

**The Divine Humanity
of
Meher Baba
Volume II**

By Bill Lepage

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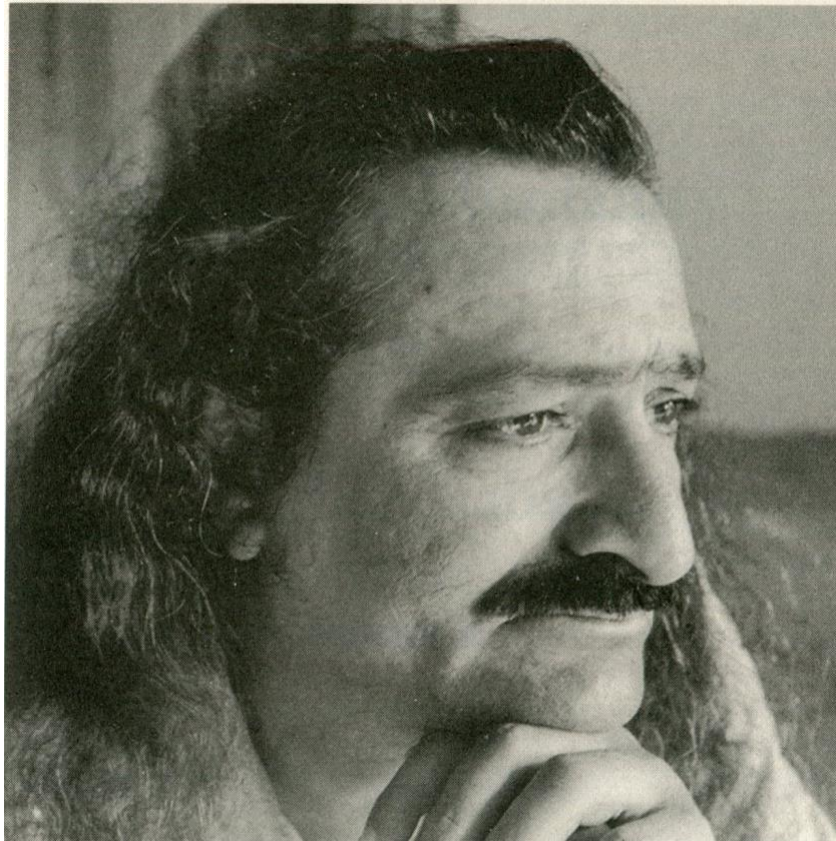
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Dedication

I am He whom I love and He whom I love is I.
We are two spirits in one body.
If thou seest Me thou seest Him.
And if thou seest Him thou seest us both.

- *Meher Baba*

The Divine Humanity
Of
Meher Baba

Volume II

Bill Le Page

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Ahmednagar, M.S. India.

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Introduction

It seems that with each of my books I begin with words about Avatar's Abode, the Place at which the books are written, and which still features so largely in my life. So I will continue the practice and write of Avatar's Abode.

Meher Baba's House.

The long slope from our house to Beloved Baba's House was not smooth lawn and gardens in June 1958. I remember it as a narrow, overgrown field with stunted wattle, gum and other self-sown trees. As I walk towards His House I recall the circular driveway running beneath the verandah of the House, roughly to the edge of the present border garden and returning midway between the House and the Meeting Hall to rejoin the entrance road. That area, now known as the Baba square, was a very simple layout then - some odd shrubs and trees, remnants surrounding the farmhouse that had been there roughly between the House and Meeting Hall. Standing there again in this area, I recall a delightful incident from that incandescent time with Beloved Baba in June 1958. As I wrote about this incident earlier:

'Generally throughout this second visit to Australia Baba was serious, at times unsmiling and withdrawn, and certainly more stern than He had been on His first visit. It was as though he intended to quicken the germination of the seed of love which He had sown on the first visit, and was less inclined to humour our moods, our "will we" or "will we not" love and obey Him. But, of course, with Baba, humour and natural humanness was never long absent and would break through at unexpected moments. One such little incident was when I was walking with Him the length of the verandah of His House. We stopped, and He pointed questioningly towards some tropical fruit growing nearby. I said, 'They are pawpaws, Baba,' and I shall never forget the quizzical, humorous look He gave me, with His hands in a typical

questioning gesture, as though saying, 'Oh! This Australian language!' Eruch then explained to me that the word for the fruit in India is papaya.

Baba also took some or all of us on occasions for an unhurried walk in the sun, or would stand with us and gaze over the green fields to the East of His House, towards the distant but visible ocean. On one such occasion, He stood with a group of us, Francis by His side, beneath the window of His room. There were then few trees and we were able to see the ocean. He remarked on the beauty of Avatar's Abode, and then affectionately pinching Francis' ear, said how well he had chosen for His Abode.

Because such times with the Lord are eternal, the heart forever responds when they are sung in words, or relived in those places. Reading, listening, thinking of them gives again the assurance to the groping heart to take strength and go forward in His love. So I relive walking the earth floor of the verandah with Him, standing with Him as He sits withdrawn on a chair near His door, sitting with Him in the vibrant warmth and 'homey' atmosphere of His House, being with Him in the charged and challenging time of His first meeting with us in the Meeting Hall - and I can understand wholeheartedly the innate longing of others to experience in spirit those times too.

Well, we cannot return the Meeting Hall to its original state - with its temporary hessian walls, and earth floor; but we can do so to a large extent with Baba's House. Maintaining the simplicity and original arrangement of His House, reminds me of a wonderful story from the late 1930's:

In 1939 a wealthy Baba lover from South India offered at the lotus feet of the Lord a very large parcel of land. Baba decided to establish on this land a Universal Spiritual Centre, and He directed that a ground-breaking ceremony be held in December 1939. Thousands were to attend including many

high officials such as the Prime Minister of the State. Baba and the men and women mandali were staying quite a distance from the land. As the time approached for departure to the land, Baba came to the room where His mother was and seeing her, said, 'We are leaving soon and you are not already dressed.' 'Can't You see - I am already dressed!' And indeed she had on a most beautiful sari, one that she considered worthy of the occasion. 'Don't tell Me you are going to wear that sari!' 'But You said it was to be a most important occasion with many dignitaries.'

Then Baba said to her, 'You are the mother of a Fakir, and you should wear a sari that befits the mother of a Fakir. Look at this jacket I am wearing.' - and sure enough there were patches on it. Shireen immediately said that Baba should change the coat - but Baba refused, and insisted that she change her sari to a plain ordinary one. Shireen wept but did as He asked. It must have pained the compassionate One to see His dear mother weep, yet His work is paramount and so He ensured that she attended the ceremony appropriately dressed.

Such a story takes me back in memory to the bare setting of that converted wool-shed, and the incredible richness of the Being that occupied it as though it was a palace. Of course His bedroom opening within that structure is indeed a palace albeit simple: its carpet and tastefully covered bed and cushions, its beautifully-grained timber-walls and furniture, befits the paradise of His heart as it envelops in Love all who enter.

The Meeting Hall.

On this concrete slab, seven foot square, defined by pieces of volcanic rock, Beloved Avatar Meher Baba sat on the first day of His visit to Avatar's Abode, 3rd June 1958. His very Presence was an active, flowing ocean of Love embracing those who had gathered on the property to be with Him. Behind Him stood throughout the meeting the four close disciples who had accompanied Him on His world tour, and

before Him sat the fifty-one men, women and children on long wooden planks supported by timber stumps. The floor was earth and the walls were one-third galvanized iron and the remainder hessian (burlap), and with the cool wind that developed as the meeting progressed, the atmosphere became draughty and unsettling.

We stood as He was carried in His chair to the platform, and we sat as He gestured for us to do so. There was a pause with Beloved Baba looking at us, and in that timeless moment we were caught and riveted anew in the wondrous beauty, strength and purpose of His face. In retrospect it felt as though this was the defining moment of His second visit to this part of His world. He had endured the exhausting journey to the southern hemisphere with a body broken in health after two car accidents and by already thirty-eight years of constant crucifixion in absorbing some of the world's karma: yet, in His compassion and love He had come for this handful of souls and for Australia.

He came to Australia twice to give His Love, and on this visit He created the second Place that would provide a never-ending especially potent source of that Love for the people of this land. As a land and as a people, we would awaken spiritually: a country located in the East and yet as a people of the West, and thus perhaps in His plan for the next seven hundred years, a significant link between East and West.

Beloved Baba's words, given through Eruch, then gave human dimension to that timeless moment: 'I am the ocean of Love. Drink deep at that fountain. Love has no limit, but mind is in the way, and mind cannot be annihilated by mind. Only by loving Me as I ought to be loved, can the mind be destroyed. If you love Me with all your heart, you will be made free eternally. There can be no compromise; one cannot love the world and love God. The man of the world has to compromise; but to have obedience to Baba one cannot compromise with the ways of the world. Love Me and obey Me and you will find Me. I am the Ancient One, the One residing in every heart. Therefore love others, make others happy, serve others, even

at discomfort to yourself; this is to love Me.'

Then Baba called for the Repentance prayer to be read by one of the men, and when it finished, He said that in His Divine authority He forgave all our sins up to that moment.

The hours that Baba spent with us in this Meeting Hall were the most consistently serious period of His entire visit. His love enveloped us, penetrating deep within our hearts and challenging us in the sincerity of our declared love for Him. Far from here seemed the sunny, light hours of His stay two years earlier in Meher House, Sydney: far were those personal moments of human intimacy experienced by many in Sydney and Melbourne. Now was the confronting challenge of our next step towards the spiritual Path: did we step forward with Him or did we linger to wait another day? As He said during those hours, 'As Jesus I said, Leave all and follow Me, and now I say Hold fast to My daaman. I have been saying the same thing in different words down the ages. Be honest with yourself in your love for Me. Love and obey Me - but if you cannot love and obey Me, then just obey Me and My daaman cannot fall from your grasp.'

The culminating point of that most intense time appeared to be when a teenage boy, deeply troubled over the question of absolute obedience to Baba, again had tears in his eyes. Baba gestured to him with a most loving expression, 'Baba loves you - you must not be sad.' As tears still fell, Baba added, 'When you cry, see, Baba cries too!' as He pointed to the rain that was gently falling. In that moment, surely Beloved Baba was expressing His compassion for all in Australia and our difficulty with absolute obedience to His Wishes.

Now I think again upon that day, - a glorious day when God-Man was with us, and reminded us to pray that we all 'live in deed and word and thought in accordance with His Will.'

Thus having given the setting for the writing of this book, let us proceed with the book itself, the second volume of 'The Divine Humanity of Meher Baba'.

Acknowledgements

As in volume 1, Ward Parks is to be thanked again in this volume for having undertaken the time-consuming task of recording Meherwan Jessawala, and Kay Walker for the equally time-consuming task of transcribing the material. It has been a very moving and joyous time for me in editing the recordings, so I acknowledge whole-heartedly my debt to Ward and Kay.

All the material in this volume has been either checked and approved by the Baba lovers included in it, or by Meherwan Jessawala who has known the deceased lovers for many years. He was also most helpful in reading through the entire book, and in helping to fine-tuning and check the material, and in some cases add to it. Most helpful too in checking and editing has been Geoff Gunther, and I much appreciate the time he has given to this in the midst of work on his own forthcoming book.

Once again Janene Pierce has lovingly undertaken the design and layout of the book, and I am personally thankful to her for doing so with her usual minimum fuss and bother.

Chapter 1

Meherwan Jessawala
Remembers the Years 1963-1969

As soon as Beloved Baba arrived for His summer stay at Guruprasad, He said to drive straight to Bindra House as He wished to see Gaimai. The household was at the time busy preparing Baba's food, and His arrival was totally unexpected on this His first day in Poona. As soon as they heard the horn of Baba's car, they rushed out, and to their utter surprise saw Baba being helped out of the car. Baba embraced Gaimai, and asked if she had received the letter He had asked Eruch to write. Baba continued, 'Of late I have been remembering you often. I don't know why I have been, and why I cannot resist coming and seeing you straight away.' Dear Gaimai began to weep, saying, 'Baba, You are so tired. You could have come some later time.' 'No, no - I had to see you right away, and I have come.' Perhaps it was simply His response to a hidden call of her heart, as happened sometimes on tours when He would visit a place, a home, that was not scheduled. Or perhaps simply another reminder to us that He will always respond to our great yearning for His company.

This is the letter that Eruch had sent on the 14th March 1963:

My dear Mummy,

Beloved Baba wants me to write to you saying that He is being reminded of you so often this past three days. Baba is asking a question since the last 3 or 4 days how is it that I keep remembering you, He asks the question of Mummy. Baba wants to know the why of it! Beloved Baba sends His LOVE to you and wants me to convey to you that He is made very

happy by your love for Him. Baba wants you to give His love to His very dear Manu and Meherwan.

Yours lovingly,

Eruch

Then on the 23rd March 1963 Baba again asked Eruch to write. This is the letter:

My dear Mummy,

Beloved Baba wants me to inform you that He knows well how much you love Him, and He wants you to know that He loves you much more than you love Him, and this is the reason why you are very frequently remembered by Him. Beloved Baba sends His LOVE to you, dear Manu and dear Meherwan.

In spite of our arrival in Poona tomorrow, Beloved Baba insisted that I write to you today, express delivery letter hence this letter to you. With much love from me and from each one of us at Meherazad to all dear ones in Bindra House and Ganeshkind.

Yours lovingly,

Eruch

* * * * *

During the 1963 Guruprasad stay, one of the mandali who did night watch with Baba was Vishnu, also known as Vishnu Master from the time he was a teacher in Baba's school in the 1920's. He would be usually with Baba in His room, but on this particular occasion he was seated outside waiting for Baba to send for him to return. It was about 10 p.m., and Vishnu was seated on a sofa or couch, enjoying a joke with somebody, and laughing loudly, when Goher came to tell him to return to Baba. At that point Vishnu suddenly lurched

forward and fell heavily to the floor. Goher shouted 'Baba ... Baba ... Baba!' and tried to resuscitate him, but there was no response from Vishnu - he had died. Then Goher rushed to Baba to inform Him, and Baba came out of His room, walked the distance to Vishnu and sat on the sofa. He said, 'All these years Vishnu kept watch on Me, now I am keeping watch on him.' This was a rare occurrence, and Baba continued, 'This was in his fate, and he deserved it.' Baba had Eruch called from Bindra House where he had been sent by Baba to stay the night, and Baba directed that he and Meherji arrange for Vishnu to be cremated that night. This was done, and Eruch then returned late in the night to Bindra House. Later Vishnu's ashes were taken to lower Meherabad and interred there with the other departed mandali.

* * * * *

Another one of Baba's long list of pets arrived during that summer stay of 1963 at Guruprasad. It was a beautiful Siamese cat of a rich, golden brown colour with blue eyes. It suddenly appeared at the house of its own accord, and became an instant favourite of Baba's. From that day it would not leave Guruprasad, and all wondered who and where was the owner. One day she did arrive, a young married Parsi woman, Dolly Deedee, who had come to inquire of her missing cat. All were happy with the reunion, and the cat, called Pegu, departed with the owner to her house nearby. But the next day Pegu returned, and following later Dolly, because she now knew where to find her cat. This time she tried to keep the cat home with a leash, but somehow or other Pegu escaped and back he came to Baba. This game between Dolly and Pegu continued for some days, until the lady gave up and allowed her cat to stay, but asked if she could come each day to feed him. This Baba agreed to. It was of course a very happy arrangement for Beloved Baba and Pegu, and in the process, a very happy outcome for the owner and her sister and their families, because they all became

Baba lovers!

Early in the morning when the door to Baba's bedroom was opened, the first one in, even before Mehera, would be Pegu. He would spend the night outside the door. He would immediately jump on Baba's lap, or rub himself on Baba's feet, and so was the first to have His darshan! Even when Baba returned to Meherazad, Pegu continued to stay at Guruprasad, and his owner was forced to continue to come each day to feed him. After one stay, and Baba was in Meherazad, He commented frequently about Pegu, whether he was being properly cared for now that no one was in the house, and if it was possible for him to be shut away somewhere. The mandali tried to assure Baba that such a thing would not happen, but later it was learnt that that was precisely what did happen. Korshed had helped to clean the house after Baba's departure, and it happened she was the last to leave and she was not aware that Pegu had been inadvertently locked in a cupboard. Fortunately after two or three days the manager of the estate happened to be in the house and heard a faint scratching noise. It was Pegu very distressed and facing death if he had been left longer. Death did come to Pegu in February 1967 when he was killed on the road outside Guruprasad. Baba was in Meherazad at the time, and He was very saddened when told the news.

Yet another unexpected new pet for Baba arrived in late 1967. Again it was a pet that gave Beloved Baba some relaxation and amusement during the intense seclusion work of the sixties. It was a very scrawny starving little puppy from the nearby village, and it slipped into Mandali Hall through the narrow opening of the door. The mandali moved to shoo it out, but Baba stopped them and said to ask the women for some food for it. Of course once it had food it did not want to leave, but probably Baba had from the beginning decided to keep it. He named it Ramu, which means in Gujarati 'play', and as was His habit, He fed it more than it could even contain. So from an extremely thin one, Ramu quickly became a very fat little puppy.

Ramu was given into Mehera's charge, and she taught him some tricks. One which Baba enjoyed was Ramu jumping over obstacles. So in the morning during the prayers, Ramu would be tied to a tree, and after the prayers when he was released, he would shoot like an arrow into the Hall to be with Baba. Baba would then feed him bits from His breakfast sent by Mehera. It was tea and a little toast, and even with that, Ramu received most of the toast. Baba would have His feet on a stool, and He would put the toast on one side of His legs, and the puppy would jump across to get it. It was bread sent specially from Poona to help nourish Baba, and Eruch would observe this game with growing annoyance and the more he showed it, the more Baba would feed Ramu. As the mandali would comment, 'Baba was a great tease!'

Kaka Baria was also during the later sixties, a great source of entertainment for Beloved Baba. He was, as it were, another 'pet' for Baba during those years. He had had seven heart attacks (surely a record) and then a severe case of failure of the renal functions which affected the brain, and all this meant that he could not form a single word, let alone a sentence. It was a terrible disability, yet Kaka was very happy with it, because it afforded great amusement for his Beloved Baba. Baba would have some sentence spoken, and then ask Kaka to repeat it. Kaka would endeavour to do so, but only some terrible, incoherent sounds would come forth. The effect was really very funny, and Baba would have a good laugh. And even more delightful was that Kaka would himself then laugh, and he would wink at Meherwan, as though he knew he could not speak properly, and was thus sharing in the enjoyment at his own expense. Baba would spell out, 'Toy, Kaka is My toy,' and also He called him 'Bilbo' from Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. He was really like a little doll, quite short, stout, upright and strong, just as one would imagine Bilbo.

Each morning he would accompany the boys with the lift chair for Baba as though he was a soldier bodyguard for Him, and would strut alongside as Baba was then carried to the Mandali Hall. Baba also gave him night duty in the early part

of the evening, and he would impatiently strut up and down outside Baba's bedroom if for some reason Baba was slow in clapping for him. He would be meticulous in all his duties for Baba, despite his inner physical handicaps. As Eruch once commented, 'When the mind impressions are gone, the heart impressions remain.'

When one or perhaps two of the mandali were massaging Baba's feet in Mandali Hall, Kaka would sit nearby on a high cushion, and gaze steadily at Baba. There was nothing else in the world for him but his Beloved Baba, and all his attention remained on Him. However one day when Meherwan and Bhau were massaging Baba's feet, there was a variation in his behaviour. He suddenly got up, walked slowly and majestically to where Bhau was sitting close to Baba, and gave Bhau a great thud on the back of his head. With this Baba looked at Kaka, and Kaka solemnly extended his hand for Baba to shake it. Baba, just as solemnly, shook Kaka's hand. Then Kaka quietly went back to his seat. This play was repeated quite often, but if Kaka decided to repeat it too often in the one day, then Baba would stop him, saying, 'Kaka, you have given Bhau enough treatment today.'

* * * * *

Baba called Meherji to Meherazad in the latter part of 1963 for some work, and said to bring Meherwan Jessawala and Dadi Kerawala with him. They were told to arrive at 2 o'clock. They arrived at the approach road to Meherazad early, so they stopped by the roadside and ate the lunch that Gaimai had prepared for them. The heat of the day, the car journey and then the food, made Meherwan nauseous, and when they were finally with Baba in Mandali Hall, he felt increasingly ill. He used any excuse to go out and wash his face in the hope this would help. Dadi would also go with him, and at one point, Baba gestured, 'What is wrong with you chaps?! Why are you always going out?! By teatime the nausea was

stronger than ever, and Meherwan wondered how he could avoid vomiting.

Then, to Meherwan's dismay, with the tea, Baba distributed to each large balls of condensed powered milk made into a sweet with sugar syrup which someone had brought. It was Baba's prasad and so had to be eaten. It was, you could say, the worst thing for an upset stomach. Meherwan went to a secluded spot thinking that now he would definitely be sick eating the sweets, and, accepting the inevitable, gulped them down. Suddenly the nausea began to subside, and to his amazement and joy, felt increasingly better. Within an hour, all squeamishness had gone. This was particularly good, because Baba had them stay overnight so that He could take them that evening to a circus.

It was a small circus with a tiny ring, but very well organised with skilled performers.

Baba sat with the women mandali in one place, and the men mandali sat a little distance away. The evening was a little relaxation for Baba in His otherwise strict seclusion, and He was therefore incognito so that the public would not disturb Him. In addition Baba told the women that all should depart before the final act. But the men persuaded Baba to stay to the end, wanting Baba to have the relaxation as well as themselves. So Baba gave in to their wishes, although it would have been better if they had followed Baba's instructions. The various acts were very good, and everyone was enjoying themselves. But the final act was a complete surprise.

Into the empty ring strode the owner of the circus with an elephant that had been performing earlier. Holding a huge garland in its trunk, the elephant circled the ring and then stopped before Baba. The owner ordered the elephant to do its duty, and the elephant raised its trunk in salute, and then put the garland around Baba's neck. It was intended as a grand finale. Everyone came to know Who was in their midst, and the whole audience shouted His 'Jai'. All were happy except Baba who was not pleased at being thus disturbed in

His seclusion. Baba had wanted His visit to be incognito, but instead the whole audience had become aware of Baba's presence. Fortunately it was the end of the show, and Baba left hurriedly before the crowd could mob him.

The next morning, after the prayers and some other work, Baba asked the men how had they enjoyed the evening. All said it had been excellent, and this act or that was singled out for praise. Then Baba said the act that He liked best was that performed by a Chinese man. In this the man ascended a ladder balanced without support on a table. He went in and out of each step of this quite high, precariously balanced ladder, and then did a head balance on the top of the swaying ladder. Baba continued that what He liked most was that each step was taken deliberately and gradually one step at a time by the performer. This He liked very much, saying, amidst much laughter, that in this Incarnation He had learnt something new 'one step at a time', and that He must remember not to go too fast, but take 'one step at a time'. Everyone enjoyed the conversation, but also took note of what is in fact a profound reminder to all.

* * * * *

The supreme importance that Beloved Baba put on obedience to even His smallest order, brought forth an interesting little story from 1956, when Baba stayed at Silver Oaks bungalow after His second car accident. Eruch had been sent to Bindra House to continue to recover from his injuries, and one morning he and Meherwan went to see Baba. He was lying on a couch with His leg suspended for traction, and He gestured to Meherwan, 'Why did you come in the sun without a hat? What was My order to you? Meherwan said, 'Yes Baba I made a mistake.' 'Always remember to wear a hat in the sun.' Even in the midst of His intense suffering from the accident, He was so mindful of the welfare of His lovers, and of obedience to all His orders. Meherwan remembers Baba's gestures from that time: always remember My orders,

and do not allow them to be violated at any time.

On this same theme, there was another incident at the time of the accident. The mandali had brought Baba to Poona for a short visit to a specialist doctor, and He had given the order that the mandali were not to have anything that day, not even water. And this was not to be conveyed to the women: when the women give you food for the day, just put it in the boot of the car, and don't tell them anything, otherwise they will start fretting.

Yet on the day of the accident, when Baba was sent to Satara by Eruch, and the others were taken to hospital, Baba sent word that they were now free of His order regarding food and drink. He could at the time barely make gestures, yet He sent that special message. How mindful Baba was about His orders being upheld by His close ones.

* * * * *

At times during the informal Guruprasad gatherings with Baba, there would be sherbet parties. Baba would dole out sherbet from a big mug into each one's glass as they filed past Him. Sometimes it was an ice cream party, and the best ice cream by far was that brought by Gajwani, a very wealthy industrialist from Bombay.

In those years Gajwani and Siganporia were the backbone of the Bombay Centre, and in addition Gajwani gave considerable assistance for Baba's work. Even in his old age, Gajwani looked and acted the picture of health, and once Baba asked him if he slept at night. He replied that he had no trouble sleeping but that he only slept three hours a night. With Baba's questioning gesture, he said that he meditated on Baba until midnight, slept until three o'clock, and then again meditated on Baba, until preparing to go to the office. He had two or three large factories in Bombay.

There is an interesting story in connection with Gajwani

and money. Three days after his last meeting with his Beloved Baba, he died of a heart attack. After his death, his son came to see Baba with his father's will. In it the father had detailed a certain sum of money from many years ago which he had meant to spend for Baba's tour of India, but had not done so on account of the cancellation of the tour by Baba. The son acknowledged the debt, but said that he did not have the money on him, and that he would send it.

Time passed and on one of Adi Snr's visits to Meherazad, he mentioned to Baba that he had not received the money, and asked if Baba wanted him to write to the son and remind him of the debt. With a twinkle in His eyes, Baba gestured, 'No, at compound interest, it will be a tidy sum for Me when I return in seven hundred years!'

But to return to the ice cream, - Gajwani's specialty was Cassata ice cream, a big ball of chocolate with ice cream, nuts and fruit inside. Baba would cut off big slices for each, and it was a treat relished by all. The following incident happened on one 'ice cream prasad' occasion when Pukar and Meherdas were present. They were both enjoying the ice cream, but suddenly got an urge to quickly finish eating it. They added water to it, drank it all down, and for some reason, looked very pleased with themselves. Baba gestured, 'Finished the ice cream?!' 'Yes, Baba, I added water and just drank it all down,' replied Meherdas again looking pleased. Suddenly Baba's mood changed, and He gestured, 'Did I give you ice cream for you to do that?! You have insulted My prasad! I am most unhappy. Go back to your home town - I don't want to see your face again!' Then looking sternly at Pukar gestured, 'You too, pack up and leave forthwith!'

Suddenly everyone's ice cream started to melt under Baba's fiery mood! Whether it was just the ice cream, or whether there was some other hidden cause, no one of course knew, but all quivered, holding their breath, when Baba was in one of these moods. So Pukar and Meherdas packed their trunks, and started to leave, when Baba called them back. He said, 'I

sit with you, I joke with you, I give you prasad, and instead you show no respect for what I do for you. To My prasad, you add water!' Perhaps it was simply an occasion when Baba highlighted the need to show respect for Him under all circumstances. Baba then continued, 'This attitude is not good. But I forgive you this time and you can continue to stay.' Pukar particularly was in tears the whole time, and now even more so with Baba's forgiveness. Pukar was a big man, a fearless warrior from the days of India's struggle for independence, but now before Baba, he wept like a little child. Baba embraced them, and all was again peaceful.

There was another 'ice cream' occasion when Baba had called various close ones for a card game, but then decided to retire early. So He sent word that all should have ice cream as compensation for His absence, and that no one should feel His absence. All then trooped off to an ice cream stall near the railway station and someone treated everyone to ice cream as a treat from Baba.

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Baba had a lifetime affection for games, and He placed a lot of importance on them. But after His car accident in 1956, He had to content Himself with indoor games, although still ordering or at least encouraging His people to exercise, to walk, to play games in order to keep the mind fresh and alert. They are also one of the enjoyable ways individuals can forget themselves without much effort.

So in the years after 1956, apart from card games, Baba also played such games as carom and table tennis - both of which He had had brought from Bindra House. Carom consists of a large square board with a hole in each corner, and the task was to send small round wooden pieces into the holes by striking them with a striker and finger. On one occasion Meherwan was partner with Baba, against two other mandali. In the course of the game, Baba missed several easy shots,

and Meherwan began to get upset over this, and becoming so much so, that he went to Baba, and said, 'Baba You must put Your finger this way and aim that way!' Suddenly Baba looked up at him and gestured in His unique way, 'I know, I know those things,' and in that look reminded Meherwan that he was trying to teach the Lord what to do! Meherwan realised that, for a moment, he had brought Him down to ordinary man, and forgotten His divinity. So Baba had to remind him in His usual gentle way - as He did with them all when very occasionally they got carried away in the heat of the moment.

With card games Baba would only play with His mandali and very close lovers, never with the crowds around Him. Those with Him felt that the games were often only a pastime for Him, and they would observe how He became more and more withdrawn over the years. Sometimes the liveliness would be there, but mostly not, and while those with Him would be sad at heart at His increasingly weak condition, they would never show that to Him. Certain ones particularly would seek to entertain Him, and thus ease for a time the burden of His suffering. One of these was Kumar. When he lost in a card game, and was therefore required to rub his nose on the floor, he would refuse to do so, and Baba's hefty twin nephews were deputed to force him to do it. Kumar would of course struggle, and the whole scene gave Beloved Baba much amusement.

While with games there would be few with Him, when He decided on house visits it was another matter. Then a procession of at least five or six cars full to the brim with people would set off from Guruprasad, and people in the street would stop and wonder about the dignitary passing by. These house visits often began at 2 p.m. the hottest time of the day, and during the hottest months of the year. All the windows of Baba's car would be closed as He wished, and the atmosphere was stifling. This Baba enjoyed. In the same way he chose 2 p.m. to go the picture theatre if He decided they should all go to see a film. The theatre chosen would sometimes be a ramshackle one, dingy with no ceiling fans

and no ventilation. It was just like an oven for all, but apparently not for Baba. During the sixties, the films seen were all English language ones. Later when Baba stopped going out, He would at times send the men and women mandali to the theatre. One film that they saw was Charlie Chaplin's 'Limelight', and the next day they had to give their comments to Baba on the film.

One of the few persons not mandali or very close to Baba yet allowed to be always present at Guruprasad, was a friend of Baba's brother Jal to whom Baba gave the name 'hermit'. This man, named Zal, was a very shy, very quiet, very short and lean person with a high squeaky voice. If anything was said to him, he would put his head down and say, 'Baba, I have nothing to say.' On one occasion Baba took him and the mandali to a film, and on their return, Baba asked each how they liked it. Zal replied that he did not see the film, and in fact had never seen a film. Baba thereupon directed that a ticket to the picture theatre again be purchased for him, and after seeing the film, he was to report in detail to Baba on it. With his very odd ways, he undoubtedly gave Baba much amusement.

On another occasion Baba asked those present about His appearance that day, and all commented in various ways on His beauty - and apparently on that day He did look particularly beautiful and glowing. But when it came to Zal, and he was asked to stand up and comment, he said, 'Baba, You look very old to me.' Baba looked surprised, and said to us, 'Old? Do I look old?' The mandali protested, 'No Baba, You do not look old to us. You look beautiful.' Baba then gestured to Zal, but again he said, 'Baba You look very old to me.' With this, Baba said, 'Leave the room - I don't want to see your face again!' He therefore went out of the room, but after awhile, was called back into the Hall. Baba gestured, 'Now how do I look?' 'Baba, You look nice.' Baba smiled, and gestured, 'Now you can stay and be with us.' All present burst out in laughter enjoying the Lord's divine sense of humour.

He was of course a lover of Meher Baba, had been so from the early years, yet he remained very odd in his ways. After Baba passed away, he never missed an Amartithi, but he would stand on one spot near Baba's seclusion cabin, looking down, and taking no part in the celebrations. One day he disappeared, and after a few days the door of his room was broken open and he was found dead, departing this life unnoticed, just like a hermit.

* * * * *

At times during the sixties Baba asked that only correspondence from close ones or from workers for Him, were to be read to Him. On one such occasion, a letter from Padri at Meherabad giving information of activities there, was read to Baba. In it Padri quite casually mentioned that one of Baba's pet dogs had suddenly disappeared one night, and they were unable to find the dog or his remains. Padri assumed that the dog had been devoured by a hyena or some such predator. As this was read out, Baba became very disturbed and angry, and He gestured, 'Is this the way Padri should write about My pet, one that I have given into his care?' Baba's eyes flashed fire, and the atmosphere in the Hall became very tense. It was a lesson to all that whatever Baba had given into their care, should be treated with utmost attention.

Baba continued, 'What was the watchman doing? What was Padri doing, and what is he doing now? Tell him to sack the watchman immediately!' Eruch then tried to pacify Baba by interceding on Padri's behalf, 'Baba, the environment of Meherabad makes it very hard to maintain security. Padri is working under difficulties ... he has a lot of responsibility ... etc. etc.' And at the same time Eruch subtly encouraged the others present to support his efforts. Baba still remained unhappy, but simmering down, finally said, 'All right let's take a vote on this - all those who want to forgive Padri and the

watchman, raise their hand.' So everyone immediately put their hand up, and at once Baba gestured 'forgiven'. And the tension just vanished. Then Baba directed Eruch to write to Padri stating that He was extremely annoyed with Padri's very casual approach to the loss of His pet, at the apparent lack of discipline there, and directed him to be more diligent in the future.

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Some Correspondence

1965. Here are some excerpts of letters from Eruch.
Meherazad 7th November 1965

.'fresh liver juice is out of question, as protein intake has to be regulated. Feromint is a new type of iron intake for a delicate stomach. It is to be kept in mouth 3 or 4 times a day and dissolved gradually. It does not upset the stomach but it is very sweet in taste. As advised by Dr Grant this is given to increase Baba's haemoglobin count. Let us hope for the best.

Najamai wants you to try to send capsicum green peppers next time with Sheik driver if possible as Baba relishes them very much. This morning at 5 am Beloved Baba also saw the comet from His room. Joan Bruford writes from Australia that the comet was the most wonderful and unique sight. It was as bright as the moon and was very big.

Another small snippet of a letter from Meherazad 6th December 1965.

... Beloved Baba is feeling very much better since a couple of days and relishes His food of pomfret and rice and ochra etc. Hope He continues to do so.

[Fresh fish was only available in Poona, not Ahmednagar. Meherwan would pack it in a tin with ice, send it in the mail taxi to Adi Snr.'s office, who would keep it in his refrigerator until taking it to Meherazad.]

Eruch wrote to Gaimai 14th November 1965.

My dearest Mummy,

Your very loving letter to me was read to Beloved Baba this morning and He noted all the news you wrote. He was very happy to note that Dolly Deedee lovingly agreed for Pegu's milk and fish. [Pegu was determined to stay at Guruprasad rather than at 'home' with his owner.] Baba approves Dolly Deedee paying Rs 8 to Ramarao for the milk per month. Next Baba wants you to convey His love to her and her children and the bonny boy grandson. So because of the cat Dolly Deedee and her entire family get Baba's blessings. Beloved Baba wants you to show your elbow to a good doctor and He does not want you to neglect it any more. He wants you to show it first to Dr Grant and take his advice. If Grant is not available then show it to Chatterjee. Baba thinks your elbow joints need an injection of cortisone inside the joint. Have you consulted Dr Fonsica? What has she to advise? Baba wants you to hurry up and show your elbow to Dr Grant or Chatterjee and report soon.

Yes it is good to keep one's weight within limits. Less the weight, less the strain on the heart and on the spinal column. Hope dear Gulamasi and Banumasi are feeling better by now. Beloved Baba sends both His love.

Baba's diet is now a mixture of fish rice dahl or curry vegetables. First we used to give Him one dish and Baba would eat that, now it's not like that. Plenty of dishes are given and He eats a little of

everything. Please tell dear Meherwan to send Bombay ducks either in taxi or with dear Meherji who might come here with Don Stevens. Dear Najamai was very happy to hear from you and she shared your letter with dear Mani and Goher. Dr Alu has now been told to leave Meherazad by this Monday and she is a bit gloomy about it. She and all the women send you and all dear ones their much love. I'm happy to note that dear Manu is feeling better these days. Hope her pain vanishes soon. Beloved Baba was amused to hear of little Mehera's [Arjani] excuses. Baba wants her to study well, and also to play about a great deal and also to learn all the housework besides reading storybooks. Baba sends His love to His dear Mehera and to Dolly [Kerawala]. He sends His love to Rosie, Sammy. Enclosing dear Dadi's letter for you all to read and to return it to me.

Baba also told me to convey His love to His dear Jollymama. [Jollymama was the name given by Baba to Dhun's father, Homi, because he was always full of jokes and fun, despite his great misfortunes in life. He was someone who was always cheerful and never showed on his face or in his manner what he was going through.]

Nariman, Arnavaz, Rhoda are due to arrive here tomorrow to return on 19th or maybe 21st. Noted about the difficulty of keeping grain in good condition, well you all know this better than I do. Here the prices are soaring sky high.

There was a telegram from Jangoo [Mehru's brother] from Nasik to Baba as follows: We thank You for Your kind telegram.

Love to Meheramasi, and Mehru and mandali. Jangoo and Amy.

In reply, Eruch wrote:

... Beloved Baba wants me to convey to you, and to dear Manu, Meherwan, Kesar, Buntty and Hamai and to all dear ones at Bindra House, Villoo House His love. Much love to you from Eruch. PS. Nariman Arnavaz Rhoda just arrived at 9.30am. Nariman's health is good, his chest is rather congested but he feels alright otherwise.

The following is a postcard from Mani: Meherazad dated 14 December 1965.

Dear Meherwan,

Rushing these few lines to let you dear ones know that dear Eruch is indisposed with fever so do not be worried if you do not get the usual letters. On 12th evening at 8 p.m. he suddenly got rigours and had high fever all night. Yesterday morning he was feeling better though weak but attended his usual duties. Then the rigours came on again with high fever which persisted till this morning and he still has fever. Dear Goher is of course treating him and has sent his urine and blood for testing. At first she thought it was malaria but now she's not sure and is giving him the proper anti-biotics and checking thoroughly. Eruch says you all must not worry, I will be keeping you informed of his progress. Much love to dearest Mummy, Gulamasi, Manu, Banumasi and all at Bindra House and to your dear self,

from Mani, Eruch and us all.

This postcard was followed up with another letter from Mani on the next day, 15th of December Meherazad

Dearest Manu,

my postcard of yesterday will have reached you dear ones. Today on my birthday I am able to give you good news of dear Eruch's health. By Beloved Baba's grace it is surely Baba's birthday gift to me.

Eruch's fever was normal this morning for the first time since it had begun and during the day it has not exceeded 99.6. His pulse is also correspondingly normal. He's of course in bed, probably the only rest he can have has to be enforced rest! He's weak but he is being a good boy and is taking nourishing liquids, milk, soup, etc and at dear Pendu's nursing. So there is nothing to worry. I'm also sending the good news to Dhunu [Dhun Satha]. It is a/so a bright day in another sense as the sun has been shining in a clear sky all day and I hope it has been the same at your end. I only wish I could give you brighter news of the pain in Beloved Baba's neck but that doesn't want to leave Him.

I don't know how to thank you dearest ones, Mummy, Meherwan, Gulamasi, Banumasi, Roshan and Homai, your ever dear selves for all the heartfelt birthday wishes you sent me in Eruch's letter. I do say amen with a little addition, may Beloved Baba make me worthy of it. Please tell dear Homai I received her loving card with much love. I'm enclosing a card for darling Mehera-Dolly which seems just specially made for them. I hope this finds each and all of you dear ones in good health and cheer. Eruch's letter to dear Meherwan crossed and he must have learnt of the cycle and all other items sent with Sheik driver reaching us safely. You should see our Dear Doctor Cyclewalla, alias Doctor "Wolliwalla", alias Doctor "Batliwalla" [Dr Goher Irani] going back and forth on a cute little cycle at jet speed again. With my dearest thanks and heaps of love to you dear ones and a special hunk from dear Eruch, Mani PS. Tell dear Banumasi I'll be writing to Ella tomorrow about news of dear Dadi, she will phone him.

A further letter from Mani: Meherazad 16th December 1965.

Dear Meherwan,

My letter of yesterday will have reached you acknowledging the combined letters from you dear ones from 13th and the good news of dear Eruch's improvement. Today all day by Beloved Baba's grace his temperature has been normal (98.4) and he took some mashed potato and boiled egg was added to the liquids. His urine report was normal and the blood was not sent to be checked. Dear Goher strongly suspects it was para-typhoid and rest and care is being taken so there is no relapse. Will drop you a few lines daily until he is quite strong enough to take up the pen again which we are determined he should not for some time yet. We're sure by His grace the improvement will continue and our Eruch will be in the pink soon. Please tell Dear Meherji that his letter to Eruch also is received and it will be read to Beloved Baba tomorrow morning. Regards our Bapusaheb, his letter will be read .to Beloved Baba tomorrow morning. I'm enclosing from Eruch copy of letter received from Steve Simon which arrived after Eruch had written Irwin and Edward Luck of which he had sent you a copy. Please dear Meherwan return here both the copies after you have done with them for showing to Nariman and then filing. I wonder who this Steve Simon is? In much haste as the boy's rearing to go off with the mail and with much love to you, one and all dear ones from our Echu [an endearing term of baby Mehera for Eruch - Echu-mama], Nana [Najamai], Goher and myself. PS Tell darling baby Mehera that her Echu-mama and all of us were very happy and proud to read her school marks, they're excellent. Beloved Baba would be very happy too when I read these marks out to Him tomorrow.

P.S. We are having clear sunny weather too and after the London-type weather how we appreciate it!

[Probably it was raining and dull and cloudy in that winter month.] *I've written to Fred Ella regard dear Dadi, they will phone him immediately, please tell dear Banumasi, Sam, Rosie, not to worry.*

Then followed a letter from Eruch: Meherazad 17th December 1965.

My dear Meherwan,

Since last two days I have no fever and today I'm feeling much better. Have started solid food from today. Still Chlorostrep is being continued, I was kept on Chloromycetin 2 caps every 6 hours. Goher said it was a case of para-typhoid. Hope dearest Mummy's catch in the back is relaxed and she's not handicapped. All our letters and letters of dearest Mummy, Manu, Sammy, Rosie, Mehera were received. We are all so happy and proud of dear Mehera's exam results. Please congratulate her on my behalf. She would be in the upper 90s in all subjects, exceptionally brilliant and that little Dad of hers is even more so. Have noted complete details of Bapusaheb's last day and funeral from your letter and from dear Meherji's letter describing the whole scene so vividly. Well Bapusaheb did his job and is now free. Bapusaheb's loss to the Guruprasadians will be very great. Baba sent me [i.e to Eruch's room] a message regards Bapusaheb on 14th as follows: I have lost Bapusaheb Shinde, but he has found Me. It is so very true.

I have noted from dear Meherji's letters that he will not be able to visit Meherazad this month. The earliest will be on first January 1966. Hope this finds you all my dear ones in the best of health and that dear Gulumasi, Banumasi too are feeling better. With much love to you all, your loving Eruch. PTO. [A footnote from Mani has been added] Dear

Meherwan, dear Eruch is resting in bed looking so 'innocent' after he had picked up the pen behind our backs and written to you. I've told him he's just like Peter, a naughty boy [Baba's Peter, the cocker spaniel], and that. I would write to you dear ones about it. It is quite alright of course that he did so, and secretly I'm glad as you will be so happy to see the letter in his own handwriting, but I made a lot of garbar [noise] about it, so he wouldn't do it again - so that he doesn't get too free with the pen, for he must rest for some days, and we are determined to see he makes the most of this temporary divorce from letter writing.

With lots of love to you dearest ones at Bindra and Villu Houses.

Mani.

Meherazad 28 February 1966 from Eruch:

My dear Meherwan,

Enclosed is a note from Dhun. From the note you will gather that dear Piloomama wants Dadi's recent letter. I have given you this letter for you to share with dear Banumasi. It is a long one and will have been written by Dadi for Baba's birthday. Please send this letter to dear Piloomama immediately so that he receives it in time to give it to Rusi. Dr. Deshmukh's letter says of a very cordial interview with the President. [Radakrishna, the President of India]. He inquired after Baba's health and whether there are any followers in Pakistan, etc. Then Dr. Deshmukh presented a copy of 'The God Man' along with the recent review, and also the folder of reviews on 'God Speaks' to him. However Deshmukh does not mention anything about having touched the topic of reading God Speaks etc. Mona-Manohar wrote saying they are given an

appointment on 5th March at 5.20 p.m. so I'm again writing to them to ask the President whether or not he has read God Speaks, if not he should be requested to do so. Baba wanted him to read it. [It appears that Baba had a soft corner for Radakrishna. At one time He asked Meherwan to write a letter that would make Radakrishna feel convinced to come and see Him. Then Baba Himself dictated the letter to Meherwan, and he wrote it down accordingly. But when He asked Eruch's opinion, Eruch replied plainly, 'Baba, this won't do, we shouldn't write like that.' Baba said, 'All right, tear it up.' Eruch asked, 'But Baba, why do you want to go after the President?' and Baba replied, 'I want him to come and see me.' And it seemed to be said rather like a small child wanting something! Baba must have had some work which He wanted him to do. Radakrishna never did come to see Baba.]

Beloved Baba and we all miss you a great deal and the room here feels so empty without you, Meherwan. [Meherwan must have just returned from Meherazad]. Baba directed me to convey to you His love. Hope you take some good rest in Bindra House after the hectic weeks of activity at Meherazad. [Meherwan had come for his usual annual vacation at Meherazad, but it proved to be a very hectic period for Baba birthday celebrations and telegrams to and forth.] In the Monday mail I received about 6 more birthday greeting telegrams, now we will be receiving the reports on celebrations from all over India. Hope all dear ones are in good health, give my love to all dear ones at Bindra and Villu Houses.

(In the later years Baba would listen to all the correspondence, and Eruch had to write replies and read them to Baba before posting. But then much later Baba would

not have correspondence read to Him, and directed that Eruch and other mandali should reply themselves. If in their opinion something in the correspondence really required His attention, then they were to convey this to Him. Again, later still, even that order was revoked. He said that they had to make any decision necessary, and that He would guide them.)

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1966

Meher Baba's seclusion continued, and Meherazad was very quiet. In the morning, around eight o'clock, Baba would be brought to the porch of the house, and four young servants would carry Him in a lift-chair to Mandali Hall, with Kaka Baria walking alongside Him. In the Hall Baba would walk three or four times its length, His hand usually on Francis's arm. The first order of the day for the mandali was the recitation of the prayers. The doors would be latched, the mandali stood facing Baba, and Baba stood facing them, and the prayers would begin, Eruch reading them. Now in these latter years, Baba needed to be supported whilst standing, Francis and Bhau on either side of Him. Baba would fold His hands while the prayers were read.

After the prayers, the large cushion that is still there in the Hall, would be brought to Baba, and each mandali approached and put his right foot on the cushion. Baba would then bend down and touch His forehead to the foot. This was done seven times and as Baba touched the foot each time, the mandali had to call out loudly the Name of God pertaining to each one's religion. In earlier times, this procedure was done only with Kaikobad.

After the prayers, the doors were opened, and Baba would wash His face and hands over a basin, with Meherwan pouring water, and providing soap, as Baba required. Then the reading of the correspondence would begin, and would

continue for a few hours, with Baba lying down quite often during that time.

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Still 1966, and Meherwan leaves Meherazad in time to prepare Guruprasad for Baba's stay. Circulars were sent out that Baba would not see anyone, and so on His arrival, only Meherji, Meherwan and one or two others were there to welcome Him. For some days all was quiet. Then word came through of considerable friction in the Poona Centre, a great deal of quarreling and misunderstandings, people saying the Poona Bhajan party thought too much of themselves, and the Bhajan party thinking that they were the life of the Centre. The friction got to such a pitch that someone destroyed all the musical instruments. Baba said after hearing of this, 'Its time to give them a little prod,' and so, despite His seclusion, a directive was given that all the Poona Centre people were to come before Him.

There was in the big hall a large crowd. Baba began to soundly berate them all. He said, 'Every time I come to Poona, I fear the problems that I will have to face with the Poona Centre. Never a year goes by without complaints, and the very idea of working in My Cause is destroyed by you people asserting your egos. The situation pains Me a lot, and it would best to close down the Centre.' Beloved Baba continued to make very clear His displeasure, and the atmosphere grew most tense. He went on to talk of the latest incident with the destruction of the musical instruments, and that this made it even more obvious that the Centre should be closed, and that He Himself would have nothing further to do with the Poona Centre.

There was stunned silence. People were looking at each other like small children doing mischief and being reprimanded for it. Baba continued, 'If you really wanted to please Me, this is certainly not the way to do so.' Then Baba allowed them to

express themselves, why were they upset, irritated and quarrelling. All their grievances were gradually brought out, and this went on for some time. Finally Baba stopped the proceedings, and asked that all should now resolve to sink their differences and start afresh with harmony and cooperation prevailing in the Centre. All said that they would do this, and Baba expressed happiness with their resolution. It was a happy ending to what had been in the beginning a most sombre meeting.

Tensions and disagreements did however continue in the Centre over the years, but never to the same extent as the situation that year.

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Amar Singh Saigal had been a revolutionary during the British Raj, and was now a member of the Indian Parliament, and Baba permitted him to be so, provided he remained scrupulously honest. This he was, and also very sincere and dedicated in spreading Beloved Baba's message. He spoke unreservedly about Baba in parliament and wherever he went. He was a great friend of Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, and had given Nehru a copy of *God Speaks*. When he travelled to other countries as part of parliamentary delegations, he would stay with Baba people, no matter how humble their residence, instead of the 5-star accommodation available to him as an elected politician.'

In 1967 there were parliamentary elections, and in India in order to win election, much money was needed. This Saigal did not have. But he proceeded in his own way, just addressing people wherever he could. His situation was the source of discussion in Mandali Hall, with Baba saying that he could not possibly win with no money, while Pendu, the great propagandist for Saigal, would plead, 'No Baba, he must win.' Baba would again say, 'But how is it possible? He has no money - how can he travel and organise meetings, so that

people will know of him?' This tussle would go on with Pendu pleading Saigal's cause, and Baba expressing great doubt on the outcome.

After the election, counting of the votes began, and Pendu was glued to the radio when not with Baba. The initial results showed a huge margin for Saigal's rival, and Baba sent word to Pendu, 'See, I told you, there is no hope, so forget about it all.' But Pendu remained fixed to his radio, and then counting in other areas of the constituency began to come in and the numbers were all in Saigal's favour. Excitement built for Pendu as Saigal gradually overtook his rival, and when he won with a good majority, it was as if Pendu himself had won! He was acting like a small kid who had won a great victory. All the mandali rejoiced with him, and more so for dear Saigal. He always lived up to Baba's words, and never took a penny from anyone when he shouldn't have, nor misspent a penny. By Beloved Baba's grace, the people knew this and voted for him.

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Before moving to Guruprasad in 1967, while Meherwan was still at Meherazad, Baba one day in the Mandali Hall asked Meherwan a question. Suppose if a circular be sent out requesting His lovers and particularly the Poona lovers that His continuing seclusion be absolutely undisturbed during His forthcoming visit to Guruprasad, would they mind that? Upon being repeatedly assured that they would certainly not mind that, but on the contrary be happy to abide by His Wish, Eruch was called and asked to send out a circular accordingly. Thus that year He came very quietly to Guruprasad, and there were very few who were allowed to welcome Him. Notices were put up in three languages, English, Hindi and Marathi, stating that Baba had stopped giving darshan to anyone.

On the very first day of His arrival, Baba walked briskly along the verandah with just His hand resting lightly on the arm of

one of the mandali. He walked really well and it was noticed too that His neck pain had eased with the supporting collar discarded. All were very happy to see this.

Then during this stay He began to do some exercises. Eruch arranged a bedding roll near His chair so that He could kick it with His foot, and thus strengthen His thigh muscle. Bars were put across doorways so that Baba could do some push ups, and a long bamboo pole was put alongside the banisters of steps leading to the first floor, and tied with cloth so that Baba could hold the cloth binding and climb up and down a few stairs. These were among the various little exercises arranged by the mandali.

Baba took an interest in doing the exercises at the time, but such interest was not always the case. Baba did not normally like doing physical exercises, and when asked He might just do two or three movements, and then say, 'There now I've done it.' Dr. Goher would remonstrate and say He should do more, but Baba would reply, 'That's enough!' However when He Himself decided to do something, it would be different and He would do it without any prompting from the mandali.

After a few days of walking and exercise, Baba asked Eruch to call Dr. Ginde, saying, 'I want to show him how I walk.' Ginde was called and as usual he dropped whatever he was doing and came immediately. On arrival, Baba walked with him along the verandah, and He moved so fast that Ginde, a heart patient, became breathless after a couple of rounds. Baba then stopped and asked, 'Well, what do you think of My walking?' 'Baba, I've never seen You walk like this before. It's a miracle and wonderful to see!' Of course he had not seen Baba in the old days, but for him to just see Baba now walk so fast was incredible. Medically it was not thought possible, after the hip-joint fracture in the second car accident.

This walking continued, and Baba even increased His pace until, unfortunately, it caused a sprain, a 'catch' in a back muscle, and the 'catch' was so bad that even to breathe was painful. That put an end to the walking for some days.

All sorts of household remedies were suggested for Baba, but the one agreed to by Baba was the application of a hot iron on the back. This was the remedy used for Eruch when he had a recurrence of back trouble. Eruch was in the early days immensely strong, but one time on the Mast tours he lifted a very heavy weight which caused a permanent weakness in the back. He found great relief with the use of heat and massage, and so Baba agreed to it. A couch was put in Mandali Hall, Baba would lie down, and Pendu would massage Baba's back with the heated iron. This seemed to work well, but then Pendu would sometimes become engrossed in talking to the others and not move the iron fast enough. and this would annoy poor Baba and cause Him more discomfort.

After that Eruch would rub in some liniment to soothe the muscles, and then wrap an elastic waistband around Baba to give support to the back. All this treatment continued for quite some days, and the spasms gradually eased, until Baba was able to walk again - to the relief and happiness of all.

All through that stay in Guruprasad, His lovers had kept scrupulously away leaving Baba undisturbed, and towards the end of the stay, as a sort of reward, Baba announced that He would show them how He walked. He specified that on the day before His departure for Meherazad, the women and children should come to Guruprasad at 7am to see Him walk; and on the day of His departure, the men could come at the same time. The verandah of Guruprasad was a wide one on three sides of the building, with Baba's bedroom on one side, and going round to the Mandali Hall on the third side.

At the appointed time, the bedroom door opened and Baba strode out, His hand on the arm of Francis, one of the mandali, and then walked so fast that Francis had to almost run to keep pace with Him. It was as though Baba floated by His lovers, striding as He used to do in long past years, and before they, as it were, had taken in awareness of Baba walking by them, He had disappeared into Mandali Hall.

There was no doubt that the women and children were happy, but the darshan was like giving a drop of water to an extremely thirsty person. Then they all had to immediately depart.

The next day Meherwan Jessawala was asked by the men Baba lovers to accompany Baba on the walk, but he felt incompetent for the task, and suggested a more senior Baba lover undertake it. Sadashiv Patel was then selected and he escorted Baba that morning. Baba again strode out of His bedroom at the appointed time, and literally whizzed past the line of men on each side of the verandah, and seemed to just disappear before their very eyes into the Hall. They all felt that they had never seen Baba walk so fast, and it was an incredible experience for them. Perhaps His whole stay in Poona that year was a preparation for those two performances, and signified the vanishing act He did a couple of years later.

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That summer at Guruprasad was unusually hot, and it was good that Baba did not have to wear the neck brace. In the midst of the heat, word came that the Meherazad well was almost dry and many of the trees, some big ones, had already died. The position was critical and Padri asked Baba if a bore well could be dug, and Baba gave permission. Where one of the trees had died, a bore was commenced and drilling went on for 50 feet - no water - so drilling continued for another 30 feet. There was still not a drop of water. At this point Padri phoned Adi Snr who in turn phoned Eruch and asked what should be done about the bore. Baba was in the Hall, and Eruch told Him that Padri had reported no water at 80 feet, and that he was asking what should be done now.

Baba thought for awhile and then said, 'Tell them not to stop, but continue drilling for another 10 to 15 feet.' The message was conveyed, and drilling was resumed. After another 3 or 4 feet of drilling water was reached, a good clear,

uncontaminated gushing flow of water which saved Meherazad for that year, and for many years afterward until about 1994.

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Before the time of those memorable walks by Baba, He paid a last visit to Bindra House, the only time during that last stay in Poona - of course the family did not know at the time that it would be His last of the innumerable visits to Bindra House. It was in the afternoon, and Eruch and 3 or 4 other mandali accompanied Him. He came in and immediately sat in the small reclining chair in the hallway. Then He called each one of the family and embraced them. Next He said to call the Roman Catholic neighbour, Julia Alvarez who lived separately with her husband and five children in one room on the same level as the Jessawala family. This was a rare thing for Baba to do, although she had seen Baba before. Then for the very first time, the landlady, Sheila Bindra, was called, and she came down from the upper floor and had Baba's darshan. While Baba was in the house, Gaimai showed Him their newly purchased second-hand refrigerator. He opened the door, admired it, and gestured that He liked it. That was the last memorable visit to Bindra House.

Talking of this visit, and of Sheila Bindra, reminded Meherwan of the time her husband wanted the Jessawala family to find other accommodation, so that he could establish a hospital in the house for his daughter. This request was made in 1959 after the death of Papa Jessawala, and Meherwan asked for time to consult with his elder brother. While he was speaking with Eruch about the request on Guruprasad verandah, Baba overheard them talking, and asked them to come into Mandali Hall and tell Him of their conversation. After hearing of the matter, and of Eruch's suggestion that the landlord find them good alternative accommodation and that they would then depart in peace, Baba agreed that the suggestion was 'fair enough'.

Baba then made what seemed at the time a passing casual remark, 'Let's see who leaves first - whether he goes or the family goes - who knows.'

So the landlord was asked to find for them accommodation of a similar standard to Bindra House, and told him that they would then depart. This as it happened proved impossible, so he then sought an agreement that they vacate after four years and accommodation then was their responsibility. A lawyer advised to sign, saying that after four years the Rent Act would make the agreement null and void. Not another word was said of the matter over the years, and then just before the agreement expired, the landlord died. So he was the first to go as Baba had hinted! The property was later quietly sold off, but the family was not disturbed until 1990, when they moved to Meherazad. Baba, as mentioned earlier, had sent the family in January 1943 to stay at Bindra House for a very short stay of fifteen to twenty days, and that thereafter He would give His call to come back. The family had to wait forty-seven years for His recall!

In the mid-sixties Baba had sent a message to the family, that after He had dropped the body, they were to move to Meherazad, Gaimai and Manu to live with the women, and Meherwan to be with the men. But He added, 'Of course nothing of the sort will happen - you all would be dead and gone before I drop My body. But just in case such a thing did happen, remember to come and stay here.' When He did drop His body, Eruch advised that they should wait awhile because the situation at Meherazad was very uncertain. So the family continued at Bindra House, until eventually Baba's orders were fulfilled.

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In January 1968, Baba called a meeting at Meherazad of certain mandali and close ones from Meherabad and Ahmednagar. It was held on the 31st of January, and Baba had fixed the time of 10 o'clock. He had finished His

seclusion work for the morning, the prayers had been said, and He was relaxing in Mandali Hall with the men mandali and Ramu the dog. Suddenly, ten minutes before the appointed time, there was the sound of a car horn, and it was announced that Sarosh and Adi Snr. had arrived. Baba was very upset, gesturing, 'Why did they come early?' and He sent word that they were to back off down the approach road, and wait there quietly and not disturb anyone.

When in time Baba called them all to the Hall, He berated Sarosh severely for blowing his horn. 'Baba, that was to announce our arrival.' 'But why did you come early?' 'But Baba,' said Sarosh, 'that's Your usual rule that we should arrive well before time for meetings.' 'Don't you know I am still In seclusion, and after My work I need relaxation to come back into the world. You disturbed Me, and I am upset.' Baba was visibly upset, and Sarosh pleaded, 'Baba, please forgive me, I didn't know that You would be disturbed.' That was the reception that poor Sarosh got for coming early.

The meeting continued until a little before midday, when Baba said that He would now retire to the house, that all were to follow Him, and that He would then bring Mehera out to be seen for the first time in many, many years by men. Certainly many of the men present had never seen her, and others not for some fifty years. Baba said that she would greet all with 'Jai Baba', and that all were then to respond with 'Jai Baba' to her.

All the men assembled below the porch of the house, and Mehera came from inside and stood holding Baba's hand. Then she folded her hands and said 'Jai Baba' and the men responded likewise. Mehera then retired inside, and Baba asked some of the mandali of their impression of her, and when they said how radiant and beautiful she was, Baba was very happy.

This incident was almost to the minute exactly one year before Beloved Baba shed His man-form.

In late January Baba called His youngest brother, Adi Jnr with his family to be with Him in Meherazad. They stayed a month, and during that time Baba asked for a Qawaali program. Gajwani of Bombay was asked to arrange it, and he was very happy to do so. He had Baba's favourite singer, Jaipuri Qawaal, come with his musicians, and the program was held on 20th February with a few close ones from Bombay and Nagar also present. A good qawaal program is always very heart satisfying, but uniquely more so in Beloved Baba's physical presence. Baba was on that day in a splendid mood, and His happiness in the singing, and in the verses that the qawaal chose, touched all deeply. Meherwan Jessawala was in Meherazad at the time for his usual annual month-long stay, and was present at the morning-long recital. During it Baba beckoned to Meherwan to come to Him and press His feet. It was for Meherwan a special time, pressing his Beloved Baba's feet while listening to songs of love for God.

Another incident that he particularly remembered from that visit, was Baba's parting embrace. It was normal practice for Baba to give Meherwan an embrace on leaving Meherazad to return to Poona, and it would be a simple embrace, nothing more. But on this occasion He stood and held Meherwan in His arms for a long, long time, and Meherwan still remembers vividly the expression on His face. There was an expression of sadness in His eyes and a distant, far-away look, and His face was full of such love and compassion that the image lives with him to this day. Meherwan, concerned over Baba's delicate physical condition, tried to minimise the embrace, and even to end it, but Baba held firmly to him. Little did Meherwan know at the time that it would be the last embrace from his beloved God-Man.

Seclusion Early 1968

Early in 1968 Meher Baba announced to His mandali that He would now enter an even more strict phase of seclusion. He said that He would work closeted in the Hall, and that there was to be absolutely no noise or movement. The mandali

should remain in their rooms and do their work very silently.

Baba came to the Hall about seven in the morning, the back door was bolted, and Baba sat in His chair with Bhau on watch outside the door on the men's side. When Baba clapped, Bhau could be heard hastily rushing in to do His bidding. It was the first morning and all was very quiet, when suddenly there was a great thud and the sound of water flowing. It was learnt later that poor Pendu in his room had let a jug of water slip from his hands.

After about two hours the mandali were called into Mandali Hall, and they would see Baba limp and exhausted from His work with all the energy drained out of Him. He would be drenched with sweat, and Eruch would dry Him and put on a fresh sadra. Baba said this seclusion was so intense that the great difficulty for Him was to maintain the link with the gross world and gross body. The strain for Him was to keep up the link and prevent it snapping. So He would pound His right thigh with His fist, and not softly but very hard. At times He would feel faint with the work, and He asked for a sash to be tied around Him and the chair on which He was seated so that He would not fall down. Such was the intensity of the work that His frail body suffered still further, and His thigh became like a block of wood from the constant pounding. Despite all this, Baba gradually increased the hours of His seclusion work.

The time for the early morning period of seclusion was gradually put back, and eventually He came in the dark about 6 to 6.30 am. After the session He asked for the prayers to be said, and, despite His exhaustion, He would stand supported on either side by Bhau and Francis as they were recited by Eruch. After that a stool was placed before Baba, and one by one the mandali came forward, placed a foot on the stool, and while each said loudly the Name of God of their religion, Baba would bow down on the foot. At the end of all that, Baba would wash His hands and face and have His breakfast prepared by Mehera, and brought over to the Mandali Hall by

Goher.

After that first session, Baba, looking very pained, asked about the big thud, 'Will you people not obey My one simple instruction!?' Pendu pleaded forgiveness, 'Baba, I am so sorry. I tried to be very careful, but the jug slipped out of my hands.' Baba gestured, 'No, it's not your fault. It's Maya as usual trying to create some disturbance in My work on the opening day.' Baba then continued, 'When there is bombing practise by the Air Force on the field nearby, and the whole of this building shakes with loud bangs, I am not disturbed. But the slightest sound from My close ones is a source of infinite disturbance and pain to Me.'

Thus the mandali avoided the slightest noise, tried not to move around lest they stumbled or hit something, and suppressed anything like a sneeze. Perhaps on the third day, someone did walk past the Hall, and again Baba noted it. He turned to Meherwan Jessawala, 'What the heck are you doing while I am in seclusion?! Can you not keep an eye and see that there is no disturbance for Me?' So Meherwan seated himself opposite Mandali Hall, and emphatically waved away anyone who appeared. One day, Mani came to speak to her brother Adi Jnr. who was also staying in Meherazad at the time. Meherwan frantically waved her away, and while she then tiptoed back, his heart stopped with the thought of her treading on a twig or making any other noise. He definitely did not want to be the cause of Baba being disturbed and unhappy.

Near the end of January 1968, a circular was issued that His seclusion would end on the 25th of March, not the 25th of February as previously announced. Perhaps a couple weeks passed, and Baba called Eruch and said that He wanted a change in the date given for the completion of His seclusion, Eruch prepared the circular, and with approval from Baba, sent it to Adi Snr for printing and dispatch. After a couple of days, Baba gave Eruch another date, and Eruch sent a man post haste to Adi to stop the printing and insert the new date.

Another few days went by, and again Baba called Eruch and said, 'I want to make another change in the date. Now make it the 21st May 1968.' Eruch was a bit exasperated, and said, 'Baba, is this final or should I expect another change very soon?' Baba looked at Eruch very seriously and said, 'No, no further change.' Then to Meherwan, who was at the time pressing Baba's feet, He said, 'Speak out loudly NO seven times!' Meherwan shouted NO but, losing count, only did it 6 times, and Baba gestured, 'I said 7 times and you only did 6 times, so repeat NO 7 times and more loudly.' This Meherwan proceeded to do, and all the while Eruch stood there quite unperturbed and unmoved. He was happy if no further changes were to be made.

In the midst of the changes to the circular, there had also been extra work involving Baba's Birthday message. In December 1967, Baba had given a message that His lovers should rejoice on His Birthday because 'soon after March 25th *something great* will happen that has never happened before.' In preparation, Eruch kept hundreds of telegrams ready with this message written out, and these were sent early in February to all in India and abroad. Now with the change in the circular, Baba wished the words in the Birthday greeting also changed to 'May 21st!' So Eruch, helped by his brother Meherwan, had to work feverishly to send new telegrams.

On the day that the final change to the circular was made, a very peculiar incident occurred in the afternoon. A huge, black-faced monkey. suddenly appeared in the garden of Meherazad, and any attempt to shoo it away met with fierce contempt and gnashing of teeth. No one knew where he had come from. After about an hour of relative calm, the monkey began yelling crazily, and leaping on to the roof of the main house, jumped with speed and force from one roof to the roof of Baba's bedroom, breaking tiles and sending them crashing to the ground. The men did everything possible to drive it away, and eventually it did stop its antics and stalked off to the nearby village.

The next day, when Baba was with the mandali, He commented that the monkey's appearance was significant. Eruch, on the other hand, was quite glum over the whole incident, and asked, 'So Baba, what is the significance?' 'The havoc created on the roof of My room on the very day I decided to lengthen the seclusion is deeply significant to My work, and is connected with that which is to happen after May 21st.' Eruch however remained unhappy and skeptical over such a 'coincidence'.

Meherwan's annual visit that year had been a particularly hard-working one helping Eruch. It was the last day of his visit, and as was often the case, Baba called the mandali in the afternoon into His room. After some papers were read that had not been dealt with in the morning, Eruch and the others rose to go. But Baba gestured to Eruch, 'Wait, wait! What's the hurry? I have some work with Meherwan.' He seemed to be a little annoyed with Eruch for hurrying to depart. So they sat down again, and Baba brought out from under His seat, a small package and gave it to Meherwan. It was a beautiful white shirt.

What was so delightful about that little incident was how Baba had been sitting on it, how He had arranged His own surprise gift to Meherwan, and how He had kept it hidden from Eruch. That little incident also reminded Meherwan of another time, again in His bedroom, when Goher brought in a plate of peeled apple for Baba. The apple was from Simla, sent by Elcha, a very soft apple easy for Baba to eat, a very nice variety, called Royal Delicious. But Baba did not like apples - in fact He always tried to avoid eating them. Unfortunately it was one of the fruits that Dr Grant had permitted Baba to eat. The fruits that He relished, mango and papaya among others, He was not permitted to have.

Baba gestured to Goher to leave the plate on the table, and as soon as she had left the room, He beckoned to Meherwan to eat the apple. At first Meherwan ate a little slowly, but then Baba gestured to eat quickly and all of it, in case Goher

returned and saw what a naughty little thing He was doing!

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Baba's insistence on absolute privacy during His stay at Guruprasad in 1968, also included Meherwan, Meherji and a few others who were normally allowed free access. In obedience to His orders, everyone finished their work of preparing Guruprasad for His stay very early, so that Baba might not have even a glimpse of their faces on the day of arrival. Usually Baba's food was prepared at Bindra House with Naja or Rano to help, but this year all food was prepared at Guruprasad, and none of the men and women mandali stepped outside.

Khorshed was detailed to assist Naja in cooking for the household. These two women did not get on well with each other, and Naja also tended to become excitable and short-tempered when cooking, so to avoid Baba being disturbed in any way in His strict seclusion, both were ordered to observe silence. To add to the difficulties for these two cooks, Naja had for example the same sign for onions, tomatoes, eggs, potatoes, and Khorshed would inevitably bring her the wrong thing. Thus there was this silent war in the kitchen, yet of course the work went on and everyone was fed - an example of Beloved Baba's humour.

One day they were called into Baba's room, and Baba asked Naja what had she cooked for Him that day. Naja began making signs, but Mani who was interpreting was unable to understand what she was saying. At one point the signs seemed like S O S, and Mani wondered what was the emergency, For some moments she was baffled, then suddenly realised that it was the word sauce that Naja was trying to convey. Baba was very amused, and everyone had a good laugh - welcome in the midst of the sombre atmosphere.

It is true that humour and good cheer was never very far from Beloved Baba, even in the midst of His intense work and Intense suffering. A little incident that comes to mind

occurred in the mid-sixties, when Madhusudan asked for permission to record His arti. Baba gave His permission, and Madhusudan arrived at Guruprasad with a big troop of Baba lovers who regularly sang with him. He brought with him a high quality recorder, and he proceeded to set it all up, but often changing his mind on how it should be done. In between changes, he was at the same time directing the singers and in the lead singing himself. Every now and then, he would stop, 'No, no that is not right! We'll start again.' So it went on, Baba thoroughly enjoying the scene, and He began to mimic Madhusudan's gestures of commencing and conducting the music, to the great delight of all the audience. In the end it was never completed, something or other always preventing it being done to Madhusudan's satisfaction. Later it was done in a professional studio.

Sometimes it could also seem that Baba's humour was simply another test for His mandali's self-control and cheerfulness in the face of all circumstances. This appeared to be the case with another very odd character, Sam, who Baba permitted to stay at Meherazad during 1967. Sam's name was actually Noshier Khodabanda, but he told Baba one day that he did not like his name, and asked Baba for another one. He said, 'Somehow the name rankles in my mind, and I don't like it.' When Baba said, 'Alright, we'll call you Sam,' he responded, 'Yes Baba, I like that, it is nice.' He came from Bombay and was a confirmed bachelor, but with a brother who was also, with his family, very devoted to Baba. Jim Mistry, who knew of Sam and his ways in Bombay, would amuse Baba with stories of him. Jim described how Sam first suddenly appeared one day when Jim was very busy cleaning his car outside his house, and said very loudly, 'Why do you hate me?!' Jim was flabbergasted, 'How could I hate you? I have never seen you before.' 'No, I can see from your demeanour that you were hating me!' That was a typical story of Sam, and with Jim's delightful and comical way of telling such things, it proved a great source of amusement for Baba.

Sam was a peculiar fellow, incessantly talking, but a very

strange sort of chat, and one day Baba Himself became so tired of his jabbering that he was told to be silent whenever Baba was in the Hall. This was a great relief for Baba, but the order didn't stop him thoroughly irritating all the mandali with his talk and behaviour outside the Hall. Francis finally became so fed-up with Sam, that they had a big fight with some physical aspect to it. This came to Baba's notice, and He was not at all happy. Francis asked His forgiveness, and Baba said, 'You shouldn't lose your temper like that. Learn to restrain yourself.' To further avoid Sam becoming a source of disturbance to Him, Baba ordered him to go each morning up Khandoba Hill [adjacent to Baba's Seclusion Hill], and meditate there from 8 to 10.30 a.m., the busiest period for Baba in Mandali Hall. Sam seemed to be delighted with the order!

By contrast Sam's brother Bohman was a very quiet and unobtrusive person, who loved Baba dearly. Once when Bohman was visiting Baba at Guruprasad, Baba asked him why his brother Sam was so opposite to him in temperament. Bohman mentioned that ever since a carriage horse had bitten Sam in his youthful days for teasing the animal, he had acted strangely. Hearing this there was an expression of great surprise on Baba's face, and He very good-humouredly gestured, 'So that's the reason for all the quirky behaviour of Sam! Why did you not let Me into this secret earlier? That explains everything about Sam now!' There followed resounding laughter from all assembled in Mandali Hall.

One day Sam just vanished from Meherazad without warning. He was not seen again.

But his stay with Beloved Baba must have cleared some account that he had with Him.

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From early 1968, discussions began on arrangements for the darshan program that all Baba lovers worldwide were

anxiously awaiting. Baba's strict seclusion had continued for a long time, and it seemed that the only announcements from Baba featured more seclusion, or as happened, exclusion after seclusion! This situation became too much for Pukar. He had revolutionary blood in him, and this state of inaction was more than he could stand. He was so frantic to have darshan of Beloved Baba, that with ten or twelve others, he descended on Poona, and came to Guruprasad seeking to enter. When he was refused, he created a great scene at the gate, shouting loudly, 'I'll die rather than return without seeing Baba! I will sit here on a hunger strike. I will not shift from here, even if it means giving up the body!' The group then sat on the ground, intent on staying.

A crowd gathered around the gate and around Pukar and his group, and the noise and general hubbub increased and the mandali in Guruprasad became very aware of it. Eruch telephoned Bindra House and told the family they must do something to make Pukar clear out and avoid Baba being very upset with his behaviour. Meherwan, Ramakrishna and others rushed to Guruprasad, and endeavoured to persuade that mountain of a man to depart, but Pukar was unmoved with their pleas, 'I don't want to hear you people! I won't go inside - but I'll just sit here and die!' Gradually with much difficulty and even a little force, he and the group were persuaded to leave. They were taken to the Poona Centre, and there, after many more hours of talking, they agreed to go to Ahmednagar and talk with Adi Snr.

While they were with Adi, a stern message came from Baba that they must return forthwith to Hamipur. This was of course the end of the matter. But apart from that incident, no other Baba lover dared to even approach the gate of Guruprasad.

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So these discussions on the forthcoming darshan were conducted in the main quietly with Baba announcing to the mandali, that He would like to give darshan from 2 o'clock in

the afternoon to 5 o'clock during the months of April, May and June 1969. A circular began to be drafted, with Baba saying that the darshan was only for His lovers, and dates were set for different Eastern groups and for Westerners. Discussion would go back and forth, with drafts of the circular read to Baba. At one point Eruch suggested that giving darshan in the afternoon for Easterners and Westerners together would be too much for Baba, and why not have the Westerners in the morning as was done in the East-West Gathering. At this suggestion, Baba made a wry face, and said, 'No, in the mornings I feel drowsy, and not up to the mark.' But Eruch persisted with his point, and Baba flared up, 'All right, all right! Let there be darshan in the morning for the Westerners.'

So there would also be quite heated discussions, and they continued with Baba taking a serious interest in all the arrangements. Eventually all was finalised, and a meeting at Meherazad with the workers concerned was called for October 13th 1968. Although Baba's seclusion work had finished by this time, seclusion restrictions remained, and Baba said that no-one must step on the carpet before Him as they entered the Hall: in fact each must carefully skirt the carpet, not even touching it, and then sit down. One exception was Meherji whose birthday it was on that day. He was permitted to kiss Baba's hand at the conclusion of the meeting, and while he was doing so, Baba asked him how everything was at home, and how was his business progressing. Meherji told Baba that for the first time the business had turned the corner, and that he could see light at the end of the tunnel. Baba assured him that this development would continue, that His nazar was on the business, and that he would prosper. This proved to be very much the case, and it continues flourishing to this day, although Meherji himself died quite some years ago.

Another exception concerned His brother Behram. Some time before the meeting, Behram had developed what seemed to be a persistent and troublesome growth inside one cheek. His doctor, an old contact of the family's, declared that he

thought it to be cancerous, and the only solution to prevent it spreading was to cut out that part of the cheek. Behram was shocked and distressed at this, and with the only Person from whom he could seek advice in deep seclusion, he was devastated. At the height of his worry came the welcome news of the 13th October meeting, and he immediately felt great relief, thinking that His brother was sure to ask for news of home.

To his growing concern the meeting continued with no sign of interest from Baba about His family matters. In fact He did not even seem to be particularly aware of Behram sitting anxiously in a corner of Mandali Hall. The meeting concluded and Baba gestured that all should leave and depart for their homes. With a heavy heart Behram left the Hall, feeling now thoroughly despondent, and was about to depart when he was suddenly called back into the Hall by Baba. Beloved Baba, the compassionate One, gestured questioningly towards his cheek, and Behram poured out his woe and giving the doctor's diagnosis.

Baba was immediately dismissive of that diagnosis, saying it was nothing of the sort, and that he was to gargle regularly with salt and water, and that the growth would go. At the same time Jangoo, his son-in-law who was with him, was to go to the doctor and tell him that he was in effect an idiot, and that the growth was not cancerous. This was a petrifying task for the young man, confronting his much older doctor whom he well knew to be opinionated and very fiery. But he, taking Baba's name, of course obeyed Baba, and found to his utter surprise that the doctor accepted the news quietly and quite uncharacteristically. Behram also of course did as Baba instructed and his condition cleared.

After this meeting, just as before, the deep concern of the mandali over the declining health of Baba continued, and Eruch would say at times, 'Baba, why do You want to do all this? Two months of darshan programs will be a great strain - how will You be able to do that in your present physical

condition?' When this was said, Baba would turn to Francis, 'Francis, supposing My health is very bad and I give darshan reclining on a bed, will My lovers mind that?' Francis replied emphatically, 'No Baba, I do not think it would be so. On the contrary they would feel it a great privilege and joy to have Your darshan under any circumstances.' Then Baba turned to Eruch, 'Listen! Listen to what he said!' Baba might continue at times, 'And if I give darshan reclining with My eyes closed, will My lovers mind that?' and Francis would again say, 'No Baba, they would consider it an even greater privilege to have Your darshan under those conditions.' Baba would again then turn to Eruch, 'Listen to Francis, Eruch! Now you carry on your preparations for the darshan program, and I will do My job of giving darshan!'

Little did anyone realise then that Baba was giving subtle hints that He would be giving darshan reclining with His physical eyes closed forever. That is precisely how Beloved Baba gave darshan to His lovers for a full seven days when He dropped His beautiful man-form on 31st January 1969.

* * * * *

Some time after the 13th of October meeting, the Bindra House family were notified of the sudden hospitalisation of Gaimai's eldest brother, Meherjimama. The doctors were very concerned about his health, and although he required catheterisation, he was so anaemic that an operation could not be done without a blood transfusion. All this news came to Galrnai, and she immediately asked Meherwan to take her to Ahrnednagar. Meherwan remembered that the date was November 21st because the next day was his birthday.

When they arrived at Booth Hospital, Adi Snr. was with Meherjimama, and Gaimai asked him to notify Eruch of their unexpected arrival. This information naturally came to Baba, and the next day a car arrived at Akbar Press with the message that Meherwan was called to Meherazad. Baba was

seated in Mandali Hall when he arrived, and he was greeted with a stern and querying expression, 'How come you are here? Are others with you? Meherwan said that only he and Gaimai had come, and Baba again remonstrated, 'Without My permission?! Why did you come?' Meherwan then told Baba of the reason for their sudden arrival, of Meherjimama's critical condition, and of his need for a blood transfusion before an operation. Baba said, 'OK, let Mama stay in 'Nagar, but you are to return to Poona tomorrow.' Gaimai was also sent back a few days later by Baba.

After the mention of a blood transfusion for Meherjimama, Baba said, 'Why are you people not thinking of giving Me blood transfusions? I am so weak. Don't I require a transfusion?' It seemed as though Baba's remark was just casual one, and Eruch and the others took it as such, 'Baba, why should You be having blood transfusions? and in any case, how could You take some other ordinary person's blood? Baba replied, 'What has that to do with My status!'

The subject was somehow not continued, and then, as was often the case, He asked Meherwan how He looked. Meherwan spontaneously said that He looked very pale to him, and really He was at the time, looking extremely pale and haggard. Eruch and Pendu promptly piped in, 'Baba, listen to Meherwan. We are constantly telling You that You don't look well. You are neglecting Your nourishment, You are neglecting Your health. You should listen to what he is saying.' At this Baba neatly diverted attention from the subject by calling for Dr. Goher, saying, 'It is Meherwan's birthday today, so ask Goher to bring something for him.' Goher brought a packet of chocolates and Baba, with His own hands, gave it to Meherwan. He then asked Meherwan to kiss Him on both cheeks, and after doing so, Meherwan left.

Some days later, Baba's health seemed to become even more critical than earlier, and Goher was given permission to have Dr. Grant examine Baba. He arranged for a blood test, and when Baba was found to be highly anaemic, an immediate

blood transfusion was recommended, and it was then that the mandali realised that Baba's casual remark earlier proved to be so true. There was some dilly-dallying and discussion, and then Baba said, 'If the doctor says a transfusion should be done, so be it.' It was arranged, and Baba was given His first blood transfusion about mid-December 1968. It is a very unpleasant procedure, yet Beloved Baba went through that suffering as He went through so much incredible suffering in His lifetime: thus while Dr. Grant was giving the transfusion, Baba gave him a beautiful discourse on the troubled condition of the world, the current height of hypocrisy, the need to balance scientific progress with spiritual progress, and that His suffering was to alleviate all this evil and to achieve balance in life once more. This was His work, and all His grievous suffering was necessary to fulfil it. Through it all He remained absolutely the Master to the very end.

(Beloved Baba had two transfusions only, one on the 15th December, and the other on the 19th December 1968. In a note from Eruch to Meherwan he stated: Baba's blood group is AB RH OD+. On the 13th His haemoglobin count was a low eight grams, and therefore Dr. Grant recommended that the blood transfusion be given.)

Gaimai stayed on at Akbar Press with Banumasi, and they look turns to go to the hospital to be of help to their elder brother Meherji. After about a fortnight Baba sent word that Gaimai was to return to Poona, that she was not to worry about Meherji, and that His Nazar would be there. Sure enough, very soon after, his urinary blockage cleared itself naturally, and there was no need for surgery.

Around this same time arrangements were in full swing for Mehera's birthday and Dara and Amrit's wedding. Baba decided that both should be celebrated on the 22nd and 23rd of December 1968. Baba took more interest in it than anyone else in determining the guest list, possibly to divert attention of the mandali from His failing health. He would add some people to the list, decide not to call others, and then

change His mind. In the end about two hundred people were present for the two days.

Although there was undoubted joy in being in His presence, there was also tension because of His health. Just two or three days before the function, Baba had the second blood transfusion. Thus when the two day program was actually held, the mandali were chiefly concerned that Beloved Baba would be able to sit through the program, and therefore had little real interest in it.

When Meherwan arrived, Pendu immediately came to him, and asked that he be in front of Baba, and make sure that the queue moved quickly along. On the second day the marriage of Dara and Amrit was solemnised before Baba in a short program. Meherwan was sent early that morning to the railway station to collect Nasherwan Nalawala and bring him to Meherazad. Unfortunately the train was very late, and by the time they did arrive at Meherazad, the program was finished and Baba had retired to His bedroom. They were however called to Baba, and when asked by Him, explained the reason for their delay. He then, while still lying on His back on the bed, beckoned them forward to kiss Him on each cheek. To Meherwan He gestured, 'Remember I am God.' Baba wanted Meherwan to stay for some time, but Eruch said that there would not be any transport for him later, and Baba thought for awhile, and then said, 'All right then go.' That proved to be the last physical darshan of Baba for Meherwan,. and he now regrets so much the lost opportunity to be with Him for the whole of that day.

* * * * *

Eruch wrote every day to the Bindra House family as Beloved Baba directed, but only some of these remain, and some are only scraps or torn pieces of a letter. Still they provide a flavour of the atmosphere prevailing at Meherazad during the last critical days of Beloved Baba's physical presence on

earth. Meherazad 18th January '69

... Received this noon your letter of 17th with report also dear Meherji's letter to Goher giving all details of his talks with Dr. Grant and Signaporita. These were read by Goher and she has noted that diuretics should not be used. She is thinking of having a phone talk with Grant on Monday 20th to see whether or not she should continue to give 25 mg which she has been giving for the last 12 days already given 6 such. Also might have other things in mind to ask Grant. From the report the urea level has slightly dropped. Hope it continues to drop until it is normal. Haemoglobin should not have dropped - maybe He might pick up with a little more solid food which He left off a/most entirely last week. He has begun to eat since last two days. He takes regular exercise and stands up every day for a couple of minutes. [This is as late as 18th January] On the whole there does seem some progress.

Note from Adi Snr to Goher.

Dear Goher

For spasms magphos, 12x or 3x every hour 1 pill should be given. It might help Him. [some homoeopathic medicine]

So Goher writes: My dear Adi, Started giving 12x magphos hourly since 1.30 p.m. for the nasty jerks. Goher wants to know whether it should be continued tomorrow and also for how many days. Hope this gives the desired relief.

Lovingly Eruch.

There is a reply:

... Doses to be reduced by hours (between doses) being made longer as improvement sets in. Otherwise continue every hour. Signed Adi

In a torn letter from Meherazad 21st January 1969 Eruch writes:

... Goher had a phone call with Dr. Grant yesterday and he wants to continue all the prescribed treatment and blood tests to be taken as at present. He told Goher that if the haemoglobin count falls below a certain level then he would have to give Baba a blood transfusion. ...and made Him sit up in bed. Baba started complaining of a choking sensation in the throat and we could hear Him breathing with difficulty and also heard the wheezing sound of an asthmatic patient. He then called for hot tea and after drinking it plus a pill that Goher gave Him, He felt slightly better. So this is an added symptom to the already existing long list of symptoms. Hope this does not recur soon. Today it lasted for ½ an hour.

On the 22nd January, 1969 at 5.30 p.m., Eruch wrote to Meherwan:

My Dear Meherwan,

Today was a good day for us as Beloved. Baba was in a happy mood and played Sokta [checkers] with Francis, and then with Kaka in the morning, and in the evening He enjoyed like anything teaching Kaka a bhajan composed by him. The bhajan was: 'Sai Baba, Babajan, Meher Baba Che Bhagwan', so Kaka was told to repeat this, and the way he repeated it we all laughed like hell today after many months. Of course Beloved Baba is still in His room and eats and sits on His cot with support at His back and under His legs. This morning too He had a very slight choking sensation when He got up and was made to sit on bed. Luckily Goher had administered a pill early morning and that helped Him. It is like a sort of old age mild asthma. He

tells us all not to get worried and even if He goes into a coma we must not worry as He would get out of it in a couple of days. It seems He is bent upon passing through all the various stages! Yesterday He looked very ill and today He looked very much better. Both Donkin and Francis expressed wonder today at the way He appeared so much better. Hope the next blood test on 24th, Friday shows further reduction in urea percentage and some good rise in haemoglobin percentage. Please tell dear Meherji to phone the result to Adi's office, as Baba told Don [Donkin] today that in absence of Adi, who will be going to Bombay, Don should be handy and if possible speak with Meherji, and get from him the report verbally and bring the news straight to Meherazad same evening. I have informed Feramroj and Bhaskar to keep alert between 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday for receiving phone from Meherji. 24th is Francis' birthday. PS. Tomorrow Beloved Baba has called for Sada plain pulav from Chagan, [Sada means simple, so not very spicy or rich.] Today He called for lemon tart from Vilumai, yesterday He had Marwadi Dhal [lentils] from Bhagirith, and the day before He ate Sambar Dhal from Bhaskar's wife Usha [Bhaskar was the son of Kutumba Shastri, the first Chairman trustee in the Trust.] [His wife was also given the opportunity to cook. Sambar is a very famous dish in South India.] [Marwadi is the caste of Hindus from Marwad, so Bhagirith is a Marwadi.] [In the last days He called for food from different households to give them the blessed opportunity to cook, unbeknown to them, their last dishes for Him.] With Yusuf [Meherazad driver] I will send two empty vegetable sacks. Can you please arrange to send eighteen Bombay Ducks [a type of fish], if you get them, with Yusuf on 31st Friday. Don't send them on the 24th but on his next trip after the 24th.

The next letter from Eruch was written on the 23rd between 5:30 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. as Baba kept calling him to His room.

My dear Meherwan,

Received your inland letter of 22nd January, 1969 and have noted that you paid Rupees 180 to Behrambai. Dear Mani sends you much love and a huge thank you. [This was payment for photos that Behram used to prepare for Baba lovers in the West. Beloved Baba would also touch them before sending.] Dear Goher and Pendu have noted that Mohite bought six prabhakar lanterns and they are ready for use at Guruprasad and that you have paid Rs 39 for the six at wholesale rates. [These lanterns were necessary at Guruprasad because of the frequent storms in summer which would cause the electricity to go off.] I shall wish on behalf of Bindra and Villu Houses many happy returns of the day to Francis tomorrow on his birthday. Yes, tomorrow is yet another day of suspense. Let us hope that Beloved Baba takes a turn for the better from tomorrow so that we all feel so much relieved of daily suspense and anxiety. Today since the afternoon He started complaining of a very stiff back and would fear even to take turn in bed. It is not a catch in the usual way but it is a sort of rigidity in the back, waist downwards, up to the feet He became rigid like a log of wood, so stiff and heavy every time after taking a turn in bed. So it was something He has been having, since the 4th night, quite a good stiffness in the spine but today's was the limit. We all felt so anxious about this condition this afternoon. Every turning would be an ordeal of extreme degree, even if we wholly helped Him turn with all our help and tenderness. In the midst of all His agony I felt as if He was trying to clear His throat before breaking His silence. He produced such a

peculiar noise, this is just for your personal information only.

After all this ordeal which we were, so to say, made to bear witness, He once again made me try Kaka sing the bhajan He composed yesterday: Sai Baba, Babajan, Meher Baba, Che [means 'is'] Bhagwan, and as Kaka's tongue started to twist and turn the words in fantastic pronunciations and shouting, Baba once again laughed and laughed as we have never seen Him do before. [Kaka was not able to get the words out and then he himself would become so impatient with his efforts that he would shout and shout at the top of his voice. This would amuse Baba all the more. Two or three days later Baba again asked Kaka to say the bhajan, and again Baba enjoyed his efforts to do so. Even in that terrible last week of His suffering, He retained His humour.] Then He turned to us all and said, 'Today was the limit and from tomorrow He would become better.' We pray that His words come true and say amen. Goher and we all feel tired and exhausted because of Baba's condition and the daily suspense. He looks radiant, He looks better, He looks worse and so forth and so on every day. Yours lovingly Eruch. PS, 10.30 p.m. 23rd just returned from Baba's room. I was called at 9 p.m. to help Him turn in bed. He again had severe pain and stiffness and because of pain a sort of choking in the throat. He is now resting. He told me to go and sleep.

[The contents of this letter were at one time discussed in Meherazad Mandali Hall, when Meherwan brought up the subject of Baba trying to clear His throat, as it were, before breaking His Silence. Eruch, during those discussions, had made it very clear that this did not in any way mean that Baba had broken His Silence. Meherwan too concurs totally with this view. I too recall Eruch telling me in the very early

seventies of Beloved Baba's seeming effort to clear His throat, and saying then that this very definitely did not constitute the breaking of His Silence.]

Meherazad 24th January 1969, 4.30 a.m.

My dear Meherwan, Enclosed is a special gift from dear Goher for Manu. [It was a sort of magnifying strip which you place on the sheet and it magnifies the characters. Manu's eyesight had become weakened so Goher sent it for her.] Hope dear Manu finds it easier to read smaller prints with the help of this Japanese magnifier. It is easier to handle so she will be able to read print in good light. I tried without specs and I found that I could not read with ease. Hope Manu tries this and finds reading easier, but if not she must not strain her eyes. With Yusuf you will be sending 1kg of khumra bhinda [that's tender okra or lady fingers] and half kg french beans. These women change their order every tick of the clock. In short, you please send good bhinda 1kg every time with Yusuf and once more mid-week on Tuesday each week. [In an earlier letter it said not to send french beans, as Baba does not like french beans, and now we are ordering french beans!] Hope you received my letter posted on Wednesday, 22nd. In it I told you to tell dear Meherji to phone Adi's office as usual the result of the blood test. As Adi is absent in Bombay with Minoo Gujwani's wedding, Baba Himself told Don to be available at the desk today to receive Meherji's phone any time between 4 and 6 p.m. I've also asked Bhaskar to be there and if necessary to hand over the phone to Don. So please tell Meherji to send the result by 4 and you please post the report as usual. Received yesterday your PC of 21 1 69 and noted that dearest Manu had a stock of vit-u-pep [cabbage-extract tablets that somebody from France used to send. Manu had to use them for some mouth condition as

ordered by Baba] given by dear Mani and that dearest Mummy will have a blood test soon. Also noted that you gave Mohite the seeds sent from here for the hedge so hopefully preparations are going on for Baba's Guruprasad stay. [They wanted a hedge grown at Guruprasad.] Goher noted that the seeds did not sprout and that a different hedge is now growing well. Also noted that you'll send vegetables with Yusuf. Much love to you and all you dear ones at home. Yours lovingly, Eruch. PS. Aloba was on watch from 10 p.m. to 4am. Asked him about Baba's condition. Aloba said Baba slept and rested and passed urine twice. Had one big jerk which woke Him up. Its 4.30 a.m. now and Baba is resting.

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Meherazad 26.1.69

My dear Meherwan,

Enclosed are dearest Mummy's reports, and also the recent note of dear Nusserwanmama [this was in respect of the illness of the eldest brother Meherjimama]. Goher commented after seeing the urinary report of dear Meherjimama and reading Nusserwan's note that it was not at all indicated that Meherjimama be taken Poona Bombay for check up by urologist specialist. The report was excellent. Of course if Breezeman [doctor at Booth Hospital] who has handled the patient feels that it is necessary to consult a specialist, then Goher suggested that he be taken to a proper urologist specialist in Bombay. [Eruch surmises that with such a good report the emergency seems to have passed. So now what is the sense.] But if you do want to do it, then send him to Bombay. In Poona any specialist would be as good as any in Ahmednagar. I have written all details to Meherjimama today. Goner said the slow fever could be due to general weakness.

Now today we transferred Beloved Baba on to the surgical bed and He felt comfortable with the automatic lifts and shifts. [That is now the bed in the Blue Bus] But since this early morning to noontime the jerks played hell on His body every few minutes.

These jerks exhaust Him completely. Goher administered sedative and the jerks subsided almost completely. This morning Baba told me that He thinks it would be easier for Drs. Ginde and Grant to call on Him whenever Goher feels it necessary if we all shifted to Guruprasad soon. And when I said that everything is ready and that He should just tell us the date Baba said 'Any day that would be convenient to us all at Meherazad and Poona: Then I told Him that I would be informing Meherji today about it, but He stopped me and said that He would let us know definitely [whether to go or not] tomorrow i.e. on the 27th Jan. and would then give a date. So we are again where we were 20 days ago. [Those earlier letters seem to have been destroyed because 20 days ago there was an urgent message to get Guruprasad ready and all that and we had made all preparations.] I will definitely let you know when I hear from Baba. He even hinted that the women would need at least 7 days for packing. So let us see. Goher has in mind to see Grant on Thursday at Booth and arrange to send blood for check-up on 1st Feb. Saturday. So that if haemoglobin falls and Grant decides to give transfusion then the same sample of Saturday can also be used for blood matching of His group, and so that Grant and Kanga and Ichhaporia can come on Sunday Feb. 2nd morning for transfusion with the matching blood of His group. Sunday being convenient to Dr. Grant. Please share this information with dear Meherji so that you and Meherji are prepared to avoid last minute rush, and for Meherji to decide his tour to Delhi and Solan. Goher also would like Grant to visit Baba on Thursday 30th if Baba permits.

Meherazad Jan. 27th 8am

My dear Meherwan,

Baba slept well till 4am, six and a half hours and was not disturbed by any jerks. [So you can see, it was all very strange. Sometimes the jerks would go on all night and would not let anybody sleep. And sometimes there was nothing. It was very inexplicable, the whole thing.] From 6.30 onwards He complained of pain in the small of the back until 7.15am when I left Him for face wash and breakfast. He had no jerks as such. Once or twice, slight tremors. Turning in the bed is an ordeal for Him whether it is due to weakness, pain in the back or catch in the back, we just cannot tell. But then sometimes His body becomes so light and supple and He takes turn on His own. It is all so very puzzling. Yesterday for breakfast 8am He had good quantity of baked rava [a sweetened wheat flour preparation. A favourite among Parsis.] A good amount with cream and a big cup of tea and half a banana. And then about 10am three spoons of complan [every spoonful has fifty calories] with water made into a paste.[It is like Horlicks]. Then about 4 ounces of whey [coconut water]. Adi brought 20 coconuts from Bombay. [Meherazad trees a/so give good coconuts, and Baba loved coconut water.] At 1pm lemon tart from Villoomai and papaya. Then at 3pm some grated apple or apple juice. 5pm scrambled egg and some papaya. And of course sometimes He has dhal-pani [that is the water that is left after the dahl is left standing for awhile. And that water Baba liked very much - it was like lentil soup.] Instead of lemon tart He has 3 [Bombay duck] with no bread. Sometimes for lunch rice or some such

thing. At 5 or 5.30pm He has a spoonful ochra or french beans, and papaya - no bread. This in general is a picture of Baba's diet for the day.

Meherazad 27th Jan. '69. 1.30pm/5.30pm

My dear Meherwan,

Received this afternoon one sack of vegetables eggplant, ochra and 2 sheets of new stamps and your note of 26th Jan. [Mani would put any new stamps on letters to the States so that stamp-collectors could have them.] Please do not send pomfret by Times taxi. You may send with Yusuf who will come to Poona with blood sample on 30th or 31st but most probably on 1st Feb. If not only 2 pomfret and some vegetables. Today Baba is having dhal by Chaggan [Chaggan was a very good cook. He had probably learnt from Masaji who was the cook for the ashram for many of the early years. After Masaji, Chaggan was the cook. Masaji was famous for his dahl.] Baba had good meal today and looked much relaxed. Your note that came with the parcel was read to Baba at 3pm and He said 'You may send pomfret if Bombay duck is not available. He sends His love to you all.' As I am writing this He is having His lunch. Just an hour ago He told me that He will not decide in favor of going to Poona till the time comes to March end. However He has permitted Ginde to come to Meherazad and check Him up and even stay in Nagar at Sarosh's for 2 or 3 days and visit Him daily. Grant will be seeing Baba on this Thursday morning at 8am when he visits Nagar as usual. I am enclosing herein the description of the ambulances in Nagar. [There was talk of bringing Baba to Poona in an ambulance.] But Adi, Waman,

Don have still to inform us of the good ambulance of Wadala Mission. Let us await news of its condition. If not one ambulance from Poona will have to be sent by dear Meherji if and when the Big Boss decides to go to Poona, and if He is not in condition to travel by car by then. The latest news today at 1pm is that He will NOT go to Poona yet. So that is it. All this is to just keep you and dear Meherji posted with the latest news. Baba has permitted Dr. Grant to call on Him this Thursday when he is scheduled to visit Booth (hospital) that day. Before going to Booth, Grant can see Baba at 8am on Thursday. Adi has been told to phone Meherji tonight and tell Meherji to fix with Dr. Grant the visit to Meherazad on Thursday 30th Jan. at 8am. Baba has also permitted dear Meherji to come in Dr. Grant's car to Nagar and return with Dr. Grant same day. While Dr. Grant is in Booth, Meherji will be with Baba and mandali and will be sent to Booth at proper time in De Sota car to join Grant to return to Poona. But Meherji should come only if he is free and finds it convenient. If not he will have to come on Sunday 2nd Feb with Dr. Grant and Mrs. Ichhaporia for blood tranfusion, if the next blood test indicates any transfusion and if Grant finds it suitable to do so this Sunday 2nd Feb. Dear Meherwan you are free to come and see Baba any day you want to, whenever you get any opportunity. Baba has not the least objection to your visiting Him.

Much love to you all, yours lovingly

Eruch.

PS My dear Meherwan, At 3.15pm today, Baba definitely decided not to go to Poona now. Not before March end. But still I think it advisable to keep in

*readiness everything to avoid last hour rush and tumble.
So we are all kept on tenterhooks till the end. (This was
the last letter Meherwan received.)*

But there are some extracts from torn up letters : Meherazad 28th
Jan. '69 8am:

My dear Meherwan,

*Received 1 block this morning of brown sugar and a
note of 27th. It was kind of dear Maisaheb to have sent
the sugar for use at Meherazad. Very kind of dear
Sarosh to have brought it here. [Maisaheb was the
dowager Rani of Kurundwad State. She was very close
to Baba and would come to Guruprasad. In the very
early days it seems that Baba had suddenly entered her
palace at Kurundwad, and she remembers that He had
given darshan to her. Just like that. She was a very dear
soul, but very old and feeble, and she soon passed
away after that.] Today or tomorrow you will receive the
detailed letter from Adi about his phone call to Dr. Ginde
and Meherji last night. Ginde was very happy to hear
that Baba permitted him to stay in Nagar 3 or 4 days to
be with Him. He will phone Adi the date of arrival after
checking up his appointments and operations. Yours
lovingly Eruch. Since this early morning Baba has been
having frequent jerks which exhaust Him.*

*A note of Jan 29th states that Baba made Adi phone
Ginde as follows: 'Come as early as possible for a quick
visit of a few hours, but not rush here at the cost of life of
any emergency patient. Later in Feb. you can visit for a
stay of 4 days.*

*Eruch kept the Bindra household informed daily of
Baba's condition, but unfortunately no more of these
letters have been kept. In one of them, Meherwan*

remembers, Eruch wrote that Baba had again given permission to Dr. Grant to come to examine Him on the 30th of January, and that as usual Meherji would bring him. In a PS to that letter, Eruch wrote that Baba had again given Meherwan permission to come with Meherji any time he was free.

Meherwan then continued his account of those days. Prior to the 30th Meherji told him that on his last trip to Baba with Dr. Grant, Baba had specifically said to bring him, Meherwan, on the 30th. But Meherwan decided not to come, as he said to Meherji, because of the extremely delicate state of Beloved Baba's health, that his presence might well mean gesturing by Baba with great difficulty, and this would only add strain to His delicate state. He thought then that this decision was best for his Beloved. Now in the light of what happened he regrets that decision deeply, for Beloved Baba dropped His beautiful human form the next day. It was a bitter life-long lesson for Meherwan.

When Meherji arrived at Meherazad with Dr. Grant on the 30th, the first thing that Baba asked him was, 'Did you bring Meherwan?' and when Meherji explained Meherwan's motive for not coming, Baba did not say anything further, but was obviously not happy. Meherwan remarked that this event was another example to him of the importance of obeying Baba's first order no matter the circumstances. Baba's Wishes should always be given precedence even over one's own deepest feelings for the Beloved. It also reminded him of an instance in Eruch's life that illustrates the same principle.

Eruch was keeping watch outside the room at Meherazad where Baba spent the night.

This room was later used by Pendu, and later again by Meherwan. At the time the door to the room was wooden with holes bored in it for ventilation - the only source. While he is

sitting there, not moving and no noise as ordered by Baba, he sees a small snake slithering by and starting to go under the door into the room. He quickly put the only thing he had to hand, his torch, on the tail of the snake. This stopped the snake going in, and it began to slowly turn around. At that point Baba clapped for him. This was an order that Eruch was required to answer immediately, but if he did then the snake would continue into the room. So he waited a few seconds, and when the snake re-emerged, he crushed its head, and then entered the room. Baba was by this time clapping furiously, and when Eruch finally entered, Baba asked, 'What kept you, didn't you hear My clapping?' Eruch explained what had happened, but Baba said, 'So what if the snake was there. Isn't My order more important? Eruch acknowledged Baba's words, and the importance of extreme attention to His slightest wish, even though he was at the time only thinking of Baba's physical well-being.

Beloved Baba constantly stressed that loving Him means constant attentiveness and obedience to His slightest wish. This was for the mandali the real, spontaneous meditation on Him, giving no room for self-indulgences of any sort in their constant concentration on His wishes. Baba took great pains to see that they did this, and showed that any lapse on their part was a source of pain for Him.

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At around 4pm on the 31st Meherwan received a phone call at his office from Meherji's house that Baba had passed away. He was stunned, and asked that the message be repeated. Then, gaining permission of his boss to have leave, he rushed to the nearest family, Baba House family, and in his agitation, blurted out to Behram, 'Baba has dropped His body!'. Behram began to bang his head with his hands and weep loudly. This

brought tears too to Meherwan for the first time since the news, and in doing so also brought some degree of calm and practicality to Meherwan, and he counselled that all should go as quickly as possible to Meherabad before Baba's body was interred. He then broke the news as gently as possible in Bindra and Villu Houses, and telephoned the Poona Centre. Gaimai and Manu for example were stunned, then wept distraught, moving about without purpose, wandering back and forth to His photo to which they would turn in any moment of distress. Meherwan finally stopped them, and said again that they must all go immediately to Meherabad, and that they should hurriedly pack some clothes and necessities.

At that point Meherji rang to say that he was leaving for Meherabad and that he would take Gaimai, Manu and Meherwan with him. This was a surprise to Meherwan who understood that Meherji had gone that day to Delhi. It transpired that Meherji had reached Bombay that morning, and then had a premonition not to go to Delhi, and to return home. They left Poona about 7.30 in the evening, and arrived at lower Meherabad about 10 or 10.30pm. It was a journey, Meherwan said, in inner and outer darkness, with Gaimai and Manu weeping on the rear seat, and Meherji inconsolable, repeating softly, 'What has Baba done, what is this He has done?' They were greeted by Padri with a little lantern, and more news of what had happened that Day of days. They then went up the hill in soft moonlight, seeing no movement or any activity, but with the faint sound of a drum beating in the distance. There at the tomb all was dark, with just a very few people who had already gathered. Eruch had in the meantime persuaded the women mandali to return to Meherazad for the night. Meherwan's aunt Banumasi and cousin Meheru greeted them sadly. They had arrived earlier from Akbar Press. A solitary village singer in a wailing tone was singing praises of the Beloved in a hastily composed elegy by him, and this

added to the pathos of the scene.

It was a desolate night for Meherji and Meherwan. After taking darshan of Beloved Baba in the tomb for some time under a very dim light of a kerosene lamp, they returned to lower Meherabad [leaving behind Gaimai, Manu and Banumasi], where Padri gave them a mattress each in Mandali Hall. So the night passed somehow. In the morning Eruch returned with the women, and others gradually began to arrive, and this was the beginning of the seven days of the Last Darshan.

* * * * *

January 31st - February 7th 1969

The seemingly casual remarks that Baba had made about how He would give darshan, proved to be exactly what happened. When Beloved Baba's body lay in His tomb-shrine, it lay on a wooden plank with His head a little raised so that the lovers could see His serene face, and His eyes were closed. Those casual remarks of Baba's of how He would be giving darshan, came to life in that final darshan. The lovers were happy that the interment was delayed, and they came in ever increasing numbers during the seven days, including some from the West. There was always a queue day and night. As the days went by, His face became even more radiant and glowing, and although after the fourth day, His body did begin to shrink, it was clear that no deterioration would take place.

A lover later remarked that Baba's face seemed like a freshly picked rose, but in deep sleep with closed eyelids and an expression suggesting great distance. It was a miracle without doubt, with only blocks of ice placed each side of His body, nothing else. Twice a day, Eruch would have the queue stopped, the tomb closed and cleaned of dust and flowers, and he would go down into the crypt, replace as necessary the

blocks of ice, and very gently and tenderly wipe His face. It so happened that there was during those days a literal flood of pink Persian roses in the market, and that rose has a particularly nice and delicate fragrance. As a result baskets of these roses were brought and Baba's body would be covered with them. Never before and never after has there been such a quantity of roses in the Nagar market. It seemed as if the local rose bushes were somehow being inspired to give their all in a final and fitting obeisance to the fairest flower in creation!

After the initial shock of His passing, and of the numbness that all clearly experienced at first, the mood of His lovers gradually changed and a different atmosphere developed. Groups sang songs of love for Him, the queues would sing bhajans as they waited, and the days became like a Sahavas of the old days with Beloved Baba giving darshan. However basically the conditions at Meherabad remained primitive. The nights were particularly cold, with a cold wind during the night and early in the morning. During the day however it was hot, dusty and dry, made worse by the milling crowds and hardly any shelter. People slept anywhere they could, on the platform or at lower Meherabad, there being no shelter around the Samadhi. For the first two days there was also no food and amenities. On the third day, Meherji and Chaggan decided to do something for the many people reluctant to leave their Beloved Baba. Chaggan went to the market and purchased rice, vegetables and spices. Then he prepared a very tasty mixture of all sorts of ingredients in a huge pot over a fire. It was greatly relished by hundreds, the contents of the pot seemed never ending, and all were amazed that so many could be fed.

During the time leading to that Day, the 31st of January, when the mandali expressed concern over His health, Baba would tell them that He would be very strong on His birthday. The 7th

of February was His birthday by the Parsi calendar, so it was decided that the body should be interred on that date. So it was done. Around noon on the 7th the prayers were said, and a wooden box was lowered over Baba's body. Then each one came forward and were allowed to throw one handful of soil and soon the crypt was full.

While this was going on, Kaka Baria sat on the platform surrounding the crypt watching. Despite the after effects mentally of seven major heart-attacks and severe uremia, he was aware that Baba had dropped the body and that now His body was being interred. So while each came forward and threw in their handful of soil, he sat from early morning to late in the afternoon, never moving, oblivious to the dust and noise and people around him. Finally an old friend, Banumasi, persuaded him to rise and go with her to wash and have some nourishment.

Somehow Kaka retained from that day a grudge against Sarosh because he, as a Trustee of Baba's Trust, had led the covering of Baba's body and had thrown earth on it. Later that month at Meherazad, when the Board of Trustees came for a meeting, Kaka got up from his chair and showed his anger against Sarosh, shaking his fist and threatening him if he came too close. Then he sat down again, and promptly slumped in death. It was as if his life had been extended just to give company to his Lord, and now with the Lord no longer on earth, Kaka also departed, to continue his companionship with his Beloved.

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Chapter 2

Ramchandra Gadekar
and family

Gadekar, as he is known, was one of the old, stalwart, totally dedicated disciples of Meher Baba. He died in March 1959, at the age of 55. On April 6th his ashes were buried at Lower Meherabad, and Baba Himself lowered the box into the grave, and covered it with some earth. He then scattered flowers on top, as did the mandali present. and garlanded the grave, Turning to Gadekar's wife, Gunatai, Baba said, 'Gadekar is free. He will only take birth again when I return as the Avatar, in seven hundred years. He is very fortunate that I, with My own hands, have placed the last remains of one of My dear ones in the grave.' He was truly loved and blessed by the Lord, and he did much work in Beloved Baba's Cause, and brought many souls into Baba's contact.

In 1923 Gadekar was a nineteen year-old student in college in Poona. His father, Kanhoba Rao, was a cobbler in Ahmednagar, and was therefore one of the so-called backward classes. Gadekar was very much a struggling student financially, so poor that his clothes were virtually rags sewn together. For some months he endured stomach pains which no remedies seemed to relieve, and on a vacation visit to Ahmednagar, friends suggested that he seek help for his pains from a 'saint' near Arangaon. This 'saint' was of course Meher Baba who had established His ashram 'Meherabad' near the village Arangaon. Gadekar knew nothing of Baba, but because of the persistent pains, decided to seek His help,

So on a Sunday he bicycled to Meherabad with one garland for the 'saint'. He had a natural reverence for Saints, and while he wondered as he pedalled if he would receive help,

he also felt drawn to go. Baba was seated in the old Mandali Hall as he and the other visitors for darshan approached. The moment Gadekar saw the lustrous, beautiful face of Beloved Baba he was aware only of the loving presence of this wondrous Being. He completely forgot his ailment. As he garlanded Baba, Baba asked, 'Who are you?' 'I am Gadekar from Nagar and I am a student.' Then Baba asked, 'What do you want?' 'I want God-Realisation.' Baba smiled, 'Do you know what is God-Realisation?' 'No, I do not know anything about the word.' 'Then how did you come to say it?' 'I do not know. It just came from my heart.' 'Well I will tell you about God-Realisation.'

Baba then gave a talk (this was before His Silence) on the spiritual Path, the Planes of consciousness and finally realisation of Godhood. After it was finished, all got up to go, and as they did so, Baba called Gadekar back. Gadekar bowed down, and Baba asked, 'But what made you come here?' Only then did Gadekar remember his ailment, and Baba told him what remedy to take for it. In time the ailment disappeared and did not return.

Gadekar continued his studies and would also be with Baba whenever possible and served Him. Gadekar subsequently spoke of listening to Baba speaking and singing, and how moving it was to the heart. Gadekar himself wrote and sang many songs of love for Baba, and Baba referred to him as His Tukaram of this Age. He was a simple, innocent man, totally absorbed in Baba, often dissolving in tears in Baba's presence, and easily the butt of ridicule and derision from others. Although through Baba's blessings he later rose to a very high post in the State's Education Department, he remained naturally humble in a most unaffected and simple manner.

Baba once referred affectionately to his innocence, saying how Gadekar would for example ask the other mandali, 'Should I go for my bath now, or should I do this or that?' On another occasion, Baba described him thus, 'Gadekar is a

person who comes to tears by talking of the good qualities of others. He is a smiling Buddha and a *bhola bhakta* (guileless devotee). He has passed through ups and downs, but he has never left Me. Although he has all along been serving Me, yet he told Me yesterday that it is a great pity that he does not get opportunities to serve Me.'

In 1925/26, Gadekar came to stay with Baba at Meherabad. With him was his new wife, father and mother, and younger brother, and they lived in a small mud hut, one of a series behind Mandali Hall. The father, Kanhoba Rao, became the cobbler for the ashram, and as he stitched the footwear with cow hide, his beloved Baba's name was on his lips. The Gadekar family's connection with Meher Baba actually began in 1922 when Gulmai K. Irani presented Him with a pair of sandals made by Kanhoba Rao. Without explanation, Baba was very careful with these sandals, wearing them for many years, and even refusing to wear any others during His first journeys throughout India. When the family came to Meherabad, Kanhoba Rao kept those same sandals repaired, and he had to do so many times. He also restitched Baba's kamli coat with patches as Baba continued to wear it over eight years.

On arrival Baba gave Gadekar certain orders, and one of them was celibacy. The marriage at that point had not been consummated, and Gadekar accepted strictly the order as he did all from his Master. The wife was very young and beautiful, but she became depressed and unhappy, finally throwing herself into the Meherabad well and drowning.

Gadekar became a teacher in Baba's school at Meherabad. He had completed some college exams, and at a certain time, Baba drew him aside and disclosed, 'You have failed in your exam!' Tears began to well in Gadekar's eyes, and to console him Baba called for sweets, and distributing them to all, declared, 'Let us celebrate Gadekar's failure in the exam!' But moments later, news came from Ahmednagar that he had actually passed the exam, and the threatening tears became

happy smiles of relief.

Later he married a second time, and she too then became a teacher at the school. Again it was a celibate marriage. She was very devout, rising early in the morning and working all day, and in obedience to Baba, she would also recite His name many times in their small room. After nine months she became seriously ill and died at Meherabad.

In June 1928 he returned to Poona and finished successfully a Bachelor of Arts degree. It is understood that Baba helped him do this. While there in college, Gadekar would go on Sundays to the area of Poona where the 'untouchables' or 'backward' classes lived, and do social work and teach the children. There was also another group of students who would go to the same area to work with the people there, and one of them was Gunatai who in time became Gadekar's third wife. Gadekar of course told them of Baba, how great He was and urged them to seek His darshan. Indeed he was always one to work tirelessly to disseminate Meher Baba's name and message wherever he travelled, and to organise darshan programs whenever Baba agreed to attend.

Gunatai was from a very wealthy but also low caste and very orthodox family. It was a large family and had come earlier from Africa. In accordance with custom she was married at nine years of age to a boy. The boy however died within a year or two, and thus Gunatai became a child widow and by orthodoxy not allowed to marry again. Being of low caste, she suffered much discrimination in school, for example forced to stand outside the room while the classes were being conducted,

A small group of the young social workers did come to Meherabad as Gadekar had urged them, and Gunatai was one of them. When Gadekar introduced her to Baba, she was so drawn to Him that she took off her gold wedding ring and laid it at His feet. Baba, smiling at them both, remarked that they would make a good pair. Thus with His blessing, they resolved to marry despite the strong opposition of her family.

In 1930 she fled Poona in a taxi with a few friends and came to Ahmednagar where Gadekar awaited her. Baba and the mandali attended the wedding. Baba embraced and blessed them, and He distributed sweets to all.

Once, during a light moment of conversation, Baba gestured to Gadekar, 'Do you fight with Gunatai?' 'Never Baba. She fights with me!' 'She is teaching you forbearance. You are in her debt.'

When Baba closed down the Meherabad school, Gadekar sought employment elsewhere. By 1930 he was a schoolteacher in Ahmednagar. Later he became an inspector and then District Officer, and was transferred to various areas. By the time he died he was Deputy Director of Education for a large area of Maharashtra. Everywhere he was posted and travelled, he spoke fearlessly and lovingly of Beloved Baba, and the following story is an example of this:

Bhanudas Gawade was a primary school teacher in the interior part of the Sholapur district in Maharashtra. He taught in a one-room schoolhouse which served the first through fourth standards (grades). In addition to his teaching in the mornings, he would spend his weekends tending his family's ancestral farm some miles away.

December to January is the harvest season, and the end of January found Bhanudas at the farm over the weekend as usual but unable to complete the harvest work. So he decided to spend Monday, January 31st on the farm as well. He returned to the school the next morning. At the end of every month each teacher had to submit certain forms to the District Office giving details of pupil attendance, lessons taught etc. and Bhanudas filled in the forms as though he had been present on the 31st. Not giving the matter much thought he posted them.

The next day he learned in the village that the section inspector had been to the school on the 31st and had noted Bhanudas's absence. The inspector had said that he would

report the matter to the District Officer.

Bhanudas was very troubled when he heard this. He knew that this was ground for suspension or even dismissal, and without his job he did not know how he would be able to support his family. He also knew that the District Officer was a good man, but also a strict disciplinarian, so he feared the worst. Therefore he went to the headmaster of a nearby school and asked his advice.

When Bhanudas shared his deep concern, the headmaster replied, 'Don't worry. I know what you should do. It is really very simple and easy.'

'What?' asked Bhanudas eagerly.

'Go to the District Office with a friend and wait outside until the officer arrives in a horse cab. When he gets down, you ask your friend, "Do you know anything about Meher Baba?" 'Say this in a very loud voice so that the officer hears you. Your problem will be solved!'

Bhanudas shook his head in disbelief. 'I can't imagine how this will solve my problem! And who is Meher Baba?'

'What have you to do with that? I personally do not know anything about this Baba, but I do know that asking the question about Meher Baba works. He may even offer you a cup of tea!'

It was Bhanudas' only resort, so the next day he took a friend with him to Sholapur. They went to the District Office and stood under a tree and waited for the officer to arrive. After a while he appeared, and as he passed, Bhanudas asked his friend in a loud voice, 'Do you know anything about Meher Baba?'

Instantly the officer stopped and came over to him. 'Are you asking who is Meher Baba?' 'Yes,' replied Bhanudas.

'Come with me. I will tell you.' He led Bhanudas to his office, opened the door for him, and beckoned him inside. 'So you

want to know about Meher Baba. Good.'

The officer's enthusiasm and friendliness were too much for Bhanudas, aware as he was of being there under false pretence. If it were discovered, it might make his case worse. So, before taking his seat, he confessed his real reason for coming. The officer waved this aside as if it wasn't very important. He called one of his clerks to get the file of monthly reports and said, 'Don't worry. If what you wrote wasn't accurate, don't do it again. Be honest in your duties. Fill out a new form and sign it.' And he concluded, 'I am happy that you want to know about Meher Baba.' He then lovingly told of events in Baba's life expressing His compassion for one and all. He also gave Bhanudas a pamphlet with Baba's picture.

Bhanudas was completely taken aback by all this. He thought, what must Meher Baba be like, if the mere mention of His name produces such an outpouring of devotion on the part of this officer? If His name alone can do that, what must He be like personally?

This contact with Gadekar, for he was the District Officer, and a little later reading a book on Baba, kindled a strong desire in Bhanudas for Baba's darshan. Some years later he did have His darshan, and at the time, as he bowed to Baba, he silently said, 'Oh, Lord Baba, I offer You my body, mind, and heart.'

Such is an example of Gadekar's intense, one-pointed love for Baba.

Through this work for Him in the Sholapur and Barsi districts, many hundreds came to know of Baba, and in response to their fervent appeal, in 1943 Baba agreed to give darshan there. With help from the mandali sent from Meherabad, Gadekar oversaw the preparations for the darshan function. Gunatai provided good food for the mandali and for many lovers from Bombay and Poona who had also seized the opportunity of having Baba's darshan. To accommodate all,

Gadekar had rented a large bungalow in Sholapur. It had a big hall on the first floor, and two rooms were exclusively for Baba on the second floor.

There were various functions during the three-day visit, and many thousands had Baba's darshan. Before leaving, Baba praised Gadekar and Gunatai, 'I am very pleased with the love of both of you and with the splendid arrangements you made for Myself and the mandali.' He then advised Gadekar, 'Don't give up this bungalow for a year. I will pay the rent.' Gadekar naturally agreed, but with his own small family in such a large house, could not understand Baba saying this.

But after Baba's visit, more and more people came for information about Him, and thus a centre became consolidated with weekly meetings. Then Gadekar realised why Baba had wished him to retain the bungalow. After one year Gadekar was transferred from Sholapur to Ahrnednagar, and he knew why Baba had said to rent for one year.

Whilst still at Sholapur, Gadekar and family came to Poona to participate in a darshan program. The day after the program, Baba ordered Papa Jessawala to keep watch near the gate of Bindra House, and not permit anyone to enter. This he did most strictly and rigidly, refusing to allow even close ones who had been called by Baba to enter until Baba Himself had to intervene. But when Gadekar and Gunatai came to the gate seeking to see Baba, Papa informed Baba, and He teased Papa, 'I had complete trust in you that you would not allow even a king to enter - how has Gadekar bewitched you!'

'Baba, they are both great lovers of Yours, and above even an emperor! He spreads Your love everywhere.'

'Since you praise them so much, I will see them. Send them in.' Baba wanted to see them, and Papa's praise gave Him an excuse,

A little later, Gadekar was transferred to Ahmednagar, and he and the family lived in Mutha's bungalow. One room in the house was kept apart especially for Baba. Baba used to visit

the family on His way to Meherabad, but would not inform them in advance of His intentions. Gunatai complained, saying, 'Baba, why do You come to visit so unexpectedly? The house is in such a mess at times. If we knew You were coming, we could keep everything in order.'

Baba smiled, gesturing, 'Is this your house? This is My house. Do I have to inform you when I come to My own house?' They took Him to the reserved room, and Baba was pleased, but also remarked, 'Do you want to keep Me confined in only this room? I want to go to each and every room.' Even the kitchen was not left out of His inspection.

On one of His visits, He gestured, 'I want to cook for Myself,' and proceeded to peel potatoes and prepare fried bhajies.

Later Gadekar was transferred to Poona, and he was there until his death.

Among the many that he inspired to come to Baba in Poona, was Bapu Shinde. He was also of the 'backward' classes and a cobbler by background, and he came into Baba's contact in 1948. The first Baba Centre in Poona was in his footwear shop in the heart of the city. On Mondays the shop was closed and the Baba lovers of Poona would gather there and sing songs of love for Baba. Shinde also had a shoe-making factory, but in the devastating floods of 1961, it was totally destroyed. As a result he was in dire financial straits, but he never mentioned this to Baba, nor showed any sign of distress and concern while with Him. He always appeared happy and cheerful in His presence. But Baba knew of his plight and that it would be very hard for him to overcome his difficulties.

One day at Guruprasad whilst the mandali and close ones were sitting with Baba, Shinde was called to come to Baba, and Baba asked Eruch to give him a packet. It was a small amount of money, and Baba said that it was His prasad, 'Utilise it and you will prosper.' Shinde accepted the package with great reverence, and .. with the money he did flourish

much beyond his earlier level. He was able to re-establish his factory, and in time move to a bigger shop, and buy a large house where his large, extended family could live. He also made very good use of his wealth in Baba's Cause, supporting the Poona Centre and the Sahavas programs of the 1960's. His death in December 1965 was a great blow for the Poona Centre. In 1965, just after Baba's last public darshan, Bapusai had become very ill with a severe skin affliction which affected the whole body system and made it septic. He suffered a great deal towards the end. The illness began before Baba's return to Meherazad and Baba said to him that His nazar would be on him and not to worry. On His return to Meherazad, Baba would ask about Bapusai's health from time to time, and letters were received. When he died, Baba sent a very beautiful telegram to the family: Bapu Shindi dedicated his life to My service, and now towards the end, he also shared in My suffering. I have lost Bapu, but he is fortunate to have found Me.

Also during the time in Poona, Gadekar, Dr. Ghani and Khak Saheb spoke to many about Baba and about their days spent with Him. Gradually devotees formed around them, and they became a singing group, which was called the New Bhajan Mandali. It was directed by Gadekar, and Gunatai and family too sang with them. In December 1950, Baba called all the group to Him at Mahabaleshwar for the celebration of Mehera's birthday. Whilst there Gadekar wanted to tell Baba about Khak Saheb's death just two days before coming to Mahabaleshwar, but because of the New Life restrictions against mentioning any such Old Life topic, he could not do so. Khak Saheb had been with Baba since the early days of Manzil-e-Meem, So, to get round this restriction, Gadekar asked Madhusudan, the main singer of the group, to sing a particular ghazal to Baba that Khak had written before he passed away.

During the singing program before Baba on the 25th of December, Madhusudan did begin Khak's ghazal, but had only sung two lines when Baba stopped him. Baba became

very serious and pensive, and as He sat still, absorbed, everything not only in the room, but indeed in the world seemed to have stopped. After a while, Baba moved His hands over His face and eyes, and gestured, 'He has come to Me.' Although He had not mentioned Khak by name, everyone in the room knew who He meant. Then Madhusudan and the group resumed their singing.

Gadekar was one of the mandali who accompanied Baba on His tours through India in the early 1950's. During these tours, Baba agreed to visit a great number of homes of close Baba lovers in the various towns. At each home, Baba had Gadekar sing His arti.

Baba too would occasionally ask Gadekar to sing His arti at other times. On the last day of the Marathi Sahavas in November 1955, Baba led the whole group out of Mandali Hall to see the masts Ali Shah and Mohammed in the Family Quarters near Arangaon. The majority of the men followed Baba bare-foot across the fields, and as a result suffered thorns in their feet. On route Baba sat beneath a tree and called on Gadekar to sing His Marathi arti. Gadekar was one who was barefoot, and with thorns piercing his feet, he had difficulty standing and at the same time singing. But he did so, and then Baba asked him to sing His Gujarati arti. Baba seemed to enjoy Gadekar's and the other's discomfort even more with the second arti. These thorns became love's thorns of remembrance on the day of their departure from their Lord.

The next day in Mandali Hall, Baba found Gadekar still there with a few others. After noting that they were all leaving soon, Baba asked Gadekar, 'While doing My arti yesterday, were you thinking of the arti or the thorns in your feet?' 'Of the arti' he said.

Joining His hands, Baba offered His namaskar to Gadekar. Taking advantage of Baba's mood, Gadekar asked, 'I am now fifty-one years old, and there are four years left before I retire with pension. I would like to resign at once, and stay with You.'

Gadekar

Baba replied, 'Up to the 15th of February, 1957, just obey Me; thereafter, I will call you to stay with Me for all time.' And so it worked out, and Gadekar did come to Baba after four years 'for all time'.

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It was in large part through Gadekar that Guruprasad became the summer residence for Baba. The Poona group was desperately seeking suitable accommodation for Baba. He was to shortly arrive in Poona, and one possibility after another came to nothing. Gadekar, a part of the searching group, 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. He knew of Baba from Gadekar 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 Jessawala and Adi Snr. to see it and check that it was suitable. Gadekar and the others were delighted with all aspects of the place, and 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. The telegram was signed by Sardar Raste, but posted by Adi to ensure that it was sent.

When the affirmative reply came, Baba had already arrived in Poona the same day. He was sent the reply, and immediately decided to inspect the house. He liked it immensely, and promptly moved there with men and women mandali. Thus through Gadekar began the long, glorious association with the palace known as Guruprasad and its owner the Maharani of Baroda, Shantadevi.

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To return to the story of Gadekar's life ...

Gadekar

Gadekar and Gunatai had six children, but only two survived, a son, Digambar, born 1935, and a daughter, Nalini Tai, born 1936. In 1937 Gadekar sought and was given an overseas scholarship by the Maharashtra government to further his studies in Education. But the amount given was insufficient for the nearly two years he would be away, and to make up the shortfall, they sold Gunatai's jewelry.

At the same time Gunatai went to Baba, and said, 'Baba, the children are very young, and Gadekar will be away for so long. What will happen to me? How will I manage? And what will happen to Gadekar, travelling overseas, and for so long?!' Gunatai was always bold and outspoken with Baba, no hesitating to express her mind. Baba, the ever-compassionate One, consoled her, 'Why do you worry? - I am here. I shall be with you. And I will also be with Gadekar.' Gunatai's family were very angry that she had married, but with the arrival of children, animosity gradually faded. This also helped Gunatai during Gadekar's absence.

At the time of departure, Gadekar took the family to Bombay and showed them the ship on which he was to sail. They walked over the ship, and then he took them to his cabin. When he opened the door, who was there to greet them but Beloved Baba Himself! 'Did I not say that I would be with Gadekar?!' beamed Baba. Baba was travelling on the same ship for His 1937 visit to Europe.

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In 1949 when Baba was preparing for the New Life, He called various close ones to Him with the mandali, and invited them to join him in the New Life. Gadekar was one who declined, and Baba signalled him out at the time, 'May God always keep Gadekar in My heart.'

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Gadekar

Over the years Baba would call Gadekar to Him as one of the close disciples, and the following letter is an example of this:

"The Links"
Highgrounds
Bangalore
5th Dec, '39

Dear Gadekar & family

As you are well aware, Baba will lay the Foundation of our new Centre at Byramangala on Sunday the 17th instant. Sir Mirza Ismail the Dewan of Mysore will be present besides about 400/500 selected officials and other residents of the State. Elaborate arrangements are made to make the function successful on this side.

As an old member of our Mandali, you need no special invitation, and Baba will be pleased indeed if you could manage to come.

With love and blessings, as ever, from dear Baba,

Yours,
J. H. Chaudhary

MSG

However with mass darshan programs the whole family would come to see Baba. At times too Baba would visit their home, and on such occasions Digambar remembers Baba playing with him, playing marbles with him, sitting him on His lap, and wrestling with him. Digambar's first clear memory of Baba was during that very big darshan program in 1943 in Sholapur. Baba was seated on a divan in one of the smaller rooms of the large house, and He suddenly gestured to Digambar, 'Sing Me a song. Sing whatever you like.' The only thing that Digambar could remember was a love song from a Hindi movie, so he adapted the words, 'Oh, Baba, where are You? Where are You hiding? What cloud are You hiding behind?' Baba looked so pleased and astonished as he sang, 'Such a small child and how well he sings. And such a nice song! I am very happy that you sang before Me.'

Another darshan program that stands out in Digambar's mind was one in 1946. It was an all-day program, and Digambar remembers Baba so radiant, glowing like the sun, and like a magnet drawing all to Him. His skin and complexion was so smooth and clear. He recalls waiting outside His door, and when allowed to enter, finding the room full of fragrance. 'I still remember that fragrance - it is still with me.' Baba loved roses and there were often roses in His room.

In the 1954 darshan program in Ahmednagar, Digambar was a volunteer helping to control the crowds. He remarked that he got tired during the long day, but Baba did not appear to do so, remaining ever zestful and loving in that intense pressing throng seeking His darshan. Baba asked Gadekar to sing His arti on that occasion.

Years passed and while Baba did not direct Digambar's studies, He would inquire about them and of his results. In 1958 when Digambar was studying for Master of Science and Baba was staying at Guruprasad, he was directed by Baba to come to Him every day, even during his examinations. He was also directed to take Baba's name before beginning the examinations. After the theory examination was over, Baba

asked Digambar how he had fared. When he answered, 'Baba, I answered to the best of my ability,' Baba said, 'You must pass first class.' 'Baba, You know what the result will be. It is for me to do the best I can.'

Again after the practical examination was over, Baba asked how he had fared and again Digambar answered in the same way. This time Baba warned, 'If you do not pass first class, our friendship is finished and you must not show your face to Me!' Digambar was greatly disturbed by this and stammered out, 'Baba, whatever is going to happen, will happen according to Your divine will.' Then, before the results were announced, Baba remarked to him, 'You have failed in the exams.' So it was with a thumping heart that he opened the newspaper publishing the results. To his immense joy he found that he had not only passed first class, but was also first in his year.

When the result was told to Baba, He sent the message, 'My love and blessings. Let us hope you pass at least third class in loving and obeying Me.'

* * * * *

It was around this time, the middle of 1958, that the first signs of Gadekar's final illness began to appear. He developed Hodgkin's disease, a cancerous growth of the lymph glands, but over the next seven or eight months, until just before his passing, Baba did not permit anyone to tell him of his impending death - and then it was an inadvertent slip of the tongue by one of the Baba lovers visiting him.

Around this same time, whilst Baba was in Poona for a short lime, Gadekar, Gunatai and the two children came unexpectedly to see Baba. Baba was seated with His mandali and a few close ones, when they arrived. Baba made them welcome, and then asked, 'Why have you come?' Gadekar had begun weeping in Baba's presence, and Gunatai, in her usual bold, forthright manner, answered, 'We came for Your darshan Baba.' But then with hardly a pause, she continued, 'Baba, my

daughter is now in third year medical studies, and if You give your blessings, we are planning a marriage between my daughter and another student at the college.' Baba turned to the mandali, 'See, she says she has only come for My darshan?!' They all laughed, and Baba said, 'All right she has My blessing. My nazar is there. Carry on with your planning.' (Tai has become a very prominent doctor in Bombay.) After some little time, Gunatai again spoke up, 'Baba, my son has a scholarship in America to study further. if You give Your blessings, we will send him there.' Again, with amusement from the mandali, Baba commented, 'She has come only for My darshan! and then continued, 'You have My blessings. My nazar is on him.' (Digambar in time became Vice-Chancellor of a leading University and held other high positions.)

Gunatai then expressed her wish to stand for certain Poona city elections, but Baba became stern and said that if she did he would reverse the Key. Gunatai kept silent.

Baba turned to Gadekar, 'Now your daughter will marry and live with her in-laws. Your son will go to the USA, and your wife will be busy with her political work, so you will be left alone. What do you plan to do?' But before Gadekar could answer, Baba said, 'You come to Me.' Gadekar was very happy, although Baba continued as if he was in some doubt, 'Are you sure you will be happy to come to Me?' 'Oh, yes Baba!' 'Then it is decided.'

Gunatai did persist in her political ambitions, paid a deposit in order to stand for the elections, and persuaded Gadekar to buy a car so she could more easily canvas votes.

The car proved a disaster, so ramshackle that doors had to be tied with rope to prevent them opening or even falling off. But she persisted. In the elections she got seven votes, and as a result lost her deposit on top of all the other expenses. Beloved Baba did not like politics.

On July 10th Baba held a meeting of two hundred men and

women at Meherabad, and during that occasion He gave the opportunity to Gadekar to stay with Him for one month. But He warned Gadekar very sternly that He would be in strict seclusion, that He was not to be disturbed to the slightest degree, and that once with Him, he could not depart until the month was completed. Baba was so stern and strict, warning that even a minor disturbance would mean dismissal, and Gadekar was thrown into deep mental conflict. He longed so much to be with his Beloved Baba, yet agonised that he might displease Him in some way. Baba then told him that he was to write on his return to Poona whether he would stay with Him or not.

In his agitation Gadekar turned to his dearest friend after Baba, Gaimai, and asked her what he should do, 'I am so scared - will I be able to please Baba while I'm there? I'd so love to be with Him - but what will happen?! This is my dilemma!' 'Gadekar, why do you worry so?! This is the way that Baba always presents such an invitation. Just take His name and say 'yes'. He will look after you. Just depend upon Him.' Gadekar immediately brightened and literally jumped for joy, 'Is that so! You know I felt really scared with Baba's words. But now I'll write straightaway to Him and say 'yes'.' This exchange with Gaimai was typical of Gadekar's natural, simple and overwhelming love for Baba. He loved Gaimai's deep love for Baba, and her never-ending fund of stories of Baba and from spiritual tradition. He would spend as much time as he could in her company, always seeking her advice, and Meherwan, Gaimai's son, would affectionately tease him, 'What will your family say when you spend so much time here!' In fact in the last period of his life, his physical condition was pitiful, and he would plead with Meherwan to take him to Bindra House to be with Gaimai and be comforted by her steadfast, uplifting expressions of love for Baba. But Meherwan felt for Gadekar's family, and would seek to discourage him, 'Just be here and take Baba's name. What would your wife and children think if I did that.'

* * * * *

Gadekar arrived at Meherazad on August 14th and stayed until Oct 7th 1958. So he even had more than the one month that Baba had said. During the time he was there, his health continued to deteriorate, and he would worry about such things as Digambar going to America on the scholarship that had been awarded to him. Baba said to him not to worry, and repeated a verse from Sir Walter Scott that He had remembered from His childhood:

*'Come ye slow, or come ye fast;
It is but death that comes at last.'*

Gadekar however, continued to be troubled, and had difficulty sleeping at nights. So Baba had Goher give him seven sleeping pills to be taken one a day. He also suffered from asthma, and Benadryl syrup was given to him.

Despite Goher's clear instructions regarding the sleeping pills, the next morning Gadekar took all seven at once. When it was discovered, Baba called him and scolded him gently for making such a 'stupid mistake'. Then Goher gave him some apples, and Baba kept him seated by His side. This seemed to solve any adverse reaction to the pills, and soon after Gadekar's worries left him, and he was once more happy.

One day, in the course of playing cards, Gadekar took himself to task for some mistake he had made. Baba assured him, 'Don't worry. Whatever happens in the world happens according to the will of God. Even sins are committed because of God's will.' However Baba had Aloha give the following couplet from Hafiz:

*Even if a wrongdoing or crime is not from your hands,
still, out of reverence for God, confess that you have done it.'*

* * * * *

Baba called Gadekar to stay with Him again in November 1958. This time it was for six days. On his return to Poona, he was diagnosed as having two cancerous tumours under his armpits. Baba gave instructions that he was not to be told of his impending death. His health continued to deteriorate, with considerable pain and distress. In January 1959 he wrote to Baba, and Baba replied with this letter from Eruch:

My dear Gadekar Saheb,

Baba took great interest in hearing the contents of your letter.

Baba knows how you have taken, and are taking great pains to spread your Beloved Baba's message of love and truth in Poona and elsewhere - wherever you are posted. All this labour of love will never and cannot go in vain.

Baba also knows how much pain and discomfort you are undergoing at present due to the swollen glands. All this pain should never be taken by you as 'paying for your sins.' No! It is to give you greater opportunity to remember Baba more frequently. Baba wants you to bear the pain patiently in loving Him the more.

Baba says that He is well pleased with your efforts, your deep love for Him, and your unfailing support and your cooperation with Baba lovers at all times and under every situation, and, this time, under severe physical pain and discomfort. Baba feels very proud for having such lovers.

Now Baba wants you to concentrate your attention on loving Him more. So, do this: remember Baba more and much more. Repeat Baba's name silently in your love and devotion for the Beloved of all hearts - Meher Baba.

Stop worrying about Digambar, Tai or Gunatai. Let

Gadekar

them now worry for your comforts and health. You have had enough worries for them in the past. Give them a chance to give their share and let them play their parts. Instead of worrying for 'this, that and them' get seriously engrossed in 'Him, His and His work.' This is the time for you to do this. Now is the time for you to feel completely relaxed from the routine worries and to get engrossed in the joy and peace that prevail when one shares Baba's 'pleasure and happiness' with other fellow beings - relations, neighbours, friends and all the rest.

Baba sends His dear love to His very dear Tukaram and to Gunatai, Tai and Digambar.

Yours lovingly,

,

Eruch

Gadekar and Gunatai came to Meherazad to see Baba on February 12th. Gadekar had grown much weaker and was suffering terribly. Weeping, he cried out, 'Baba, cure me. I want to go to different places to spread Your love.'

Baba consoled him, 'Don't worry, you will be all right soon. You have devoted your whole life to My cause, and I am pleased with you.' Sending him out of the Hall with one of the mandali, Baba said to Gunatai, 'Gadekar will come to Me soon, so serve him well. Keep him as cheerful as possible. Whatever is going to happen will happen: you should not worry. Keep your head cool and give him as much rest as possible.'

Baba asked Meherdas to go to Poona with Gadekar and help nurse him. He told Gadekar to repeat His name continuously and not to worry. He then bade him a loving farewell, and when Gadekar sat in the car, He sent the mandali to stand near it and shout, *Bhakta Shironmani Gadekar Saheb Ki Jai!* Meaning 'Victory to the lover who is like a diamond in the King's crown.' It was a most touching departure.

On March 7th Baba departed for Bombay, stopping at

Guruprasad for lunch. But before taking food or rest, He went to see Gadekar in his home. Gadekar tried to rise from the bed, and Baba gestured to him to stay, 'How is your pain? How do you feel?'

Gadekar replied, 'Because You have come to see me, I feel no pain.' 'Today is Mahashivratri (a holy day in honour of Lord Shiva),' said Baba, 'and Shankar in person has come to your house to see you. Repeat My name day and night. Go on doing it.'

Gadekar wept tears of joy. After embracing him, Baba returned to Guruprasad. During the last period of Gadekar's life, Baba sent mandali members to sit with him, and the Poona bhajan group helped by singing to him through the long nights of pain.

On March 12th, news was conveyed to Baba who was in Bombay, that Gadekar had died at midnight. Baba commented, 'Only I know how fortunate Gadekar was, who with his last breath called out My name. He has come to Me forever.'

Baba sent a telegram to Gunatai:

Gadekar was dear; now he has come near.

Inform all not to fear, but to love Me with cheer.

He also stated, 'Be happy that Gadekar enjoys My company forever.'

Digambar was already in America, and Baba sent a telegram after his father's death, telling him to remain there and continue his studies, and 'be happy that your father has come to Me.'

Before Digambar left India for his studies, Baba gave him three orders: 1. No smoking. 2. No drinking. 3. Do not touch any woman with lustful feelings. He was also ordered to write to Baba every fifteen days. At first Digambar was enthusiastic about writing and did so at length. But as the months went by, the letters became shorter and shorter. After a few months of consistently four-line letters, a message came from Baba,

'Why are you writing only four lines for months now - are you cyclostyling them?'

When he returned to India, his mother arranged his marriage, and Baba called the couple to Meherazad. They bowed to Him, and He embraced them, saying to the wife, 'Digambar is very dear to Me and you are fortunate to be married to him. Hold fast to My daaman.'

When their first child was born, a son, Baba was notified and He replied, 'My love and blessings to Meheram' - thus naming the child and by adding Ram to Meher thereby remembering his grandfather Gadekar, whose name was Ramchandra Kanoba Gadekar. Baba was told of the birth of their second child, a daughter, and again He named the baby, 'My love and blessings to Mehera.' .

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Chapter 3

Early Correspondence
between Meher Baba
and the
Jessawala Family

This chapter contains a selection of letters between Beloved Baba and the Jessawala family. They shed some light on how the family left the world to come to Him, and how He looked to every minute detail of bringing them to Him, and getting them established in the ashram. There was no aspect of life that was overlooked by Him, and the letters, even though perhaps only snippets of some remain, show how practical Baba was in all matters, and how He sought to relieve all anxiety and worry that they might feel in their affairs. Yet He did not allow this task to interfere in any way with His universal work.

The first snippet is intriguing. It is in Baba's own handwriting, and a footnote to it reads: Found in Baba's own writing on a leaf of Baba's biography in Gujarati by Baily J Irani.

Baba writes in English

*I am He whom I love and He whom I love is I. We are
two spirits in one body. If thou seest Me thou seest Him.
And if thou seest Him thou seest us both.*

Meher Baba

The first letter is only a fragment written by a mandali member and signed MS Irani. It contains a number of points:

Early Correspondence

4. You (Papa Jessawala) should serve til June 1939. Then take leave on full pay for 4 months. Then 2 years with half pay. In short your family joins me on 1st August 1938 provided the bungalow is sold, and you on 1st August 1939.

5. Don't worry about Mehru and Eruch's marriages. I've done the engagements and I'll be responsible for their marriages. Love and blessings to you and all your family.

Show this letter to everyone of your family. ,

MS Irani

The next letter is in Gujarati written as from Baba. Panchgani 30th May (1938)

Dear Gaimai,

I discussed all with Behramshaw and Eruch and everything is well settled. Behramshaw has promised to do whatever I have said, which has pleased me very much. Hence you give cooperation as much as possible in his work and be of help to him. Such is my wish. Be not afraid of anyone and do not worry about anything. Leave everything to Me and be carefree. And at the beginning of August all of you must come to Me and live with Me. All My love for self and to the dear ones of the family.

MS Irani

(He was taking the whole burden of the family on His head and asking the family not to worry.)

Now here is another little fragment of a letter. It is the 4th page of a long letter which Baba made Eruch write to Papa. (Jehangirji was Eruch's future father-in-law)

... Most probably Jehangirji will not object to this proposal so you need not worry at all. You must now be cheerful and happy. Baba knows your desire that

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you sincerely wish your children should stay with Baba and Baba will also see about your staying with Him. You need not worry about it at all. Remember well Baba can see through and through. He knows very well what is going on in your heart. Just now Baba has received your letter and also enclosed cheque for Rs500 only. With love from Baba.

Your loving son Eruch

P.S. Everything is alright. Do not worry send wire on receipt of this letter.

MS Irani

Another fragment of a letter: 5th page and last para. of a letter from Eruch to Papa:

... Everyone over here is OK. Masaji and the mandali have sent namaskars to you.

With love to you, yours lovingly Eruch

PS Today Baba is going to take me to His bungalow with the boys. (The bungalow is the probably the Irrigation bungalow in Ahmednagar where Baba and the women used to stay before upper Meherabad was completed.) There I will tell Mother all about it. She will indeed be extremely happy at the thought that Meherwan will meet her often by his staying in Nagar. Think of Baba always and Keep your promise that you will not cry and worry at all. Now there is no reason for you to worry. Let Baba do what whatever He wants to do. We know that He always does everything for one's good.

Eruch.

PS Further Baba said that by this arrangement none

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of His or yours plans will be upset. Shirinmasi and the family will have no hold over Meherwan only Baba will have hold over him. (This is some arrangement about Meherwan being kept at Shirinmai's in Akbar Press.) Because Baba will definitely make them understand that Meherwan will be kept there as a paying boarder. Baba wants your reply soon so He can arrange accordingly.

Eruch.

PPS. If in spite of this explanation you do not like the idea inform Me frankly so I will arrange for Nasik as previously settled.

MS Irani.

(Meherwan would have gone to Nasik with Dadi to the boarding school there.)

Another letter to Papa written by Adi. 16th August 1938.

Dear revered Beheramshaw,

I received your letter to me enclosed with your letter to Eruch. I gave that letter to Shri Baba to read. He read the same and after carefully considering all matters He has dictated the following. What you write about son Meherwan is absolutely true. This child is young and delicate. He frequently gets colds, and has worms. Baba wished to keep him in Nasik boarding school and still wishes to do so. But unlike here it feels like there will be none over there to treat that child like one's own and take care and keep him close all the while. After all a boarding school is a boarding school only. Dadi is old enough and quite healthy, and for him a boarding school is alright. In Meherwan's present condition it is not good to keep him in a boarding school. Hence it would be good if he stays in Nagar only. If he stays in Nagar he will be under Baba's own nazar. Eruch

will keep meeting him, Gaimai will keep meeting him, and all care will be taken of him like at home. Now where to keep him in Nagar so that he gets his education? At our place i.e. in my father's house there is no woman hence it is decided to keep at Satha's near Shirinmai. With her other children she will keep him like her own child. All expenses for his food clothing etc will be paid by Shri Baba to Shirinmai. So you need not go under any obligation of anyone. Because Meherwan will be at Shirinmai's place it is not that Eruch and Gaimai will go to meet him at Shirinmai's. But it will be Meherwan who will be brought frequently to Gaimai and Eruch. Now about his studies. Here the main language is Marathi, the English school here is very good and every time the matriculation results are 80% pass, hence there is no worry about the English language. One year we will keep this child with Shirinmai and give him private tuition at home then the teacher could give him good coaching in 4 subjects. The child is intelligent. Then from the 2nd year he could attend the English school here. How do you feel about this? Isn't it good? This is how Baba would like it and I too feel it to be a good arrangement. One's own child to be under one's own mother makes quite a difference to keeping it in a Boarding school. Hence if you please make known your opinion in the matter it will be nice. 1st Aug will be fine. Please do not worry about anything. Shri Baba sends His love and blessings. Here all are well.

Yours Adi. (Counter-signed) MS Irani.

To what lengths Beloved Baba had to go to see to all the details. That was His way of dealing with everyone, to look into the minutest details, and not to leave it to anyone else.

Now here is another letter from Meherabad from Baba Himself. Ahmednagar, 20th of August 1938.

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My dear Behramshaw,

I've read your letter of the 18th instant and I have decided as follows. As everything is now left to Me I will do the best for the boys. Dadi will now be sent to Bombay near his mother and for his expenses I'll be sending 30 Rs per month for 1 year and then on seeing the situation I will decide to stop or continue. This would be cheaper than if Dadi were to be sent to Nasik where the monthly expenses would have exceeded 50 Rs. P.M. (this little thing shows how Baba was so practical about expenses too) As for Meherwan he will stay at Akbar Press near Shirinmasi. He will be taught only English by private teacher for one year and then sent to Nasik. During his stay in Ahmednagar I will be frequently seeing him and talking to him and taking him to his mother. There is no question of obligation as I will be paying all Meherwan's expenses for education, meats etc. After one year Meherwan will surely get alright and will have perfect health. Then he will be sent to Nasik as a boarder. So his joyot ceremony will be completed during his stay in Ahmednagar. Hope you will not worry unnecessarily as you say that you have left everything to Me.

Love MS Irani

(Another letter from Baba.)

* * * * *

Early Correspondence

My dear Behramshaw,

I received all your letters. You ask Me to forgive you but I always forgive all because I love all. I find it difficult to explain things to you because you never make up your mind one way or the other, and the result is you yourself are worried and upset, your family suffers and I become displeased. That is why I don't write to you. You may rest assured of My love to you. I know all your feelings and reactions and would like you NOT to worry. Leave everything to Me. I will write later on details of My coming to Nagpur.

Love to you all (signed) MS Irani.

(Because Papa was alone at Nagpur he would worry about the family, and so after his working hours he would sit and brood over it, and get all sorts of conflicting thoughts and so scribble off notes to Baba every now and then.)

Here is another letter from Baba dated 4th Aug 1938

Dear Behramshaw,

Received your letter and noted about Abu Kali. I've sent Dadi to his mother at Bombay. I intend to keep Meherwan with the Satha family in a day or two. Glad you've left everything to Me, and rest assured you won't repent. Are you keeping your promise to Me not to worry? All your dear ones are well here

Early Correspondence

and send their love.

Love MS Irani

At some time during 1939, Meherwan wrote to Baba, and after Baba had dropped the body, Eruch found it and Baba's reply in the 1939 correspondence file. There is no date or place on the letters.

My Dearest and Beloved Shri Baba,

dear Baba I feel so lonely without you as there is no-one to play marbles with me. I think of my Baba and tell Mama to take me to you. Dear Baba won't you call us quick, please do so.

Your loving Meherwan

Baba's reply is as follows:

My dear Meherwan,

I have just received your sweet letter along with Mama's cover and I am happy to note what you have written. My love and blessings to you and all at home.

MS Irani

In sending these letters, Eruch also added two sayings **of** Baba's which He appears to have given in July 1940 in Ahmednagar.

1 Spiritual path is not about gaining counter. The Self gives to the self and the self receives from the Self selflessly.

2 Love gives and never asks, so why want to be loved at all?

Letter from Jubulpur 2nd Jan 1939

My dear Papa,

I hope by now you have reached Nagpur safely by

Baba's dear Grace. Banu must have met her mother by now (Banu was one of her friends in Nagpur) According to Baba's instructions I will start on 10th Jan 1939 with Mama Manu, Meheru and Meherwan for Nagpur. Now Baba has need to inform you that you must not purchase anything new. Whatever you have, that is quite sufficient for them. Mind it is Baba's order. You must not buy anything new because only for 6 months you all have to stay in Nagpur. All the remaining things of theirs will remain in Meherabad quite safe. As it is they have started for a tour of 6 months. They have sufficient clothing with them. You need not worry about their needs. From next month you start giving them Rs 200 only and you will see that Mama will be able to manage the whole household affairs. You simply pay the rent of the house and keep aloof. The rest Mama will look after.

Baba also gave certain orders to be carried out by Mama, and I'm sure she will sincerely carry them out. I hope you will also do your best as you are doing now to carry out all the orders of Baba to the very letter. Dear Papa do your best to make all of them happy for the little time they are staying with you. Make your moods suitable for their happiness which you are so much after giving them. I'm sure that you will do your utmost to be in best of terms with them. Do not be planning all the time for their comforts by purchasing new things for them. Their happiness and comforts lie in finding you happy and jolly. If you want them to be and remain happy then you make yourself cheerful and gay. This is the sum and substance of the whole thing which has been unnecessarily allowed to increase and expand. The best way to always remain cheerful and gay as a bird is to do according to Baba's instructions. He who sees the past and the future will always guide

Early Correspondence

us better than any man on earth. Obey Him and be cheerful. Here all are in the best of health. Baba most probably leaves Jubulpur on the 15th inst. Remind me to all dearest ones at home Adi and Bapu.

With love and blessings from Beloved Baba

I remain your loving son Eruch (countersigned) MS Irani

Baba would tell him certain things to write and then Eruch would write the rest and then read it to Baba in case Baba had any corrections to make. Otherwise He would call for the letter and countersign it. Any little letter had to be shown to Baba and any incoming letters Baba would first see before anyone else. Even Papa kept the details of the marketing that he would do and Baba would initial each page and check each item. This shows what detail Baba would go to in everyday life, and His permission had to be obtained before purchasing every little item. Mani also mentions in her talks how even for a little item to be bought Baba's permission had to be obtained. Like one time when Norina asked for a little tin of shoe polish, and Baba said, 'But you just had a tin - are you applying it on your toast?! Eating it or what?!' Baba had remembered a purchase of shoe polish some time back.

This is a letter written by Eruch. 25th Jan 1939 from Agra. (Written during the Blue Bus journeys, and it seems that He had sent the family back to Nagpur at that time. Papa rented a small but nice cottage and they were there for a few months.)

My dear Mama,

Baba has read your loving but distressful letter and He tells me to inform you all that He knows every little thing that happens daily. Baba wanted you to come here and see all the places like Agra and Mathura etc if possible with Papa. But as written by

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you in your last letter Papa does not want to come and does not want to send you all. So let his wish be done. When Papa is really willing to resign from his job, he will bring you all of his own accord. As Papa is not happy to send you all, then Baba will not send me to bring you all from Nagpur. Dear Mama you must not worry about these things. Baba, as you know very well, knows what is happening in the whole world every moment. Today a wire is sent to Baba's mother as to whether she is willing to go to Nagpur or not. (It seems that Baba's mother had expressed a wish to visit the family) If she is willing then Jalbhai will bring her to Nagpur. If she does not want to go then it is her wish. Wait for her decision. Baba heard your request that Papa should have faith and love. He will get them in due time. Show him this letter. Baba will come to Nagpur with all.

Love and blessings to you, Papa, Manu, Meheru and Meherwan from Baba.

Your loving son Eruch

PS If Shirinmai does not come and if Papa can get leave for 7 days you all can come with Papa to Agra and see it along with Mathura and go back and if not possible don't worry. Baba is with you and near you.

(and countersigned right across the letter) MS Irani

Another letter from Jubulpur - 6th April 1939

My dear Papa,

your letter to Baba gave information that it is extremely hot at Nagpur. 115 degrees must indeed be unbearable. Now Baba wants to inform you that the lectures at Nagpur will be postponed. owing to the extreme heat and secondly the halls where the Westerners were to lecture could not be had.

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Another disadvantage is that due to the summer vacations the principal men of Nagpur may not be present. Subsequently Baba desires that the lectures be postponed for the present. (Quite a series of lectures had been arranged in various places) Baba most probably will leave Jubulpur with all the mandali by the 15th or the 20th May 1939 for Ahmednagar, and back in Jubulpur by the beginning of July with all Meherabad mandali. Nothing has yet been decided finally. The meeting at Mandla on the 12th holds good. Baba expects you to be present on the 12th May at Mandla for the meeting. Do wire as to Baba's instructions.

*With Love and blessings from Baba,
your lovingly Eruch (countersigned) MS Irani*

Another letter from Jubulpur - 20th April 1939.

My dear Papa,

Your loving letters of the 15th as well as of the 18th were received. Baba was much pleased to read them through. One railway receipt enclosed was also received together with a letter of Shirinmasi. Baba has also noted your two programs. I hope you are taking all precautions to guard against the heat. Really it must be terrible over there. Anyway this is your last summer of Nagpur, so cheer-up with that thought. All of us are in the best of health. Baba will be observing fast from tomorrow onwards. Yesterday Kaka returned from Bombay. Most probably Gulamasi will be leaving Jubulpur tomorrow for Bombay. The centre work of Jubulpur is progressing well. Nothing definite as yet.

With love and blessings from Baba.

Your loving son Eruch. (countersigned) Baba

This is a letter from Lonavla 24th May 1939

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My dear Papa,

This is our last day in Lonavla. Tomorrow we all leave for Meherabad. After we left Nagpur we passed through etc and took a halt in Aurangabad. Khuldabad guest house was reserved for us, and we all had a very delightful stay with all comforts at our disposal. We all saw the caves and they took one whole day to see. We received letters from Mama. They are all at Jubulpur passing their days peacefully awaiting Baba's return. You must too be waiting for the date when you will be getting rid of your laborious routine. Hope you all in Nagpur are in the best of health. Baba sends His love and blessings to you, Dinamai, Adi, Freni and Banu, and Bapu. .

Yours lovingly Eruch

PS I will come to Nagpur by the beginning of June to dispose of all furniture.

Eruch (countersigned) MS Irani

(Papa continued work until he got the pension which was for life.)

Another letter which was probably written by Mani as dictated by Baba: (The date 2nd June '39 Meherabad written in Papa's handwriting.)

Dear Behramshaw,

I received your letter and Eruch's letter. I am enclosing a copy of My reply to Eruch. You like My mother are always in the habit of worrying when there is nothing to worry about. I promised everything you asked and will keep them. You ought to be the happiest of men knowing My love for you and yours. Well soon you will come and we will see how you don't listen.

Love MS Irani

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Another letter written by Mani without date but entered by Papa as the 4th June 1939.

Dear Behramshaw,

Received your sweet and loving letter and accordingly I wrote to Jal not to find a separate house for Gai and the family and that they should all stay for the present at his house. As I sent a message to you through Eruch you should send everything to Jubulpur by the 10th of July and join Me at Meherabad on July 10th Bring your bedding and trunk of clothes and a few necessities. After you come here I will tell you the full program in detail.

Love MS Irani

Here is a letter from Bangalore. The Links. 16th March 1940

Eruch writing to Papa.

My dear Papa,

We all have noted that you, Pendu and Homi reached Mandla safely and smoothly arranging the things at Mandla. Here we are making haste to go out of Bangalore as soon as possible, because pamphlets and notices have been distributed to the public that smallpox is spreading fast and public are advised to take precautionary measures. Consequently Baba with all the ladies will start on a tour from the 1st of April. Meherwan will also accompany them. School advised us that it would be better if weak boys go out for a change soon. The epidemic would not tell upon their health. Naturally Meherwan is free from the 1st of April as the Principal has sanctioned leave. We have paid private tuition fees till May end. Further your car was taken by me to the garage and the Works Manager has promised to give me the car on the 20th March completing all the necessary repairs. Jal Kerawala left Bangalore yesterday for Chanda and Savak Kotwala and all his family has come to stay

with Baba permanently. They came yesterday. Within a couple of days Adi and I will go in search of a good house and the situation will be nearer the school which will later on facilitate Meherwan greatly. I'm sure you are not worrying as you have promised. You leave everything to Baba and see how comfortable and light you feel. Always think of Baba whether you are successful or unsuccessful in the work you take in your hands, thinking it is He who has brought the result either way. Don't forget your promise to Baba that you'll always be happy. Let there be no worries except the worry of fulfilling this promise of yours. Then see how Baba in turn fulfils all the promises He has made to the very letter.

Your loving son Eruch (and countersigned boldly - right across the sheet by) Baba

(Eventually Baba got the better of Papa with His infinite patience.)
Bangalore 21st March 1940.

My dear Papa,

Baba showed me your letters and telegrams and am glad to learn the facts from them. In short everything turned out as Baba told you before leaving for Mandla. It is really surprising to us all here how the public showed such enthusiasm and how Jodri was immensely happy at the idea of building the cottage at Mandla on his land. So quick and neat a change in the manners of the public is always Baba's way of working. Here is very hot and there is no trace of rain yet. I learn from your letter Mandla is cool and pleasant. The mosquitoes here take delight in troubling the people in Bangalore. They even beat Jubulpur out and out in their silly tricks in the night. Today is ? (the New Year of the Zoroastrians), and we all ate pulla. (It is always 21st March each year). Changi is sure that you, Pendu

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and Homi will go to Jubulpur and enjoy the day by visiting Marble Rocks etc. (these are pure marble and they glisten in the moonlight and also in daytime you can go and see the beauty of the place. They are all along the river. We went in the boat along with Baba.) Your car will come from the garage on the 25th Mr.(Naidu?) is working hard on it. Everything else here is as usual. Remind me to Pendu and Homi.

*With Love and blessings from dear Baba, yours lovingly
Eruch. (Countersigned) MS Irani*

(The car was a sturdy late model German car - a '39 model and top car of the time, and Baba used it.)

The following is a part of a letter from Eruch to Papa: ,

... It is really surprising to note that the amount gathered from the auction of mangoes was only 64. Most probably that must be owing to the bad crop in that district. You all have occupied a rented house of 15Rs which Baba has also taken note of. You three should be extremely careful about your health as you all have to do work in the heat of April and May. You need not fear about your diabetes. You do regularly without fail what Baba has ordered you to do and leave everything to Him. He is the Doctor of Doctors. Baba is really pleased to note that you are following the same diet as He had ordered you. Baba sends His love to you, Pendu and Homi.

*Yours lovingly Eruch. (countersigned boldly again by)
Baba*

(He would at times dictate on the board, and the mandali would write it down - other times He would give points and the mandali would compose the letter.)

This is a letter written by Meherwan's sister Mehru from Karwar 5th April (a coastal quiet village at the time) to Papa.

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My dear Papa,

Hope you must have received my last letter to you from Bangalore. Today I will write to you about our tour. On the 1st of April we took halt at (?) The next day we went to Shivagar. We stayed there for 1 night and from there we went to Jog Falls. After we finished visiting Jog Falls we went on to Karwar. These falls are very beautiful and we also saw them at night because special fires are lit and then thrown down from the top of the mountain to show us the falls as soon as we arrived. We had to cross a small river to the rest house and this we did at 10 p.m. The next morning we again crossed the river and came to Karwar. But we also crossed another river which is mixed with the ocean waters some 25 miles before we came here. Our hotel over here is situated in front of the Indian ocean. A nice cool breeze blows all day long. Tomorrow at 7 a.m. we will go boating in the ocean. Ever since we are on tour we are healthy and happy. Meherwan too is in good health. In a day or two we will go to Goa. Hope you are keeping good health by dear Baba's Grace.

With love from Baba and all of us

Your loving daughter Mehru. (countersigned) MS Irani

Then Manu was asked to write by Baba to Papa. No one could write unless He asked them to do so. 9th April 1940 Karwar.

My dear Father,

I hope you must be in the best of health as we are the same and enjoying the trip very much. By now we have reached Karwar. The place where we have halted is a very beautiful spot. The hotel in which we are staying is just opposite the sea. So it is quite cool. Dear Baba also liked it very much. We have also seen the Jog Falls. Really they were marvellous

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especially the beautiful scenery of lovely mountains and trees all round them. I think it was really worth seeing. Today we had a good time with dear Baba on the beach. Dear Baba intends staying here until the day after and then we go for Goa. Dear Papa, don't worry about us or Meherwan for we are all enjoying the trip very much. I hope your building work must be going on well. Now no more news to pen. Mehru and Mama will give you the rest of the news, so I close.

Your loving daughter Mani (countersigned) MS Irani

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Jal Kerawala was a very close lover of Beloved Baba, and he was also a close family friend. When he died Baba wrote a letter to the family. Date 9/10/1952 Pimpalgaon.

Dear Meherwan,

You are not to worry about anything. I will soon decide upon your future and personally tell you about it at the end of this month. Tell Mother she loves Me wholeheartedly so she must bow down to My Will. Tell her that Jal is not dead but alive and happy with Me in My Love. Reply to this letter.

Love to you all Baba.

This is the reply that Meherwan wrote to Baba. Poona 10th October 1952.

Dearest Baba

We received Your letter and those few lines so full of love have sufficed to give us inexpressible peace and happiness. It is because You have asked me to reply that I feel I must write this. Yet I think it is useless to attempt to put down all that surges within the heart. Your infinite love for us alone has been

responsible for all that has happened and will happen. What makes us feel most is that we cannot love You as truly and as wholeheartedly. Indeed who can except You Yourself? Dear Jal has indeed become the happiest of all in that he has finally arrived at the Source of all happiness which is You. And ignorance alone is responsible for any grief on the occasion of this most happy event. I am sure Mama would be ready to sacrifice her all to the One she loves most. She no longer feels any hesitation to accept what You have willed. Dearest Baba what I must say is that the initial shock was very great. She felt desperately sad at not being with him in his time of agony and pain. Her only solace is that You were there as You have always been with him throughout. But perhaps he could not see You and was very eager to do so when he was last in Bombay. (He had come to Bombay for consultations about his heart. He asked Baba for permission to see Him but Baba said to return straight to Nagpur and on the way he had the heart attack and died on the way to hospital.) However Your love has seen to everything, and we are happy in the conviction that now his heart's desire is forever fulfilled and he sees You more intensely than we here could ever hope to do. Truly all this makes us feel that You and You alone can know how fortunate one is to come into contact with You or even to be born in this world in Your time. Dearest Baba that I should have the courage to write all this beats me. I feel it is You alone who is writing all this through me and it is You alone who could appreciate its true worth. Your decision about my future is a matter of Your choice and convenience. Be it as You will. Only I pray that I have the strength and love to obey You to the last letter and until my last breath. With all the love and namaskars of all of us to our most Beloved.

Your very own Meherwan.

This from Eruch 1955 and Baba is in Satara. 1st May 1955

My dear Meherwan,

after the meeting of the 25th I hope you and others reached your respective destinations safely. (It seems he is referring to a meeting which was held in Satara probably on the 25th April) Did Sarosh and Savak drop Baba's bedding, petrol tin and my clothes at Bindra House? Baba entered into seclusion on 1st May at about 8 p.m. At present He is keeping fine and looks bright. Now as I have to attend on Him for about 9 hours in the day, I get very little time for correspondence. I do trust that you all are keeping fit. Kishan Singh left Satara on the 2nd and he had dropped a letter to Papa to send someone with the lockets etc. to railway station to hand them over to him personally. Hope Papa met him at the station. Did you all secure any customer for the car? (Sam's car) Who uses the car now days? How are Dadi and Banumasi for the present? It must be less hot at Ganeshkind than Poona proper. Baba gave us all fast for 24 hours on April 30th. But we had tea thrice during that fast. Also we all kept awake with Baba on 30th and 31st May night, and again on the night 1st May. (They were awake continuously for 3 days and 2 nights). We were all with Baba at Jal Bungalow on 1st May night till 12:15 and then leaving Baba there to continue His seclusion, we went to our bungalow Rosewood. It is long since I have not written to Sam. One of these days I shall write to him all details. Hope you all received the latest circular No. 25 about Satara meeting. Accordingly on 27th April Baba asked all mandali individually whether each one had decided to hold fast to His daaman. All said the same thing that they would try their best. Consequently at

present we are all living with Baba and there is no vacancy as yet as suggested by Deshmukh. (Deshmukh wanted to stay with Baba as one of the mandali and Baba said 'there is no room here unless one of the mandali decides to leave My daaman and go and a vacancy is created. Then I will call you.') On 1st May night before Baba commenced His period of seclusion He asked me to write to you saying He loves you very much, that you were so quiet during the meeting, that, in spite of His love for you, you managed to escape His notice, and that He felt very much as to how He could miss patting His Meherwan, even when he was so near Him. Baba had asked me to write to you all this and to write to you also that must not feel Baba was reserved with you. He said that He was busy with other things and forgot all the time that His Meherwan was near Him. Then I told Baba that there was no need to write to Meherwan and he would never mind all this and that You Baba had exchanged a few words with him Meherwan. I said that Meherwan would not feel anything of the kind. But Baba said although Meherwan would not feel, yet He felt very much for Meherwan. Therefore I should write when I found time to. do so. Hence this letter. Also Baba wanted to know before He entered into seclusion whether you convey all details of the meeting to all at Bindra House and especially to dear Papa. Here we are having drizzling rain occasionally in the evenings and the temperature falls down towards evening.

With love to you all, yours lovingly Eruch

(Meherwan commented after giving this letter, that he does not remember now any thoughts and feelings he may have had to prompt Baba to direct such a message. But it certainly stirred the heart when He did so, including concern that He

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was thus disturbed in His seclusion. Now after all these years it, and indeed all the correspondence between Beloved and the family, reawakens much joyful and thoughtful memories.)

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Chapter 4

Roshan Kerawala - Her Story

Roshan Kerawala (nee. Satha) was born 1937, the fourth and last child of Homi and Piroja Satha. The mother was from a staunch Zoroastrian family in Nagpur, and although all in the family knew of Beloved Baba, it wasn't until the time of Roshan's wedding that many of them met Him, except for one uncle who, as the projectionist in Sarosh's picture theatre, had had contact with Baba over a number of years prior to the wedding. Occasionally after closing the theatre around midnight, he was then required to open it again for a 5 a.m. showing when Baba would at times ask for it. He was very unhappy over these early showings, complaining, 'What sort of a man is this who wants to see films at such an early hour?!' He had no respect for Baba.

When Roshan's maternal grandmother came before Baba at the time of the wedding, He asked why she had not come to see Him so many years ago. She replied that she had not realised how nice He was, and Baba was very amused. She was a very outspoken and critical person even when with Baba, and she would complain about such things as government policies especially the prohibition on liquor, and He would chuckle and enjoy the conversation. He commented that she had a good heart.

There is also an interesting story involving that grandmother and one of Meher Baba's Perfect Masters Tajuddin Baba. Tajuddin Baba would frequently come to the family home in Nagpur and sit on the front step. The grandmother regarded Him merely as a fakir, had no patience with Him and did

everything she could to shoo Him away. But He took no notice of her, would stay as long as He wished, and then depart. He did not care what she thought or said, and He never asked for anything.

In those days there was a plague, carried by rats, in Nagpur, and the grandmother's young son had it and according to the doctor, would not survive the day. It was the height of summer in Nagpur, so the boy was put in the coolest room of the house, and she went about her duties in the kitchen at the rear of the house. That day Tajuddin Baba walked straight into the house and into the boy's room without a word or gesture to anyone. He picked up the boy and pressed His two thumbs on his tonsils so hard that they reversed their position. He immediately held him upside down, pounded him vigorously on the back, and all the mucous in the system poured out of his mouth and nose. The boy gave a loud cry, and his mother rushed into the room. Tajuddin Baba told her to get clean clothes, sheets and wood ash from the stove, and said that the boy would not die. He then cleaned the boy Himself, and after this was done, the boy slept. The boy lived to 75 years of age, and a month or so before his death he told Roshan of the incident. Roshan's grandmother no doubt thanked Tajuddin, and thereafter she did gain some faith in Him, treating Him with respect, and accepting His presence when He sat at the front of the house.

When Roshan was nine months old, her mother and her aunt, Banumasi, with Roshan's brother and two sisters, came to see Baba. He was staying at the time with the Dadachanji family in Dadar, an area of Bombay. Baba took Roshan on His lap, cuddled and kissed her, and then gave her back into the arms of Banumasi, not her mother. This proved in time significant because her mother died when she was five years of age, and Banumasi, with her sisters Shirinmai and Gaimai, helped in raising the child, and she also in time became her mother-in-law.

Roshan's father Homi, was one of the four from the Satha

family who first had contact with Baba in 1923. He described to Roshan how they saw Baba sitting under a tree by the side of the road to the village of Arangaon. He was singing, and Horni said how He rose so naturally to greet them, and how they all felt very drawn to Him, although at that stage they had no awareness of His spiritual status. During the course of the conversation Baba asked how many were in the family, and when He was told 'five brothers and four sisters' He said, 'No, there are six brothers - I am the sixth brother.' Thereafter Baba frequently visited their home, going straight to the pantry for food if He felt hungry, and being in every way a natural part of the family.

Homi was a locomotive driver with the Indian railways, B.B.&C.I. and he became the senior engineer on such routes as Bombay to Delhi. It is recorded that he was so skilled and meticulous in his duties, that people would set their clocks by his departures and arrivals. He married Piroja, and they lived in Bombay opposite the Dadachanji family. Although it appeared that both parents were very healthy, their first three children developed muscular distrophy all by the age of seven which left them increasingly crippled, and resulted in fairly early deaths. Then, when the mother died in 1942, Homi was left with the three crippled children and Roshan only five years of age.

The family was in Bombay at the time with the grandmother, and the mother died there from the loss of blood after some teeth extractions. The day before she died, an interesting incident occurred. A very old lady came to the door, and asked the grandmother for something - what is not remembered now. The grandmother, distraught with her daughter's condition, gave her nothing and drove her away. As the old woman departed, she said, 'Today is your last day. Your good days are now finished.' Hearing the voices Homi came to the door, saying she should be given something, but the old woman could not be found. Homi, who was earning very good money in the railways, was supporting the grandmother's household as well as his own, and so when he

had to resign following his wife's death, the grandmother's days of comfort and ease were indeed over.

In that same year, 1942, Homi's sister Shirinmai's husband died, and she was left with seven children and very little money. Again in the same period, one of Homi's brothers lost his wife, leaving him with one son, Dorab. So Homi resigned from his job, returned from Bombay to Ahmednagar, and he and his brother supported Shirinmai financially in caring for all the children - a total of twelve.

On his return to Ahmednagar and the family home, Akbar Press, in 1943 Homi took Roshan to Meherabad to see Baba, Roshan remembers going in a tonga, and seeing Beloved Baba in the Rahuri cabin. He was seated on a divan and resting against cushions, and in the cabin was the very large painting of Him by Rano. Roshan looked from One to the other, not understanding why the two should be there. Baba took Roshan on His lap, and assured her father that this child of his would not get muscular dystrophy. He said, 'I. will take care of her, you should not worry; but you are not to take her to any physician nor to any saint or shrine. Each day rub her body with some oil'. Then He sent Homi to Padri for lunch saying that He would take Roshan up the Hill to see Gaimai and the other women.

Roshan said, 'Baba took me by the hand, but I was a frail child, five years of age, and by the time we had reached the railway line, I was already panting and tired. I looked up the hill, and it seemed so far to the top. I said to Baba that I would not be able to climb the mountain. Baba just nodded, and very quickly He and Roshan went across the tracks and Baba squatted down, 'gesturing to me to get on His shoulders. He then put my hands on His head, and gestured that I was to get off immediately if I saw someone up the Hill. You know - when Beloved Baba wants you to understand something, spoken words are not necessary. I cannot explain it, but my experience is that He puts into your mind-heart what He wants you to know. Anyway, Baba carried me most of

the way, until I saw a very fat lady sitting at the base of the water tank outside the gate. I learnt later that it was Kharmanmasi, a sweet lady intensely devoted to Baba. When Baba put me down I found all my tiredness had completely gone.

We went to Mehera and Mani in the East room, and He assured them that He had given His promise to my father that He would look after me. I remember that Kitty was near the door. and when Baba clapped, she came in. He told her to take me to Gaimai in the kitchen. It was her day to cook for the women, and after hugging me, Gaimai gave me plain rice, dahl and spinach. It was the most delicious food I have ever had in my life, and I still have the taste when I think of it. After eating, I was sent back to the room and Baba said to Kitty, 'Do they not have something sweet for this child?' Kitty replied that there was peanut toffee, and so I was given some.

Then Baba took me down the Hill, and I said that I could now run with Him. When we arrived at lower Meherabad, Baba asked me if I missed my mother, and I said I hardly remember her, and that now He was my mother, He was everything to me. Baba called me close and gave me an embrace, and that embrace I can never forget. It was as though He was giving energy from His heart to my heart. Then we returned home.'

* * * * *

For the next seven years Roshan lived in the Satha family home Akbar Press. It was originally a cotton-pressing mill, and one of the Satha brothers, Pilloo Kaka, managed the mill for the Moslem owners. With the partition of India, the Moslems departed for Pakistan and sold the entire property to the eldest brother, Meherji, who had earlier returned from Shanghai a very rich man. He had no children and he continued to take care of most of the finances of the property. Naosherwan, another of the brothers, told Roshan that once

in the early years Upsani Maharaj came to Akbar Press, Babajan came also from Poona in a tonga and Meher Baba joined them there. First they sat under a tree in the garden, and then the three walked the entire circumference of the property, exactly one mile.

A year or so after coming to Akbar Press, a very famous actor/singer from Bombay visited Ahmednagar and stayed with the Satha family. While there he heard Roshan singing and he said to Homi, 'If you give this child to me, I will make her in time an outstanding actress.' This would have meant wealth apart from other benefits, and Homi was tempted. He wrote accordingly to Baba, who replied, 'Do not make such a stupid suggestion ever again.' She did continue to study singing, and in her early teens entered a competition in Bombay. She won, and the organisers of the competition told her to ask her parents if she could stay with teachers and become a background singer in films. This was conveyed to Baba, and He emphatically said 'No'.

In Ahmednagar Roshan's uncle Naosherwan ran a school for orphans, and Beloved Baba often came to bathe and feed the children. Until 1950 when she went to Bombay, Roshan attended this school. She rose at 4 a.m. and would help her brother and sisters to sit on potties, and after cleaning the potties, she prepared breakfast of tea and chapatis for them. She then had her own breakfast, and later walked to school some distance away. This she did four times a day, returning home from school in the afternoon to feed them and care for them, and then back to school. There was insufficient money for her to have a bicycle. She, with the other children, was taught how to cook and do household duties, but their schooling only went to the 7th standard with Marathi the only language taught.

Later Roshan became very conscious of not knowing English, as so many of the family around her did, and she even at one time spoke to Baba expressing her wish to be able to speak English. Baba just nodded, and did not comment. But later

after marriage, with her children learning English at school, she learnt with them at home, playing spelling games and poetry games. Up to that time, she had never heard or read storybooks, only books on the Saints and spirituality. Now she began to read storybooks with her children and thoroughly enjoyed the fun of learning a new language and playing at the same time with her children. Sam, her husband, was away on his sea duties for long periods, and she said how she and the two children became like three children in the house.

Another of Roshan's duties when she lived at Akbar Press, was to collect the eggs of the 500 chickens each morning. She had little time for playing but occasionally she flew kites with her brother who, although crippled, was able for some years to hold the kite aloft a certain distance. They made the simple kites themselves. Once when they were flying a kite, Baba unexpectedly came, and Roshan said to her brother to bring it down. But Baba had seen them and gestured to stay. He then, holding her brother's hands, let the kite fly higher and higher. But Roshan had forgotten to tie the string to the roll and suddenly the kite flew away into the heavens. Baba was very happy, obviously enjoying the play, and they all had a good laugh. Occasionally too she would be given a rupee, and then she and her brother and sisters would have a party with lemonade and goodies.

Many times during those years Baba took Roshan with Him to Poona in the car to see Gaimai and the Jessawala family. Roshan spoke very lovingly of Gaimai. She said that Gaimai was such a loving and understanding mother to her, that she did not miss her own mother. She would listen patiently and openly to Roshan at all times, and advise so sensibly on what to do or not do. She was like a rock in all calamities, and would go out of her way to help, but advising Roshan not to let her left hand know of the service the right hand was giving to others.

Gaimai was an excellent cook, no doubt helped by the fact that she constantly repeated Baba's name almost inaudibly

as she cooked. In her cooking she had a habit of putting a pinch of sugar into every dish without exception, and this gave rise to an endearing anecdote. She was the cook for Baba and the women mandali when she and the family first joined Baba in 1938, and because of this she saw little of Baba. The women became aware of the sugar that she put in every food, and complained to Baba that this was not good for the health, especially His health. Baba used this complaint as an excuse to call Gaimai to Him. With all the women there He spoke sternly to Gaimai, 'Is it true that you put some sugar in all the food? Do you want to give Me diabetes?! Are you trying to kill Me?!' and He continued in this strain for quite some time. Gaimai repeatedly and tearfully expressed her concern with His well-being, and that she would not put sugar in the food in the future. Baba eventually stopped, and dismissed all except Gaimai. After the women had gone, He embraced Gaimai, and said how He liked her food, and to continue cooking just as she always had, her pinches of sugar included!

The four Satha sisters, Gulamasi, Shirinmai, Gaimai and Banumasi were very close to each other, united not only by blood, but also very much by their mutual love for Beloved Baba. Sam recalls hearing of an occasion when Baba called for Gaimai to join Him on the verandah of Bindra House. He gestured to four sparrows playing amongst the bushes nearby, commenting how happily they were playing together like a loving, united family. After a little time two of the birds flew, leaving the other two there. Baba gestured to Gaimai to remember this scene. In 1971, both older sisters, Gulamasi and Shirinmai died, leaving the other two, and Gaimai remembered that scene of the four birds with Baba.

Roshan also spoke lovingly of Papa, Eruch's father. She said he was very stern, very much the man of the house, a strict inflexible taskmaster, but also very loving inside. He was extremely practical and everything he did was done to perfection. In the early years he was the first to make Baba buttons, rings, key-rings etc and even after many years these

would remain in first-class condition. In like manner he would patiently teach Roshan as she was growing up, saying for example, 'No, child, you store things in such a way that even if you cannot see, you can immediately find what you seek'. He arose at 3 a.m. each morning, and proceeded to awaken the whole house with the repetition of his prayers. He had a nice voice, but a loud one. He would then get his own morning tea.

He was particularly happy when Roshan gave birth to baby Mehera. He was convinced that she was his daughter Mehru reborn after dying some eight years earlier. He was delighted to sit by her side as she slept, and was constantly finding little toys for her. So happy was he with this conviction that Baba did not contradict him, but saying to the others of the family that she was in fact His very close lover, Jal Kerawala, returned.

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During those early years, Baba would every so often come to Akbar Press. There were very few cars in Ahmednagar in those days, only 2 or 3, and so all the children would run to greet Baba when they heard the horn of Baba's car. Sometimes He would stop and cuddle and play with the children; sometimes He would walk straight into the house, perhaps into the kitchen, and look into the pots to see what was cooking. He might then say, 'On My return I am coming for lunch.' When He did so, He would walk into the house holding Roshan's hand. She then took Him to the washbasin, and poured water over His hands as He washed them. Once whilst doing this she was distracted and continued to pour water beyond His need. Baba admonished her, gesturing on all the great work He had to do to bring water to the earth, and He went through the whole cycle of nature, finishing with, 'So never waste water.'

When Homi had retired from the railways in 1942, he had received a pension of Rs. 42,000, which was a good amount

in those days. He invested the money in the People's Insurance Company in Bombay, and received a monthly interest amount sufficient for their needs. In 1947 with partition of India, the company being Moslem owned, packed up and went to Pakistan, telling Homi that if he wanted money he would have to come there. Thus he lost all his money. Around this time Beloved Baba called Homi and Roshan to see Him at Meherazad, and sent Sarosh with the car to bring them.

Homi was still untying his shoe-laces at the doorway of Mandali Hall, when he heard Baba say through one of the mandali, 'Today Homi has won, and I have lost.' Homi was shocked, and hurriedly came in and exclaimed, 'Baba, why are You saying that to me?! If I have done something wrong, please forgive me.' Baba assured him that he had done nothing wrong, but repeated what He had said first. Then He went on, 'See, I took away your young wife, and you did not complain to Me. I gave you three crippled children and you did not complain to Me. Now I have taken away all your money, and you have four children still to care for. You have nothing - so what will you do?' 'Baba, I have always felt in my heart that all these things belong to You. I know You will never let me down, and that You will provide us with whatever is necessary.'

Then Beloved Baba turned to Sarosh, who was sitting under the window where Eruch sat for so many years, 'You have a big business. From tomorrow Homi will work for you, and you will pay him Rs.150 per month. (This was the sum that Homi had been receiving from his retirement fund). He is a most honest man, and will take good care of your business.' Homi began working for Sarosh accordingly, leaving the house at 7 a.m. and returning at 6 p.m.

In 1950, Roshan went to Bombay to attend the wedding of one of her maternal uncles. She stayed with her maternal grandmother, and Homi wrote to her asking that Roshan be sent to a school for Parsi women to learn some skills useful in

life. He pointed out that she had not received a good education in Nagar. The Principal of the school that Roshan subsequently attended noted that Roshan had a natural aptitude for sewing and needlework, and enrolled her in a Diploma course covering all aspects of dress design and manufacture. Roshan knew only the Marathi language, and so the Principal also taught her the basic English, which was necessary for the course, but charged nothing for doing this. It was a five-year course and Roshan successfully completed it.

During those years Baba would at times ask Nariman or Meherji to come to Him, or would ask that the car be sent for His use. When this occurred He would arrange for Roshan to be in the car. She would then see Baba wherever He was, stay over-night at either Akbar Press or Bindra House, and then return to Bombay.

At one time Sam Kerawala and Meherwan Jessawala took Roshan to see the Saint Kammu Baba who had come to the Perfect Master Sai Baba at the age of seven years, and had worked for Him for many years. Kammu Baba was, according to Roshan, a very sweet man whom one just felt was very spiritual. The young men asked Roshan to write to Baba of their visit to Kammu Baba. She did so, and this began her involvement as courier in correspondence between Beloved Baba and Kammu Baba over the five years she was in Bombay. She would go to see Kammu Baba in the afternoon, and as she did so she would pass Nargis Dadachanji's house, and if there was a letter from Beloved Baba then Nargis would clap, and Roshan would collect it. She always had an inland postcard with her when she visited Kammu Baba, and she would write on the spot whatever he wished to say to Baba. She received no pocket money from her granny or her uncles, and Nargis gave her the train fare needed to go to Kammu Baba.

Once as Roshan walked to the train station, she noticed two big boys following her. She was about fifteen at the time, and

with little traffic in the streets in those years, she became frightened. She began to take Baba's name, and saying to Him, 'I have no means of protecting myself, so You will have to do so.' Roshan then went on to say, 'As soon as I thought that, I felt as though I was walking under a mosquito net, an enveloping sheaf around me, and the boys were unable to come close. But I was very shaken.'

When she came to Kammu Baba, he said, 'What is wrong? You look so frightened!' Roshan explained, and he replied, 'You must not worry. When you take our Name, nothing can happen to you. Meher Baba and I were walking alongside and those boys could not touch you. When you take our Name wholeheartedly, it becomes our bounden duty to care for you.' Roshan learnt from his disciples that before her arrival Kammu Baba kept saying to them that the girl from Meher Baba was coming, and that when she did so she was to be brought immediately to him.

On one visit in the early 1950s to Kammu Baba, to give him a message from Beloved Baba, she said that she was going to Poona to see Baba. Kammu gave Roshan a beautiful garland, a coconut and incense to be given in turn into Baba's hands, and he also asked that she kiss Baba on the right cheek, the left cheek, on the forehead, and finally put her head on His feet. When she saw Baba, she told Him all this, and He said, 'OK, keep them aside. Now I am going to Ahmednagar - do you want to see your sisters and father? When the car returns to Poona you can come back in it.' Roshan happily said 'Yes Baba'.

As soon as Baba would begin a journey by car, He would, like a child, open a box of snacks, perhaps ones made from chickpea flour. He liked to munch something while traveling. All in the car would share in the snacks. On this particular journey, He began to question Roshan.

'Have you ever spoken lies in your life?' 'Yes Baba, I had to.' 'Have you pilfered anything?' 'Yes Baba.' 'What things did you do?' 'Baba, Shirinmai did not always give us enough food to

satisfy our hunger, so when I collected the eggs in the morning, any that were newly laid, nice and warm and fresh, I would crack and quickly swallow. Those eggs were delicious. 'But what did you do with the shells? And how many eggs did you eat?' 'Baba, I crushed the shells into the ground – and Baba I never counted them, but what were nice and hot were mine. I also stole chapatis and bananas from the pantry, made them into a roll and gave them to my sisters in the loo. They were helpless and I had to be with them. I also picked chicos from the trees, would leave them on the ground and then when they were ripe, eat them with my sisters.' 'You did all that?!' 'Yes Baba I'm not telling You lies.' But Beloved Baba listened lovingly and did not admonish Roshan. Then He asked her to sing for Him. In this way they reached Ahmednagar.

No one knew Baba was coming to Akbar Press, and no one came from the house to greet Him. Baba sat on the bench on the front verandah, and said to Roshan, 'Now do what Kammu Baba told you to do.' So Roshan put the garland on Baba, and gave Him the coconut and incense. Then she said, 'Baba will I kiss You as he had asked?' 'Come on - do it!' Roshan kissed Baba on both cheeks and placed her head on His feet. As she did so, Baba patted her on the head, and gestured, 'Are you happy?' 'Yes Baba I am very happy.' 'Now when you return to Bombay, give Kammu Baba a full account of what has happened, and give him back the garland, coconut and incense for him to keep.'

Baba then returned to Meherazad and Roshan returned to Poona and Bombay.

Later Kammu Baba developed cancer of the throat, and he asked Roshan to write to Baba requesting Him to release him from the body. Beloved Baba asked Kammu Baba to stay with Him secluded in Meherazad for one month. But he refused, saying that Sai Baba had not given him permission to leave the compound and go out, otherwise he would definitely have come. Three times he refused Baba's invitation: the third time

even after Baba had sent Eruch and Meherji to especially ask him. Then it was learnt that Kammu Baba had gone to one of his disciples' thread ceremony. Baba exclaimed on hearing this, 'He refused Me and went to that ceremony! I tried to give him a push, but it was not in his destiny.' Baba told Roshan that she was not to go again to Kammu Baba, and to write him giving him the reason for not doing so.

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In 1955 Roshan completed the Diploma, and returned to Bindra House in Poona.

In this same year Dadi Kerawala was posted to a remote village, Ajra near Goa, to develop the agricultural products there, and Baba told Banumasi and Roshan to go and keep house for him. They returned to Bindra House after Baba's second car accident in December 1956. Their house in Ajra was a small mud-brick building with a well in the rear from which they drew their water. As with the whole village, there was no electricity, and until Baba visited them, the villagers had never before seen a car. There were in effect two rooms, a small front room which became Dadi's office, and a larger room in which they lived. They had one or two chairs, and only two beds, one for Banu and Roshan and one for Dadi. The bed also served as a dining table, and a corner of the room was partitioned off with a cloth for a bathroom. Roshan said. their house was certainly simple and their life most simple, yet it was a happy and contented stay of two years.

In the jungle surrounding the village was a small temple with a priest named Ramdas. He had become a mast, a very wild-looking man, dark-skinned with matted hair, large eyes and wearing only a loincloth. He would stand in the blazing sun for hours. He never came to the village, keeping entirely to himself.

In a corner of the main room, Roshan had a small niche in the mud walls and here each day she would put Baba's photo on

a clean handkerchief, with fresh flowers, which they grew in the front of the house. Seven days before Beloved Baba came to the house at the beginning of a mast tour, Roshan was as usual before the niche singing in the morning, and having cleaned the niche, preparing to put her handkerchief on the shelf. As she did so, she was suddenly aware of the mast standing behind her. She was frightened, but he said nothing, looked into her eyes, and putting out his hand, simply grabbed the handkerchief from her, and then went round the rooms knocking on the walls with his hand before departing. The next day he came again, and again took the handkerchief, patted the walls with his hand and departed. Three days running he came and despite initial grumbling from her, took away her only three handkerchiefs. When Baba came later, she told Him the story of the mast's visits. Roshan is not certain but Baba may have contacted the mast.

Baba and the mandali had come in two cars, and they were all given lunch by Banu and Roshan. Afterwards Baba asked if they had eaten, and they said that they would do so later. But Baba had them sit in front of Him and have their food. Roshan had eight chapatis with her lunch, and Baba gestured, 'What are you doing? So much food!' She answered that she had not eaten since early morning, and that she was very hungry. But Baba said that she must not eat so much, and He ordered her to eat one chapati less each week until she was down to three per meal. She was at the time very, very thin, but after reducing the quantity of food eaten, she began to put on weight. After lunch at the house, Baba then continued on His journey.

The day they received a telegram telling them of Beloved Baba's second car accident, Banu and Roshan left immediately for Bindra House, Poona. Roshan lived subsequently for many years in Bindra House, and thus, with Baba's many long stays in Poona, was able to be of service to Him. The highlights of that service were perhaps the cooking she did for Him, and in the joy He had in her children. At the time of Amrit and Dara's wedding in December 1968, Roshan

had her last darshan of her Beloved Baba. His health was very poor, and all were told to only bow to Him as each filed past. When her turn came, she bowed, looked at Him, but said nothing. Baba then gestured, 'Roshan, I have always enjoyed your food. It has made Me very happy. Now this body of Mine will not last long. Always remember to feed any lover who comes to your house, but only whatever is in the house. Offer whatever food is there to Baba lovers, and when they eat, remember that it is I who am eating the food.'

Roshan suddenly recalled the notes that the family sent to Baba every day over many, many years of happenings in the extended family even to minor things such as decisions on travel between Ahmednagar and Poona, and how He would always respond whenever necessary with guidance and instructions. So she said to Him, 'Baba, whom should I ask now about decisions to be taken in life?' This was especially important to Roshan, because of the absence of Sam for long periods at sea. Baba replied, 'Think of Me wholeheartedly, and whatever thoughts come to you, that will be Me guiding you.'

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The beautiful details of Roshan's marriage to Sam Kerawala, the events leading to it and the events surrounding it, have been told in the earlier book of 'The Divine Humanity of Meher Baba (Vol. 1)' - another of Beloved Baba's 'marriages made in Heaven!' Before the marriage Baba asked Roshan to hand-stitch pajamas, sadra and jacket for Him, and she was to do them without help from others. She was shown handstitching by Gulamasi, and once started, she found the stitching stronger than any machine stitching, and that it could be done surprisingly fast. She did not have Baba's measurements, yet she managed to make the garments satisfactorily except for the sleeves of the jacket: these she was able to adjust later because she had allowed for that

possibility. The marriage occurred in March 1958, and after a month or so, Sam returned to his sea-job for another 3 years.

During those years Baba came frequently to Bindra House, and invariably came with many people. At that time food was rationed, and the grains available were of very poor quality. So the preparation of the food took hours, yet all concentration was on the thought of Beloved Baba coming and being ready for Him. There was also a period when food was sent from Bindra House to Baba and the mandali at Ganeshkind gardens and Guruprasad - and at the time the mandali were hearty eaters! If Homi was staying at Bindra House, he would read Baba books or other spiritual books to the cooks as they worked. There was also a period in 1958 when Meherwan, on Baba's order, read 'God Speaks' to the household for one hour every evening.

Each day a chit would come from Guruprasad saying what food Baba would like that day. Everyday without exception Baba had chutney with His meal, but otherwise the requirements would vary - curry and rice, fish, vegetable etc. Sometimes He would ask for one kind of vegetable for perhaps ten to twenty days running. When Roshan was pregnant with baby Mehera, Baba told her to make a different chutney every day for Him. This proved very difficult for her, but also an interesting challenge in pleasing her Beloved. She did succeed with all sorts of different vegetables and spices and combinations. Baba liked tasty food, and whatever He ate He enjoyed - particularly the love with which it had been prepared. He was also very careful over waste, and Roshan remembers Him picking up some grains of rice that had fallen on the floor.

One day when Baba was at Bindra House, He asked Roshan if she missed Sam, and she, still not conversant with English, said, 'Baba, what is to miss Sam?' Baba explained, and then Roshan, with contentment, answered, 'No Baba, I do not miss Sam. When You are here, how can I miss him?' 'Very good!' and Baba gave her an embrace - adding greatly to her joy in

His Presence. Serving Beloved Baba and His embrace was more joyful than having Sam around.

Roshan's first daughter was born in 1959. She was named Mehera by Baba, and twenty days after her birth, Baba came every day to Bindra House during His stay at Guruprasad that year. He would come with two or three cars packed with people. There would be so many. It was summertime and Baba had ordered that a big pot of sherbet be kept ready each day for His arrival, and He would sit at the head of the dining table and, using a cup, pour each person a glass of the sherbet. The time would be 1 or 2 p.m. After the people with Him had had their drink, He would tell them to go for a drive.

On the 7th of May each year, there was an ice cream party for Manu's birthday. A big bowl was used to make the ice cream which was invariably mango ice cream. The bowl could hold almost two litres of milk, and two or three lots of ice cream would be prepared, and thermoses would be filled ready for Baba's arrival. But Baba Himself would eat straight from the bowl. With the ice cream would be all sorts of tasty snacks made by Naja and Manu, and there would be a lively and very happy time for all. After the women had had their party and departed, the men would have their turn.

On one of those times when Baba had brought the women, He said that He would like to sit on the verandah swing, and He did so with Mehera by His side and baby Mehera on His lap. He called all the women out to be with Him, and asked why so much time was being spent on sifting the grain. When they explained about the very poor quality of the grain and the need to clean it, He lovingly expressed sympathy, 'Oh, you have to go through so much to prepare the food!'. When all the women had come, a number sat on Eruch's bed which was also on the verandah. Suddenly it collapsed with the weight of the women, and they all fell in a heap. Baba had a good laugh, and said it was Nargis' fault, because she was the heaviest. Then He said, 'But what will Eruch do now in the night!' 'Baba, we have a folding bed.' The next day the bed

was mended.

As soon as Baba's car arrived, Roshan would run to Him with an umbrella, and help Him walk towards the House and up the steps. Papa Jessawala was always delighted when Baba came, but because of the large crowd, would not always come out of his room. At those times, Baba would go to see him.

In those years when Beloved Baba stayed at Guruprasad, the routine at Bindra House was set and only changed when Baba willed it so. The household rose early in the morning. After breakfast Eruch would leave on bicycle for Guruprasad, and the rest of the family began their duties. Roshan would pick flowers that were growing around the house and they would all sit and weave garlands for Baba's pictures. These flowers were also sometimes sent to Baba who loved their fragrance. Gaimai would have Roshan read Gujarati books of saints, of Vivekananda and Ramakrishna, of Kabir and of other Masters. Sometimes Gaimai would tell stories of her times with Baba and with Baba's mother Shireen. Gaimai loved music, and while they sat around the table and prepared vegetables, she would have Roshan sing bhajans.

After lunch all rested for a short time. Prior to 4 p.m. when Meherwan would come from the office, the household had tea and dressed appropriately for a walk which Baba had ordered all were to take. This meant the servants too, and the dog Brownie that had been given to Bindra House by Baba. In the evening Arti was followed by dinner, and then all retired early.

Over the years Baba gave more and more prayers to the Bindra House family to be said each day until it was taking almost forty-five minutes to complete them. As the years passed, the older women found it increasingly difficult to stand for that length of time. This was mentioned to Baba and He said 'Then sit while you are saying them. What harm is in that? It is not necessary to stand to say the prayers.'

Brownie, the beloved dog of Bindra House, later got cancer,

and she suffered a great deal. When this happened Meherwan asked Baba if she should be put to sleep because of the suffering, but Baba said to wait until the next day and then put her to sleep. Very early the next morning she died naturally and peacefully in the garden.

During the times when Baba was at Guruprasad and Eruch returned from Baba late in the afternoon, they would all go for a walk for thirty to forty-five minutes with Eruch pushing Roshan's sister Dhun in a pram. This pram had been given to Dhun by Baba. They would also all gather in Papa's room or sit on the steps of the house, and Eruch would recount happenings of the day with Baba, or tell stories of earlier times with Baba.

When Eruch was at Bindra House, he enjoyed the good food that his mother prepared, particularly things that he did not normally get - roast meat, fish and even a tot of whiskey. Eruch did not have lunch, so he did not share in the food sent for Baba's and the mandali's lunch - the main meal of the day.

When Baba came to the house, He became like one of the family. He would sit on any chair or any bed, or perhaps go straight to the table and sample from any pot of food that was there. Roshan recalls a time when they were rolling chapatis. They had to make many for some thirty to forty people. Baba particularly liked Gaimai's chapatis. Instead of making them from cold water, she added boiling water to the flour and thus made them very soft for Baba when he had no dentures. On this occasion Baba came as they worked, and watched them turning a ball of dough into a round shape to be then cooked over the stove. After a few minutes, He asked if He could roll one. Gaimai gave Him a rolling pin and a ball of dough, and He began to roll. Immediately Gaimai called out, 'No, no Baba! Not so much on that side!' And then the next moment, 'Baba, more on that side! Wait, wait, it will lose shape!' In the end, it was not at all round, but like a map of some country. But Baba said to bake anyway, and adding, 'I take care of the

whole universe, but that's not as difficult as rolling a chapati! Today I have done something I have never done before in My life.'

'There were times when Roshan's sisters and brother would also be staying at Bindra House. They all had good singing voices and Baba on His visits would sometimes ask them to sing for Him. Other times they were at Akbar Press, and Roshan would visit them there. When she did so, and Baba was at Meherazad, she would cook food for Him, and send it by car. She was told that He would wait impatiently on the verandah for the car, and when it did so, He would open the package, and because by that time the food was not very hot, He would eat straight from the pot. He did not eat much, and He would then distribute the rest to the mandali.

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Roshan continued to live at Bindra House after her marriage, and for a time after the birth of Mehera. Baba said to her at that time to always keep seven thousand rupees in cash in the house and only use it in an emergency. She did this. But one day, and for some time, all the banks went on strike, and no money was available. Meherwan too did not receive his pay. The situation became serious, with ten or eleven people in the house to be fed, as well as Baba and the mandali. Roshan considered this to be an emergency, and so she used the seven thousand in expenses. In the evening the topic came up, and Eruch was told what was happening. Eventually the strike was over. Baba came to the House after this, and while all was gathered around Him, He said that He had been told the money that He had ordered to be kept aside had been used by Roshan, 'Did I not tell you to always keep that money in the cupboard for an emergency?' Roshan explained that she had seen the situation as an emergency, asked for forgiveness, and said she would replace the money now in the cupboard. Baba called her close, embraced her and

forgave her, but- repeated His order to always have an emergency fund of seven thousand rupees put aside. (Perhaps an interesting hint to all, a hint to have such a fund so that we do not have to burden our Beloved Baba to help us in our emergency.)

In 1961 Sam came home on leave from his ship, and he joined Roshan at Bindra House. While he was there Baba sent a telegram stating that Eruch was ill, and that Gaimai, Manu, Sam, Roshan and baby Mehera, were to go to Ahmednagar and be with Eruch. He instructed Gaimat and Manu to stay in the hospital with Eruch, and Sam to relieve them for night duty. Roshan stayed at Akbar Press and sent boiled water, barley water, and food to the hospital for Eruch, Gaimai and Manu. Apart from that and caring for her baby, she also took care of her eldest sister Aloo, who was by that time, bedridden with advanced muscular dystrophy, but otherwise quite well.

This was a time when Eruch nearly died. During the floods in Poona in 1961, Baba had told Eruch to cover himself well with clothing while he traveled each night to Bindra House. This he failed to do sufficiently, and he developed a chill in the lungs, which became pneumonia on their return to Meherazad. It was a very severe case with a high fever, but while the fever was gradually brought under control by Goher's treatment of sulphur drugs and antibiotics, Eruch' body had a strong reaction to the drugs, and he developed; hemolysis. This meant that his kidneys began releasing blood: through the urine, and this became darker and darker until it was almost completely blood. Goher informed Baba, saying that he should be hospitalised, but at first Baba refused, insisting on her trying her own treatment for him. But his condition worsened, and reluctantly Baba allowed him to be taken to hospital.

After their arrival Eruch's health continued to deteriorate, and he was not responding to the medical treatment. Yet despite his condition Eruch would talk to the Salvation Army hospital

doctor, a Dr. Pederson, about Baba, and the doctor became very impressed with Eruch. He was so deeply concerned about Eruch's condition that, in addition to his medical treatment, he would tell Gaimai that he would pray to Jesus, while she prayed to Meher Baba for Eruch's recovery. This he did.

As Eruch's worsening condition became known, Roshan's sister Aloo grew more and more concerned, not only because of her love for Eruch, but also because she knew the role that he played in Baba's ministry. On Baba's orders, a report was sent every day to Him, giving details of life and happenings at Akbar Press. With Eruch's worsening condition, Aloo had Roshan write in the daily report: Baba, I know You are God, and I have never asked God to cure me, or why I have been given this illness, but now Baba, with folded hands, I request something from You. If it is time for Eruch to go from this world, I request You to take me in his place. I am of no use in this world, I can do so little. I beg You to accept my request.

Roshan wrote as she dictated and sent the note to Baba, but she added that it was not from her, and that she only wrote because Aloo could not write and that she had asked her to do so. Dr. Goher read the note to Baba, and Roshan was told later that at first Baba was very angry, and blamed her for it: did she have no sense? - she was always creating nonsense - she was this and that! Roshan was told that He then thought awhile and asked Dr. Goher to reply thus: I will think about it.

The note came to Roshan, and she read it to Aloo and to all in the house. For a day or so, Aloo was quite well, but then she developed a little influenza, which soon quickly deteriorated into bronchitis and pneumonia. Over the next three or four days her condition worsened, and as it did so, Eruch's began to improve a little. Perhaps on the fourth or fifth day, Aloo asked Roshan to write again to Baba: Baba, I feel that I will not be very long in this world, and before I go, I would like to have Your darshan. So please come and see me.

Baba came to Akbar Press around two o'clock in the

afternoon, and with Him were Dr.Goher, Kaka Baria, Pendu, and Adi Snr was driving. At the time He arrived, Roshan was sitting in the front hall writing the daily note to Baba, giving details of Aloo's condition, the treatment being given and that it was having no effect. Dr. Goher was the first to come into the house, and on seeing Roshan, expressed her anger towards Roshan, saying such things as, 'Roshan, you are the most stupid of all people! - but Roshan realised later that she was very upset for her Beloved Baba because He had come with a temperature of 103 degrees, and Roshan had written the note asking Him to come. Roshan then went to the car to fetch Baba, and when He held her hand to climb the stairs, she exclaimed, 'Baba, You are burning with fever!' He gestured, 'Yes, I am not well.'

Then He asked Roshan if Aloo was still alive, and she replied yes and that she looks all the time towards the door of her room, thinking: He will come, He will come. Baba gestured to Roshan, 'Lets go' and she took Him to Aloo. He sat on her bed and embraced her, and said, 'Aloo, this world is zero, it has no meaning. It is like a movie you watch and you get so involved in it that you think it to be real, but it is not. This life is like that movie. Now you are to forget everybody and everything, and think only of Me.' Then He turned to Roshan, 'I am very thirsty - give Me a glass of sherbet.' Roshan went, prepared it, and brought it to Baba in His special glass that no one else used. Baba drank and drank as though He was very thirsty, but left a little in the glass, and told Roshan to give that to Aloo. Roshan took Aloo's stainless-steel cup thinking to pour Baba's sherbet into it, but He stopped her, saying, 'Let her drink from My glass only.' Afoo then drank the sherbet. As Baba continued to sit there with her, He asked Roshan about the other family members, about her aunt who was also bed-ridden, and about baby Mehera.

In Aloo's room near the foot of her bed was a refrigerator, and Baba asked Roshan to put His photo on top of it so that Aloo could easily see it, and said to her, 'Keep looking at Me.' Then Baba began to perspire very much, until He took a

handkerchief from His pocket and wiped His face and hands and some of His body with it. He gave Roshan that handkerchief and told her to tie it to Aloo's right hand, and in such a way that the four corners should be in her hand. Then He lovingly folded Aloo's hand closed over the handkerchief, saying to her, 'Hold on to this and think only of Me. Nothing else - forget everything and remember Me. But take whatever medication, food and drink Roshan gives you.'

Before departing Baba embraced Aloo again, and then greeted all in the house, including baby Mehera.

After He had gone, Aloo did not speak again. She had the tea that Roshan gave her, and remained quiet just gazing at Baba's photo. By that evening, perhaps late evening, she lapsed into a coma, and remained in that state for two days. It was now the twenty-second of November, 1961.

On that day Eruch was discharged from hospital completely recovered from his illness. Baba gave orders that Gaimai, Manu and Eruch were to go straight from the hospital to Bindra House, where Eruch could continue to recuperate. They were not to go to Akbar Press. They left Ahmednagar early morning, reaching home by midday. Aloo died that evening. When Baba was notified, He said, 'When I was Jesus, I had St. Theresa. In this incarnation Aloo was like her, and now she is relieved of her suffering.'

Her funeral was the next day, because the funeral ceremony cannot be held after sunset. Baba told Roshan not to be present at the ceremony because she was then pregnant with their second child, Dolly. She was also in fact to be so far away that she could not possibly hear the prayers. Before doing so, Roshan washed Aloo and dressed her for her final journey.

After a few days Baba called the whole family to Meherazad, and said, 'Do not linger in thought over Aloo. She is happy now that she is with Me.' Roshan replied, 'Baba, I too am happy knowing that.'

Although it could be said that Eruch did fully recover at the time, over the next few years or so, he had a series of painful conditions and operations. It was as though he had to share in his Beloved Baba's suffering during those last years of physical deterioration. In his operations the doctors would find it very difficult to anaesthetise Eruch, and the quantity needed would be normally sufficient for three people. After each operation, Dr Pederson would happily come each day to talk with Eruch, and so absorbed would he be in Eruch's talk of the spiritual path, that he would forget to continue his work of checking on other patients, and Eruch would have to remind him of his duties.

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Roshan's remaining sister, Dhun, died in the early eighties. She became increasingly crippled over the years, and could only be moved by her servant from bed to chair, to toilet and vice-versa, as long as Dhun was taking Baba's name as directed by Baba. Otherwise movement would have required many more hands. She remained alert and attentive to activities at Akbar Press, maintaining some order among the servants despite her immobility. She loved sitting in her chair facing the window so that she could constantly see Baba's face in the leaves and branches of the trees outside. She delighted visitors with her ability to see images of Baba where they could not until shown by her.

She was of course not always so restricted in movement. In the late nineteen-thirties during the time that Helen Dahm was painting the inside of the Samadhi, Baba would sometimes take her there, and sit with her on the threshold, watching Helen at work. In later years, when Roshan at one time took her to Meherabad, she pointed to a figure on the left of Baba, and said to Roshan, 'That is me.' She also said to Roshan, 'Baba told me that He could cure me, but if He did so, then I would have to go through the same thing next

lifetime - but without Him with me. So He said to finish my karnna in this lifetime whilst He is with me.'

There is an interesting story of a time when she was staying at Bindra House. It was Amartithi 1970, one year after Beloved Baba had dropped His body. The family planned to leave very early in the morning of the 31st and return in the evening. Such a journey was impossible for Dhun, so Roshan stayed with her. Before the 31st Dhun's health was fine, but after the family left at 4 a.m. she began to have stomach pains. Then she began to vomit and have diarrhea, and this went on and on. No matter what Roshan gave her, even a little liquid, she was unable to keep down. By 10 a.m. she had become extremely pale from the loss of fluids. The servant had gone with the family to Amartithi, and with no one else in the house, Roshan could not leave Dhun and go seeking a doctor.

There was in the house a photo of Beloved Baba to which Baba Himself would go, and after removing His sandals, would bow down before it. Gaimai had told everyone that they should go to that photo and pray to Him over any difficulty they might have. Roshan remembered this, and so she prayed, 'Beloved Baba, You must please do something for Dhun. I cannot go on, and I have no one else to turn to. I leave her to You.' Then she tried giving Dhun again a little lemon juice, sugar and a pinch of salt, but she promptly brought it up. She looked as if she would die, but she said to Roshan, 'What if I did die! That would be no great loss! Take me to the dining table and we will say the prayers after observing the silence.' Dhun always sat at the head of the table where Baba would sit when He came to Bindra House. Roshan was seated to her right, and the door was on Dhun's left.

They finished the prayers, and Dhun was so exhausted that she did not open her eyes. When Roshan opened her eyes, she saw Baba walk in through the door and stand between the dining room and the door. He looked at Roshan and

looked at Dhun, and then He walked behind Dhun and stood patting her head. With this, Roshan cried out, 'Open your eyes! Baba has come!' Dhun opened her eyes, but looked towards the door, thinking that He would be there. At the same time, Roshan was thinking that Baba was giving so much attention to Dhun, and not even looking at her. With that thought in her head, Baba looked at her and smiled. Again at the same time, the moment that Dhun looked towards the door, Baba disappeared.

From that time, Dhun's health began to change. She shortly expressed hunger, and asked for arrowroot. At 3 p.m., she asked for mashed potato, and when Roshan cautioned her about eating too much, Dhun assured her that she was all right. By the time the family returned Dhun was normal in health. She told them that the incident had felt to her like someone putting their hands on her head. The family said how they had experienced Beloved Baba's presence in the Samadhi, so He had had to come all that way from there to be with her in Bindra House!

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That manifestation of Beloved Baba after He had dropped the body, brings to mind another similar incident. In the 1970's Meherwan Jessawala became extremely ill. It appeared at first like influenza with fever, but even with antibiotics the fever would not subside. He began to have great difficulty walking and moving, and then, while sitting down, he called out to Roshan, 'I am becoming numb in the feet - and now it is rising! It is coming up!' She quickly called Gaimai to be with him, and ran for a doctor. This doctor in turn called for a neuro-physician who immediately directed he be urgently taken to hospital. With great difficulty they took him to the hospital. Baba had ordered that no woman except Gaimai should touch him, yet his condition was most serious, so it was decided that Roshan, who had had some nursing

experience, should be his nurse. Eruch, his brother, came from Ahmednagar, and relieved Roshan during the day and helped in massaging his limbs. His condition could be described as almost a complete paralysis of the nerves. Roshan would spend all night rubbing his body with almond oil, and Meherwan would direct her to rub various parts that were troubling him more than others.

After a time Meherwan began to have difficulty in breathing, and he was moved into intensive care. His condition grew even more serious, and then one night at a critical point Roshan saw Baba standing with His hand on Meherwan's bed, and He was looking towards him. Roshan said to him, 'You just don't worry - Baba is at the head of your bed and He will not let you go,' and she called the doctor and physiotherapist, and they gave him oxygen and massage. For three nights during that most critical time Baba stood by his bed. Then gradually and steadily his condition improved and after eight weeks he moved back to Bindra House, although he was still like a baby, not even able to hold a spoon.

One night while Meherwan was still very ill, Roshan had an experience in which she saw Baba gesturing for her to hold one side of Meherwan, and with Him holding the other, Meherwan was made to stand up. As in a dream, the three of them were in Meherabad, and they were standing at the road that leads to the Samadhi. Baba gestured and they began to walk with Baba and Roshan supporting Meherwan with their arms around his waist, and his hands on their shoulders. When they reached the Samadhi, Baba helped Meherwan to bow down to the Samadhi, and then Baba disappeared, and Roshan was left with all the weight of Meherwan on her. But Meherwan said, 'Don't worry Roshan, I can get up now.' After that night, Meherwan took a definite turn in his health, and became normal much more quickly than the doctors had predicted.

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Roshan's second child, Dolly, was born in 1962, and Roshan and Sam were then told by Baba to have no more children. After her birth, Dolly was given a smallpox injection but it not work, and Baba directed that another be given after three months. This the family did not do because during her first year, every so often, she would have a high fever and rash and so the second injection was not given. After antibiotics she would recover. But at one year of age she got smallpox from other children visiting Baba at Guruprasad. She was extremely sick, so she was taken to a hospital. There Roshan and child were quarantined for forty days, and each day, sometimes two or three times daily, Roshan would write to Baba on her condition and treatment.

Contrary to the normal situation in Government hospitals, but because of Beloved Baba's Nazar on Dolly, a doctor would come even every fifteen minutes to check her condition. Her eyes were closed for twenty-four days, and her body was so covered with the pox that there was no space for an injection. But the doctors took great care of her, and Baba continued to assure Roshan that everything would be alright. Roshan was told that Baba asked for Kaikobad at Meherabad to come to Guruprasad, and that He sat with Kaikobad for one hour each day while Kaikobad prayed for Dolly's recovery. Later when Baba had returned to Meherazad, Kaikobad was again called to stay with Him.

Dolly did fully recover, but it was some time before her eyes returned to normal. When she was better, Baba called Roshan and Dolly to Meherazad, and said, 'Roshan, you can give her any food you wish, but not fish in any form for three years. I will give her, her first fish to eat. And for three years she must wear woollen clothing next to her skin in all seasons. This proved very difficult for her in summer, and she naturally complained, yet she also accepted the hardship because it was Baba's order. When the three years were passed, Beloved Baba fed Dolly fish with His own hands.

At one time, Baba told Roshan that He had given the two

children, Mehera and Dolly, to bring up for His work. Roshan was not to express anger towards them, nor ever to beat them. If she did so it would be Himself experiencing the anger or the beating.

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During the 1960's Baba asked Roshan to learn another prayer, a beautiful one which she continues to sing at the morning Arti of Avatar Meher Baba at Meherabad. It is one composed and sung by Lord Zoroaster when He journeyed alone in the mountains of Persia (Iran), and it is meant to be sung not spoken. Baba said that the prayer was the essence of the Zoroastrian prayers, the others being given later by succeeding Masters over the ages. Baba had specifically told her to learn the prayer from Kohiyar Satarawala and, because it required strict breath control, it was not easy to sing. In 1946 Baba gave this translation of the prayer to Bhausahab:

I begin my prayer by invoking the Name of Yezdan, the Lord of creation Ahuramazda.

You are the Source of all light.

You are all effulgence, all knowing, the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, the Creator of all creation, the Preserver and the Sustainer.

Omnipotent, You are the Ancient One and eternal.

You are the giver of all boons, You are the Giver of all mercy and wisdom, and the Source of all purity.

Oh the Lord of creation, Ahuramazda, I invoke Your name and ask for Your blessing.

Let Your will be done and Your justice be administered oh God Ahuramazda.

In speaking of the prayers, Roshan recalled Baba stating that His Gujarati Arti, which He had composed, words and music,

was the most potent of all the prayers in this Advent. He said that He would be present wherever and whenever that Arti was sung. She then told of her daughter Dolly's friend who died for three and a half minutes while she was undergoing an operation. Roshan and Dolly were with the friend's parents when they were informed by phone of the death, and immediately Roshan called for them all to sing His Arti with all their heart. As they finished, they were informed by phone that the young woman had returned to life.

Later Roshan asked the young woman what could she recall of any experience during those three and a half minutes. She said that she experienced travelling down a tunnel at tremendous speed towards an extremely bright light - so bright she could not bear to look at it. Then she experienced the light stopping her, and she was back in her body. She regained her health, married and now has two children. Roshan said that she sang Baba's Arti at the wedding.

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Chapter 5

Bhagirath Tigiri

'Bhagirath does not speak English,' said Sam Kerawala, 'so I have translated what he has given me of his life with Beloved Baba. His native languages are Marathi and Hindi, but he has also become a prominent Urdu scholar. When he came here this morning, he told me a most beautiful song in Urdu from Saint Mirabai. She sings to Krishna:

'Beloved, I have been eagerly awaiting Your sight for many, many years.

I have become skin and bone, and now the vultures and crows are hovering above me, waiting to devour me.

I am near to death yet You do not come; something must be lacking in my love for You.

Vultures, this dead body is the right food for you, but kindly do not eat my eyes, perchance at the last I have a glimpse of my Beloved.

But perhaps you want my eyes, then eat them too, but first please carry them to the abode of my Beloved.

Let me see Him to my hearts content and then I may die.'

Sam murmured, 'Beautiful, beautiful ... and so characteristic of Bhagirath to bring me such a song.'

'Now let me begin telling of his life with Baba'. He began by invoking the name of his Beloved, Meher Baba. He continued:

I began serving my Lord from the age of ten, and in this new

mode of living I came to know of many things which I didn't know before. Thanks to my past sanskaras I came to His lotus feet. I lived for Him and was not concerned with what the world thought of me and of my way of life. I realised that I cannot please one and all in the world, so I decided to strive to please my Beloved only. This knowledge does not come from books but from and through life. Love cannot be talked about: it has to be experienced. My Beloved was the first one to reach the Goal, and He comes again and again to earth for His creation. He sows the seed of love in His creatures and nourishes that seed until it becomes a firm tree. Once He enters our lives we gain everything worth gaining and having.

My mother died when I was eleven months old, and I was brought up by my paternal aunt. She was a child widow - very spiritually inclined, and she raised me with a love for prayer and strict vegetarianism - not even garlic and onions. A Baba lover of Ahmednagar took me to Beloved Baba when I was ten years of age. Baba liked and accepted me, saying, 'Would you like to live with Me?'

I said 'yes' and Baba sent Adi Snr. to gain permission from my father for me to do so. Thus began my life of service to my Lord. But I found at first the way of life at Meherabad contrary to my upbringing, and Baba arranged for my food at Kalemama's place. Master Dixit was my teacher and Ramjoo's son Dadu would tell me stories.

In 1938 I was with Baba at Panchgani, and He told Sidhu to take me sightseeing in Mahabaleshwar, and then have our food when we returned. Sidhu showed me all the sights, and then on the way home, because we were hungry, we had food at a restaurant. Only afterwards did we remember Baba's instructions to us to eat at Panchgani.

Baba was waiting for us on our return, and He told us to go and have our supper. Fearfully we confessed that we had already eaten. Baba slapped us both soundly, and said, 'Always remember My instructions!' It was a good lesson for us. Shortly after this, we were, by Beloved Baba's Grace and

by obeying His orders strictly, saved from a serious car accident.

After some time, with Baba's permission I returned home, and then with my father lived in Hyderabad State, attended school and learnt the Urdu language. But I always remembered my happy days at Meherabad, and by His grace I returned to Ahmednagar after three years. I met Vishnu who said to me that Baba remembered me often, and that I should come to Him.

This I did and so began in earnest my life with Baba as one of His mandali. Under His loving guidance my old habits dropped away. No one was allowed to be idle, and one of my orders was to wash my hands seven times and fetch a pitcher of water for Him from the well. Then I would wait for Him to come down from upper Meherabad, and on seeing Him coming, I would cross the railway line, meet Him and escort Him to the mandali hall. But He did not drink the water that I gave Him. Then I waited outside the hall, and if anyone came I would inform Him. One day I forgot to fill the water jug, and that day Baba asked for water. I quickly filled the jug and Baba asked why I had not filled it earlier as ordered. I replied, 'Baba, every day for a month You have not drunk the water.' But Baba said that it is His order to me to get water for Him and His wish whether He drank it or not. Thus I learnt to obey Him implicitly.

As we walked to mandali hall one day, Baba asked me if I would like to get married. After I said 'yes', Baba then said to leave the matter to Him, and He would see to everything. Ten years later He fulfilled His promise and so beautifully. But more of that later.

I remember another incident from those early days. We, the mandali, were one day with Baba, and we could hear loud chanting from the nearby Arangaon village. Baba gestured, 'What is it? Why such loud chanting?' I replied, 'Baba, there is very severe drought in the area, and the villagers have brought water from a holy river and are invoking the idol of

Lord Krishna to bring rain.' Baba gestured with emphasis, 'They are begging before the idol of Krishna and Krishna is sitting here!' and Baba sent me out to check on clouds in the sky. When I returned and said there were none, Baba expressed scepticism and asked if there was something wrong with my eyes. Then He sent Kalemama or one of the others to check. Again the report, 'No Baba - no clouds.' Baba replied, 'What is wrong with you men! Do you need glasses?! Go and check again!' This time, whoever went outside reported, 'Yes Baba, there are a few small clouds on the horizon.' 'Sit down', gestured Baba, and within ten to fifteen minutes it rained heavily. It reinforced my conviction that everything in the universe is at His command: as He has said, 'Not a leaf moves without My will. My will governs the cosmic illusion.'

(At this point Sam gave an interesting aside on God's will. He was walking with Eruch in the 1960's between Bindra House and Guruprasad, and he asked Eruch, 'On the cross Jesus said to His beloved Father - 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do.' Now we know that Jesus did not die on the cross, but let us say He did, and we know from the Scriptures that at the time nature revolted and the whole world darkened intensely and there were tremendous thunder storms - Eruch, how could this be when Jesus had commanded total forgiveness?' Eruch replied, 'We human beings know that there are certain things our Beloved likes and others He dislikes, yet more often than not we do the things He dislikes. So that must have been what happened at the time of the crucifixion - the pain and agony in nature at the atrocity committed on the Lord made nature revolt!')

Baba took me to Mysore for three to four months, and during that time he gave me bazaar (marketing) and postal work, and also to relieve the watchman at His house between twelve noon and two p.m. Whilst there I had an altercation with the cook, and he was so outraged with me that I feared he would poison my lunch. So I did not eat lunch that day. At noon I was on duty with Baba and He asked me if I had eaten.

I said, 'No Baba', but Baba only replied, 'We will see to that later.' After my watch was over, Baba called me into mandali hall and asked me what I took Him to be. I answered, 'God.' Baba then said, 'Do you think I called you to Me to starve you to death!? Go now and have your lunch.' I did so.

While I was at Mysore, Baba told Chanji to write a letter to the Dewan or Prime Minister of the State, and give it to me to deliver to the Dewan. When the letter was ready and I was asked to deliver it, I thought that I should change my clothes for such an important person. I started to do so, but Chanji said, 'What the hell are you trying to prove? - this letter is the important thing, so just go! He won't even notice you.' I went and found a big office, and that the Dewan's office was on the second floor.

I told a man in the office that I was from Meher Baba and had a letter for the Dewan. He informed the Dewan, and he came running down the stairs and he embraced me in a very natural and familiar way, even though I was only a boy. Then he read the letter, and asked me to sit and have tea while he wrote a reply. After he did so, he gave it to me and again embraced me in a natural way. I realised then that even if I had been a dog, because I was from His Darbar I would have been given utmost respect.

With His permission I returned to Ahmednagar, and while there I received a letter from Baba telling me to go to Meherabad and wait His arrival. After a short time with Baba at Meherabad, I said to Him that I did not want to live with the mandali, and that I wanted to be independent with a job. Baba gave me three choices of work - cinema operator, vehicle driver or vehicle mechanic. I said I would like to learn driving and mechanical work. Immediately Baba ordered me to pack my bag and He took me to Nasik. There He got me work in Sarosh Motor Works and made all arrangements for my food and lodging.

Soon after I was there, my aunt who had brought me up, died and I was very upset. I requested Beloved Baba to let me

return home, and although He said what is the point, she dead and gone, He let me go, but told me to return soon. Hardly had I arrived than a message came from Baba telling me to stay until He called me. I could not understand the change, but soon after my father died. Baba ordered me to complete all the formalities of the funeral, and to return to Meherabad. On my return, Baba called me to Him and He said, 'As of now, I am your father, mother, everything. You should not worry in the least - you will never find a Parent more loving than Me.' In my life I have realised the Truth of His words.

Then He sent me back to Nasik and I completed my driving/mechanical training. I was very happy there, with Rustom and Ramjoo as my bosses. Although I was still very young, I got my driving licence and Beloved Baba called me back to Meherabad. Baba took me with Him to Panchgani, and entrusted me with the task of taking Baba lovers to Mahabaleshwar for sightseeing. From there I was sent back to Nasik and obtained a truck driving licence. When Baba went to the West, He put me in Sarosh's bus company and I drove buses taking military personnel from Sarosh cinema to their camps. One day I had an altercation with Sarosh's father, and I left the job and went to Meherabad. Sarosh tried to make me return, but I refused. When Beloved Baba returned from the West, I gave Him a full report on my experience, and He said, 'What does the Khan Bhadur think of himself!? He does not provide us with anything. It shows how much he loves Me'. Then, with financial help from my elder brother I acquired a truck, and thus by His wish and will, I became independent. But my focus was always on Beloved Baba and His Meherabad.

I was 25 years of age when Baba spoke to me again about marriage, 'Have you thought again about marriage?' 'No Baba.' 'Why not?' 'I do not have a penny to my name, so who would agree to give someone in marriage to me?' 'Do not worry about such things. I will see to it all, and I promise that you will ride an elephant on your wedding day!' (It is

customary in India for the bridegroom to ride a white horse to collect the bride from her parent's home, but in Bhagirath's case, it was to be much more grand - to the great embarrassment of an unassuming man like Bhagirath.)

My sister came for Baba's darshan, and she spoke to Baba about marriage for me. Baba said that if they did not have a girl in mind, they should look for one from a good family. This was not easy, but by His grace, my elder brother soon had contact with a very good family and their daughter Kokila. I was called to see Kokila's uncle in Latur, and he was happy with me. We were engaged for a long time, and Baba asked why was there such a delay. I said that Kokila's family were awaiting an auspicious time, and Baba replied that His Birthday could not be more auspicious.

So in February 1948 we were married with all expenses paid by Kokila's family. Kokila was fourteen years of age. As promised by Beloved Baba I rode an elephant on the day, and on returning to Ahmednagar we took Baba's darshan in the ice factory bungalow (Dr. Goher's father's house). Baba said to us not to bother searching for a house, and to stay there in the bungalow. So we returned with our bedding rolls and two trunks, and Beloved Baba exclaimed, 'Only this much!?' I said we would gradually obtain furniture and kitchen utensils etc., and Baba replied that until that happened, we were not to waste time cooking, 'I will send food for you.' And He did so from the mandali's kitchen, food for lunch and sufficient left over for supper, sometimes serving us with His own hands.

While we were there Baba Himself showed Kokila how to keep the house in order. Once, when Kokila was barefoot scrubbing pots and pans outside in the compound, Baba saw her and said, 'Kokila, learn to keep your chappals on. You'll spoil your feet by working in the mud barefoot.' Beloved Baba showed her how to be a good housewife, and if at any time something was lying amiss, Baba Himself would pick it up and put it in its proper place.

On one occasion we visited Baba in His part of the bungalow,

and on Kokila mentioning that they all lived in the same building, Baba said, 'I am everywhere!'

'But how can we know it?' asked Kokila.

Handing her a fresh rose, Baba said, 'Can you see its fragrance?' Kokila replied that she could not see it.

'But it does have a fragrance, doesn't it?' 'Yes, certainly.'

'As the fragrance is hidden in the rose, in the same way My presence is hidden in every heart - unseen and imperceptible.'

Later, because I was at times away over-night driving, and Kokila would be alone in the bungalow, Baba directed that we lived in Kushru quarters.

It was a small part of the building, and when I visited Baba, He asked me of our life there. 'Are you and Kokila alone in the rooms?' 'No, Baba, Kokila's parents are staying with us.' 'What! How could you have privacy!? Now return home, pack the parents' bags, put them outside the rooms, purchase train tickets, give them to the parents and ask that they immediately depart - but don't tell them that I told you to do this.' I did as Baba ordered, and it was only some 35 years later that the parents heard that it was Baba's order. (Again Sam commented, 'Their respect for Bhagirath was greatly increased when they casually found out.')

By my Beloved Baba's grace we fared well in our life, and even in times of great difficulty such as petrol rationing, He guided us and we flourished. Also, not only was I allowed to approach Baba freely, my truck enabled me to serve Him often. I carried goods, baggage, or furniture for Him whenever needed.

During this time I came in contact with a saintly Brahmin named Hari Om. I talked to him about Beloved Baba and one day he asked me what caste was He. I replied, 'Do not ask the caste of an enlightened One. Ask what depth of knowledge He has. The value of the sword does not depend on the

scabbard'. He then expressed a desire to have Baba's darshan. Whilst I was delivering goods to Aurangabad I happened to find out that Baba was in seclusion there. So I told Baba that this man ardently sought His darshan. But Baba said, 'Not now - I am in seclusion, but bring him on such and such a date to Meherabad.' I did so on the appointed day, but Baba said to me, 'Today Deshmukh has come from Nagpur and you know how he upsets My mood - bring Hari Om tomorrow.' The next day after Baba had finished His work, He sat outside mandali hall beneath a tree, and when Hari Om saw Him from a distance, he ran to Him, fell at His feet, and wept like a child for about fifteen minutes. Baba comforted him, patting his back and when he was quiet, said, 'Do not worry - whatever is lacking in you, I shall fulfil.' Hari Om was most happy, and Beloved Baba too seemed particularly happy with the meeting. Hari Om became 100 % for Baba.

Over time I became an accepted Urdu scholar, and many of my friends were Persian and Urdu scholars. Among them were Abdul Karim, professor of Persian at Ahmednagar college, and his friend Hakim Ashgar Ali. I told them of Beloved Baba and they were eager to have His darshan. One day I met them in Ahmednagar, and they asked me where I was going. I said to Meherabad to return some furniture which had been repaired. They said, 'We wish so much to see Baba, but you never take us because you say He is in seclusion. Why not take us with you now?'

Then I had a brain wave, 'I can take you on one condition - that you become my coolies/porters, lift the furniture here and unload it at Meherabad.' They replied, 'We are most willing to the task.' So we did that, and sure enough while we were unloading, Baba asked Kaka Baria what was the commotion. He said, 'Bhagirath has come.' 'Call him here' gestured Baba, and when I came, 'Why have you come?' I explained that I was returning furniture. 'You came alone?' 'No Baba I have two coolies.' 'Bring them here,' gestured Baba, and on seeing them and giving them darshan, He remarked

that they did not seem like coolies to Him. Then I confessed that both were Persian scholars and they had been longing for His darshan. 'Oh is that so I too am Persian,' said Baba to the professor, 'So recite a ghazal for Me.' But the professor was totally tongue-tied before Baba, and only after much prompting from Baba, was he able to painfully recite a ghazal.

Then Baba turned to Hakim Ashgar Ali to hear something from him. But he was by this time somewhat prepared and he gave a beautiful couplet in Persian: How can I come before You with the mirror of my heart totally dirtied, and because of that I am ashamed of myself in Your presence. Then we all left very happy, and on the way Abdul Karim tells me, 'Speaking is my business. I am a factory to produce graduates and yet in the His presence my mind was blank and my tongue unable to move.' I said that happens to many scholars, even the best of them become totally lost in His presence. Both became devoted to Him, and He would regularly call them to be with Him at Guruprasad and Meherazad.

Ashgar Ali began composing ghazals in honour and praise of Beloved Baba. One ghazal written for His Birthday was sent to Baba by Adi Snr. and Ashgar Ali was upset and said to me, 'Why was it sent - I wanted to frame it first and then send it as a Birthday present.' A few days later I was at Meherazad, and Baba showed me the ghazal which had been framed by Him. Ashgar Ali was very happy to hear this.

When there was a big function at Hamirpur in Baba's honour, the Ahmednagar centre bhajan mandali were asked to attend. Kokila has a very good voice and often sang ghazals before Baba. She was a member of the bhajan mandali, and was very upset when her name was not on the list of members going to Hamirpur. When Adi Snr. was asked why, he said that Baba had prepared the list. She accused Adi of lying, and Adi became angry with her. The matter came before Baba, and He asked Adi why she was not included in the party. He said because she does not attend singing practise sessions. Baba was not happy with this reply, and told Adi to pay her fare to

Harnirpur and back. At this point Pendu intervened saying that Kokila could not go alone, and that I and our son Rajan must go with her. Baba turned to Pendu, 'Who asked you to poke your nose in - you can pay the fares for Bhagirath and Rajan to Hamirpur.'

Kokila sang the very first ghazal of the program at Hamirpur.

(Later Sam recounted a little episode that Bhagirath had not mentioned. Their son Rajan was in an accident at a place Siram between Bombay and Poona. He was taken the hospital there, and Bhagirath and Kokila notified. They set off in their truck in torrential rain, and a little before Siram they saw in the rain a young boy gesturing for a ride. They stopped and the boy said, 'I only have two rupees, but will you kindly take me to the hospital where one of my relatives is a patient.' They took him into the truck, and they reached the hospital about midnight. It is a huge building, very complex, and at that late hour there were few people around. They wondered how they could find their son, but the boy promptly said, 'Come - follow me.' Through a maze of corridors, he led them straight to their son's room saying, 'This is where he is. Now I will go, so please take my two rupees.' But Bhagirath would not do so. After they were with Rajan for an hour or so, Bhagirath sought to find the boy's relative and although he made many enquiries, he realised in the end there was no such person.)

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Kirkpatrick

The year was 1965 and Meher Baba was staying in Guruprasad. He was in seclusion, the gates shut and only those invited by Baba were permitted to enter. Adjoining Guruprasad was another bungalow, much smaller and not in good condition. It was always closed, every door, window, ventilator shut, and it seemed as if the place was totally unoccupied and deserted. But it did have one occupant, a man, rarely seen and the subject of much intriguing speculation.

Baba was seated on the wide verandah of the large bungalow with the men mandali around Him, and whilst they were there, the man came out of the adjoining house, and began to walk along the road, passing Guruprasad. He wore a hat, walked with his head down, looking neither to left or right, and carrying a satchel. They had noticed that same pattern of behaviour before, and at the same time of the day. Baba glanced towards the road, and said, 'Look, that man has left again!' and to Aloba, 'Go, go and find out about him, who he is and what he is doing.' As soon as Baba said this, it was as if Aloba had become electrified. He leapt to his feet, and instead of going via the porch and the stairs, he swung straight over the balustrade, jumping ten feet to the ground. He then ran full speed the hundred plus metres to the gates, and because they were closed, he did another cartwheel over the railings that bordered the property. Baba, watching all this, exclaimed, 'Look at that fellow! He gives me a heart-attack. To give him any order is a dangerous thing!' All the mandali watched in amazement as Aloba obeyed Baba, and wondered how the man also did not have a heart-attack with Aloba suddenly materialising before him as he did!

Kirkpatrick

In time Aloba returned with all the information one could ever possibly want of a person. His name was Kirkpatrick and he was Irish. He lived alone in the house, did not have a job, was in dire financial difficulties and unable to pay the rent, and the landlord had cut off the water and electricity supply in an attempt to force him out of the house. The landlord was unable to evict him because of the rent control laws at the time. Kirkpatrick had been at one time the secretary to the bishop in Poona, a high position in the church hierarchy, and had been quite well-to-do. Now he had become extremely destitute, and he barely maintained himself with the sale of a few of his books from his extensive library. He ate only a little bhakri and chickpea flour preparation.

Beloved Baba in His compassion knew the time had come for Kirkpatrick to have contact with Him and to receive His help, hence His apparent casual inquiry.

After this initial contact, Kirkpatrick one day came inside the gates of Guruprasad and inquired if he could be allowed to bathe in the outside bathroom. He was therefore taken to Baba, who gave him permission to bathe there regularly. Gradually he came closer to Baba, and Baba allowed him to sit with Him and the mandali in the Hall. He would sit in a corner of the room, very quiet and unobtrusive. He would only speak when spoken to. Then Baba at one stage asked about his financial position, and he told Baba of his poverty and asked for some help just to meet his daily food requirements. He said, 'If I can have enough for a little bhakri and chickpea dish I will be very happy.' So Baba arranged for Meherji to give him a monthly amount of Rs. 30. This continued even after Baba dropped the body, with the amount increasing a little over the years.

Eventually the landlord succeeded in obtaining a court order against Kirkpatrick and he was thrown out and abandoned with his belongings outside the compound of the house. The Christian Mission came to his rescue and gave him a small room, about ten feet by eight feet, in their Poor Home for

those totally without support. His whole room was filled with his trunks of books, so he did not even have space to lie down. There Meherwan would find him on his visits sitting on a trunk and reading. That was his daily occupation. He was now past sixty years, and very frail and anaemic. Despite Meherwan's admonitions, he did not look after himself and he became more and more frail. When Meherwan went to him with his monthly allowance, he would say, 'You won't forget to come next month?' and Meherwan would assure him, 'No, no do not have any concern about that. Baba will always look after you. If you need anything, do let me know.' But his demands were very few.

One day a man came to Meherwan to say that Kirkpatrick was not well and should be taken to the hospital. But Kirkpatrick assured Meherwan, 'No son, I'm all right. This wetness of my trousers is a little discharge from a sore.' Meherwan remonstrated, 'But this requires treatment. I'll take you to a good hospital or clinic.' 'No, no I'm all right. I'll let you know when the time comes. Don't worry about me.' That was the type of man he was.

The time did come. He sent for Meherwan, 'Now I need to be hospitalised. Get me to some good place.' Meherwan arranged for an ambulance and had him taken to a nice mission hospital where Meherji's daughter worked. When Meherwan went later to see him, the man in charge said, 'What a man you brought here! He was full of maggots and it's taken buckets and buckets of water to clean him. He is not in good shape and we fear for his life.' When Meherwan saw him, he looked much better. He said, 'Son you have done very well. I am really happy now. Can I have an egg each day - can you arrange that?' The doctor was told not to spare any expense, and to give him whatever he needed.

For a time Kirkpatrick seemed to be doing well, but then the infection spread in his blood stream, he got septicaemia and after a couple of days he died. Meherji and Meherwan arranged for his burial in the Christian cemetery, and at the

final service said the Master's Prayer and farewelled him with, 'Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!' So it was that Beloved Baba saw to the welfare of a real destitute one who came under His protection till the very end - literally to the grave!

Some twenty-five years later, Mehru, one of the women mandali, accompanied by two or three Baba lovers, with great difficulty found Kirkpatrick's grave in the cemetery. It was a bare strip of ground, completely unmarked. The church had looked to his burial in a minimal way. Mehru laid a garland which she had brought with her on the grave, and gave a brief tribute to him, 'It has been a busy hour and more since we came to find this pauper's grave, and offer a garland to him. He will be ever rich in his connection with Meher Baba, and in that his name will always be remembered and not forgotten.' - remembered as he was then by one of the Emperor's disciples.

Thus in his dire need Beloved Baba the Compassionate One cared for him and continued to do so to the end.

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Sam Kerawala and Others Relate Some Stories

ASHTVAKRA

God descends into man form, and as God-Man becomes an enigma to us all, a mystery we cannot comprehend, a problem we cannot solve. Thus some accept Him as God in human form, many discard Him, and many even hate and abuse Him. But all this does not make any difference to Him: He comes exclusively for the betterment of His creation, and every breath he takes as God-Man is for this work of betterment. His chief attributes are love, mercy and compassion, and this is a story that reflects those qualities.

King Janak was the father of Sita who became the consort of Avatar Rama. The court of Janak was renowned for its galaxy of brilliant scholars and learned pundits, but all regarded Bal Deep to be the chief amongst them.

There was also in the kingdom a young man who had eight distinct deformities in his physical form, and when he walked his movements were so ridiculous that everyone laughed and mocked him. One day this young man, Ashtvakra, entered the court of Janak, and walked towards the king to bow to him. As he did so, the whole court including Janak burst into laughter.

When the laughter eventually subsided, Ashtvakra himself began to laugh, and the king asked him, 'Why are you laughing?' Ashtvakra replied, 'For many years now I have heard that your court contained learned and spiritual scholars, but now I see that you are all ordinary people: you judged me by my outer appearance. However, I am told there

is one amongst you of very high intelligence - I challenge him to a contest on the Scriptures.' King Janak turned to the scholar Bal Deep, 'Do you accept the challenge?' Bal Deep, thinking that Ashtvakra was only a fool, accepted the challenge readily and happily.

Ashtvakra asked the first question: Do you believe that God creates anything and everything in the whole of creation? Bal Deep said yes, and Ashtvakra then asked, 'Yet there is one thing He cannot create, what is it?' Bal thought deeply but could not answer. Ashtvakra explained, 'God is One without a second, therefore He cannot create Himself.' Then he said to Bal, 'Do you believe that God can do anything and everything?' After Bal said yes, Ashtvakra asked, 'There is one thing God cannot do: what is that thing?' Again the pundit could not answer, and Ashtvakra said, 'He is all-pervading, and has authority and sovereignty over all, but He cannot send the worst sinner into exile.'

'Now,' said Ashtvakra, 'the third question: He has said 'Don't worry, be happy' yet He has constantly one worry - what is that worry?' Again Bal could not answer, and Ashtvakra said, 'His worry is that if there are no sinners in the world, how will He be able to exercise His three qualities of infinite love, mercy and compassion.'

King Janak became the disciple of Ashtvakra, and in time by His Grace Janak too became Perfect.

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The Gecko

Meher Baba was staying in the north of India and with Him were His men and women mandali. He spent some time each day with the women in one of the rooms.

One day as they sat there talking, the largest gecko Naja had ever seen, ran along high on the walls stopping over Baba. It

then voided itself on Baba. Baba, not ceasing His conversation with the women, took a handkerchief from the pile on a small table beside Him, wiped His head clean and discarded the handkerchief. Naja, observing this, was not at all happy, but could do nothing to stop the gecko.

The next day, the same thing happened with Baba again quietly wiping His head with a handkerchief without any sign of irritation or impatience. But it was not so with Naja, seeing her Beloved Lord having to endure such insult. The next day she brought with her a long broom, resolved to deal with that gecko if it sought to do the same thing again.

Sure enough it did appear, but as she leapt to her feet to strike it, Baba stopped her in surprise, 'What are you doing with that broom?!' 'Baba, I want to stop the gecko reaching You.' 'What do you have against the gecko? All of you,' said Baba, circling the room with His hand, 'are much more a burden around My neck than that poor gecko!'

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Attar's Story

A most beautiful description of the spiritual journey to God has been given by the Perfect Master, Fariduddin Attar, who is also author of the book 'The Conference of The Birds'.

A King gave orders that a very beautiful garden be created, a garden that would even exceed the Garden of Eden in its flowing streams, all manner of insects, birds and animals, and every type of flower and tree and herbs. All lived most happily in that garden.

One fine day the King gave orders that the most beautiful peacock in the garden should be confined in a leather cage, with only a small opening through which the peacock was given food regularly. This was done and the peacock at first missed the beauty of the garden, but gradually it accepted that the cage was the only abode it had ever known, and so

became content with its lot in life.

Occasionally however a breeze would blow and carry with it to the peacock, the fragrance of the flowers, the music of the flowing streams, the call of the birds and animals; and at such times, pain would come to its heart and give a twist in its stomach. The pain thus created for a moment discontent for its leather cage, but then the breeze would subside, and the peacock returned to its contented acceptance of the cage.

Years and years rolled by. Then one day a fresh breeze began to blow and this time it continued to blow. With that breeze came the music of the streams, the fragrance of the flowers and the singing of the birds, and the pain in its heart and in the very depth of its being became unbearable, and the peacock fell unconscious. It remained unconscious for many, many years. When it eventually awoke, it had become nothing but skin and bones, and so it was able to crawl through the opening that was created to give it food.

Then the peacock saw the garden and remembered that it was its earlier home. Now, after the effect of its pangs of separation from the garden, the peacock enjoyed the beauty of the garden with greater intensity than did the other inhabitants of the garden. Time passed, and with time the peacock began to feel that the garden was nothing but the product of its own imagination. But it continued thus to enjoy its freedom in the garden, until one day the eyes of the peacock and the King met, and in that precise moment the King made the peacock realise that He, the peacock and the garden were not separate but One. The final veil of separation had been torn asunder, and with that the journey of the peacock ended forever.

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Naja

A neighbouring farmer came each morning with milk for the

ashram and gave it to Naja who was the cook for Meher Baba and the women mandali. The farmer was a simple, devout and humble man who loved his three buffaloes as though they were his children. He knew and accepted Baba as Lord, and he always addressed Naja respectfully as 'Mummy'.

One day he announced sorrowfully to Naja that one of his buffalo 'children' was ill. Naja, eager to help, offered him dhuni ash, saying that he should apply it to the forehead of the buffalo. She explained that because the ash was from the dhuni ordered by the Lord, it was therefore most beneficial. The farmer accepted it very happily, and Naja felt confident that his 'child' would recover.

A few days later, when Naja asked about the buffalo, the farmer quietly said, 'Mummy, she has died.' Naja was shocked and distressed for the farmer, but he appeared unperturbed, saying, 'Don't worry Mummy that she has died. It is not for you to worry.'

Again a few days passed, and the farmer said that another of his 'children' was ill. This time Naja hesitated in offering him dhuni ash, concerned now over the outcome, but the farmer again accepted it happily. Naja prayed that the poor farmer would not lose another buffalo. But he did, and while Naja was really upset and concerned, he accepted the loss with quiet equanimity.

When later his third 'child' became ill, Naja was most reluctant to give him some dhuni ash. But he asked for it, and she gave it, yet she feared that another loss would surely destroy the farmer's simple faith in his Lord.

In time the third buffalo did die, and Naja, loving soul that she was, felt most distressed for the farmer. But that simple devout man quietly assured her, 'Don't worry Mummy. It is all right,' and looking towards the ashram with a benign smile, 'I know where my 'children' have gone.'

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True Contentment

A man once approached a Sufi Master with a question: If a man is contented with his lot in life, how far will this carry him on the Spiritual Path? The Master answered, 'If the sense of contentment is accompanied with a sense of true humility, then such an individual could go to the very threshold of the Beloved. Now listen. You are fortunate. There resides in such and such a place an old man. I advise you to go there and observe him for some time. Then come back to me and tell me of your observations.'

Accordingly the man went to the given address and there saw an old man residing in a broken-down hut. The man observed that the old man owned nothing of this world, and there were even days when he didn't have food or drink. Yet the only prayer that he heard the old man say throughout the day, was, 'Thank You God for having satisfied all my needs.'

The man observed this way of life in the old man for more than a month or two, and finally could not contain his wonderment longer. He approached the old man, and said, 'Excuse me Sir. I have been observing you for more than a month, and I realise that you own nothing of this world and that you often go without food and drink. Yet your constant prayer is, 'Thank God for satisfying all my needs. How can you say such a prayer?' The old man replied, 'Yes son, I too have been observing you. What you say is right, but your angle of observation is wrong. Absolute poverty is my need and God has satisfied that need completely.'

The man then realised what the Sufi Master had meant when He spoke of true contentment and humility.

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Meher Baba and Cookies

When Meherwan came to Meherazad for his annual stay with

Baba, Kaikobad was confined to a wheelchair because of his fractured hip-joint. So that he would have proper medical treatment, Dr. Alu was called to stay at Meherazad in the small room at the end of the cottage verandah from where she could attend him.

One evening Eruch, Kaka, Meherwan, Najamai and Dr. Alu were sitting together outside Mandali Hall. There was no verandah then, and they sat on benches, having a little chat before retiring for the night. Suddenly Pendu appeared and said that Baba wanted Meherwan to go quickly to Him. Meherwan ran to Baba's room. It was quite dark, the only light a kerosene lantern on the outside ledge of the window, but he was able to see Baba sitting on the edge of the bed munching something.

Baba would become hungry in the night, and call for some little snack, or He would call Najamai and ask if there was any food for Him. At times He would say to Naja, 'Now don't keep any food for Me.' and He would say this very emphatically. Naja would reply, 'Yes Baba, I won't keep anything.' But she would keep something, and when called and tell Baba, 'Yes, there is something for You,' He would scold her for disobeying Him, and finish by saying, 'All right bring Me whatever you have kept!' These little exchanges were a delight for the watchman or whoever happened to be there.

So Baba gestured for Meherwan to come close, and He gave him a piece of a Parsi cookie sent to Baba by Gaimai. It is a sweet cookie made from wheat flour, butter and other ingredients, and Baba was very fond of them. Baba gestured to him to eat saying, 'See these cookies prepared by your mother are so hard - how can I chew them?' 'But Baba, the Doctor has said You are not to eat much of such things as butter and it is butter that makes them soft. Mama is thinking of Your health.' Baba waved that aside and gave Meherwan a different cookie. It was extremely soft and tasty, and it was clear that lots of butter had been used by the lover who had sent them to Him.

Baba said, 'Can you see the difference?' Meherwan replied, 'Yes Baba, but what can be done now?' Baba then changed the subject, asking, 'What were you doing when I called you?' 'The mandali and I were just chatting.' 'Who were there?' Meherwan listed all who were there, and Baba seemed unhappy to hear the list. Baba then sent Meherwan back to the men's side.

A little later Pendu appeared and told Naja that Baba did not approve of her being there, and sternly said she was to return to the women's side. With this poor Alu also fled, and to make sure the message was clear, Pendu pounded on her door, saying, 'Did you understand? Baba does not want you there chatting away! Stay in your room!' That is how strict Baba was with the rmandali even in those times.

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Beloved of the Beloved

One day God called Moses to Him and told him to convey this message to a certain individual: 'All your prayers, your remembrance of Me, your love for Me, are of no avail. Your name has already been entered in the book of the damned.'

Accordingly Moses conveyed the message to the old man, but to his utter surprise, on hearing it, the man was ecstatic. He jumped up and began to dance with extreme joy. Moses was astonished and asked if he had heard God's message correctly, and if he had, why this sudden outburst of joy.

The man answered, 'Moses, God has no need of me, but I have all need of Him. Until you brought His message, I thought that He was not even aware of my existence. but now I know He is, and my heart is over-flowing. From now on I shall increase my remembrance of Hirn ten-fold.'

Moses reported what had been said by the man, and God told Moses to return to the man and tell him, 'If you increase your

love and remembrance of Me ten-fold, We shall on Our part increase Our showers of blessings a hundred-fold.' As Moses was leaving the presence of God, God called him back and said, 'Oh, Moses, know the station of such lovers of Mine - far, far higher even than that of the prophets.'

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Meher Baba's Teeth

Although Baba took very good care of His teeth over the years, gradually He lost them all. By the commencement of the New Life, Baba had none of His own teeth left. The doctors thought that the absence of teeth was one of the reasons Baba suffered from stomach pains. He was always impatient over food, impatient over the time spent in eating, and so He tended to gulp down His food. As a result of all this, He then suffered stomach pains. The doctors thought that He should have dental plates and that these would naturally help in chewing and digesting His food.

So Eruch went to a Dr. Bharucha, a very good dentist of Poona, and without telling him Baba's name because he thought it would not be good to have such personal things bandied about in the market-place, he persuaded the dentist to come to where Baba was staying. After two or three visits, the plates were completed and fitted, and that was that. In the course of the visits, the dentist was drawn to Baba, and received Baba's blessing.

But later Baba complained that the plates were too heavy, that they were too awkward in His mouth, and finally He stopped using them.

Now the New Life came, and Baba continued to complain about stomach pains and indigestion. This distressed Eruch and he gave much thought to possible ways of helping. During the New Life they reached Hyderabad and, for some

time, Baba and His companions stayed there. Eruch began thinking of the Nizam of Hyderabad, that a person of such immense wealth must have the best of everything, and that only a dentist of exceptional skill would be used by him. Did the Nizam himself have plates? If so, were they of special material? And so, without telling Baba what was on his mind, he found out who was the royal dentist, and dressed in the New Life attire specified by Baba, gained an interview with him. The dentist was a Christian.

By this time Eruch's kafni was shabby and worn, and Eruch knew that he must look like a beggar, so he hastened to tell the dentist that he was not a beggar. He explained that he was travelling an elderly companion and a few others, living in a certain way without a regular home, and begging for their food. He said that his elderly companion would not come of His accord, but that He did need dental plates. Was it possible for the dentist to make very light dentures? What material would be used for dentures for the Nizam? What would be the cost, and how quickly could they be made? This was important in case Baba decided to leave Hyderabad sooner than presently indicated. Eruch still did not disclose Baba's name.

With satisfactory answers to his questions, Eruch returned to Baba and, emphasizing the light, transparent nature of the material used, persuaded Baba to come with him to the dentist. Within a short time, the dentures, both top and bottom, were made, and they were very satisfactory. The cost of one thousand rupees was paid with Baba's approval by the Arrangementwallas of the New Life.

Later Baba went to the West, and suffered the first car accident near Prague in the middle of America. At the time, He was wearing only the upper denture plate, and the force of the impact between the two cars caused the denture to be embedded in His lower gums.

After this Baba did not wear the plates again.

In that same accident, Beloved Baba's nose was also broken. Thereafter He complained of pain and discomfort in His nose particularly with a draught or breeze, but even at times when there was none. His nose had always been sensitive, and He had disliked moving air and breeze, and particularly wind blowing in His face, because this made Him sneeze. Meherwan recalls an occasion he was with Baba on a walk, when unexpectedly a strong wind began to blow, and immediately Baba had a severe bout of sneezing, and He went on sneezing for sometime.

But the accident had intensified the sensitivity of Baba's nose, and Eruch became very concerned with this continuing discomfort and attempted to discuss the matter in medical terms with Baba's doctors. They held that nothing could be done, but Eruch was not satisfied and sought to locate the best Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist in Poona. He then went to see him, and gave him details of his 'elder brother's' condition without revealing Baba's name. Eruch was told the likely reason for the pain, and assured that the solution was a simple, twenty-minute, although rather painful, operation. So Eruch made a tentative appointment.

On returning to Baba, Eruch suggested a drive, and Baba looked puzzled and asked why a drive. But Eruch remained suitably evasive, yet persuasive, and Baba agreed. When they arrived outside the doctor's clinic, Eruch confessed all to Baba as they sat in the car.

Finally Baba agreed to the operation, and it was accordingly done, apparently successful.

It transpired that the doctor knew of Baba, was delighted that He was his mysterious patient and to receive His blessing. It was another matter with Baba's doctors. They were quite displeased that Eruch had organised an operation without their approval.

Baba complained of a smell in His nose for days after the operation, and, although it was only supposed to take a few

days, the healing from the operation took about a month. But even then and thereafter Baba's nose was ultra-sensitive to cold and breeze.

(This I can verify because one of my vivid memories of Beloved Baba's 1958 visit to Australia, is of Baba holding a handkerchief to His nose in the cool early morning in the Brisbane Hotel where He stayed the night. Baba spoke to Francis and myself at the time about the sensitive condition of His nose.)

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Total Reliance on God.

Bayazid of Bistam, the Qutub-e-Irshad of His time, as a young child attended a school where he was taught the Koran. One day the class teacher said to the students, 'About two years ago, I went on pilgrimage to Mecca, and putting my trust in God, journeyed with only two dirhems in my pocket.' Bayazid, who even as a child showed the mark of greatness inherent in him, stood up and said, 'Respected Sir, you say you went on pilgrimage putting all your trust in God?' The teacher agreed, and Bayazid said, 'If you put all your trust in God, may I know what the two dirhems were doing in your pocket?'

The teacher knew then that Bayazid was destined to be a great Teacher and Master in his own right.

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Sari al-Saqati

There is a beautiful story of how Sari al-Saqati entered the spiritual Path. Sari al-Saqati was the maternal uncle of Junaid, and He gave Enlightenment to Junaid, who then became the Qutub-e-Irshad of His time.

Sari al-Saqati was a rich jeweler, and he had a slave. One day

as he was having a feast of good food and drink with wealthy friends, they said to him, 'That slave of yours is a ghost. Every night he goes to the graveyard, opens up the graves, robs the bodies and sells what he collects. This is how he earns money.' Sari al-Saqati was shocked, but being sensible he decided to investigate the story for himself. A night or two later he followed the slave. Sure enough the slave went to the graveyard, but instead of opening any grave, the slave dug a hole. Then he sat in that hole, chained himself, and spent the whole night in prayers to God.

At about four o'clock in the morning, the slave undid his chains and went to the Mosque for the morning prayers. Sari al-Saqati carefully followed him, observing his every move. After the prayers were over and the congregation had departed, the slave, now alone in the Mosque, raised his hands to Allah and said, 'Allah, all I want to do in this world is to love You, to remember You and serve You. But You have made me a slave, and as such I must work for my worldly master. If You can, by Your Grace, free me from my master, then I can devote all my time to You.' As he held his open, upraised hands to Allah, a ray of light fell on his palms and turned into a golden dinar.

Then he left the Mosque to return to his master intending to seek his freedom with that gold Dinar. But as he did so, Sari al-Saqati seized his hand, and said, 'As of today I am your slave and you are my master.' The slave replied, 'I have nothing to do with this world. If you have freed me, then let me depart - I long to serve my Beloved and no-one else.' 'You are free. Go, but before doing so, teach me, I implore you, how to enter this Path that you are obviously traversing already.' 'I give you three hints - take care of them each. First and foremost, turn aside from this world, and having done so, never turn back to give it another glance. Secondly, avoid human company and make the Lord your only companion. Thirdly, eat, drink and sleep in moderation so that these do not become a barrier between you and your Beloved.'

This advice Sari al-Saqati took to heart and thus became a Master.

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VISHNU

Vishnumaster joined Meher Baba as one of the mandali in the early nineteen-twenties. For long periods he was responsible for supplies for the ashram, and because of the number of people in the ashram, and the different items that needed to be purchased, Vishnu would make a list of the items before setting out for the market place. At 3.30 p.m. Baba would ask Vishnu for an account of the expenditure and required an exact balancing of the money spent with the money left over.

One day as he was about to depart for the marketing, a message came from Beloved Baba's Mehera to purchase four lemons for her. Leaving as he was at that moment, Vishnu did not add the item to his list but fulfilled the request.

At 3.30 p.m. came the accounting with Baba, and there was the discrepancy of one anna between his purchases and money returned. "What did you buy for one anna?"

Vishnu could not remember. "Did you have a cup of tea? Did you lose it?" No matter the prompting from Baba, Vishnu could not remember what had happened to the one anna. 'So,' continued Baba, 'until you do remember, you are to fast.'

Two days passed and Vishnu fasted, still not being able to account for the anna. On the third day, while He was with His women mandali, Baba casually remarked about Vishnu, 'Vishnu does not remember what happened to one anna - perhaps he lost it, or perhaps he spent it on some vegetable.' Mehera said, 'Baba, I had requested him to buy four lemons. Could that have cost one anna?'

Baba came down from the Hill and called Vishnu to Him. 'Do

you remember?' 'No, Baba.' 'Did you purchase some lemons?' 'Oh yes Baba, I did. And they cost one anna.' 'All right,' said Baba, 'now you can go and break your fast.'

A beautiful example of Baba's discipline in the ashram, of His attention to every detail no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, and of His mandali's acceptance of His orders no matter how exacting or seemingly harsh.

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Free Will

No question has been asked so often by so many people from all walks of life as the question: is there free will? There appears to be, yet all religions, all spiritual schools of thought declare that not even a leaf, a blade of grass can move without our Beloved's Will. If this is so, then where is the free will? So the figure has been given in spiritual tradition, of a cow tethered to a rope about fifty metres long, with the rope tied to an iron post firmly embedded in the earth. The length of the rope, about fifty metres, is the extent of the free will of the cow. The iron post to which the rope is attached is the Will of God, our Beloved Meher Baba.

However Beloved Baba has given us something much more precious than free will. He has given us discrimination, and this what our Beloved taught us in His Gita, when He walked His earth as Lord Krishna: 'Arjun, thinking of sense objects will attach you to sense objects; grow attached you become addicted; thwart your addiction and you become angry; become angry and you confuse your mind; confuse your mind and you forget the lessons of discrimination; lose discrimination and you have lost life's only purpose.' So, what then is discrimination?

An incident from the life of Abu Said, a great Sufi Master, once described by another Master as 'the royal Falcon of the Way', throws light on the question. Three youngsters desiring

to become His disciples visited Abu Said, and He directed that they should be segregated from each other. After a short time the Master called the first aspirant to Him, made him feel comfortable and relaxed, and then put this question to him, 'If you found a purse full with money, and you knew to whom the purse belonged, would you return it to the owner?' The aspirant boldly answered, 'Of course I would.' Abu Said smiled and said, 'You are a fool,' and sent him packing. The young man was most happy to go thinking that he had just escaped from a false master.

The second aspirant was then brought to the Master, and the same question was put to him. He answered, 'Do You think I am a fool? Of course I would keep the purse for myself.' Abu Said looked at him and said, 'Not only are you lost to this world, but also to the world to come,' and sent him off.

The third aspirant was brought to the Master, and given the same question. The man answered, 'If at that time, honesty, integrity and fear of consequence prevailed, I would return the purse to the rightful owner: if however, dishonesty and the desire to steal prevailed, then I would keep the purse for myself. Whatever it be, will happen according to Allah's Will.' Abu Said smiled and gave orders that this third aspirant be accepted into the ashram.

This is discrimination - to know what would please the Beloved and what would displease Him - the most precious gift given by Him to His creation.

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Food

In the early years of Beloved Baba's stay at Guruprasad, all the food for Him and the mandali came from Bindra House. But Baba called more and more people to stay for lunch, and the pressure on Naja and the 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 Dorabji offered to send the food, and Baba accepted the offer, but insisted that some payment be made. This was set at Rs.1 per head, and delicious meals of vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes were hence provided.

One day Baba expressed tiredness, and announcing that He was retiring, told all there to have their lunch. Now our Parsi community is fond of jokes and pranks, and Nariman and Meherji decided to tease Sadshiv Patel, a Hindu by birth and therefore vegetarian. So as they went to the lunch, they lightly prodded Patel, saying, 'Patel, why are you still eating vegetarian food?! You have been with Baba for so many years, and you still cling to your vegetarian food! Come on, have a change, have some non-vegetarian food.' Patel said, 'No, it is not religious scruples that make me stick to this food, but from my childhood I have never eaten non-vegetarian food, and it just doesn't appeal to me. But if you want me to do so, then I'll have some right now.' Nariman and Meherji immediately backed off, saying, 'No, no we are only teasing you. We are not serious.'

But Eruch, sitting nearby writing letters, overheard the conversation, and when Baba returned to the Hall, brought up the subject of food. You know, when Beloved Baba would come into the Mandali Hall and sit, He would then fold His hands to us, and gesture to us to sit down. And sometimes as He folded His hands, such beautiful hands, I would see an expression of pensive sadness, and I would think: there is the very Heart of eternity, and I do not have the courage to enter it.

After Eruch had narrated what had been said about food, Baba replied, 'No one sitting here is so very important that God is standing behind your chair watching what you are eating.' These were His very words. On the spiritual Path vegetarian and non-vegetarian food has no meaning at all -

except that a vegetarian should not take pride in that, nor a non-vegetarian look down on a vegetarian.

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Love

Avatar Meher Baba in His discourses has spoken of love: In worldly love it is expressed as one falling in love. In Divine Love one never falls in love, one rises in love.

At its very apex, worldly love with an all-consuming passion, can bring one to the very threshold of Divine Love, and Beloved Baba has given as an example the story of the love of Majnun for his Layla. 'Majnun loved Layla. This was pure love, not physical, not intellectual, but spiritual love. He saw Layla in everything and everywhere. He never thought of eating, drinking, sleeping, without thinking of her, and all the time he wanted her happiness. He would have gladly seen her married to another if he knew that would make her happy, and die for her husband if he thought she would be happy in that. At last it led him to Me - no thought of self, but of the beloved, every second and continually.'

Bayazid of Bistam once made a cryptic remark whilst with His disciples, 'I learnt of love from a common criminal.' He then went to narrate the following story: I was at one time strolling through the marketplace in Baghdad, and I saw a criminal being whipped heavily for some crime of his. His whole back was lacerated and bled profusely, yet what surprised Me most was the expression on his face. There was a smile on his lips, a shine in his eyes and his whole face bore a joyfulness that bordered on ecstasy.

After the flogging was over and the crowd had dispersed, I approached the man and revived him. With his head in My lap I told what I had observed of him, and asked the reason for such joy that he seemed to be totally unaware of his harsh

punishment. He said to Me: 'I am deeply in love with a certain woman, and I have tried my utmost to win her, but to absolutely no avail. She even shuns my very presence and cannot bear my approaching her. Today whilst I was being punished I saw my beloved in the crowd. Seeing my pitiable condition, there were tears in her eyes. For those tears in her eyes, I would undergo the same punishment a hundred times over.'

Bayazid then said to His disciples, 'I realised that such depth of love was the only way one should and must love God.'

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Gustadji

The story of Gustadji's coming to Meher Baba is a very beautiful one.

He came to the Perfect Master Sai Baba seeking God-realisation, but Sai Baba totally ignored him. While Sai Baba made sure that everyone with Him was well fed, He acted as though Gustadji did not exist and so Gustadji literally lived on boiled grass for six months. After this period Gustadji decided any further stay with Sai Baba was impossible, and he resolved to return to Bombay the next morning. Being a sensible man, he had retained Rs.50 in his trunk as an emergency, and so had money for his travel expenses.

That evening Sai Baba announced that He had a serious problem and needed Rs.50 immediately. He promised to return in time, not Rs.50, but Rs.500 to the man giving Him the money. Gustadji gave no sign that he had heard, and Sai Baba said again that the matter was urgent and repeated the promise of a ten-fold return on the money. Gustadji continued to ignore Sai Baba. A third time Sai Baba asked and again no response from Gustadji. At this Sai Baba jumped up seemingly angry, and grabbed Gustadji, 'You have Rs.50 in

your trunk - why don't you answer Me?!' At this Gustadji lost his temper, 'For six months I have been with You, and You don't even look at me! I have to eat boiled grass to live!'

Sai Baba, the perfect actor, exclaimed, 'Oh! Is that so? I'm so sorry But in the meantime get Me those Rs.50!' The money was given, and the next day He gave orders that Gustadji should be given food like everyone else.

During his stay with Sai Baba, Gustadji was harassed no end every day from morning to evening by a half-mad, half-mast-like resident there. He would force poor Gustadji to lift one end of a long and very heavy steel girder lying in the open compound, while he himself lifted the other end. He would then make Gustadji, with himself, carry the girder back and forth from one end of the compound to the other. This exertion, with almost nothing to eat except boiled grass reduced Gustadji to mere skin and bone. Although Sai Baba was fully aware of Gustadji's plight, He allowed Gustadji to undergo this ordeal as if to prepare him for the spiritual life he was destined to lead later with the Avatar of this age - Meher Baba!

Later He sent Gustadji to Upasni Maharaj who sent him to Meher Baba.

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Around the mid-1950's Meher Baba was in Satara and Gustadji was with Him. One day Eruch seemingly received a postcard from Kaka Baria whom Baba had left as caretaker of Meherazad. In it Kaka mentioned that a certain person, Krishnaji, had come from Dehra Dun to stay at Meherazad, and that he had come without suitable clothing for the very, very cold weather at Meherazad. So he had forced Kaka much against his will to open Gustadji's trunk and give Krishnaji all his woollen clothing, and now Krishnaji was warm and happy. Gustadji was a fair-skinned man with a round, open face and

contented expression, but on reading the postcard, his face became red like a pomegranate.

Baba then joined in, 'Has Kaka Baria gone mad?! How the hell could he do such a thing with your clothing, Gustadji?! Just open your trunk! We could take him to court for this - its thievery!' Gustadji was jumping up and down in rage, saying to Baba, 'Give me 24 hours, I beg of You, and send me to Meherazad, and I'll squeeze his neck and finish him! Then I'll return.' After another moment or two, again, 'How dare he do this!' Then turning to Eruch he gestured that Kaka should be instructed to remove all the clothes worn by Krishnaji from his trunk and burn them. To add to his grievance, Gustadji knew Krishna and had little respect for him, and certainly did not want him wearing his, Gustadji's, clothes! Baba again fuelled Gustadji's rage, 'Yes, I too am surprised that Kaka could act in such a manner!'

Gustadji continued to fume and rant (of course all in his own unique sign language) and jump up and down for a time, and only then did Baba point out to him that the postcard had not come from Meherazad and had been posted in Satara, 'See the post mark - I told the mandali to write it. Everything is all right.' Gustadji stopped in his tracks as Baba gestured, and suddenly all his agitation subsided and he smiled good-naturedly back at Baba. Baba said that since Gustadji was not feeling well and had developed flu and a higher temperature that morning, He felt concerned for him and so called off the joke so soon!

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I Am Not My Brother's Keeper

Ali, the son-in-law of his Beloved Mohammed, was the fourth Caliph of the Islamic world. Until he was persuaded to become Caliph against his wishes, Ali lived quietly for some fifteen years on an estate remote from the turmoil of the

growing empire. He was content to dwell thus undisturbed in the living remembrance of His Beloved Lord. He had however a neighbour who sought in every possible way to make Ali's life a trial and tribulation. He hindered Ali's farming in every way he could, he slandered and abused and harassed him at every opportunity. But Ali never retaliated, was always quietly courteous and loving towards his neighbour, accepting without protest whatever was poured on him or whatever damaged his farm. This one-sided warfare went on for some years.

Then one day the Lord touched the neighbour's heart, and he came to Ali in distress and begged his forgiveness for his past behaviour. Ali replied, 'You are asking of me the impossible.' But the man continued to plead for forgiveness, reminding Ali that he was known as the lion of Islam, so called by the Prophet Himself. Then Ali said, 'In order to forgive you, I would have to sit in judgement over your actions, and the Lord has not sent me into this world to sit in judgement on my fellowmen, nor am my brother's keeper. Allah alone is the Judge and the Giver of forgiveness. But I can do one thing - I can embrace you as my brother. Let us hence forth live as brothers in peace and harmony, for has not our Lord said, 'Harmony is the imprint of oneness on multiplicity.'

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The Farmer

In the early years at Meherabad a nearby farmer became very close to Beloved Baba, and he would often sit with the mandali as one of them. All was well with him, except that he had a persistent back ache which gave him considerable pain and interrupted his work. But he did not complain to Baba about his condition and pain. One day when he was present, Baba complained about the effect the buffalo milk that He was given each day was having on His stomach, and He

turned to the farmer and asked about his one cow. 'But Baba, she only gives barely a cup of milk each day.' Baba replied, 'Never mind, bring Me tomorrow whatever milk you get from her. Do not keep any of it for yourself.'

The next morning the farmer appeared with about two litres of milk, not the cupful that he normally got. Seeing this, Baba appeared as though angry, and said sternly, 'You liar, you said you only ever receive a cup of milk daily!' and with that He struck the farmer such a blow that he banged against the wall, hitting his back as he did so. When he arose he found that his back pain had disappeared, and it never returned.

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Some Little Anecdotes as Told by Mani:

One day Baba gave an analogy of a person wanting to know what God Realization is. He said we must understand that asking what God Realization is can be compared to a child asking to have marriage explained to him. How do you tell a child about marriage? That is, marriage in the sense of the sexual relationship between husband and wife. The child wants to know, so, in great detail you describe the wedding to the child: what the bride wore; how many layers the cake had; when the minister came; that the bride wore such and such a veil; how they went to church; how the bridesmaids were dressed.

When the child grows up and experiences what marriage is, you don't have to tell him and he doesn't ask.

All that I tell you about God-Realization is purely about the wedding. When you know about the marriage there is silence, because you know from experience itself.

Here is another of those little sermons by which Baba would teach us the most simple things. When Baba would come over from the women's quarters to be with the men in

mandali hall, Peter the cocker spaniel would follow Him with his ears flopping. Baba would sit on His chair, Eruch would come in with the mail and the other mandali would come and sit in their usual places. Peter would be at Baba's feet and after a while he would lie down. He would feel so relaxed, so trusting, so happy to be with Baba, that he would go to sleep. After going to sleep, he had a habit of snoring and he snored like a human. I remember once in Baba's room, when I was reading a book to Baba, suddenly in the midst of the reading I heard this snore. I couldn't believe it. Which one of us was doing that? We were in front of Baba. But everyone was wide awake and then from under the chair we heard another snore ... it was Peter.

Just inside the door of mandali hall two bells were kept. When the bigger bell was rung we knew that Goher was wanted by Baba, and when the smaller bell was rung we knew that it was for me. One day when the little bell rang, I came running. Baba, with a twinkle in His eye and a mocked helplessness, said, "Look at Peter." There was Peter lying down very happy and snoring away. I laughed and said, "Baba shall I take him away?" He said, "No, no." So I went back to my work. A few moments later the little bell rang again. This time Peter was not only fast asleep, but he was having a dream, and it was a very exciting dream. He was so excited in his sleep that he was making noises with his mouth and his paws were going so many cycles to the second! He was so excited that he was frowning. If he had been any other sort of dog his ears would have been up, but being a cocker his ears came altogether over his eyes and gave him a Carol Lombard look.

Baba said, "Peter thinks that he is chasing some wild animal or that some wild animal is chasing him, and that he is going over mountains or through deserts, that he is going through so much, yet really he is not. All the time he is lying safe and sound at My feet." I said, "Oh yes, Baba!" It was only afterwards that I realised what a wonderful discourse it was. Even while we are thinking that we are going through so much, that we are striving, and suffering, Baba tells us not to

worry because He knows that we are safe and sound at His feet. He doesn't tell us not to worry in the sense that a doctor would tell a patient. It is not advice. When Baba said a thing it was with the authority of supreme knowledge, knowing everything. So when He says be happy, don't worry, He knows that there is no reason to worry.

For instance, when I read a book to Baba (and Baba being all-knowing would appear unknowing, because He would play the game perfectly) - when I was reading a book usually He would have me stop at a very critical juncture - where Pauline was hanging over the cliff or something, and we didn't know if the train would be going over her or not - and we were told not to look to see what happened ... not to look further to find out. Baba would then ask me, "Do you think there will be a happy ending?" I would say, "Well Baba, we can't look, so we will know tomorrow." But then Baba always liked a happy ending, That is because His story, the story of His creation, has a happy ending. We are simply going through chapters. But somebody who has read the book and who knows the end, can very authoritatively say, "Don't worry, don't worry," while you are in the midst of a chapter which is terrible. So whenever we go through something that seems so difficult, so disagreeable, don't worry, remember it is only a chapter ... the next chapter may be different. When the end of the story comes, the story is finished. So, we might as well enjoy the story while we are in it too.

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'Thank you'

A young Egyptian was one of the disciples of the great Sufi Master Zu-el-Noon, a fisherman by background. The young man came from a very rich and aristocratic family, and the Master gave him the order to utilise his vast wealth in the upkeep and running of the ashram. This the disciple did diligently over the years, yet he became more and more

aware and upset that the Master totally ignored him, not even once offering thanks for all the wealth he gave, and the work he did for the ashram. The time came when he had no more wealth left, and then he thought to himself with some pride and arrogance, 'Now let us see how they manage the ashram without my help.'

That night the Master called the disciple to His room, and after some talk, directed the man to bring Him a handful of white clay that was visible outside the room. When the clay was brought to the Master, He casually began to press it in His hands. Within a short time the clay became a beautiful and precious ruby, the size of a duck's egg. The Master then gave it to the young man, and told him to take it to the market place, and find out the value of the ruby from the jewellers, but not to sell it. Accordingly the next morning, the man took the ruby to the jewellers, and, to his utter surprise, found the value of the stone was exactly equal to the amount he had spent on the ashram.

He returned to the ashram, and told the Master the stone's value. When the Master asked him how much had he spent all those years in the service of the ashram, the man confessed it was the exact value of the ruby. The Master told him to smash the stone, and then said, 'You came to Me for spiritual enlightenment, and the maintenance of the ashram was the task I gave you. You did carry out My order, but all the time the thought was there that you were obliging Me and your fellow disciples. It was an opportunity I gave you to serve, otherwise I am fully capable of running My ashram Myself. Also be aware that had I even once acknowledged your presence and said, 'Thank you, you would have had your reward in this world only. Whereas I wanted you to have your true reward in Allah's Darbar. Go now, remove such thoughts of self, and serve again the ashram with love and diligence.'

The man bowed at his Master's feet, and begged His forgiveness and expressed his desire to serve as his Master wished, 'But Master I have no wealth left of my own.' The

Master embraced him, forgiving him and told him not to be concerned. Sure enough in little time he regained his lost wealth, and began this time to serve the ashram as the Master wished.

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Pilgrimage as Told by Eruch:

The Prophet Mohammed laid down that His followers should make a pilgrimage to the Kaaba at Mecca at least once in their lifetime, and that the Kaaba be circumambulated on a particular day. This was incumbent on all true believers.

There was at one time a man who with very great difficulty saved enough money to make this pilgrimage as enjoined by the Prophet. He was an ordinary labourer and he had had to toil long hours to earn sufficient for the journey. At the same time that he set off, there was from elsewhere a whole tribe who also set forth on pilgrimage to Mecca. There were men, women and children, and the leader was a very pious man intent on fulfilling the Islamic law. The tribe were thus hurried along by the leader to ensure that they arrived at Mecca on that special day, as he knew there was no time to lose.

But while they were travelling, one of the women of the tribe neared the point of child-birth. It is clear that she would soon deliver the child, and for that she must cease travelling and stay on the roadside. After the birth, the leader of the tribe, bound by the traditions, said: We must leave the woman and hasten to reach the Kaaba by the date. God will surely take care of the woman, because we are all heading towards Him. It is His duty.

And what happened to the woman left with a new-born babe alone on the roadside? God does take care of her - through the man who had with the greatest difficulty earned enough for the pilgrimage. On his journey he found the woman distressed and alone, and he stayed with her and helped her.

But in doing so he missed the central point of the pilgrimage, the circumambulation of the Kaaba on the set date.

In due course, the tribe returned, headed by the pious man, and camped again where the woman and the man stayed. The man was relieved. The husband was now with the woman, and so he bade them goodbye and left to complete at least his journey to the Kaaba even though he thought now that the spiritual value had been lost.

During the night the pious man had a dream, and in that dream he heard a Voice saying: Of all the thousands of people who have gone on the pilgrimage this time, only the pilgrimage of one is accepted by Me. The pious man asked:

My Lord, whose pilgrimage have You accepted? Who is the blessed one? And the Lord answered: The one who looked after the mother and child.

What truly matters is the longing to be in the place of pilgrimage, to be in His presence, to keep Him company, not necessarily to be there physically.

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Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 5, para 2, line 16, Tolkin's changed to Tolkien's
Page 11, para 2, line 5, trouped changed to trooped
Page 12, para 3, line 10, "was would" changed to "would"
Page 14, para 1, line 3, Amirtithi changed to Amartithi
Page 14, para 3, line 4, "it is" changed to "it"
Page 32, para 2, line 14, "had" changed to "had to"
Page 36, para 2, line 5, its changed to it's
Page 36, para 3, line 2, least changed to lest
Page 63, para 1, line 9, it's changed to its
Page 65, para 3, line 1, "made had" changed to "had made"
Page 69, para 3, line 1, was changed to would
Page 83, para 4, line 5, pending changed to impending
Page 103, para 2, line 1, Lonalva changed to Lonavla
Page 114, para 2, line 10, padded changed to pounded
Page 125, para 1, line 9, "leave" changed to "would leave"
Page 139, para 2, line 11, Amirtithi changed to Amartithi,
Page 150, para 1, line 9, that changed to than
Page 155, para 3, line 16, enquires changed to enquiries
Page 158, para 3, line 6, its changed to it's

To penetrate into the essence of all being and significance, and to release the fragrance of that inner attainment for the guidance and benefit of others, by expressing in the world of forms, truth, love, purity and beauty- this is the sole game which has any intrinsic and absolute worth.

All other happenings, incidents and attainments can, in themselves, have no lasting importance.

Meher Baba