Dina in that house. Curshed's first memory of Baba was of himself standing on a high chair embracing Baba. He recalled Baba

The Talati Family

showing him how to spin a top. When Baba went to the west, He gave Curshed pictures of the ship in which He was to travel, and Curshed told Baba that he too wanted to go. Baba replied that some day He would send him. As a child he often told Baba that he wanted to go to London, and in 1956 Baba fulfilled his dream.

In 1930 or '31, Navalsha and Dina moved to Nasik to be near Baba. Baba lived in several houses in Nasik before settling in Rustom's. Each of the houses were leased for a period, but Baba would not stay for the whole period, and the house was then allotted by Baba to one of the mandali, usually Rustom, Ramjoo or Navalsha for the remainder of the time. Ramjoo's and Navalsha's families shared houses on two occasions, and otherwise remained in close proximity to each other. A close bond developed between the two families. The first accommodation occupied by Navalsha was the first floor of a house on a road leading to the river. At that time the mandali were not allowed to visit anyone's house unless accompanying Baba, or sent by Him on a specific occasion. Each morning some of the mandali would go to the river for a bath, and on the way they would often call out to Dina to indicate that they would shortly return. Dina would then quickly prepare some snacks, making them into separate packages for each one. On their return walk, Dina would throw the packages to them, and they would eat the snacks on the way. When inevitably Baba learnt of this, He called Dina and the mandali, but they pointed out that none had broken His orders; no Mandali had visited the house, and Dina did not come down to the road to meet them.

Throughout the families' stay at Nasik, Baba would come to the house, unannounced and at any time. It all started shortly after settling in Nasik and on a number of these visits He would ask for food. The first time this happened, there was nothing that had been specifically or specially prepared for Him, and Dina felt very amiss. So from the next day, she prepared something for Baba every day that He was in Nasik. However once He returned

The Talati Family

unexpectedly from either Meherabad or Rahuri, and asked Dina to serve Him lunch and there was nothing specially cooked for Him: so from then on, unless Baba was overseas, she prepared food daily for Baba. But of course no food was ever wasted, so what was not eaten by Baba that day, was eaten by the family that night. Even when she was not well, Dina would ensure that Navalsha prepared Baba's food.

On the many occasions that Baba had his meal at Navalsha's house, He would tell Dina to deny that He had eaten if the women mandali asked her. Sometimes she was told to even deny that He had visited the house. These orders of Baba's created much ill-feeling and misunderstandings between the women and Dina. Often when He had eaten Dina's food, He would return and tell the women mandali that He was not hungry and would not eat that day. Then Mehera and Naja, Baba's cook, would be upset and grumble saying it was because He had eaten at Dina's house. But Baba would not admit it. And so when they directly questioned Dina, she would also deny it, much to their disbelief. It was only years later, that the women learnt that it was all their Beloved Baba's game with them.

In 1984 Mehera recalled those early days and Dina's role at that time. Dina was responsible for the supply of all the women mandali's little needs. The women mandali knew that Dina was lying over Baba's visits and food in her house, and adding fuel to the fire, Baba would side with Dina. Mehera said that later, Arnavaz Dadachanji played the same role. As Mehera pointed out, it was Baba's way of polishing the heart of each. They each loved Baba deeply, and each knew this of the others, and so each strove to please Baba the most, this often creating storm in the midst of the tranquillity.

* * * * *

During the Nasik stay, Dina became quite ill and Navalsha was very worried about her. He told this to Baba, and Baba assured him that nothing would happen to Dina. In fact, in consoling Navalsha, Baba said Dina would outlive him, and that it would be best if Navalsha looked after his own health.

As a part of the treatment for the illness, the doctor prescribed a course of 20-24 injections. Dina hated injections and refused to have them. No amount of pleading by the doctor and the family had any effect. Finally the issue was brought to Baba. He came, spoke to her, but still Dina refused. This went on for some time, with Dina finally weeping and pleading with Baba not to force her to have the injections. In the midst of her tears, she said, 'Baba, do You know how it feels to have an injection!?! How much it hurts to have just one? And you want me to have 20-24?! How will I bear it? I'm scared!' Baba pacified her and said, 'Alright, you take one, and I will take one the next day and so on, and together we'll finish the course. Now will you agree?' But now Dina was more upset. She did not want Baba to take on her pain, nor to cause Him pain in any way, so she agreed to take the full course herself. But now Baba would not agree! He insisted on taking half the course, and the doctor was instructed accordingly. Every day he was to come to Rustom's house where Baba was staying to administer the injections. Dina was to be present each day, but the injections were given to Baba and Dina on alternate days. Baba took the first shot and Dina the second the next day.

On one of the days that it was Dina's turn for an injection, but before the doctor's arrival, all were sitting in the hall with Baba. He was giving a discourse on everything being nothing. He concluded by saying that the entire creation was a zero, and then turning to Dina, asked, 'Do you understand? All this, including your husband and children, everything, is just a potato! Do you believe this?' She replied, 'Yes Baba, I believe this because You say so. I do not know it, but I believe You absolutely.' Baba then said, 'What is there to

know in this? When there is nothing, where is the question of knowing anything!' But Dina answered that even if the whole world is nothing, for her everything was there; she could see, touch and experience everything including Baba himself. For her, Baba was there, as also all the people and things in the room, so how could she therefore know that everything was a potato! Yet she accepted His word that it was so, because of her faith and conviction in Him. Baba then ended the talk with the remark, 'Let it go! You will know.'

Some time later the doctor arrived, and Baba sent Dina into another room for her injection. The doctor gave it, but then came out after a few minutes to tell Baba that Dina had died. Baba told him to go back and check. Again the doctor returned saying that there was no pulse or breathing in Dina. Baba called him a 'barber', (which was Baba's general disparaging sign for a doctor) and told him to go and check properly. He also sent someone to go with the doctor. Both returned to declare to Baba that Dina was no more. With this Baba got up and went into the room. He climbed onto the bed on which Dina was lying, put His foot on her chest. Then, getting down, asked the doctor to check her again. This the doctor did and reported heartbeats. Baba told him to wait with Dina, and see that she lay quietly until He called for her. After some time He sent for Dina, and when she came, told her to sit near Him. As she did so He asked, 'Now tell me - is it a potato?' She answered: 'Yes Baba' - and nothing more was said on the subject.

Years later when asked if she remembered her feelings at that time, all she could say was that there was nothing really to say. She did remember the great peace and blissful happiness that she experienced on opening her eyes. She knew nothing at all of the drama of that occasion, not even of Baba's closeness as he placed His foot on her chest. No amount of questioning or probing

produced more than a smile of perhaps 'nothing'!

* * * * *

Navalsha was an electrical contractor, and in Nasik one of his contracts was the electrification of the central jail. In the prison was a man sentenced to life imprisonment. He was very strong and could break a live electrical circuit with his bare hands, but he was also ill-tempered and a terror to the jailers and other prisoners. As a result he was kept in solitary confinement. Navalsha befriended him, talking to him about Baba and His message, and so conveying to him how he should live even though in confinement. In time he became very attached to 'Bavaji' (a Parsi gentleman) as he called Navalsha. He loved to hear Navalsha speak of Baba, and he had with him a small photo of the Master Bavaji had given him. If he became violent or troublesome Bavaji was the only one who could control him, and at such times, the man would weep like a child for having broken his promise to Bavaji.

Once it so happened that Navalsha was not well and stayed at home, and at the same time Baba left Nasik for Rahuri for a few days. On the way He stopped at Navalsha's house, and then before leaving, He said to Navalsha that he should take rest and not leave the house for three days. And He repeated this again just before stepping out of the house. Two days passed uneventfully for Navalsha and he began to feel quite well. But still he stayed indoors on the third day. In the afternoon of the third day, one of his assistants came to the house frantic and pleading that Navalsha should come immediately to the prison; because something had gone wrong in the electrical system. Navalsha agreed to go until Dina reminded him of Baba's order. While they were discussing the position, another worker came running saying that the situation had worsened, and that Navalsha's Chief

Assistant was in danger. With that Navalsha ran immediately from the house, and on arriving at the prison found his assistant and another worker both stuck to exposed wires. Perhaps in panic and without thinking Navalsha attempted to pull his assistant off the wires and himself became caught. At this point the prison guards brought the prisoner whom Navalsha had befriended to the trouble spot, and he broke the circuit with his bare hands - so releasing Navalsha and his two workers. But Navalsha suffered his first heart attack and was carried home. He was ill for quite some time.

Baba was informed of the events on his return to Nasik and visited the family, saying especially to Navalsha, 'I knew what was to happen and so I warned you. If you had stayed home to fulfil My order, it was then My responsibility to save your assistants. All this would not have happened.'

It was the only time that Navalsha failed to honour Baba's wishes. He truly endeavoured to love and obey his Beloved Lord and Master till the end. His life was fairly short, yet in that time he gained the respect of people with his integrity, honesty and humour. He had a great sense of humour, and children loved his improvised, funny stories and songs. But he also indulged in practical jokes, innocent and perhaps child-like, yet these sometimes backfired.

In the 1920's during the 'ghamela yoga' days at Meherabad, Baba had a dharmashala where travellers passing through could stay the night. Buasahib was in charge of this shelter. One day around evening time, a villager asked Buasahib for shelter for the night. He was very arrogant and demanding in his approach, which annoyed Buasahib, and he told the villager that the dharmashala was full and that he should go elsewhere. Navalsha and Padri overheard this exchange, and they approached the traveller as he returned to the road. They explained that he had been too arrogant with Buasahib, who was actually a very kindly person and who would normally never refuse shelter to anyone. When it was

suggested that he approach Buasahib again, but this time humbly, the man was afraid that he would be recognised. So they then suggested that he cover his head and face with his ghomti - a sort of gunny sack, split on one side and worn like a long hood. So the man did this, pleading humbly for shelter and sure enough, Buasahib did not recognise him. He was given food and shelter, and made generally welcome. In the morning, grateful, he thanked Buasahib for his hospitality, but this time Buasahib recognised him and was furious that he had been tricked, and knowing Navalsha's penchant for practical jokes, was sure that Navalsha was behind this particular one. He decided to teach Navalsha a lesson.

By the time Baba came to the Mandali that day, Buasahib's anger had grown. He was seething with anger, and he asked Baba's permission to break one of His rules. When Baba asked which rule, it was only after much coaxing that Buasahib admitted that it was the ruling not to hit anyone. Baba gestured 'Is that all?! Permission is given if you first strike the one I name.' Buasahib thought that this meant first striking Baba, and so angry was he that he was even prepared to do that, and he agreed. But, to his shocked surprise, Baba said, 'First strike your anger, and then you can strike whoever you wish.' This was such a shock and the inner conflict produced so intense, that he began to perspire. Then he requested Baba permission to leave the ashram. Baba granted this, and Buasahib left and began running along the road past the Arangaon village. He ran for many miles before collapsing from exhaustion. Hours later he returned to Meherabad. Baba was waiting for him, and he fell at Baba's feet and wept and wept. When he had calmed down, Baba told him he could now strike whoever he wished. But Buasahib said that he now no longer wanted to strike anyone. He was very strong and could easily have broken a few of Navalsha's bones.

Baba then asked what had prompted his anger and so the story was told. When Baba questioned Buasahib's insistence that

The Talati Family

Navalsha was behind the episode, Buasahib said he was sure because of the past history of Navalsha's pranks and mischief. Baba called the mandali, and Navalsha and Padri admitted that they had started the deception. Baba scolded both, but then also reminded Buasahib that the dharmashala was His, and that as the manager only, he had no right to turn away any traveller. Navalsha and Padri were told to apologise to Buasahib and to embrace him. Peace was restored.

* * * * *

In 1933, during Meher Baba's fifth visit to the West, Dina and Navalsha had their third child, Perviz. Before leaving Baba had instructed Ramjoo's sister-in-law to be with Dina, and to help with the baby. On His return He visited the family and saw Perviz. His opening remark to Dina was that she was not to prepare the baby's horoscope. Dina said that her aunt had most probably already done so, as it was a firm tradition in the whole family. Baba then said that if it was so, then it should never be consulted or shown to anyone.

Somehow over the years, memory of Baba's instruction faded, and the horoscopes of the three children were shown to one astrologer or another. In the case of Jeru and Curshid some few predictions proved correct, but in Perviz's case they were never right. But in 1947 Dina was reminded of Baba's words in 1923 and 1933, and from 1947 their horoscopes nor their hands were never shown to anyone again. The family knew that they were in His hands to sail across the ocean of illusion as He deemed fit.

During the 1930's Perviz was the only child at home, with the other two children at boarding schools. When Baba was in Nasik, He would visit Navalsha and Dina's home unannounced at odd times, and so Dina was from early morning always ready for Him. Perviz too would be dressed and ready, and with a spare set of

The Talati Family

clothing in case of mishaps. Sometimes Baba would send the car to bring them to Him, and at such times, to minimise delays, Dina would, if necessary, change Perviz as they travelled.

* * * * *

Whenever Baba visited the Talati family home, He always spared some time to play with Perviz. Perhaps it would be hand games, such as finding the middle finger, or taking her small hand between His palms and rolling it: perhaps hide and seek, when He would hide Perviz under a bed, cover her with His sadra and have one of the mandali seek her. Sometimes she was asked to sing or recite a nursery rhyme. Always there was an outpouring of love from Beloved Baba, ending with a big hug or sitting on His lap. Such moments are treasured for life.

In Rustom's house there were a number of animal skins hanging on the walls, and on small wooden stands were the stuffed heads of the animals. Baba's gadi (very similar to the one at upper Meherabad) was just below and to the side of one of these heads, and this one had the mouth open, big white teeth and two sparkling eyes. One day Baba was seated on the gadi, His long hair flowing beautifully behind Him, and He called Perviz to come to Him. She was perhaps three years old and was sitting with Dina on the floor with many others. Perviz refused to go and when asked why, she said she was frightened of the animal's head beside Baba. Baba stroked the head, saying, "Don't be frightened - it will not hurt you." Still Perviz would not move, and Baba then put His hand into the animal's mouth. Very hesitantly Perviz finally approached Baba. Taking her on His lap, Baba put her hand on the rough tongue of the head with His hand covering her little one. "See," said Baba, "It does not bite and there is nothing to fear." But Perviz replied, "That is because You are holding my hand - it won't bite You." The fear in Perviz of that head remained over some years, but it was balanced

The Talati Family

by the knowledge that the head would do no harm as long as Baba was there.

* * * * *

In 1937, Baba's birthday was celebrated in Nasik on a very grand scale. A few days before the birthday, Navalsha brought home a splendid crown for Baba, and on the occasion, Baba wore a silk robe and the crown. He looked most radiant with the light shimmering through His long beautiful hair. There were long lines of guests, and Baba tirelessly gave prasad to each one. Later in the day, Ramjoo had Baba wear a 'sera' (a sort of floral burkha that Muslim bridegrooms wear on their wedding day). To relieve Dina for the day, Elizabeth and Norina were given responsibility for Perviz. For lunch everyone sat on the ground in long rows, Baba with Dina by His side sat at the beginning of a row, and Elizabeth and Norina with Perviz between them, directly opposite. The meal began after Baba had eaten His first morsel.

In 1938 Baba's birthday was again celebrated on a grand scale, but this time at Meherabad.

Shortly after this, Navalsha became very ill. When Baba visited him, he would try to sit up, but Baba insisted on him continuing to lie down. Baba would sit on the bed and talk with him, His fingers flying across the alphabet board. Chanji and Dina would stand close by, with little Perviz on a stool, wondering at the serious atmosphere, and what was being said by Baba. But on leaving, He would tell Perviz to be good, not to disturb Daddy and to help Mummy look after Daddy. During the visits, Baba told Navalsha not to worry about everything, but to think of Him only. He assured Navalsha, if anything happened to him, He would look after the family - a promise which He kept to the end. Navalsha was ill for a considerable time and died on June 10th, 1938. Baba was not in Nasik at the time.

The Talati Family

On His return to Nasik, He called Dina to Him at Rustom's house and gave her three options for her future life without Navalsha. One: to stay with Him in the ashram. Two: to go to Bombay and live with her parents. Three: to go to Bombay and live independently with the three children. With Beloved Baba constantly stirring the pot amongst the women in the ashram, and knowing that the children would be sent to boarding schools, Dina did not feel she could adjust to ashram life. She did not, for various reasons, wish to live with her parents, so she choose the third option. It was in hindsight a bold decision, because she was to leave quite a sheltered life and enter the world with little experience of it, but it was a move that she and the children never regretted.

Ramjoo was appointed guardian of the family, and he assisted Dina to move from Nasik, find a small cottage in Bandra, a suburb of Bombay, and arrange schooling for Curshed and Perviz. It was decided that Jeru would stay at home. Baba gave financial assistance, reduced in stages as circumstances changed until 1951, when it was 45 rupees per month. This amount continued over the years, despite Dina and Perviz pleading on occasions to discontinue the allowance. But Baba would at first say, "Not now," and then later He told Dina it was His prasad to her, and to accept it as such. In 1967 Adi Snr gave Dina a lump sum to cover the period to the end of December 1968 with a message from Baba that for certain reasons He would not be sending any further money after that period.

Dina had to work hard, early morning to late at night to maintain herself and children. Life was not easy, yet through it all, Beloved Baba was there sustaining, supporting, inspiring. No major decision was made without His approval. Sometimes even minor concerns were referred to Baba through Ramjoo or Adi Snr, and His nazar was always there. Thus Beloved Baba as Father fulfilled His promise to Navalsha in spirit and letter.

The Talati Family

Dina brought up the children to love Baba, not fear Him: She firmly believed that the two do not go together. She would never scold her children, "If you disobey, Baba will punish you," it was instead, "Will what you are doing please Baba," or "This will not make Baba happy - or such remarks to remind them of Him and of love for Him in order to please Him. In such ways Dina was not only mother but friend to her children, helping and guiding them in their efforts to love Baba and hold firmly to His daaman. Two things the family particularly enjoyed was Dina's singing, accompanied in later years by Curshed on the guitar, and listening to her anecdotes of life with Baba.

In Dina's counselling of the children she emphasised two points - one: never question what Baba had said to do: just accept His statement. Dina also pointed out that even if someone suggested an alternative to Baba's wish, and Baba accepted it, the first order should be followed, no matter how difficult or seemingly impossible. The second point emphasised by Dina was not to bow to anyone except Baba or allow anyone to bow to them. If anyone, even a beggar in the street bowed down to them, they should immediately take Baba's name and bow to that person.

* * * * *

In 1947 Manek Mehta of Bombay invited Baba to a three day tour of Surat and Rander, a place within walking distance of Surat. Baba instructed the Dadachanji family and Kharmanmasi, except Nariman not to accompany Him on this visit, but a number of others, including Dina and her children were permitted, and they travelled in the train with Baba.

Even before the beginning of the train journey, whilst at the Bombay central station, the family became aware of Manek Mehta's very patronising attitude to Baba and the mandali. He did not like any of the Baba lovers to be close to Baba. Dina had made

a big blue soft satin cushion for Baba, and wanted to give it to Baba before the train moved out. But Manek would not hear of it, and an argument commenced between him and Dina. Baba, seated with the shutters closed heard the commotion, and asked one of the mandali to open the window and find out the cause. Dina explained that she only wished to give the cushion for Baba's use, and Baba seated away from the window, signalled that it be accepted. He placed it behind His head, and then gestured that the family should run to their carriage or they might miss the train. The shutter came down again, and a very sulky Manek stood frowning as they ran to their seats.

Early next morning the train arrived at Surat. Baba was greeted with a band, and was then seated in an open car, with the band and 'Lejim' dancers from the local boy scouts forming a procession to escort Him to the city. Baba was in the rear seat with Manek on Baba's right. Eruch sat in front. The other mandali were in a second car which followed closely behind Baba's car. Curshed was the only male in the group of lovers from Bombay, and he had with him a heavy old fashioned camera. a tripod, a small camera and his haversack. The baggage of the party was in a truck that followed the cars.

As soon as the procession started, the group of Bombay women, including Dina and the girls, squeezed between the two cars so that they could walk close to Baba. This arrangement Manek did not like, and he asked that the second car be brought closer to the first. Thus the women were forced away from Baba's car, but at the instant even a small gap appeared between the cars, the women rushed in again. This game continued for some time, much to the entertainment of the women and the irritation of Manek. He continued to turn around and glare at the women, even shouting to them to move back. To add to his annoyance, Eruch had Curshed place his heavy equipment on the footboard of the car, and he held it while Curshed walked beside the car. Manek

started to object to this, but Baba stopped him. At one stage, Manek stood up in the car and shouted, "Ladies, stop rushing forward." And in response Alu Khambatta shouted back, "Maneksha, we are not rushing, it is our love that is rushing forward!" With this, Baba turned around, and with a big smile waved to them. Then He patted Maneksha's shoulder and gestured for him to calm down. After that the women were left undisturbed to continue to walk immediately behind Baba's car. Now and then Baba would turn around and smile at them, touching their hearts while Manek remained, as it were, sulky and annoyed. The women thoroughly enjoyed the whole show. The processio ended at a lane, a short distance from the house where Baba stayed. He gestured to the women to go, and they then went to their rest house.

The first public program was in a large hall and when the Bombay group reached the entrance they were asked to produce badges. It was learnt that badges had been issued to those who attended Manek Mehta's classes, and for others who wished to attend the function, badges had to be purchased at the door. Dina, as spokesperson for the group, explained to the volunteers that while they did not belong to Manek's group, they had no intention of purchasing badges. They were there, said Dina, to be with Baba, and that was their only interest. The door keepers replied that they had strict instructions to admit no one without badges, so Dina calmly said they would wait until their Badge arrived. They then stepped away from the door, and waited for Baba's arrival. Repeatedly they were told that the hall was rapidly filling and they should buy badges and go in to ensure seats, but they continued to refuse.

In time Baba arrived, and seeing His lovers standing near the entrance asked why they were not in the hall. When Dina explained about the badges, Baba smiled and with a twinkle in His eyes told them to follow Him. The mandali had joined hands to form a circle

of protection around Baba, and they then raised their arms and the group moved into the circle with Him. So they all trooped very happily into the hall. Baba walked to the stage, and as He did so, signalled to Dina and the group to sit on the floor just below the stage. This they did most happily, and so enjoyed the entire program in close proximity to Baba. At the end, Baba gestured to the group to join in the circle again, and they remained with Him right up to His car.

The next program was in the evening at another hall. The Bombay group were again stopped at the entrance because of no badges, and again they waited for Baba. This time there was some resistance from a few of the more senior organisers to the group waiting near the entrance, but the group managed to remain close by. Again Baba came with the mandali and signalled to the group to follow Him. However even the space below the stage was full, so Baba had the group go with Him onto the stage. Baba was seated in a large, cushioned chair in the centre of the stage and back from the edge. The mandali and musicians were on His left and the Bombay group sat on His right. Dina and Perviz were able to sit right next to Baba's chair. People filed past, taking His darshan but were not permitted to touch His feet. Whilst the darshan proceeded, singing continued led by a young man 'Kariman' - although that was not his actual name.

In the midst of the program, Baba called Pendu and pointing to the extreme right hand corner of the large hall, asked him to bring to Him a man standing there, wearing a cap. Perviz, seated next to Baba noted the exchange, but could see nothing other than a sea of people and greatly wondered to whom Baba could be referring. Pendu, however, did not ask a single question, but plunged immediately into the crowd. Perviz tried to follow Pendu's progress but soon lost him in the crowd. To her utter surprise, some time later Pendu appeared at the edge of the stage accompanied by a tall man wearing a cap. Baba said to the man,

"Where have you been all these years?" The man gave a dazed look, and removed his cap, "Baba, you remember me?! But I was just a college student at the time!" Baba replied, "Yes that is so, but why' have you not come to Me earlier? Why did you stay away all these years?" The man began to weep, and Baba leant forward and patted his cheek. The answers he gave Baba are not remembered, but at the end of the conversation, Baba gave His hand for him to kiss and said, "Do not keep away for so long again. Keep in touch." Many years later Perviz had the opportunity to ask Pendu if he recalled the incident, and how he had found the right man. He did not exactly recall that particular incident, but said such things were quite common during Baba's darshan programs. The mandali concerned, never questioned Baba, they just went in search of the person called, and it was Baba who guided them to the right person. He said, "We leave it to Baba and He guides us." He could not recall anyone ever having made a mistake of bringing the wrong person to Baba.

Amongst the crowd of that second program, there were some rowdy students intent on disrupting the atmosphere. They were in the two galleys each side of the hall, and the music could barely be heard with the commotion the students were creating. Baba repeatedly asked the young singer if he was frightened. Each time he assured Baba that he was not frightened, and he continued to sing. A little time after 8 pm someone from the right hand gallery urinated on the people below, and a tremendous ruckus ensued. Baba again asked the singer if he was now nervous and wanted to stop. But he said to Baba that he would continue as long as Baba remained. Baba asked him that if He were to stay the whole night, would he continue to sing, and again the young man assured Baba that he would. Baba then gestured to go on without fear. The singer began a song in Gujarati, the first line of which is "Sadguru jena sachha hoi, te toe savene sarkha gane" (a true Sadguru is He who treats everyone alike). After the first few lines of the song, a

hush came over the whole hall, and soon only the singer's voice could be heard. The singer smiled at Baba, and was encouraged by Him to continue. After one or two more songs, Baba asked that the program be closed with His arti. It was then about 9 pm. Manek asked his people to stand and sing Baba's arti. But the arti they commenced was one composed by Manek and sung at his centre and at lectures. Baba stopped them and gestured, "Not this, My arti." Manek said, "But Baba, this is Your arti." Again Baba insisted, "No, My arti." and then asked, "Does anyone here know My arti?" Dina immediately said, "Baba we will sing it." so standing beside Baba on the stage, the small group of Bombay lovers, together with the mandali, sang to Baba His Gujarati arti accompanied by the musicians. As soon as it finished, Baba stood and left the hall with the mandali and Bombay group following.

The program for the next morning was at another location. This time the reception was different and quite surprising. The Bombay group were greeted with great courtesy, and the senior volunteer at the door saw that they were escorted to the two front rows of the hall, brushing aside objections from ticket holders for these special rows with the explanation "These are Baba's people!" When Baba arrived and saw them all seated in the front rows, He smiled with an amused twinkle in His eyes.

The group continued to be treated as special guests. When Dina and her three children came to see Baba in the house where He was staying, they were admitted without question. However with Manek, the reception was another matter. When he saw them in the house, he demanded, "Why have you come? Who let you in? Don't you know that Baba is not seeing anyone - please leave at once." Before they could answer him, one of the mandali appeared, and told Manek that Baba would like to see the family. Obviously annoyed, Manek had no option but to let them see Baba.

It was a short period with Baba, and He asked Dina to dissuade any others of the group to come and see Him, as that

would further annoy Manek. This Baba did not wish.

On the third day Baba was taken in a procession to Rander village. Baba was in an open car with an umbrella over Him. The mandali's car followed with a third car containing Elizabeth and Norina. When Norina saw Dina walking on the road side, she asked Dina to ride in the car with them. Dina would not do so without Baba's permission, and Norina sent a message to Baba seeking His permission. This Baba gave, and also said the girls of the group could ride on the footboards if they got tired. This made the journey much easier, especially for a niece of Dina who had developed a stomach pain, and who then travelled on the footboard.

In the evening after the Rander visit, the group went with Baba to the railway station. Baba was leaving half an hour before the departure of the Bombay group's train. All the women gathered in the ladies waiting room with Baba, and the men waited outside. Dina read Baba's alphabet board and interpreted His gestures. After a short time, Baba took Perviz by the hand and sat her by His right side. He gave her a hug, and then pushed her head gently onto His lap, and kept it there. Perviz was very happy. But then, for some inexplicable reason, she began to weep and she continued to weep, and weep. She was conscious of Baba's sadra becoming wet, and tried to lift her head, but Baba held it down firmly. She felt most uncomfortable, conscious of Baba's clothes becoming thoroughly wet, yet unable to stop weeping. She tried a number of times to lift her head, but each time Baba firmly pressed it down and some times holding it so. She heard various voices including Dina's when she interpreted Baba's comments, but only once did a sentence penetrate clearly to her, "She is my daughter" - although to whom it referred was not clear. All Perviz's thoughts were on the unceasing flow of tears, and on the increasing wetness of Baba's clothes even to the undergarments. In time she could even see the skin of His thigh and the trickle of tears sliding down

it. She was very aware of the discomfort she must be causing her Beloved Baba, yet unable to do anything about it with her head firmly in His lap.

Suddenly Baba released His hold, took Perviz in His arms, and holding her against His chest asked her to stop crying. As if a tap had been turned off, the tears stopped completely. Baba patted her head, blew her a kiss and gently pushed her into Dina's arms. She was at the time 14 years of age.

Baba then left the waiting room, asking the women not to follow Him immediately. He left Surat in the train for some destination other than Bombay. Half an hour later the group departed for Bombay.

Later on questioning Dina and Jeru about the episode in the waiting room Perviz learnt that Manek Mehta's wife had tried to push her daughter forward to sit on Baba's left. But Baba gestured, "No, she is your daughter, take good care of her." Then He patted Perviz's head and said, "This is My daughter, she has been with Me from birth. I have brought her up." He also said that the group of women from Bombay loved Him dearly, and all were His. Each time Manek's wife tried to push her daughter towards Baba, He would stroke Perviz's head and press it down again. He spoke to the various ones of the group, and when told of Anoo's (Dina's niece) pain, Baba placed His hand on the paining area and said that His nazar was on her. All through the three-day trip, Anoo had complained of a dull pain. Early next morning before dawn, she had an emergency operation for appendicitis.

Later Dina and family heard that Baba had gone through the entire "jhamello" of the Surat trip for the sake of two people. In time they became aware that two very sincere Baba lovers had left Manek's group, and had devoted themselves exclusively to Baba and His Cause. They were Sorobji Sigantoria and Burjor Mehta, and both did much work in Baba's Cause.

The Talati Family

In 1958 Baba visited Bombay on a number of occasions, sometimes with both the women and men mandali, sometimes with the men mandali only. On all occasions He stayed at Ashiana, Nariman and Arnavaz's apartment. He was in Bombay for the New year 1958, and after a few days returned to Meherazad. Then within a short period returned again to Bombay.

January 26th 1958 was a holiday, and Dina and Perviz decided to spring clean the house. This was a one-story bungalow, set back from the road with coconut trees between it and the road. Anyone visiting by car, had to park on the road and walk through the trees to the house.

Dina's eldest daughter, Jeru, had married two months earlier, so Dina and Perviz were alone in the house. They had almost finished their spring cleaning, when Perviz saw Eruch and Homa Dadachanji coming through the trees towards the open front door. This was most surprising, because she knew that Baba was in Bombay and Eruch normally never left His side, and she exclaimed "Eruch, you here!" Eruch replied, "Is this how you greet your guests? Why, am I not welcome?!" He then embraced her and Dina, and said that he had been sent by Baba to specially inquire after them both.

Then he asked them to sit with him for a few minutes, before he returned to Baba. He did not accept tea or refreshments. After inquiring after their health and general well-being, he turned to Dina and asked about her son Curshed, who had been in England since September 1956. Dina expressed her concern that she had not heard from Him for four months, and therefore did not know of his well-being. While she talked Eruch interjected with remarks such as, "Why do you worry about his health and circumstances? Why not leave it all to Baba?" These remarks prompted her to

continue to talk until, at one point, she said, "Eruch, you don't understand - my main concern is that Curshed should not break any of Baba's orders" (Curshed had been given quite a few orders by Baba before leaving for England). Eruch replied, "Dinamai, don't worry, now he won't break any of Baba's orders" - and he emphasised the word "now". This conveyed to Perviz the message that Eruch was giving them, but Dina did not realise it. Again she expressed her concern over Curshed breaking the orders, and again Eruch repeated his assurance. A third time Dina spoke of her concern, and for the third time Eruch gave his emphatic assurance. This time Dina asked Eruch how could he be so sure of Curshed's obedience, and it was then that Eruch very gently said: "Because Dinamai, Curshed is no more, and it is this message that Baba had sent me to tell you." There was for some moments a stunned silence in the room. Again softly, gently Eruch said that he had been sent by Baba specially to convey the news of Curshed, that Baba would see them and that he and Homa were to take them to Him - but on one condition - that they do not weep. Eruch repeated the condition: "Do you want to see Baba? Will you agree not to cry?" Dina seemed to shake herself out of a stupor and said: "Yes, we will come with you to see Baba and we will not weep." Dina turned to Perviz: "Go prepare yourself quickly, we mustn't keep Baba waiting".

Within a few minutes they left the house. As they did so, Dina asked Eruch if they could collect Jeru on the way and he agreed. They drove to Jeru's house, and Homa went in to tell her that she was to accompany them to see Baba, but gave her no other news. Jeru was of course delighted and came to the car in a beautiful sari. When she was in the car, Dina said to her quietly but firmly, "Jeru we are going to meet Baba because Curshed died yesterday. But Baba does not want us to weep." Jeru, very attached to her brother and a naturally timid, easily-affected person, burst into tears. Dina repeatedly told her of Baba's

condition, and after a time Jeru composed herself and Homaj started the car. But after a short distance Jeru began to weep again, and despite Dina's pleas to stop, she seemed unable to do so. Finally Dina asked Homa to return to Jeru's home, resolved to proceed to Baba without her. But Eruch told Homa to stop on the side of the road. He then asked Jeru to compose herself and talked to her, emphasising the importance of obeying Baba. Jeru finally managed to control her tears, and they all continued to Ashiana.

When Dina, Perviz and Jeru entered Baba's room, Baba was seated in the far left corner, with some of the men mandali standing on the right. Eruch was on His left. As they walked towards Baba, He looked straight at Dina and said in Gujarati, "Aje Navaraji gujari gaya" (Today Navaraji has died). Some one in the room, it is thought Meherjee, said, "Baba, not Navaraji, Curshed died". By then, the three were standing directly before Baba, who nodded, but made no further comment. That incident remain firmly in the minds of Dina and Perviz, but neither ever understood why Baba said what He did. Baba never made a mistake, so it would not be an error or mix up of names, and they knew deep within themselves that He meant what had been said.

Baba then embraced each of the three, and gestured, "No tears!" They assured Him they would not cry, and He was pleased. He told them that Adi jnr. had phoned Adi Snr. from London with the news of Curshed's death. He continued, "Today I have come to Bombay especially for you. I am happy that you have obeyed Me not to cry. Curshed was Mine, and I have taken him. He is with Me." Perviz does not remember whether it was Dina or Eruch who spoke of Dina's concern of breaking Baba's orders, and Baba said, "Had he lived he would have definitely broken My orders, and he would have suffered. Now he is safe with Me."

Baba then asked the men mandali to leave the room, and the women mandali came in. Such were the women's expressions of

sympathy, and their words of fondness for Curshed, that the three had difficulty controlling their tears. Mani, Goher, Arnavaz and Naja each spoke of their regard for Curshed, but it was as Naja spoke with eyes brimming and tears in her *voice*, that Baba asked Perviz if she felt like crying. Perviz replied, "Yes Baba" and Baba said that they were free to weep in His presence, but not the moment they stepped out of the room. With those words Perviz and Jeru wept freely, but Dina did not. Baba asked her, "Don't you want to weep?" Dina shook her head, "No Baba." She appeared like one frozen in time with all emotion in suspension and intently controlled.

Baba gestured for them to sit, and Jeru by mistake sat on His toilet seat. Immediately realising her mistake she got up, but Baba told her to sit down again. He then said to her, "I was not going to give you a child, but now that you have sat in that chair, I will have to give you one." Dina sat next to Baba, and He held her hand for quite some time.

Later Rupamai came into the room as Baba had also asked her to come to Him. She too had been instructed not to weep. After her arrival, Baba said that it had been arranged for the women mandali to see the film "The Ten Commandments" on the 28th January, and that tickets had also been purchased for Dina and Perviz. They were asked, "Would they go?" Dina and Perviz said they would go if that was His wish. Baba expressed His happiness with their response, and said that He did want them to go. Perviz was told to sit next to Mehera. Baba then asked Rupamai if she would go, and she said yes if that was His wish, although not knowing English she would not understand the film. Baba smiled and agreed, so she was not to bother to go.

The women mandali then said goodbye and left the room. When Eruch and some of the mandali returned, Baba told the family He did not want any of the usual ceremonies of Zoroastrian funerals for Curshed. He set a date, February 4th when 17 poor persons were to be brought to their house and served food. He

specified that Dina and Perviz only were to cook the dhal, rice and potato food: no one else was to help in the cooking, and only they were to serve the food. However Dina's eldest brother, and another person if necessary, could help to find the poor people, and bring them to the house. He repeated that none were to help Dina and Perviz in cooking and serving the food. He then asked Nariman Dadachanji to give Rupamai 5 rupees, and instructed her to go to the Zoroastrian Fire Temple on the 28th morning, buy sandalwood with the 5 Rupees and offer it on His behalf. But there was to be no ceremony.

The following day, 27th was the birthday of a cousin of Perviz, and Baba asked that they go to the family gathering for a time, even if it did not turn out a celebration. One of the mandali suggested that it would be best for Dina not to stay alone in the house, especially since Perviz was instructed by Baba to continue to go to her office work. Baba agreed, and told Dina and Perviz to stay for a week with Nergis Dadachanji. Homa was asked to take them home, and then to Nergis's. The family then took their leave of their loving and compassionate Baba.

Dina and Nergis were very fond of each other, so Nergis was a great comfort to Dina over this period. There were visitors including Nagoo Irani and Alu Khambatta, both doctors, but Dina spoke only when addressed, and it was very obvious that she was suffering within but not expressing it. Once only she said, "It took me 20 years to get over Naval's death and now this!" A remark that she did say often was, "How kind my Baba is to come all the way to Bombay to comfort us. How much He looks after us." Homa had recently returned from England and recounted his last meeting with Curshed. This was some comfort to Dina.

Alu, for some reason, thought that Dina should cry and did everything possible to make her cry. The more she tried the more Dina was irritated and upset. Alu followed her trying to make her cry, and she sat in front of her weeping and wailing. She would not

accept that it was Baba's order not to weep. It went on hour after relentless hour, until Dina shouted at Alu: "Stop it you devil, or I will slap you! Why are you so determined to fight Baba and make me break His order? I won't do it! Go away!" It was then that the men present at the time physically forced Alu out of the room. Alu left the house, and it was learnt later that she then phoned Ashiana. She returned to Nergis' and said: "Baba is coming to see Dina, but no-one else is to see Him or even His car when He arrives." Dina asked Dara Dadachanji to buy a nice garland for Baba. This he did and Dina sat alone in the front room with the garland in her hand, waiting for Him. When she saw the car, she went out and waited for it to do a U-turn and come to the house.

Baba was in the rear seat and He asked Dina to sit next to Him. The car moved on and stopped a few buildings away. Then Dina garlanded Baba and He lovingly embraced her. He asked her why she had sent for Him and she replied that she hadn't. "Do you want to cry?" asked Baba, and she replied "No Baba." Baba said He had come especially for her because He was told she wanted to cry. Dina began to explain that it was all due to Alu and that she had not asked for the phone call to be made, but Baba cut her short "Never mind, I am here. Tell me what you feel." Dina replied that Curshed's death, alone in a strange country, far from everyone had given her a sense of guilt. She was aware that since childhood Curshed had wanted to go to London and she had finally let him go. That she had done so, now had created some feelings of guilt. Baba said "Are you mad? Do you think you are responsible for his going or his death? It was I that sent him." Then with His index finger, He moved a small leaf on the garland around His neck and said "This small leaf also cannot move unless I will it so! All that has happened is by My will! You were worried that he would break My orders - I prevented that. I have taken him to Me. You are not responsible for anything." Again Baba moved the leaf and repeated "Remember not a leaf moves without My will." After some more

talk, Baba directed the car to do a complete circle of the Dadar roundabout then a U-turn in order to leave Dina at the house again. Baba said that He was happy she had obeyed His order, and that He was always with her. Baba then returned to Ashiana.

As instructed by Baba, the next day, Dina and the family attended the family gathering, but because of Curshed's death and the death of ari uncle of Dina's earlier that day, there was no birthday celebration for the cousin. Dina talked to the gathering of Baba's compassion and how He had come especially to Bombay to be with Dina and family. She entreated everyone not to weep, but to be happy for Curshed, now with Baba. Dina was herself very calm, as she was also the next morning at the funeral of Pirosha, Navalsha's eldest brother.

That evening, the women mandali, Dina and daughters saw "The Ten Commandments". As instructed Perviz sat with Mehera in the front row and Dina was in the second row. Later, when talking about the film, Dina said there were two scenes during which she very nearly wept - one, when Moses meets his real mother, and two, when the princess, the foster mother comes to Moses. In those two scenes, if it was not for Baba's order, she said she would have wept and wept - and once started she knew she could not have stopped. She thanked Baba for giving her the strength to control herself. If she had not, she could never have forgiven herself. The movie outing was on the fourth day after Curshed's death, and this being the most important day, there was disbelief and much criticism amongst the community that there had been an outing, but no ceremonies.

A day or two later Baba left Bombay. Dina and Perviz were still at Nergis's, and Nagoo came each day to check Dina's health. Some time during the week, Dina began to have a fever, and as her temperature rose to a dangerous level, Nergis and Nagoo sat for many hours applying cold compresses. When the temperature came down, and Dina regained consciousness, she asked why her

forehead was cold and damp. Nagoo explained that she had been very ill. Then Dina smiled and said, "I was very happy and at peace and now you have brought me back."

On the appointed day the poor were served lunch as ordered by Baba, and again there were no ceremonies.

Later in February Dina and Perviz attended the Sahavas in Meherabad, and on their return to Bombay found that Curshed's ashes had arrived from England. That night they returned to Ahmednagar, with Dina holding the box on her lap, like a small baby, throughout the journey. The next morning they went to Meherazad and Dina handed the box to Baba. He assured her that He would personally inter it at Meherabad. This He did some time later and Curshed's ashes rest amidst the giants of Beloved Baba's court, such as Eruch, Padri, Pendu, Adi Snr, Vishnu and others.

On Baba's first or second trip to the West He had given Curshed a folder with post cards of the ship on which He was sailing. Curshed told Baba that he too wanted to go to London, and Baba said, "One day I shall send you." Baba fulfilled His promise.

Unfathomable are His ways and boundless His love and compassion. Words are inadequate to describe His beauty and His bounty.

In November of 1962 Shridhar Kelkar happened to visit Poona. He worked in the same office as Perviz Talati, had become friends with her and had been told of Meher Baba by her. But not yet had he met Him. It was the time of the East West Gathering and Perviz with many other Baba lovers was staying at Mobo's hotel. One afternoon Shridhar visited Perviz at the hotel, and while they were talking Arnavaz came to them and gave Perviz an entry badge for the Gathering, saying that her friend could use it if he wished to have Baba's darshan. Shridhar readily agreed and joined the group leaving at that time for the Gathering. On reaching the main bungalow of Guruprasad Perviz explained that the darshan was being conducted behind the building, and that the women

went to the left of the building and filed before Baba from that side, and the men filed by from the right.

Shridhar, finding a very big crowd seated before Baba, decided to stand by a post near the stage so that he could have a better view of Baba. There he stood for a considerable time before thinking whether he should leave. But he did not want to admit to Perviz that he had not taken darshan nor could he tell a lie. Finally, although the queue was very long and he hesitated, he did join it and in time happily had Beloved Baba's darshan. This first real contact with Baba brought him much closer to Perviz, and in 1966 they married. Baba sent them His love and blessings, but being as He was in strict seclusion they did not meet Him.

In December 1968 Perviz and Shridhar were among the two hundred invited to Meherazad for Mehera's birthday and for Dara and Amrit's wedding. On the 23rd December Baba asked that Perviz and Shridhar come to Him on the porch; they each kiss Him on the cheek - Perviz on the right, and Shridhar on the left. Both were very moved by awareness of the indescribably frail and delicate state of His body.

The next physical darshan they had was in the early hours of the 1st February 1969 while Beloved Baba lay in the crypt at Meherazad. There His body remained for the next seven days giving His lovers the opportunity to descend into the crypt and touch the feet of the Beloved Avatar of this Age.

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai !!!

Epilogue

This book began with Salutations to the Eternal Beloved, and now could end with these Salutations by the Perfect Master Kabir:

*Humbly do I stand before my Beloved God and before my Master:
to whom shall I bow down first? Oh! To the feet of my Master
by whose Grace I have beheld the Beloved!*

*My salutations again to my Master who granted me the light of true
Knowledge: without His Grace the darkness of ignorance can
never be dispelled.*

*My salutations and eternal gratitude too at the feet of Advanced
Wayfarers and the God-Intoxicated: thru their Grace I learnt
true Love and Devotion and thus crossed the ocean of illusion.*

*Were I to turn this whole world into writing paper, all the trees into
pens, and the waters of the seven seas into ink - all this would
not suffice to describe the beauty of the Beloved.*

(Translated by Sam Kerawala)

Do not worry about your weaknesses.
Eventually they will go; even If they linger,
love will one day consume them.

Everything disappears in the Ocean of Love.

Because I love you, you have a pool of love within you.
When you feel wretched,
when you fall in your weakness,
have a dip in that pool of love.

Refresh yourself in that pool of My love within you.
It is always there.

Even if you wash your weaknesses every day in that pool,
it will remain clear.

Don't worry.

Baba loves you, that is what really matters.

Meher Baba

Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 5, para 1, line 3, trifle changed to trivial
Page 6, para 2, line 20, swapped changed to swatted
Page 12, para 2, line 6, its changed to it's
Page 40, para 1 line 8, medley changed to melee
Page 44, para 3, line 6, then changed to than
Page 54, para 4, line 10, it's changed to its
Page 63, para 2, line 1, go changed to went
Page 68, para 1, line 1, effected changed to affected
Page 70, para 2, line 12, His changed to his
Page 92, para 2, line 3, written changed to write
Page 113, para 1, line 14, bother's changed to brother's
Page 148, para 2, line 8, ensured changed to ensued
Page 153, para 2, line 9, effected changed to affected