

## **Surrendering to Him**

By Rhoda Adi Dubash

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by Rhoda Adi Dubash

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# Surrendering to Him



## My Life with Meher Baba

Rhoda Adi Dubash

# **Surrendering to Him**

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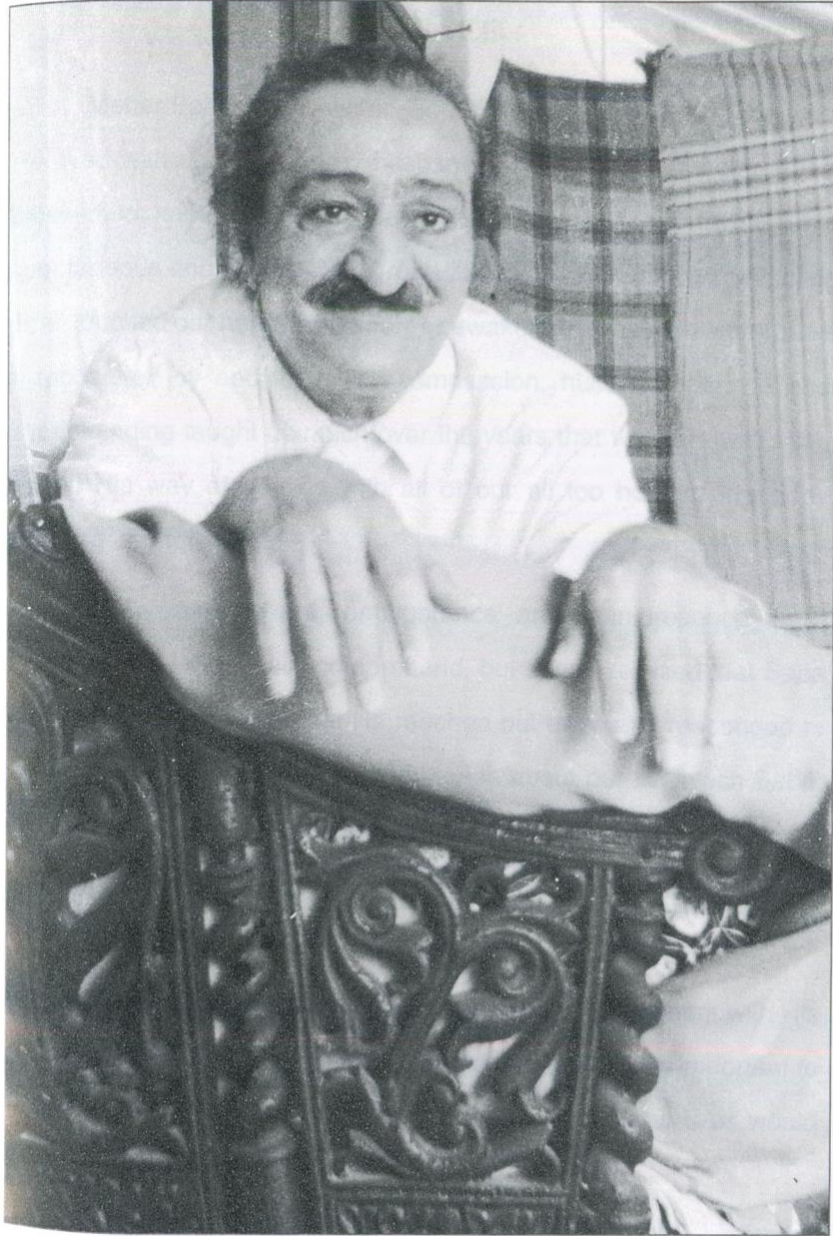
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**Avtar Meher Baba**



## PREFACE

Meher Baba is the Avatar, God in human form. During the time He lived with us as man, my husband Adi and I were among those blessed to know Him and spend time with Him. His love - pure, spontaneous and divine - was irresistible. No human being could ever have touched our hearts so deeply or awakened in us such a profound response of joy and love. His compassion, humour, patience and understanding taught us much over the years that we were with Him, as did His way of dealing with all of our all too human errors, by forgiving and forgetting.

In my early years, omnipotence and omnipresence were concepts that I didn't fully comprehend, but soon I realized that Baba knew our every thought, that He reached out to us and responded to our silent yearnings. The following stories about our lives with Baba, about my questions and doubts and the way He entered my life and changed everything, illustrate some of the many beautiful qualities of the Divine Beloved.

Baba's influence on our lives did not stop for a moment with His passing away in 1969. Today Meher Baba remains just as important to us as He was during His time on earth. Without Him our lives would have no meaning. He is everything.

Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!



Dedicated to

**Avatar Meher Baba, the Eternal Beloved**



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Loving hands and hearts have helped me throughout the publication of this book. With thanks to Marlena Applebaum, who recorded many of the stories contained herein, to Nancy Wall who helped with the organization and writing, to Kristin Crawford for proofreading the manuscript, and to my husband Adi and son Merwan who encouraged me to keep at it until it was finished.

As I was working on the final proofs of the book, Beloved Baba called Adi back Home to Himself, on 4 August 2001.

Before *Surrendering to Him* was printed, Rhoda herself went to Baba, only six weeks after Adi, on 19 September 2001, hence this publication is posthumous.

CHAPTER ONE



*Rhoda, early 1940s*

I first heard of Meher Baba when I was a child. I belong to the Parsi community, followers of Lord Zoroaster. In this Avataric period Meher Baba took birth into this community, and it is a known, historical fact that the Avatar is always persecuted most by His own people. During the time I am talking about, the late twenties and early thirties, there were around 5,000 Parsis in Karachi, Pakistan,

where I was living. Among them only four or five were disciples of Meher Baba. Most members of the community were, one might say, indifferent, and some were anti-Baba.

When I was growing up, I did know one follower of Meher Baba quite well. We had for a neighbour a Parsi lady, Khorshed Pastakia, who was His disciple. Her front door was always open to us, and she was like a second mother to me and my two sisters. She had married late in life, but a daughter was born to her and her husband, and they

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were very happy. A few years after the birth of their daughter, when Khorshed was pregnant with their second child, her husband's appendix burst. In those days, before penicillin or antibiotic drugs, a burst appendix was nearly always fatal. Only a few months later Khorshed was taken to the hospital to deliver her second child. While she was in labour, she shouted Baba's name repeatedly, but her child was stillborn, and she herself also died. The whole Parsi community of Karachi was in an uproar over all these deaths. "See what happens to the followers of Meher Baba? One dies of a burst appendix and now the other has died in childbirth," people said smugly to one another. And this episode led to the circulation of a number of malicious rumours about Baba.

Although I had from childhood believed that God existed, I saw Him as distant and looked upon Him with awe. My sisters and I were raised to believe that if we did something wrong, God would punish us. We were taught to fear Him, but nobody ever told us about loving Him. I must have trusted Him though, for Him to have helped me in difficult situations. Once I called out to Him for help. I was with Adi Dubash, with whom I was going steady. We were sitting on our motorcycle and chatting away in an open *maidan*, a vacant lot. On one side of the open space were military barracks pretty far from where we were sitting. All of a sudden, stones started falling all around us as if there

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was a bombardment, and we could not move. Out of nowhere, one of the senior military personnel appeared beside us and the bombardment suddenly stopped. He asked Adi what we were doing there. Adi replied that he was just talking with his sister. Then he warned us that the people surrounding us were no good and that we should get out of there as fast as we could. Adi tried and tried to start the motorcycle, but it would not respond. Terrified, I silently called out, *please, God, help us*. In a split second of my calling, the motorcycle started and we sped away safely. That experience confirmed my belief in God, but He still seemed quite remote to me.



A few years later, in February of 1945, after Adi and I had become engaged, I accompanied Adi, his mother (known as Mummy"), and Minoo Kharas, a close family friend, to Bombay.

Mummy was to have an operation while we were there, and I had gone along both to be with her and to shop for my wedding trousseau. The day before Mummy's operation, while we were at the hospital, I received some most unexpected news. Mummy, Minoo and I were alone in her private room. Naturally, Mummy was upset about the operation, and she was softly crying. Trying to console her, Minoo said

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to her, "Why are you crying? You should be happy that you are living during the time of the living prophet."

I pricked up my ears. "Living prophet? Who is the living prophet?"

"Meher Baba," Minoo answered spontaneously.

I gaped at him, absolutely aghast. "What?" I exclaimed. "You believe in Meher Baba?"

"Yes," said Minoo.

A sudden thought seized me. "Does Adi believe in Meher Baba?" "Yes, hasn't he told you?" Then Minoo realized that he had blundered in telling me about Adi's belief in Baba like that, and he awkwardly repeated his words.

Mummy stopped crying and the three of us sat there in uncomfortable silence. Because I had grown up in an anti-Baba atmosphere, this news came as a terrible shock, particularly since I had gone steady with Adi for seven years before we became engaged.

Regular visiting hours for the hospital started at 5:00 in the evening, so I went to the top of the second-storey staircase to wait for Adi to arrive. It was a big hospital, and at 5:00 a steady flow of humanity started to pour up the staircase - doctors, nurses, and

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visitors. As I waited at the top, I saw Adi among all those people. I cupped my hands and shouted down at him, "Adi!"

He looked up.

"Adi, do you believe in Meher Baba?" I shouted down to him.

Adi stared at me, but he didn't answer. He just kept coming up the staircase. He must have thought me mad!

As he came toward me, I reached for his hand. The only thing I could say was to repeat, "Adi, do you believe in Meher Baba?"

"Yes," he replied calmly.

"Adi, all these years we went steady and you never told me that you believe in Meher Baba?"

He just looked at me innocently. "Well, you never asked me," he said.

That night, although Mummy had a private nurse with her, the doctor, who was a family friend, allowed me to stay. I was given the couch in the waiting room to sleep on, but I couldn't get to sleep. I tossed and turned, terribly frightened. I cried and cried until my pillow was soaked with tears. I just didn't know what to do, where to turn. Here was a man I loved dearly, but he believed in Meher Baba, and I did not want to become involved with this Meher Baba. I thought of Khorshed Pastakia, our old family friend. I didn't want to die from a



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burst appendix or in childbirth. As dawn approached, I finally made my decision. I loved Adi too much to let him go. I would marry him. But I resolved to bring about a change of heart in him so that instead of going to Meher Baba, he would go in the opposite direction. Believe me, I was absolutely certain that I could take him away from Meher Baba. Little did I suspect that my plan would backfire and I would be the one to have a change of heart and find myself caught in the Divine Fisherman's net!

Mummy's operation took place the following morning, and everything went well. A few days later we left for Karachi, where our wedding day was fixed for 1 July 1945.



During the months between our stay in Bombay and the wedding, I naturally spent a great deal of time with Adi's family, and whenever Mummy, Minoo Kharas (who was almost family) and I were together, they cleverly steered the conversation to talk of Meher Baba. I didn't really want to hear what they were saying, but etiquette demanded that I sit and listen. I couldn't very well get up and walk out of the room. And as I listened to them, the thought came to me that here were people who had met Meher Baba, and they were giving me

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quite a different version of Him than the one I had heard as a child. But even so, I wasn't interested in Baba, and I didn't give Him much thought.

Then, just two days before the wedding, I was all alone in our new flat, arranging things, when suddenly I stopped. I remembered that ever since I was a schoolgirl I had wished that on the day of my wedding God would bless my marriage by sending a few drops of rain. Spontaneously I sent a silent challenge to Meher Baba, who was then in Ahmednagar. *If You are who they say You are, You'll send me heaven's blessings on my wedding day.* And as soon as I had sent my silent challenge, I forgot all about it.

Two days later our wedding day dawned, bright and clear, just as we expected. Karachi is in a desert, and in those days what little rain it had during the year usually came in the winter. The wedding was to be a grand event with a thousand guests invited, as Adi was the first son in his family to marry. Back then we didn't have big hotels in which to hold weddings and receptions, so ours was to take place in the gardens of our Parsi Club, on the beautiful green lawn, surrounded by flowers. The invitations were for 6:00 in the evening, with the ceremony to start at 6:30. At about 5:30 dark clouds began to roll across the sky from every direction. I was, at this time, being given a holy bath, part of the preparation for a traditional Parsi wedding, so I

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didn't see the clouds arrive. But Adi later told me it seemed as though someone were literally rolling the clouds across the sky until they were directly *over us*, and the rain poured down.

Karachi is never prepared for heavy rain, and in half an hour all the streets were flooded. Traffic came to a standstill in places. One of the only ways to get through the deep puddles was to take a horse buggy, but few of these were available. The rain caused such havoc that of the thousand invited guests, only about one hundred and fifty were able to be there. The head priest, who was to perform the ceremony, literally had to be carried through knee-deep water from his flooded house to the car that was bringing him to the wedding. Of course, all the decorations in the garden were drenched except for the two wedding chairs where the couple sit while the ceremony is performed. Someone rescued these and brought them inside.

As my family and I were being driven to the ceremony in my dad's car, my mother burst into tears. A close family friend who was accompanying us asked her, "Why are you crying? God has come to your daughter's wedding!" Hearing that, I was startled, suddenly remembering my silent challenge to Meher Baba. *Is it possible? Could this be His doing?* But I pushed the thought aside, concerned with the water that was pouring into the car through the sun roof, which was not properly closed. By the time we arrived at the Parsi Club, my beautiful

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white bridal sari was streaked with yellow, green and red from the colored paper used to decorate the car. I didn't have time to fret over my appearance, though, as the ceremony was about to start. And when it was finished, the rain had stopped, and the wet garden looked beautiful. The next day and all the days that followed for several months were bright and sunny. And I didn't think again of God having blessed my wedding for a long time to come.



There is a sequel to the story of the rain that fell on my wedding day, and to tell it I have to jump forward many years. But I want to make it very clear that it was not because of the rain at my wedding that I accepted Meher Baba as God. No, far from it. For some time I continued to have doubts about who He was.

Many years later, after I had accepted Baba completely, He said to me, "You are for Me now, 100 percent." By this time I had long quit wondering whether He had sent that rain; I knew it was definitely Baba's doing, though I had never asked Him about it. I actually felt a little ashamed to have thrown such a challenge at Baba. But because I didn't ask, one time when we were in Pune (formerly known as Poona) to visit Him at Guruprasad, Baba let me know how it had happened in a most vivid way.

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*Wedding picture taken at a studio the next day, as no photographer turned up because of the heavy rains*

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It was 1963, eighteen years after Adi and I were married. This time it was the bridegroom, not the bride, who was asking for Baba's blessing on his wedding day, again in a town which has very little rain. And as with my wedding, a very large number of guests had been invited and the wedding was to be held outdoors in a garden. Sarosh and Viloo Irani's son Merwan had just come from Germany with Anita, his Swiss fiancée, to be married in his home town of Ahmednagar. On their way to Ahmednagar from the airport in Bombay, Merwan expressed a wish to stop in Pune to see Baba. Normally it was not that easy simply to arrive without making prior arrangements, but Sarosh was one of Baba's earliest and closest disciples, and he was very happy that his son was showing such an interest in Baba.

A few of us were sitting with Baba at Guruprasad when someone came to inform Baba that Sarosh and Merwan had arrived and wished to see Him. Baba nodded, and they entered and greeted Him. After the greetings had taken place, Baba, as though He didn't already know, gestured to Merwan, asking why he had come. Baba always behaved like an ordinary man, not wanting to overpower people with His presence and knowledge; otherwise, people would have behaved unnaturally with Him.

Merwan said, "Baba, I'm being married in a few days, and I am asking for Your blessings at my wedding."

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Baba gestured, indicating "Blessings granted." He gave instructions to Sarosh to go to Ahmednagar and have the wedding. Then, on the morning following the wedding, Sarosh, Viloo, Merwan, and Anita, were to return to Guruprasad to see Him.

Two days later we were with Baba when He gestured to Eruch to phone Sarosh and find out how the preparations for the wedding were getting on. When Eruch returned to the room, he told us that Sarosh had shouted into the phone, "Tell Baba it's raining cats and dogs here. Everything is all soggy, and now all arrangements for the wedding have to be changed. It will be held in a hall instead of in the garden, as we had planned." Eruch reported this information to Baba, but neither by facial expression nor by gesture did Baba reveal what He was up to. He just nodded. I sat there, listening to Eruch and enjoying the conversation in Baba's presence. The similarity between this wedding and my own still didn't occur to me.

On the morning after the wedding, we were again seated with Baba when in came Sarosh, Viloo, Merwan, and Anita. After they had greeted Baba, He asked them, "How did the wedding go?"

Viloo said, "Oh, Baba, how it rained!"

Baba gestured, "Well, your son asked for My blessing on his wedding, so I gave it."

I was sitting just to the left of Baba's chair. He turned around in the chair, looked directly at me, pointed, and indicated that Viloo

should ask me what had happened on *my* wedding day.

I was taken completely by surprise and simply gaped at Baba. I had never mentioned my challenge to Him to anyone. Now, after eighteen years, God Almighty was telling me, "It was I who gave you that blessing." The Beloved was enjoying His divine humour, smiling at me with great warmth as I sat there with my mouth open.

Finally, Eruch said, "Well, Rhoda, we are all waiting to hear what happened on your wedding day." His words brought me back to earth and, stammering and stuttering, I told everyone there about the silent challenge I had made to Baba, telling Him I wanted heaven's blessing on my wedding. I said that Baba had nearly drowned us, flooding all of Karachi and preventing all but one hundred and fifty of the thousand invited guests from attending the wedding. As I finished, Baba gestured, "But you didn't tell them that after throwing out that challenge to Me, you completely forgot about it until you were on your way to the wedding." Even that small, insignificant detail had not escaped our all-knowing Beloved.



## CHAPTER TWO



*Naize Dubash, Adi's mother, known as "Mummy"*

In December of 1945, just a few months after Adi and I were married, he came to me one day and told me that Mummy needed to return to Bombay for a medical checkup. Minoo Kharas was to accompany her. Knowing Mummy and Minoo, Adi thought they would certainly go to see Meher Baba, and he wanted me to go with them so that I could meet Him. Well, I wanted to meet Baba, but not for the same reason Adi wanted me to. I still felt he was

making a mistake in following Baba. "Yes," I said, sarcastically. "I too would like to meet Meher Baba." When I agreed to go, I had no idea that I would be receiving Baba's *darshan* with gratitude on this visit.

When we arrived in Bombay, we went to stay with Arnavaz and Nariman Dadachanji. Arnavaz and I took to one another at first sight, and we spent hours talking together each day that we stayed there. Of course, the talk was always of Baba, and I found myself becoming

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more and more anxious to meet Him, though I have to confess that a part of me was still looking to prove to Adi that Baba was a fraud.

Minoo sent word to Baba immediately on our arrival, saying that he and Mummy had come to Bombay and this time they had brought Mummy's daughter-in-law Rhoda. He asked permission for the three of us to come for Baba's *darshan*. Baba's answer came, saying that we would be welcome. "Bring Rhoda," He said. "She is one of us." The following day the three of us took the 11:00 a.m. train from Bombay to Ahmednagar, planning to arrive at 8:00 that evening and take a horse tonga out to Meherabad from Ahmednagar. The train arrived late, however, around 10:00 p.m., and Adi K. Irani, Meher Baba's secretary, was waiting for us at the station. When he saw us, he said, "Come on, come on, it's 10:00! Baba sent me to bring you to Meherabad because He knew it would be very dark by the time you arrived." I was touched that Baba was concerned about our getting out to Meherabad safely. There was no electricity in those days, so once it was dark, everything had to be done by lantern light. Baba had given Adi orders that if the train arrived on time, Adi was to take us to Upper Meherabad to meet Him, but if we arrived later, we were to be taken to one of the small rooms near the main hall of the men mandali in Lower Meherabad, and Baba would see us the following morning.

We bundled into Adi's car, and Mummy and Minoo began

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asking for news about Baba. I just sat there quietly, listening. They were still asking questions when we arrived in Lower Meherabad, and since we were definitely late, we sat in the car chatting for a while. Suddenly somebody shouted, "Baba is coming! Baba is coming!" We all jumped out of the car, and I could see someone walking toward me by the light coming from a lantern that someone else was carrying. Minoo and Mummy both greeted Baba, and then He turned to me. It was a cold night and Baba had a scarf wrapped around His head, but the beauty of His face took my breath away. I don't remember whether or not I embraced Him or kissed Him, but I do know that I could not take my eyes off Him as He stood there under the starry sky. Now and then He gave me a glance as He discussed something with Minoo or asked Mummy a question before sending Minoo over to the men's quarters.

Then with Pilamai Irani, one of the resident mandali, lighting the way, Baba led Mummy and me to a small room (which was the room at the end of the Old Dharmshala in which Nana Kher stayed in later years) and told us to sleep there for the night, since the ladies had all retired. He entered the room and made certain that everything was ready for His guests. He checked the bedding, the blankets, the drinking water, seeing to everything like a perfect host. When He was satisfied that we would be comfortable, we were told that Pila would

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come and wake us at 5:00 in the morning because at 6:00 Baba was taking the ladies who were up on the hill to the cinema, and we had to be ready to accompany Him.

I had come here thinking to prove that Meher Baba was no Spiritual master, and believe me, a visit to the cinema was the last thing I would have expected a *Sadguru* to arrange - particularly at 6:00 a.m.! But I accepted the invitation as graciously as I would have accepted an invitation to dinner. Somehow this excursion seemed perfectly natural, nothing strange about it at all. Baba then left us in Pilamai's care. We knew her well, as she was originally from Karachi, one of the very few Parsis living there who believed in Baba.

The night was cold, and we were grateful for our blankets. The following morning at 5:00 Pilamai woke us. Mummy and I, both shivering, dressed quickly in our nicest clothing. At 6:00 sharp two buses pulled up close to where we were waiting in the driveway in front of the verandah. It was just a few days after Mehera's birthday, and many women who had come for the occasion were staying on the hill. Mummy and I got on a bus, where we found that a seat had been left vacant for us. As we started down the road, Mummy told me that Meher Baba was sitting two seats behind us. I turned to look, and there He was, with Mehera beside Him. I had the same difficulty I'd had the night before - I simply couldn't keep my eyes off Baba's face,

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and I kept turning around to stare at Him. Sometimes He anticipated my move and I turned to find Him looking directly at me. Mummy was very embarrassed by my behaviour, and finally she told me to behave myself. Then, of course, I had to sit up straight and keep my eyes ahead.

At the cinema Sarosh Irani, the owner, was waiting. Of course this was a special showing - who would come to a cinema at 6:00 in the morning? Sarosh escorted Baba and the rest of us to the first floor gallery, where we had a sofa seat right beside Baba. We were given no refreshments, nothing, and as soon as we were seated, the picture started. It was a western film about a girl and a horse, and everyone was surprised that Baba sat through the entire film. It seemed that usually at some point He would make a sign that He was ready to go, and everyone would have to leave, even though the film was not over. Mani used to describe the mandali filing out of a theatre, their eyes still fixed on the screen, trying to see as much of the film as possible. Later I learned that the cinema offered an ideal place for Baba to do His work, which required the concentration of a lot of people focused on the same thing. Baba worked while everyone's attention was fixed on the screen, and when the work was finished, He would leave, no matter how much of the film was left.

When the film ended, we got onto the buses, and by 10:00 we

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were back in Meherabad, where we were taken up the hill for a simple lunch of rice and dal, the most delicious I'd ever tasted. Naja was the cook at that time, and she also brought us some of the vegetable she had prepared for the previous evening.

After lunch Mummy and I were taken to the "tank room," at the far end of the covered area where Baba's *gadi* is today, for a private interview with Baba. He asked us to sit in front of Him. After He had talked to Mummy, Baba asked me if I wanted to ask Him anything. I could only mutter something like, "Let your grace flow through me." Baba gestured something, and Mani, who was translating for Him, told me He had said, "My Nazar is on you always." Then suddenly, out of the blue, came the thought, "You sent me blessings on my wedding day." Instinctively I knew that He was responsible for the rain. I said nothing to Baba about this, nor did He bring it up, but that's all I could think of. Those words replayed in my head again and again like a broken gramophone record. After a while Baba indicated that we should leave the room, and I was sorry to go. He told Mani to finish showing us around Meherabad Hill and then take us to meet the women mandali.

We visited the women's quarters, a simple, plain room, with an atmosphere of love, peace and joy. Mani, Mehera, Rano, Goher and several others were there. Baba had also told us to rest, so we retired

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to Pilamai's room, but by now I was so curious that I kept pestering Mani, Pila and Naja to tell me more about Baba. As we were talking, I suddenly became tired of all the chatter and had a great longing to see Baba once more. I walked over to the window and looked out. To my delight I saw Baba come around the corner of the building, walking toward me. Our eyes met for a second, and I felt great joy in my heart.

All too soon we were told it was time to pack up and leave for Bombay. As we were waiting at the Upper Meherabad gate to board the bus that would take us back to Ahmednagar to catch our train, Baba stood with Mehera at His side, and each of us greeted Him as we passed by. Sometimes Baba would touch someone. Suddenly I felt again an intense longing, this time for Baba to touch me. And, sure enough, as I passed through the gate and nodded to Baba, He gave me a hearty pat on the shoulder and a smile. As the bus moved out, I looked back to see Baba with the women mandali waving at us. Although I didn't recognize exactly what had happened at the time, in later years I came to realize that if you call out to Baba from the heart, His response is always there. He had brought rain at my wedding; He had known my desire to see Him through the window; He had touched me as we said good-bye. ;

When I returned to Karachi, I found that all my previous antagonism toward Baba had flowed out of my system. It was

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completely gone. I was growing more interested in Baba, and whenever Mummy, Minoo, Adi and I were together, we would talk about Him. From time to time we received news about what was happening in Baba's circle, and I looked forward to hearing about His activities. Sometimes we received circulars saying that Baba wished us to keep silence for a day or fast for a certain period of time. These were not orders, but I found myself happily taking part in whatever Baba asked us to do. I was also increasingly aware that whenever I was confused or needed help, I was turning to Baba and silently calling out to Him to help me.



It wasn't long before I was expecting my first child, and I was very happy. Then the doctor told me that there was a good chance I might have a miscarriage, and even if I didn't, I might not be able to carry the baby to full term. It was then that once again, sitting in Karachi, I sent a silent message to Baba - but this time it was not a challenge; it was a loving plea. I told Baba, "I want a child, I need a child, I'm longing for a child. If You give me one, I will dedicate him or her to Your service."

It was during the final month of my pregnancy that Adi was, at last, to meet Meher Baba in person for the first time. Baba had sent a



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circular saying that anyone who wanted to meet Him could come to Madras on 3 April 1947 and have five minutes of His *darshan*. Minoo Kharas urged Adi to take advantage of this opportunity, as he had missed many chances to see Baba in the past. As I was doing well, Adi agreed to go. It seemed ironic that Adi, who had known about Baba since he was a schoolboy and had sent me to be with Baba soon after our marriage, had yet to meet Baba himself.

Adi and Minoo had quite an adventure, first flying to Bombay and then taking a train all the way to Madras. Arriving a couple of days before Baba, they were able to be at the train station for a first glimpse of Him and then accompany Him to Saidapet, where He was to stay during the *darshan* programme. They were also able to spend time with Baba after the *darshan*, going with Him to a cinema owned by the mayor of Madras. And on the last night that Baba was to be there, Minoo and Adi were invited to spend the night in the mandali's quarters. They slept there with the men, while Baba slept in a small adjoining room. The following morning they travelled by train with Baba, all the way back to Pune, where He got off, while they continued on to Bombay. So the five minutes that Baba had promised in the circular turned out to be more like a few days!

Adi returned to Karachi very happy indeed. He said that until he had met Baba personally, he was making a slow crawl in Baba's

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direction. But after he met Baba, the crawl became a gallop - there was no stopping him.

To add to our happiness, on 7 May 1947, our first son was born, a healthy, full-term baby. Though I was not thinking of Baba at the time of the delivery, simultaneously with my son's birth, the name of Baba pulsed through my whole body. It was like a wave that passed from head to foot, vibrant with His name. And when Minoo sent Baba a cable telling him of our son's birth, Baba cabled back, "My Blessings to Rhoda and her son."

A few days later another cable arrived most unexpectedly. This one read, "Rhodadi boy to be named Merwan. Blessings, Baba." I had told no other person of my silent dedication of this child to Baba, nor had I written Him about it. But I do have to say that despite all my love and surrender, I didn't like the name at all! It was then the fashion to give long, high-sounding Persian names, and to me "Merwan" was a very old-fashioned name. Adi, however, was overjoyed. And today if anyone told me to change Merwan's name to something else, I wouldn't do it for anything. It's the most precious name of all.

### CHAPTER THREE



*Rhoda and Merwan, early 1950s*

In December of 1948 a few of us from Karachi, Minoo, Mummy, Adi, Merwan and I, travelled to India. Our Merwan was nineteen months old, and Baba had asked me to bring him. When we arrived, Baba told Minoo to bring Merwan to Him. After Baba had held Merwan in His lap, the child was put on the floor. We were then asked to come into the room where Baba was, by which time Merwan was

crawling around, quite at home. As we were greeting Baba, Merwan suddenly stopped crawling, sat up, and, looking straight at the Beloved, shouted out, "Baba!" Baba gave him a beautiful smile, and then on the alphabet board He spelled out this message: "Out of the many on the waiting list, I have selected him..." I garlanded Baba with a silent "Thy will be done." After we had individually received Baba's *darshan*, we were allowed to remain with Him for some time, and I felt even more of my original doubt fading away.

Two years later Baba gave Adi and me another son, Homi. And then one morning in 1952, soon after Homi was born, I found myself

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being pushed awake just before dawn. I was half asleep and half awake, but I felt that something extraordinarily beautiful was taking place within me. At first I just lay there in bed, but then I felt an urge to get up, so I walked from our bedroom and through my children's room to the verandah, where I stood in front of the window and looked out at the sky. An unshakable conviction that Meher Baba was God in human form flooded my being. This conviction was so deep, so strong and vibrant, that I knew with absolute certainty that Baba was God, the personification of truth and beauty, and without Him life had no meaning. He was the One who comes again and again into the world. As Krishna said, "Whenever there is a resurgence of evil and injustice in the world, I, the Avatar, take human form for the destruction of evil and the establishment of righteousness." It had taken around seven years since my first meeting Baba for the last of my doubts to evaporate, but from that morning on, my conviction has never been shaken. I have loved Baba, obeyed Him, surrendered to Him.

One day many years later I was sitting alone, and I wondered exactly when it was that I had fully accepted Baba as the Avatar. Immediately, I remembered that morning long ago. And I instantly recalled one other episode concerning my dear father and how anxious I had been to tell him about my visit to Ahmednagar to see Baba.

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My dad and I shared a deep love and understanding of one another, even when I was only a child. I adored him. He was the one to whom I told all of my secrets. Even when I got into trouble at school and had to stand alone outside the classroom so that everyone would know I was being punished, I would go directly to my dad as soon as I got home. I would sit in his lap and put my arms around him, and he would know that I was troubled about something. "Now, what have you been up to?" he would ask, and I would tell him.

Dad was the first person to whom I confessed my love for Adi Dubash, and when I said that if I were to marry I would marry him, Dad didn't argue. He just said, "Okay, give me a few days and I'll find out about the boy." Several days later he called me in and told me he'd made discreet inquiries about my friend Adi and had received wonderful reports. "He's a fine man," my father said. "Go ahead. I will help you." Naturally, Dad was the person I most wanted to talk with about Meher Baba.

My opportunity had finally arrived several months after we returned to Karachi after meeting Baba in 1945. I was spending the day with my parents, and I waited for an appropriate moment. In the afternoon my father and I were alone in the dining room, and he asked me to make him a cup of tea before he went out. I brought him what I



*Adi and Rhoda, Karachi, late 1960's*

thought was a nice pot of tea, but as I poured him a cup, he looked at with disapproval.

"Oh, not this white tea again! Why have you put so much milk?"

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"Dad," I answered innocently, "plain black tea is not very good. You must have a little milk in it."

"You don't know. You don't understand how good plain tea is," he answered, but he started sipping.

As we sat there together at the table, I said, "Dad, I want to tell you something. You know this last time when I went to Bombay with Mummy and Minoo, I also went to Ahmednagar. I know you believe in saints and sadhus, and I have met the greatest of them."

Dad stopped drinking his tea and looked at me over the top of the cup. "In Ahmednagar?" He didn't ask who, but where.

"In Ahmednagar," I repeated.

His face showed great surprise. "In Ahmednagar is Meher Baba.

"Yes, Dad. I am talking about Meher Baba. I met Him."

Dad's cup plunked into the saucer as he stared at me. "What? You met Meher Baba?"

"Yes, Dad, and I tell you that all the talk I heard as a schoolgirl

at the time of Khorshed Pastakia's death was just slander and rumours."

"What did you find there?"

"What I found at the ashram was pure love, peace and joy."

Dad did not hesitate for even a minute. "Have you any books on Meher Baba?" He held out his hand as if to take a book from me.

Not long after our conversation, Jean Adriel's *Avatar* came out - that was, in fact, the first time I had ever seen the word "avatar." I gave it to my father, and Minoo Kharas gave him Baba's *Discourses*. I have always been happy that I had the opportunity to tell my father about Meher Baba, because he had a heart attack soon after our conversation and lived for only another year and a half. In those days heart patients were confined to their beds, and during that time he had both *Avatar* and Baba's *Discourses* on his bedside table. He wouldn't allow anyone to take them away. Once my elder sister was with us and asked him to sign a cheque that she'd written for household expenses. She put the cheque on the book of Baba's *Discourses* and held it while he signed, then started to take the book away along with the cheque. "Come, Dina, put the book here again," Dad called out. And the Baba books were right there next to him when he died the following day.





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The experience of arriving at absolute certainty that Baba was God in human form left me with a great, uplifting sense of wonder and joy. But in the time that followed that morning, I also became quite restless. I had to see my Beloved. There was so much I wanted to tell Him. But Baba was at this time in the West, and no correspondence was allowed. The nearest we had had to contact with Him in recent years, during which He had been in His New Life phase, was a visit from Eruch and Pendu, Baba's very close disciples who resided with Him, during their tour of India and Pakistan in preparation for the period of Baba's Fiery Free Life. I didn't know when I would be able to see Him again.

Then came the shocking news of Baba's accident in America. Those were anxious days, and I waited, along with all His other lovers for word on His condition.

In August of 1952, an unexpected telegram arrived, saying that Baba and His party would be stopping for a few hours at the Karachi airport on their way home from the United States. Because of an airline strike, they were forced to make a detour and catch a flight from Karachi to Bombay. The cable, addressed to Minoos Kharas, gave instructions that he should come alone to the airport. But I was convinced that Baba had heard the call of my heart and that was one

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of the reasons He was stopping in Karachi. I had no doubt that He would send for me and I would finally see my Beloved.

Sure enough, early on the morning of Baba's arrival a call came for me and our two boys. Adi was already at the airport, as he had been called even earlier in the morning to come assist Baba and the others. I started my journey to the airport to meet Him for the first time with the full knowledge that He was the Avatar. As I entered the designated room in the airport terminal, there was God Almighty sitting with His leg in a heavy cast, but looking as beautiful and majestic as only God could look, in spite of the discomfort His injuries must have caused Him and the long, tiring journey He had just made. He saw me and a smile lighted His face; the next moment He was enfolding me in His arms. Then He called Merwan to Him. I picked Homi up, but, Baba gestured, "Enough." This was the first time that Homi had met Baba.

The few hours that I was there with Baba, I was literally swimming in His Ocean of Love. I felt such buoyancy that I could hardly keep my feet on the ground. With so many people present and so much activity going on around Him, there was no opportunity for me to tell Baba all that I wanted to tell Him. I knew in my heart that He was already aware of what I wanted to say, but I also knew that in time He would create the opportunity for me to say it.

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After a little while, Baba asked Adi what his work was. Adi told him that he was connected with shipping. Baba said, "Can you arrange sea passage for all of us?" Then He paused. "No, we must go by air this very morning. Get Me six seats on today's flight to Bombay." Adi went down to the booking office on the main floor and asked for six seats for Bombay. The clerk told Adi emphatically that the flight was fully booked; no seats were available.

When Adi came back and told Baba that no seats were left Baba said, "Try once again, and tell the clerk to check through his papers very carefully, as I must go today. Adi went back down and requested that the clerk check the papers carefully again. To Adi's surprise he did so, and then announced that one seat was available. When Adi reported the news, Baba sent him downstairs once more this time to say that He definitely needed four seats, but two in their party could fly the next day.

Adi returned to the booking office. By this time a crowd had gathered; everyone was asking about seats. Adi waited until the crowd thinned out and then approached the booking clerk once again. This time the man was less patient. "I have gone through the passenger list repeatedly, and no more seats are available, but let me see." Reluctantly he checked, and as he finished looking through the list, to

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Adi's surprise and joy he said, "I have three seats available." Adi ran back to Baba to give Him the good news, but it was not good enough. Baba told him to go down yet again and ask the clerk for one more seat, as four of them had to fly together. This time, when the clerk saw Adi in the office, he was angry and rather rude, but Adi stood in the corner meekly waiting for the clerk to finish what he was doing before pestering him once again for an additional seat. In sheer disgust the clerk picked up the passenger list and started going through it very carefully. After a couple of minutes he told Adi that four seats were available. Adi literally flew up the stairs to give Baba the good news that the mission was accomplished. Baba and three of the rmandali could fly to Bombay on that day's flight; the other two mandali would leave the following day.

We had brought a basket of fruit for Baba, and He accepted it very lovingly and told Dr. Goher to put it with their luggage. She protested, "But Baba, we are already overweight." Silently I was calling out, "Please, Baba, take it. It's from us with all our love." Baba turned to Dr. Goher and gestured, "Just put it with the luggage; we will take it with us."

Then it was time for farewell embraces, after which the Beloved was once again wheeled to the plane and lifted up the gangway. All the

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time Baba was in Pakistan during this layover, He did not put His foot on Pakistani soil. He was either carried or wheeled wherever He went. We watched Him waving to us from the plane, and we waved back. I blew kisses to Him until I could no longer see the plane. And going home, I looked at people on the street, going their way as usual, and I wanted to shout to them, telling them, "God is here again among us. He was just here, in this very town, and I was one of the blessed ones to embrace Him!"

## CHAPTER FOUR

In August of 1954 Meher Baba was in Satara, and I was visiting Panchgani, a hill station a few miles away, with my two sons, On 30th August, Rusi Billimoria, the cousin whom I was visiting, and another friend from Panchgani were going by car to Satara for some work. I decided I couldn't pass up this opportunity, so I asked my cousin to let me accompany them to Satara and drop me at Grafton Villa, where Baba was staying.

As we approached Satara, I was suddenly filled with misgivings. What would Baba say about me dropping in unannounced? What was I thinking of? But then I assured myself that I needed to see Baba and tell Him what I had wanted to tell Him at the airport in Karachi two years earlier. In any case, it was too late to turn back. As we approached Grafton Villa, I asked Rusi to stop the car a short distance from the gate of the villa.

I got out of the car and told Rusi to come back for me in the evening. By that time I knew something of Baba's ways, and I thought if the car waited for me, He would see me for only a few minutes and then send me packing. But without a car, I would be helpless, and Baba would have to take me in. "Everything is fair in love and war," I

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concluded, and when the car was only a tiny speck in the distance, I walked to the gate.

Rano Gayley, one of the mandali, appeared and asked me what I wanted.

"I've come to see Meher Baba," I said.

"He doesn't see anyone," answered Rano.

"That's all right. Just give Him a message. Tell Him that a lover of His has come from Karachi to dedicate her life at His feet."

Rano's hand shot out over the gate, and we shook hands. "Wait a minute," said Rano. She went into the house. A few minutes later she returned and said, "I've given your message to Baba. He is very happy and He wants you to come to Rosewood Cottage at 2:00 this afternoon."

I was overjoyed. "Could you tell me where Rosewood Cottage is?"

"Why? Don't you have anyone to take you there?" asked Rano.

I was all innocence. "No, I'm sorry, but I'm absolutely alone here."

"Wait a minute." Rano went inside again.

I waited, certain that Baba would call me in. But a few minutes later Dr. Goher appeared with her bicycle and said, "Baba has asked me to take you to Kohiyar Satarawala's house and to give him Baba's instructions to bring you to Rosewood Cottage at 2:00."

"Well," I thought, "you can't say I didn't try." But what could I really have expected? Baba is the Avatar and He is always one up on us.

Kohiyar, another follower of Baba's, was overjoyed to see me, as this would give him a chance to have Baba's *darshan* too. Soon we sat down to eat lunch, but I couldn't wait for it to be over, as I was so eager to get started. "Come on, let's go," I said repeatedly. So Kohiyar and I set out on foot, trekking through the fields until we reached the main road. Suddenly we saw a car approaching at full speed, honking. Kohiyar stopped abruptly. "It's Baba!" he said. "That's His car."

The car drew up to where we were standing, and Eruch leaned out the window on the driver's side. He smiled at me. "Couldn't you wait until 2:00?" he laughed. "Well, in any case, Baba has sent His car. He told me it was too hot for you to be out walking, and He said to take the car and bring you."



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"Where does Baba sit in the car?" I asked.

"The front seat," Eruch replied.

I jumped into the front seat and rode in silence toward Rosewood Cottage, deeply touched by Baba's thoughtfulness and His concern for my welfare.

As we drew up at Rosewood, Eruch said, "Go in. Baba is waiting for you."

We entered the main room, and for a moment I couldn't see Baba, as my eyes hadn't adjusted from the bright light outside. And then I saw Him, sitting in an armchair on one side of the room. Love radiated from His whole being. As I approached Him hesitantly, He opened His arms, and the next moment I felt His embrace. There are some moments in life when one cannot find adequate words. For me this was one of those moments. Suffice it to say that time stood still for me in the embrace of my Beloved. Love, beauty and peace flooded me. I had come home.

Baba gestured for me to be seated at His feet. He said, "Your love makes Me very happy." Except for the mandali, I was the only one

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there with Baba. Using the alphabet board, He inquired about Adi, then spelled out *Adi soonoo che* ("Adi is solid gold.") Baba also asked about my older son Merwan, but I noticed that He didn't mention my younger son, Homi. At one point Baba said, "If I were to ask you to give Me your son, would you willingly give him to Me?" I was so happy, interpreting His question to mean that He wanted my son to stay with Him as one of the resident mandali, and spontaneously I answered, "Yes, Baba." My answer made Him very happy, but I was not to understand the significance of His question for several more months.

Then Baba called Bhau, one of His mandali, to Him and asked, "Do you know her?"

When Bhau answered that he didn't, Baba showed surprise and said, "How is it that you don't know her? She is the wife of Adi Dubash." Baba then got a very mischievous look on His face. "You know, Adi, that tall, dark, handsome fellow who nearly drowned Pendu and Eruch when they were in Karachi." Baba then asked Eruch to tell Bhau what had happened.

During that visit to Karachi, Adi had taken Eruch and Pendu, along with me and other Karachi Baba lovers, to a boat club, where Adi was a member and rowed regularly. Adi was wearing swimming

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trunks, but Eruch and Pendu were both dressed in normal street attire, and they were carrying all their travel documents with them. In those days people travelled not with passports but with travel papers.

Adi, Eruch and Pendu got into the boat, and Adi started rowing. At first everything was all right, but when they were a short distance from the dock, water started to leak into their boat. Pendu shouted to Adi, but before any of them could do anything, the water was coming in so fast that the boat started to sink. Then all three of them were in the water. Initially they all fended for themselves, but Pendu, who was asthmatic, struggled under the weight of his wet clothes and shoes, so Adi turned the rowboat upside down and told Pendu and Eruch to cling to it. By this time all their travel papers had come out of their pocket and were floating in the water. Fortunately, the three were not that far from the dock, and they pushed the overturned boat until they were close enough that bystanders on the shore could come to the rescue. They helped Eruch and Pendu and then picked up all the papers they could find. And when Eruch and Pendu sorted through the papers, they were surprised to find that everything was there - soaking wet, but there. Not one paper had been lost or even smudged.

The rest of us who had accompanied them waited while Adi drove Eruch and Pendu home to change clothes, and then we

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continued with our plans for that day. The wonder of it was that a few weeks later when Adi was at the boat club, he inquired whether the boat had been repaired. To his surprise, he was told that no leak was found and, in fact, the boat had been in use regularly since the incident!

While Eruch was telling the story, Baba illustrated it vividly with His gestures, entering into the spirit of the episode. I was fascinated by the simplicity and eloquence of these gestures and the beauty of His expressions as His fingers flew over the alphabet board, and I was overwhelmed with love for Him.

After some time Baba said that He and the mandali were leaving the next day for Ahmednagar to prepare for the Wadia Park meeting and a visit from the westerners. There were details that needed to be looked after, but He told me I did not have to leave. "Just sit over there against the wall and enjoy being in My presence." As Baba went over last-minute instructions with the mandali, at one point He looked at me and said, "You are very fortunate to have come today. If you had come a day later, I would not have been here."

I sat against the wall thinking. With me it was always thinking, not words - with Baba you don't need words. If something comes from

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the heart, He hears. At one point I thought, "How beautiful You are. Let me look at You a long time so I can take the image of Your beautiful face with me when I go back to Karachi." Spontaneously Baba turned to me and started caressing His face with a twinkle in His eye. "You know," He said, "I have grown old now. My face has lost its youthfulness and is no longer beautiful."

Sitting quietly in the room, watching the Divine Beloved at work apparently attending to mundane affairs, I was suddenly aware that tears were rolling down my cheeks. I was sitting quite a distance from Baba, and I kept very still so as not to draw His attention to me. But in the midst of His work, Baba again turned to me and, with a look filled with compassion, said, "Don't cry now. You will have a lot of weeping to do in the future." I would remember those words later.

On the way to Kohiyar Satarawala's house, I had asked Dr. Goher, "What does Baba teach us?" Late in the afternoon Baba asked one of the mandali for the pamphlet "Truth of Religion." Somebody brought it and gave it to Baba, and He handed it to me. "Go in the small room and read this. It will help you to understand." However, my concentration was not on the contents, but on the pamphlet itself. "At last," I thought, "I have something that Beloved Baba has given to me personally." Baba, with a twinkle in His eye, gestured, "By the way,

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don't forget to return the pamphlet after you've read it, as it belongs to Bhau."

Someone showed me to the small room and pointed to a place on the floor where I could sit and read "Truth of Religion." I noticed that there was another occupant in that room - Gustadji, one of the mandali who had been observing silence under Baba's orders for many years. He was sitting cross-legged on the floor, patching up his old coat. He nodded to me, his rosy-cheeked face lighting up with a sweet smile. Watching him, I thought, "He just needs wings put on him and he would be a perfect archangel." Then for some time I was engrossed in reading the pamphlet. I had just finished when someone came to say that Baba was calling me.

In the large room I saw Kohiyar and my cousin Rusi, who had come for me, taking Baba's *darshan*. I had been given three hours of bliss in Baba's company, but now the time had come to leave. Once again I was in His all-encompassing embrace, and to ease the pain of separation, the Compassionate Beloved consoled me, reminding me that I would see Him again in only twelve days at the Wadia Park *darshan* in Ahmednagar. Then Baba asked me to bow down to Him. As I left, I was walking backwards, with my face toward Baba and my back to the door, my way of paying homage to my God, Beloved

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Avatar Meher Baba. And as I reached the threshold, Baba, ever considerate and loving, gestured, "Be careful! Don't fall over the threshold."



Only twelve days after the glorious afternoon I had spent in Baba's presence in Satara, the Wadia Park *darshan* was held in Ahmednagar. When I thought of Baba consoling me with the reminder that I would see Him again very soon, my heart was filled with joy as I anticipated being with my Beloved once again. Seven of us came together - Adi and I with our two boys, Mummy, and Minoo Kharas and his wife Freny. When we arrived, Wadia Park was already filled with people, a wave of humanity that extended as far as the eye could see, but I was not interested in the crowd. I was already trying to work my way toward Baba, to catch His eye and send Him a silent message of love. Try as I might, however, I could not catch His attention.

Two events that occurred at that *darshan* stand out in my mind. The first happened soon after we arrived. The *darshan* was already going on, and we milled around waiting until it was our turn to queue up. We were quite thirsty, so someone suggested we go around to the back of the stage, behind the dais where Baba was sitting, and look for

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some drinking water. We approached one of the men who was there, and he looked around, then said, "Yes, here is a bucket of water – you can have it." Someone in our group commented that the water looked dirty, but he assured us that Ahmednagar water always looked like that, and since we were very thirsty, we drank all the water in the bucket.

The minute we had finished, another man came running up, saying, "Baba wants that bucket of water which He asked us to keep behind the dais. Where is it?"

We looked at one another aghast. It seems we had done something wrong. Someone explained to the man that we had just drunk all the water from the bucket. He stared at us, clearly astonished. "Okay," he said, "I will tell Baba, but this was the water which He had used to wash the feet of the poor." We were dumbstruck, expecting all kinds of difficulties. But nobody said a word to us about it, nothing happened to us, and nobody even got sick.

The second event has to do with my inability to capture Baba's attention on this occasion. As the time came for us to queue up for Baba's *darshan*, I thought, "Now I will surely catch His glance," but as I came closer and closer in the queue, I saw that Baba was busy looking the other way. When it was my turn to bow down to Him, I did



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so, then looked up expectantly. Baba's attention was already on the next person in the queue, and I was just brushed aside.

Still, I was determined. I made my way up on the stage where Baba was, though it was already so full of people there was hardly a place to stand. At one time I heard someone say, "This stage is going to collapse any minute. Let's get down." But I was not to be budged I fought my way toward Baba and stood right behind Him. Silently I implored Him to look my way. He did turn, only to caress the face of someone on my right, to pat someone on my left, to ask a question of someone behind me, but it was as though I did not exist. I was literally dazed. I couldn't understand why my Beloved, who had showered so much love on me only a few days back at Satara, was absolutely ignoring me. I thought I might have a chance when evening came, but the crowd remained, so thick that when He was leaving, Baba sat on the roof of the car so that people could see Him. There was no way that I could capture His attention. Later I understood as I learned more about Baba's ways, for He has said, "I push you away, then I draw you close; again I push you off and draw you even closer...." But, of course at that time I didn't know that this was one of Baba's ways of working, and I was devastated.

Many years later something similar happened to me when we

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were in Pune and Baba was staying at Guruprasad. Baba suddenly started ignoring me completely. I remember one day in particular, when we were sitting with Baba in the small room at Guruprasad, and He asked a lady on my right if she had met Mehera that morning. The same question was then addressed to the lady on my left, then to the one behind me and one in front of me. I sat there looking up at Baba expectantly, certain that He would give me His attention and ask me the question also. But once again, I was brushed aside as though I didn't exist. Baba continued to ignore me completely during the next couple of days, and I was inconsolable.

One evening during our stay in Pune I was at Bindra House, Eruch's home, and Rano Gayley was also there. Everyone noticed that I was peevish and withdrawn, and they coaxed me into telling them what the trouble was. Finally I told them how miserable I was because of Baba's ignoring me. "I might as well not be here," I said.

Rano said, "My dear, that has happened to me and to Kitty Davy, too. Baba will literally ignore us - we could be paper on the wall. I also used to feel very upset, and then I found a beautiful solution. I told Kitty, 'Can you imagine how conscious Baba has to be of us in order to ignore us in that way?'"

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Rano's explanation satisfied me to some extent, and a few days later a Baba family arranged a feast at Guruprasad. We had a beautiful lunch with the Lord of the Universe sitting with us, watching over His children and telling us to eat heartily. But again, it was as though I wasn't even there. Every time I tried to catch His eye, Baba was looking the other way.

As soon as we had finished lunch, I went into another room and stood looking through a window where I could see Baba clearly but the same time not be conspicuous. With tears streaming down my cheeks, I told my Beloved silently, "If it is Your wish and makes You happy to ignore me, it is all right. Your happiness is my happiness."

And that was the end of it. The episode was closed, and the Beloved's face was once again turned toward me. I am reminded of the translation that Baba once gave when a *Qawwal* was singing:

*How indifferent and independent God is,  
although He Himself is everyone and everything.  
The more you love Him, the more He turns His face  
away from you.  
But if you persist, you compel Him  
to turn His face to you.*

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In His masterful way Baba had shown me that the adolescent love I had for Him had to be replaced by a more mature love, a love that does not need recognition at every step but which silently burns for the Beloved. For as Baba said,

*...those who sigh loudly and weep and wail have yet to experience love. Love sets on fire the one who finds it. At the same time it seals his lips so that no smoke comes out.*



The following month, on 6 October 1954 (just one day before Baba discarded the alphabet board), Adi and I came from Panchgani, where we were visiting, to Satara. We needed to inquire about our passports, which we had sent there for endorsement. We took care of our business and were out of the passport office in an hour's time, free for the rest of the day. We knew Baba was in Satara, and we looked at one another, our question unspoken.

Adi shook his head.

"But," I burst out, "we have no orders from Baba not to visit Him. It's all right for you to shake your head; you were with Him for three weeks last month, but what about me?" I persisted.

Surrendering to Him



*Attending Beloved Baba, Adi Dubash with hat on Baba's right – Meherabad Sahavas, 1958*

## Surrendering to Him

Adi remained hesitant, but I finally convinced him, and we went to Grafton Villa, where Baba was staying. We stood outside while the men mandali sent word to Baba that we were there. The answer came, telling us to wait outside Rosewood, the quarters of the men mandali, where Baba would see us at 2:00.

The moment Baba stepped from the car at Rosewood, we could see that He was angry with us. His eyes flashing, He gestured, "These two people are sitting on My chest." Then, relenting somewhat, He turned to Adi and gave him a friendly slap on the back. "You just stayed with Me for three weeks. Weren't you satisfied? Tell me, it was Rhoda who brought you here, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Baba," said Adi.

Baba then turned to me. "Today, after three months, I have had a head bath, so I don't want you to embrace Me. If you do so, I will have to take another bath, and I'm already feverish."

I assured Him that I would not embrace Him. Baba instructed us not to ask any questions and not to disturb Him, as He had a lot to see to. He needed to give last minute instructions to the mandali before giving up His alphabet board on the following day. Baba turned to one

## Surrendering to Him

of the mandali and asked, "What time is it?" It was two o'clock. "And finally," added Baba, "you will stay here for an hour and then leave at three o'clock."

We both assured Him that we would do exactly as He wished, then followed Him inside. After He had taken His seat, we sat on the floor in front of Him, absorbed in His Presence.

In spite of the intense activity, as He attended to correspondence and gave instructions to the mandali, the Beloved found time to joke with us and ask us questions. Sometimes He ignored us, but every so often He cast a loving glance in our direction.

During that hour Eruch read out a letter from the principal of a new school for girls in Kolahpur, inviting Baba to come for the inauguration; if Baba was unable to come, the principal asked that He send a message with good wishes for the occasion. Baba started dictating a message with special emphasis on the training of girls to become good citizens, good wives and, above all, good lovers of God. To achieve this, He said, they must be absolutely honest with themselves, with others, and with God.

Suddenly, with a twinkle in His eyes, Baba turned to Adi and

asked, "What do you think of Rhoda? Is she a good wife?"

Adi answered, "A-one, Baba."

Baba's face lighted up with pleasure. He then turned to me.

"And Adi, is he a good husband?"

"A-one," I answered.

With an exasperated look, Baba turned to Eruch and said, "Why are you bothering Me with sending this message to the principal of the school when we have here these two perfect examples of what I want to convey? Instead why don't you just send Adi and Rhoda and tell the principal to make them stand on the stage and say, 'Instead of sending a message, Baba has sent these two as living examples of how a man and woman should be in life.'"

During this conversation, we both became aware that the hour Baba had given us had passed, but we made no attempt to leave. I thought, "Baba isn't saying anything about our leaving, so that must mean He doesn't mind us staying." Five minutes passed, then ten, fifteen, twenty.



## Surrendering to Him

Suddenly Baba turned to Adi and asked, "Are you a true Zoroastrian?"

Adi was taken by surprise. He didn't understand what Baba meant "Baba, do you mean do I wear the *sadra* and *kusti*?"

"No," Baba replied. "I mean do you practice good thoughts, good words and good deeds, as laid down by Zoroaster, in your life?" He continued, "What's the time?"

"Twenty past three," Adi answered.

"You gave me your word that you would leave at three o'clock. Where is your word as a Zoroastrian?"

"But Baba," I said, "You didn't seem to mind our staying."

Baba remained firm. "When three o'clock struck, it was up to you to keep your word and get up to leave. Then, if I had wanted you to stay longer, I would have told you so. A true Zoroastrian, once he has given his *jaban* (word), is honour-bound to keep it at any cost."

We both felt so ashamed that we literally hung our heads as together we got up to leave. Baba immediately held up His hand and

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gestured to us to be seated again. "Now," Baba said, "you will leave when I tell you."

After a while, when Baba asked us to leave, He added that Adi was to come to Satara again the following day, to stay with the men mandali and be there when He gave up the alphabet board.

"I will come too," I said eagerly.

Baba shook His head. "If you insist, I will tell Adi not to come."

Much as I wished to accompany Adi, I could only obey. I was beginning to understand that the beginning of real love is obedience, and the highest aspect of this love, which surpasses love itself, is action which culminates in perfect obedience to and supreme resignation to the will and the wish of the Beloved. As Baba has said, "I do not want anything else from you but the gift of your obedience."

## CHAPTER FIVE

For Adi and me the late 1950s were a time of learning much more deeply what it meant to love and obey Baba. All of us during our lives have to pass through situations which are beyond our control and may cause great suffering. We know this, but we often cannot see the events that are coming, so we are not prepared for them to happen. In April of 1955 Adi and I experienced an unexpected tragedy that changed our lives.

In February or March Minoo Kharas had received a letter from Adi K. Irani conveying Baba's wish for him to arrange for a continuous round-the-clock *jap*, or repetition of God's name, to be carried out by Baba's lovers in Karachi. Each of the lovers took a shift, and the *jap* was carried out in different homes according to a fixed time schedule. Adi's *jap* was from 4:30 to 5:00 p.m. and mine was the half-hour following. During the period in which this *jap* was being recited in Karachi, on 16 April 1955, our youngest son, Homi, who was only four and a half, fell from a second storey window of our house. We rushed him to the hospital, but he died half an hour later without ever regaining consciousness.

When the doctor told us that Homi was gone, Baba's words in

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Satara a few months earlier flashed in my head: "If I were to ask you to give Me your son, would you willingly give him to Me?" Assuming that Baba had meant He wanted my son to stay with Him as one of the mandali, I had been overjoyed and had spontaneously said yes. Now I understood instantly what Baba's words had really meant. I also recalled Baba at that time asking me about Merwan, but not about Homi, and I knew without question what Baba meant by His words, "Whatever I have said must and will come to pass. My words can never be in vain." Sometimes an event takes place immediately; other times it may take months or even years, but it will happen in His time and His way.

Later I would remember other signs that I had noticed, but to which I had not attached any particular significance. When I had taken Homi to the airport in Karachi to meet Baba for the first time in 1952, I picked him up in order to put him in the Beloved's arms, but with a gesture He stopped me from doing so.

The doctor's words that our child was dead left me completely dazed. Had it not been for Baba, I'm sure I would have lost my equilibrium, and as it was, I moved about at first like an automaton. We returned home, reaching there just before four o'clock. The news of Homi's death had spread, and friends and relatives were already

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pouring in. Adi told me that it was time for our *jap*, and he was going upstairs to the small Baba room. He told me not to let anyone attend to Homi's body until he had finished the *jap*. Just before five o'clock I went upstairs to relieve Adi, as it was then my turn, but Minoo Kharas finding us both missing downstairs, came up and induced me to let him do the *jap* in my place. Still, I wanted at least to start the repetition of God's name, so I insisted on going inside the room for just a few minutes. The moment I bowed down to Baba's picture, tears flooded my eyes, and the words "Thy will be done" came to my lips. Relief came instantaneously. When I came out of the room, I had stopped crying and felt clear-headed and composed.

Looking back on this incident, two things stand out clearly for me. Friends and family, with good intentions, begged me to cry, thinking tears would help to relieve me of the shock of losing our son. But after those few minutes alone with Baba, I remained dry-eyed because at the back of my mind was the thought that Baba, while speaking about death, had once said tears and wailing hinder a soul from departing. Knowing that Baba did not wish His lovers to weep and wail, I just could not cry. According to Parsi tradition, Homi's body could not be taken to the Tower of Silence (the Parsi cemetery) that evening, so we kept vigil during the night near his body. As I sat there with him, I silently implored, "Homi, go to our Beloved Baba. He is at

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Satara. Homi, find your way there. Find your way to our Beloved and tell Him, 'I have come to Thee.'

The following morning, as the time of Homi's funeral drew near, the smile which had already appeared on his face seemed to me to grow more radiant, and I knew that Homi had met his Maker, our Beloved Baba. A few days later a letter came from Satara. Dr. Goher wrote, "Baba says little Homi has come to Him and is with Him."

It is the Parsi custom for the men to participate in the funeral procession. Adi later told me that as the procession made its way to the Tower of Silence, he was remembering Baba all along the way. When the procession stopped and the gate was opened, he visualized that he was leading Homi by the finger and at the gate was handing him over to Baba.

Filled with grief, though with loving resignation, we wrote to Baba:

*. . . We loved him, but he has gone back to his Father Who loved him far, far better than we did or ever would have. He was an angel, but now he is with 'The King of Angels.' Beloved Baba, take him 'Unto Thee' so that he too may dedicate his life, his all, to Thee through eternities. Not our, but Thy will be done, Baba. . . . When the tragedy struck us, fully knowing it was your work, it still found us*

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*unprepared. Forgive us, dear Baba, our weaknesses. Call us near You and discipline us, as You have disciplined so many thousands of Your disciples so that we too may be worthy to serve and love Thee...*

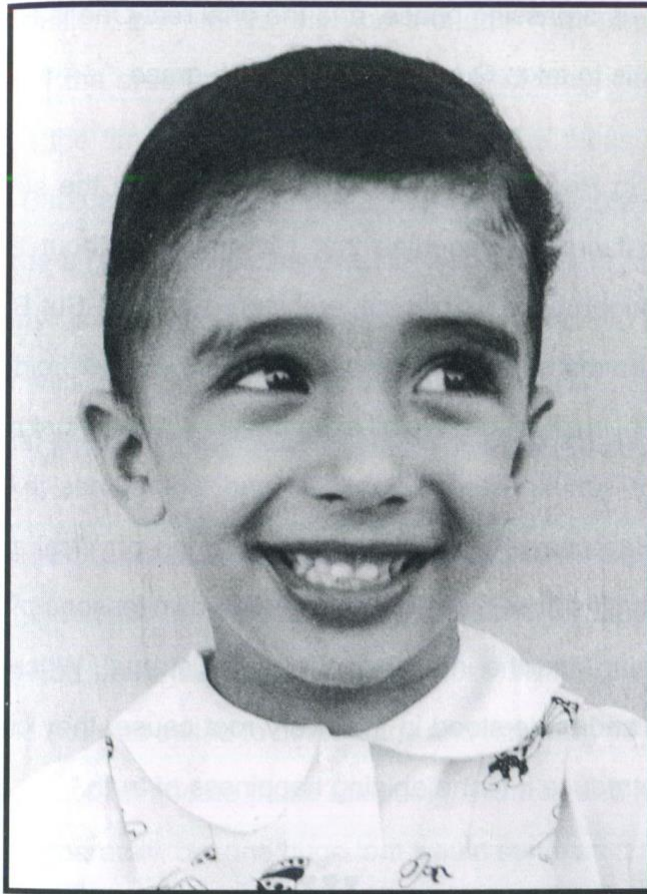
As always, the Compassionate Father in Satara heard our heartfelt prayers, our call from across the sea. When Baba received our letter, which also contained a photograph of Homi, Eruch wrote, "Baba very lovingly took Homi in His august hands." Eruch told us that Baba then asked for a flashlight, which He focused on Homi and looked at him for a few seconds. Then He handed the photo to Eruch to be sent back to us with the following message:

1. Baba with His hands touched Homi.
2. You two frame the enclosed photo and keep it near you.
3. When you say that Homi has come to Baba, then you two must feel great relief; and with this knowledge Baba wants you both to feel happy.

Eruch also added how happy Baba was that in spite of our great loss, we did not hesitate to carry out the *jap* entrusted to us.

Today we look back with joy on the years that we had in dear

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*Homi, August 1954*

Homi's company. Adi and I thank Baba from our hearts for giving us this beautiful gift, our son Homi, whose custodians we were destined to be for four and a half years. Baba gave us a painful but important lesson early in our lives: that everything - father, mother, husband,



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wife, child - is a passing phase, and the only real One is Baba. His is to give; His is to take. Ours is to accept with grace.

But in His compassion, Baba also gives us the strength and courage to face the tragedies that life brings. Without Baba such tragedies might make us cynical, embittered or sour. But Baba is our Rock, and no matter how hard we lean on Him, He will hold us up. He is our Haven, our Refuge. We all experience situations that are beyond our control - unexpected calamities and sometimes excruciating suffering. Baba says, "People should look upon physical and mental suffering as gifts from God. They bring their own lessons of the futility of the passing and the intrinsic worth of the eternal. When accepted with grace and understood in their very root cause, they chasten the soul and introduce it to the abiding happiness of truth."



Nearly three years would pass after Homi's death before I was to see Baba again, this time at the February Sahavas of 1958. During this period I felt a great change in my attitude toward, and my love for Baba. He had become the very centre of my life. First came Baba, then my husband and family. Formerly, when any orders regarding fasting or silence had come from Baba, I had observed the orders

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without question, but always with the thought, "Will I be able to do this?" And if the order involved a long period of time, I felt a sigh of relief when the time ended. But now it became a pleasure to follow whatever Baba asked of us, and Adi and I actually looked forward to Baba's orders. Our attitude toward life also changed. Having Homi taken from us had led us to cease worrying about events and circumstances that would have upset us in the past. We accepted what came, knowing that whatever happens is Baba's will.

The 1958 Sahavas was the first time men and women had been called together for a Sahavas in Meherabad. Previously, these occasions had been just for men. Only those invited by Baba could attend, and Adi was called to come early and help out, as tents had to be set up to accommodate those attending. Women and men were to be lodged separately, but one huge tent would serve as a meeting hall and another as a dining room. Adi departed for Meherabad, leaving me and Merwan in Panchgani, where we stayed with friends.

Merwan, who was then ten years old, had very much wanted to attend the Sahavas with us. When he found out that children were not to be allowed at this gathering, he wrote a letter to Baba protesting the fact that he had not been invited. He soon received the following reply from Eruch:

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Bombay

26th October 1957

My dear Merwan,

Your very sweet letter was received and was read out to Beloved Baba. Your letter made Baba feel very happy. Baba says that you are very dear to Him.

All children who remember Baba and love Him are fortunate. You too are fortunate because you too love Baba.

You must NOT feel sad if you are NOT allowed to be with your Mummy and Daddy for the Meherabad Sahavas because all Baba's loved children are constantly in His Sahavas.

Baba sends His fond love to you and to your dear Mummy, Daddy and to all who love you.

Yours lovingly,

Eruch

Merwan's response to this letter was quite simple - even at age ten he was already devoted to Baba and knew that a *no* from Him was a definite *no*. End of story. Although Baba had told us clearly from the beginning that Merwan was His, we had never forced Baba on Him. Of course as soon as he was old enough, we had begun telling him about

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Baba, and he had the advantage of being in Baba's physical presence from time to time, but we also allowed Merwan to go to the Fire Temple, where the Parsis worship, with other members of the family, and he had his *Navjote* performed according to Parsi tradition. Within just a few months of his *Navjote*, however, Merwan had stopped wearing the *kusti* and shortly after that the *sadra* as well. When we noticed this, Adi asked him why he was not wearing them, he replied, "You and Mum do not wear them." He was right. We had no answer. However, Adi told him that it was all right if he did not want to wear the symbols of the Parsi religion, but he needed to make a decision so that he wouldn't miss out on a spiritual life altogether. Of course, Merwan chose Baba.

A few days after Adi had gone to Meherabad, word came from Baba calling me to come. I left Merwan with my cousins in Panchgani and went with a joyous heart, grateful to be able to be with my Beloved once again.

The Sahavas began on 16 February 1958, divided into two segments according to language groups. The Gujarati group was in the second half. Soon after our arrival it was announced that Baba wished all of us to leave Meherabad on 26 February. Although Meherabad had no railway station, arrangements had been made for

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a special train to stop there so that all of us could leave on it together. My birthday was on 27 February, and I very much wanted to have Baba's *darshan* on that day, so I sent a request to Baba through Eruch asking that Adi and I be allowed to stay one more day.

A call soon came for us: "Adi-Rhoda wanted by Baba." We hurried to the room where Baba was resting after the morning programme. His eyes were flashing, and we could see the anger on His face. The moment we stepped in, Baba said, "What is this I hear about you wanting to stay one day more?"

I tried to explain. "Baba, my birthday is on the 27th, and I would like to have Your *darshan* on that day..."

Baba interrupted me. "In spite of My asking you to leave on the 26th? If anybody else (He made a wide sweep of His hand to indicate the crowd outside) had made such a request, I wouldn't have taken the time to call and explain to them. But because you are both of my household, I have taken the trouble of calling you to tell you that it is My wish that all must leave on the 26th."

Hearing Baba's words, "you are both of my household," brought such joy to my heart that my desire to stay another day vanished. I

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*Meherabad, 1958 Sahavas. Adi Dubash with hat on Baba's right*



## Surrendering to Him



*1958 Sahavas. Rhoda standing behind Baba*

blurted out, "We are sorry, Baba, to have caused so much trouble. We will do exactly as You wish and leave on the 26th."

Baba's anger was gone in a flash. He looked at us with eyes full of love as He repeated, "I want you both to leave on the 26th." And the Compassionate Father opened His arms to His erring children and embraced us lovingly, then asked us to bow down to Him before leaving.

The scene of our leaving by the special train is captured in the film "Happy Birthday, Baba." The train came to a stop in Meherabad and since there was no railway platform, we women were literally

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picked up and thrust into the compartment by the men. And as the train was about to leave, someone began to shout, "Baba is coming! Baba is coming down the hill!" We all rushed to the windows. As the train started, there was the Beloved, waving to us, pouring out His love and benediction to all of us who were leaving by the special train, gesturing to us, "Take Me with you." If we had disobeyed Baba's order and stayed the extra day, we would have missed participating in this glorious moment with Baba and would have missed His blessing.



The lesson of obedience is one we humans apparently have to learn over and over. And if one sincerely wants to obey Baba, absolute honesty is necessary. It may be possible to fool the world, but it is not possible to fool Him. I learned this lesson through an incident having to do with keeping a fast.

From time to time we used to receive circulars from Baba giving specific orders for His lovers all over the world. There was a time when He wanted us all to keep silence for a month. Another time a circular came saying that husbands and wives should live together as brothers and sisters for three months; then He extended the time to six months, then to a year. And during these periods other circulars would come



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with orders for fasting, sometimes just for twenty-four hours. But once a request came that men should fast for twenty-one days and women for five. Of course, the five days were not compulsory - but that was Baba's wish. It was for us to decide whether or not to obey, and in this case He had left the choice to us. We could fast for one day or for five.

When the circular arrived, I decided I would fast for all five days. I got through the first day successfully, and the second day as well, continuing to perform my job. At that time I was teaching private English lessons to foreign diplomats. On the third day one of my students, not knowing that I was fasting, offered me a plate of delicious-looking cakes. It was two days after Christmas, and she had made them herself. "Please, Mrs. Dubash, try these cakes," she said, excusing herself and leaving the room for a few minutes.

So there I was, all alone in the room, with the plate of cakes in front of me, tempting me. They made my mouth water, and I couldn't keep my eyes off them. *How delicious they look*, I said to myself. *I must have one - no one will know that I have eaten it. There is no one here to witness this act, so I can still say that I fasted for five days.* I reached out and picked up a cake - and immediately dropped it back on the plate. *Who is it I am trying to fool?* I thought, *Meher Baba? God Almighty?* And with that thought, the crucial moment passed and, with

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it, the temptation. What had stopped me from falling prey to temptation? I had felt Baba's presence, and I remembered that the fasting I had undertaken was to please Him. I had to teach my class for an hour in that room with the cakes still there, but they no longer held any attraction for me.

Nothing, however, escapes the All-knowing. One year later at Christmas, the same student brought to the same room a tray of cakes she had made, and they looked just as tempting as the cakes had looked the year before. She put the tray on my desk and said, "Please help yourself, Mrs. Dubash." Now this time I was not fasting, so I happily stretched out my hand, selected one, and took a big bite. It was the worst cake I had ever tasted! I had a whole mouthful. I couldn't swallow it, and I couldn't spit it out. Again I felt Baba's presence. *Okay, Baba, I thought, I've learned my lesson. Now please give me an out so that I can spit this cake somewhere.* But Baba just left me to my own resources, as I tried to gulp it down. He wouldn't let me off lightly for having even thought of trying to fool Him.



## Surrendering to Him

Even though Adi and I loved Baba wholeheartedly and were absolutely dedicated to Him, we were still finding ways to make Him more consciously a part of our daily lives. Late one evening in Karachi we were talking, and I suddenly had a thought. "Adi," I said, "how many times did you remember Baba today? I'm asking you because I was just sitting here wondering how many times I remembered Him today. And do you know, Adi, I was shocked. Maybe two or three times. Recently Baba had asked a few of us to write letters to Him, and in my letter I had told Baba I loved Him above everyone and everything. Was this how I loved Him? Remembering Him only two or three times in an entire day?"

Adi scratched his head, trying to recall. "Maybe three or four times," he said.

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Adi, we should do better. I'm going to try tomorrow to remember Baba more." This seems rather odd to me today, as now remembrance comes naturally. But in our earlier days with Baba, that was not the case.

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The next day I remembered Baba maybe four or five times, as did Adi. But that still wasn't enough. "Adi," I said the following night, "we must try to bring Baba more into our lives and not get so engrossed in worldly affairs."

Adi sat quietly for a moment, then said, "You know, I remember something that happened during the Three Incredible Weeks, when Baba called His western disciples to stay with Him. One day Minoo and I and the others were sitting with Baba in the shade, and Baba said to us, 'I tell you with My Divine Authority, if you remember Me at the time of dying, you will come to me. But how can you do that? Only if you start remembering Me now. Then, automatically, you will remember Me when you are dying.' He told us we should start with the morning, remember Him as soon as we get up. And again at twelve noon. He said, 'do it simply, just for a few seconds, as long as it takes you to adjust your tie.' And again at five o'clock in the evening, and then as the last thing before going to bed at night. If we would do that, Baba said, we would remember Him when we were dying. You know, I was there, I heard, but I thought it was meant only for the Westerners, not for us."

"Oh, Adi, how could you think that way? Here's the reason: Baba knows that we need help to bring Him more into our daily life. Adi, let's do it."

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Adi agreed. We started trying to remember Baba at those four times, and then we would report to one another in the evenings.

Thinking of Baba first thing in the morning was easy. But at twelve noon, everyone is at work, busy. And yet if you are determined to remember Baba, you will think of Him and look at your watch. You may find it is only eleven, so you remember to try again later. I was a teacher, and in the midst of teaching a class I'd think, *time to remember Baba*. Then I'd look at my watch and think *Oh, only 11:20*. Then I'd think again, and maybe it would be nearly noon. Of course you don't neglect your work, you do your work, but your heart is with Baba. Maybe the next time you look it's 12:15, and you may think, *Oh, I missed*, but it doesn't matter, because every time you do this for a few seconds you send your heart to Baba and then continue with your work. The same thing would happen at 5:00. Sometimes I would realize that I was half an hour late in remembering Baba. And the same thing happened with Adi. It would be impossible to be right on time at the beginning. But the time comes when something inside pushes you to look at your watch and you discover that it is 12:00 or 5:00 on the dot.

This practice became most enjoyable for both Adi and me, and we discovered that it brought us closer to Baba, because we thought

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of Him often - a way of bringing Him into our lives no matter what we happened to be doing at the moment. This remembering Baba brought such joy to us that we thought of other ways to remember Him. When you are making a cup of tea, just before you drink it, remember Baba, or when you are sitting down to play cards, or before you start a game of tennis. Baba helps you if silently, in trouble or in pleasure, you reach out to Him throughout the day.

Even at parties, where in the beginning we would not have thought of Baba, we learned to remember Him.

One time when I was having lunch with Baba and the women, Baba asked me if Adi drank liquor. "Yes, Baba," I said. I had to tell the truth, but I was thinking *oh dear, that's finished - Adi's going to get an order*. Then I continued, "But not regularly, Baba. Only when he's very tired, or when we are at a Parsi gathering, a wedding or other celebration where 'hot' drinks are served (in Gujarati 'hot' drinks are ones with alcohol). And when we are given a drink, Adi and I always search the party until we have found one another, and we drink a toast to Your health." At these words Baba smiled from ear to ear, and the matter was finished - so now we are bound to drink to Baba's health.

It may seem unnatural for people to think of God while they are

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at parties, but if we bring Baba into our pleasure rather than calling on Him only when we are in pain, life becomes much more full and beautiful.

## CHAPTER SIX

During the early sixties, we were able to spend much more time with Baba than we had been able to in the past. In May of 1960 Adi, Merwan and I came to Pune, where Baba was staying at Guruprasad, the summer palace of the Maharani of Baroda. She had graciously given the palace over for Baba's use. Whenever we went to see Baba, we just went; we never knew how long He would allow us to stay. In the past we had sometimes been with Him for only a day, but on this occasion we were in Pune for six weeks, staying at hotels or with relatives. We had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time in our Beloved's Presence at Guruprasad, as we were usually there from about 8:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. This was one of the most beautiful times we ever had in Beloved Baba's company.

Then, in 1962, we received a circular from Baba saying that He was having a *darshan* programme for both His Eastern and Western followers at Guruprasad from the 1st to the 4th of November that year. We greeted this news with joy, although there was one problem, about which we wrote to Baba. Merwan's Cambridge Exams, his final high school examinations, were coming up later in November, so we weren't certain that he should attend. Baba replied, saying that Merwan should come, even if for only two days. Merwan was



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overjoyed and immediately put his mind to his studies. He stayed behind with a relative in Karachi when Adi and I left at the end of October, as we were working as volunteers. Merwan was to join us for the first day of the *darshan* programme, which came to be known as the East-West Gathering.

Our duty was to take charge of the Westerners staying in one of the hotels and make certain they were at Guruprasad each afternoon in time to receive Baba's *darshan*. When Merwan arrived, he was also put to work, running errands and helping to control the lines of people waiting for *darshan*. He had thought that since the programmes were held only in the afternoons, he would be able to study in the mornings, but on the first morning Baba told us He wanted Merwan to come all day for the three remaining days, so there went his studying.

The first day of the East-West Gathering dawned bright and sunny, but both that day and the next, Baba kept saying, "Hurry up, hurry up, it's going to rain," and sure enough, both days it poured. All the people gathered at Guruprasad for Baba's *darshan* were completely soaked. Baba insisted that the Westerners change into dry clothing, but the volunteers had no time to change. Nevertheless, we had several glorious days in Baba's company.

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Although Merwan left after four days to return to Karachi, I waited until after the gathering to go back, while Adi and Mummy, who had also come for *darshan*, went to Bombay. Within a few days of his return, Merwan became very ill and started running a high fever. The first diagnosis was a throat infection. I informed Adi in Bombay, and he informed Baba. Baba sent the same cable to me in Karachi and to Adi in Bombay: "Whatever happens, don't worry. Be resigned to my will... Tell Merwan not to worry if he cannot appear for examinations...." Baba also instructed Adi to come back to Karachi to help me care for Merwan. When we received Baba's cable, we both thought that Merwan would not be able to take his exams. Our fears increased as Merwan's temperature continued to rise, and he was eventually discovered to have developed measles.

Then news of Merwan's illness and the possibility that he might not be able to appear for his exams began to spread throughout the Parsi community in Karachi, and many people were very critical of Adi and me for being so "foolish" as to take Merwan to see Baba at such an important time in his academic career.

The first day of the exams, which were scheduled to take place over the following three weeks, arrived, and Merwan did not appear. I

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was very anxious and phoned the doctor to ask if it might be possible for him to write the exams in isolation. To my great surprise, the doctor informed me that the quarantine period was over and Merwan might now appear for the exams. But now another problem was facing us. Merwan had not been able to study for the previous three weeks, and he was still not feeling very strong. We weren't sure that he should even make an attempt. Merwan, however, was both confident and very eager to try, so we got permission from his school principal for him to begin the exams late. He had already missed the first two papers; there were six left to go. Baba timed everything perfectly, because the marks for only the top six papers would be counted, and since Merwan had taken eight subjects, he could miss two. While all this was going on, we received a cable from Baba asking after Merwan's health and quite innocently inquiring whether or not he had appeared for his examinations.

The results of the exams took nearly three months to arrive. We had some doubts as to whether or not Merwan would pass, as one of the papers he had missed was one of his strongest subjects. And the Parsi community continued to talk about our "foolishness" in not leaving him in Karachi to study instead of taking him to India to see Baba. But when the results arrived they surprised everyone, including all of us. Not only had Merwan passed; he had received a First Class,

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and was the only Parsi to do so! It was the one and only time he passed First Class. Of course, we cabled the news to Baba. He cabled back saying that He was very happy about Merwan's success and wanted to hear the details, so we wrote Him a long letter as well. Baba cabled back once again, reminding us that He wanted Merwan to study for his Bachelor of Commerce in Pakistan and then go to England for further education .



In 1963, just a few months after the news came of Merwan's exam results, we again had the good fortune to come to Pune for six or seven weeks of Baba's *darshan*. As we had on our previous visit, every morning we would come to Guruprasad, and every evening we would return to the place where we were staying. On the first day, as soon as we had greeted Baba in Mandali Hall, which was filled with people, Baba asked me to tell everyone the story of Merwan's exams and what the Parsi community had to say about the whole situation. When I finished narrating the story, Baba said, "Merwan did my work among the Parsis very well."

It was wonderful to be in Baba's company once again, and many lessons came to us during those days. Once a few of us were

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with Baba when suddenly He turned to a young man sitting there and asked, "What are you thinking?"

The man, who was apparently going through some internal upheaval, answered, "You know very well what I'm thinking, Baba."

"Yes, I know. You want to get married. That's what you are thinking about. But how many times have I told you that if you leave the question of your getting married entirely to Me, I will get you a wife whose beauty will eclipse the beauty of the moon itself. The trouble with you is that you don't leave it entirely to Me. If you have one hundred percent faith in Me and leave it entirely to Me, the burden will



*Merwan, Rhoda and Adi, Karachi, 1967.*

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*Guruprasad, Pune in 1960*

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automatically fall on My shoulders and the pressure of the burden on My shoulders would make Me remember in spite of the pressure of My universal work, with which I'm engrossed."

Listening to this discourse, I thought suddenly of our son Merwan, who at the age of sixteen had developed an ugly habit of twitching his nose in such a way that he would distort his entire face. We had talked to him, scolded him, beat him, bribed him, and coaxed him, but all to no avail. If I told him to stop, he would deny that he was doing it. This had been going on for around a year and a half, and we felt absolutely helpless. Internally, I said, "Baba, I believe you, and if what you just said is so, then I leave the problem of Merwan twitching his nose entirely to You."

Hardly had I finished this thought when Baba turned suddenly to me and asked, "Why is Merwan twitching his nose all the time?" I literally gasped as Baba continued, "What kind of parents are you that you have allowed him to develop this habit?"

I poured out the whole story, how we had tried our best, but all our attempts to make Merwan stop had failed utterly.

Baba then looked at Merwan and said, "You know, you could get

into a lot of trouble with this habit of yours. My father," continued Baba, had a friend who was in the habit of twitching his eye" - here Baba mimicked that man. "One day the two of them were walking down the street and from the opposite direction two women were coming. As they passed by, My father's friend twitched his eye. Two men who were behind the women took this as a mark of disrespect to the women. They thought he was just being fresh, so they grabbed him by the collar and began to beat him up. Of course, My father intervened and managed to stop them. As My father was explaining that the twitch was an unconscious habit, his friend's eye twitched again, and the two men were convinced. But the long and the short of it," said Baba, "was that My father's friend was beaten because of his habit. You, Merwan, will also get into trouble some day because of this habit of yours." And Baba twitched His own nose.

Baba's mimicry was perfect; He twitched His nose exactly as Merwan did. As for me, I felt that a great load had been taken from me.

At this moment Baba became very serious and, looking directly at Merwan, said, "From this minute you are not to twitch your nose. If you do, I do not want to see your face again." Then He turned to me and said, "From now on, if Merwan twitches his nose, you must send me a cable immediately."



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"I will pay for the cable from his pocket money," I said.

The Beloved shook His head. "No, half from you and half from Merwan."

A card game, *Larisque*, followed. The game was in full progress, and Baba was looking in the opposite direction from where Merwan was sitting. Suddenly He turned with a jerk and pointed to Merwan. "You twitched your nose."

"If you say so, Baba," said Merwan, "but I didn't know I did it." He did not argue. He loved Baba with all his heart and he knew that whatever Baba said was true.

During the rest of the day Baba caught Merwan twitching his nose a few more times. On these occasions Baba's face would be turned away from Merwan, and He would turn around quickly and say to him, "You twitched your nose." And Merwan would answer, "Baba, I must have done it unconsciously." The Compassionate One allowed Merwan to get away with twitching his nose that day since he was doing it unconsciously, but He reminded Merwan that if he twitched his nose from the next day onwards, His order of not wanting to see Merwan would stand. That was the last day we ever saw our son twitch his nose!

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In later years, when Baba was in strict seclusion and no correspondence was allowed, we would ask Merwan teasingly, "How about twitching your nose so that we have an excuse to cable Baba?" But of course Merwan refused to do what Baba had told him not to.

This may seem an ordinary, even trivial, incident, though at the time it seemed to our family anything but trivial. But Baba, through this incident, showed us very clearly the importance of having one hundred percent faith in Him. And He also showed us his displeasure that we had not been able to keep Merwan from developing this habit, which was part of our responsibility as parents. Baba teaches us not through preaching, but through His supreme example of a life perfectly lived. As Charles Purdom says, "Baba enables us to discover ourselves, to understand ourselves by His Presence, simply by our awareness of Him. We get through Him a change of heart. He has the power to transmit grace, kindle love, bestow illumination."

We found out early in our lives with Baba that weaknesses have to be brought out, and the Master Psychologist manoeuvres a situation to a climax. Once the lesson has been administered, the chapter is closed, never to be mentioned again. It is up to the disciple to take cognizance of the fact that Baba expects him to do the correcting, to be aware of his weakness and make an effort in the right direction, all

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the while knowing with certainty that Baba will help him. Baba tackled the situation in such a loving, fatherly way that He got an immediate response from Merwan. But there is no doubt in my mind that it was Baba's grace which, in a single day, removed an unconscious long-standing habit.



One afternoon a small group was sitting around Baba when Adi Arjani, another Pakistani, came into the room with his family after having eaten lunch. As was Baba's practice, He asked Adi whether they had eaten well, then asked him what they had for lunch. Among other dishes, Adi mentioned chicken curry. At this time in India, particularly, chicken was not an everyday dish, but something served on special occasions.

"So you had chicken," Baba said. Then asked others what they had eaten, but He didn't comment further.

The next afternoon Baba again asked the Arjanis the same question, and again they had eaten chicken.

"Again?" Baba asked.

And the third afternoon the scene was repeated. Baba asked the Arjanis what they had eaten, and once more, chicken had been a part of the meal.

"Chicken again? Do you like it so much that you have it every day?" Baba asked.

Adi Arjani explained that since they were on vacation, they were having chicken as a special treat.

This discussion of chicken went on for a few more days. Then one day Baba said, "You Pakistanis, you're gluttons. Are you crazy, eating chicken every day?" And he told the Arjanis that they shouldn't eat chicken any more. But that was not the end of it. One by one, Baba asked everyone in the small group sitting in Mandali Hall at that time if they ate chicken, and if they did, He told them to stop. When it was Adi Dubash's turn, Baba said, "No chicken for you." Every time Baba gestured no, He also made a gesture of corking a bottle.

I was sitting with the women, and I was afraid Baba's eyes would be on me next. I was most relieved when He changed the subject to something else, as I loved chicken and knew I would be very sorry if I couldn't have it. But after some time, He turned to me and

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*Guruprasad, Pune, 1960s*

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asked, "Is it all right" - He knew how I loved chicken, and He asked the question with such compassion - "if you also don't eat chicken?" The Beloved always knows what is going on in our hearts and minds.

"It's all right, Baba," I said.

"Good. Then I would like you not to eat chicken." Now my bottle was corked, too. Merwan was now the only one in the room who had not been given this order. Baba asked us if he ate chicken, and we told Him that Merwan ate it only on special occasions.

"All right, never mind," Baba said, and the conversation turned to something else. Merwan thought he had been spared. But in a few minutes Baba again turned to us and asked if it would be all right if Merwan didn't eat chicken either. Of course, we agreed, but then Baba Himself said, "Never mind, he's only a child." This time Merwan was certain that he wouldn't be given the order. But in a few minutes, Baba once again told us it would be best if Merwan didn't eat chicken. So that was the end of chicken for all of us.

Since that time I have not intentionally eaten chicken. In the beginning we blundered a few times, but no chicken means no chicken. Once someone served us soup, and we ate it without

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thinking. Afterwards, when dinner arrived, it was chicken *pilao*, and I instantly became suspicious and asked the hostess what was in the soup. She knew that we had Baba's order not to eat chicken.

"Oh, Rhoda," she said with concern, "that soup had chicken in it." Then, with great compassion in her voice, she asked, "What now?"

I said, "Nothing you or I can do now - I've already eaten it. **But** it's all right." And silently I asked Baba's forgiveness for breaking the order.

Another time someone offered us sandwiches, but the moment I put that first morsel in my mouth, I realized what it was. Without swallowing I asked what was in the sandwich. When the answer came, I went outside and took it out of my mouth. Perhaps three or four times I have inadvertently broken Baba's simple order, but I have never done so knowingly. Now Adi and I have become veterans where chicken is concerned. Most of our friends know about our order not to eat it, and they tell us before the food is put on the table. But even a simple thing like this teaches us to be alert and also to remember Baba.



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Guruprasad was also the scene of a striking example of Baba's divine forgiveness. A group of us had been sitting with Baba for some time when He asked most of us to go into an adjoining room, the Rani's room. The mandali He told to stay with Him. We were all sitting in that room when suddenly an urge came to me to find out what was going on in the room where Baba was, so without a thought I got up and peeked through a crack in the door. Baba was sitting among the mandali, who were standing and talking. Then it occurred to me - *Baba, what have I done? I have encroached on Your privacy.* I felt terrible.

Just then our son Merwan came running up saying, "Come on, everybody, Baba is calling you."

My heart started thumping. I knew I had displeased Baba, and He would be very angry with me. I was ashamed of stooping so low, and I hung back as others started into the room. Normally, I tried to be the first one through the door and the last to leave, so that I could spend the most time in Baba's company. But now I literally tried to hide myself from God and sneak in behind the others. I could see Baba in front of several people who were already sitting on the floor talking, and as I put one foot over the threshold, I realized that suddenly there was nobody in front of me to keep Him from noticing me. And just then



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Baba spontaneously turned, looked directly at me, and blew me a kiss. Then He turned back to the people in front of Him.

I was stunned - so stunned that I could not take in the forgiveness He had just shown me. I sat down, heart still thumping wildly, until gradually I became calmer. The matter was never even mentioned, but what most impressed me about this incident was that we should never be afraid to ask Baba for forgiveness. If our request is sincere, He will forgive us freely and lovingly. Such is divine forgiveness.



Sometimes Baba works on us in very humorous ways, but even when He teases and treats a subject lightly, that doesn't mean we shouldn't take Him seriously. All my life I have been a very slow eater, and Baba used to poke fun at me frequently. "Poor Adi," He would say, "I don't know where he found such a wife." Or He would tell everyone, "By the time Rhoda has finished just one slice of mango, the rest of us would not only have finished our lunch, but would already be fast asleep." Sometimes Baba would even mimic my peculiar way of eating.

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One day Baba called me to the table where He was having lunch with the women mandali. Baba was seated at the head of the table with Mehera, Mani, Goher, Naja, Rano, Meheru and Arnavaz. One mango seed with a lot of pulp still clinging to it, and a large slice of mango had already been put aside on a plate for me. Then Baba said, "Add one more slice." That done, He said to me, "You must finish all this in five minutes. Sit at the table and eat so that we can watch you eat like a monkey."

I started on the mango, but Baba kept asking me questions, and I would eat, answer, and then eat again. Then Baba pointed at the clock on the wall opposite Him and gestured, "four minutes left." That was when the gravity of the situation hit me and I realized this was not something Baba was joking about, but His order, and I started attacking the mango as quickly as I could. Baba still asked me questions, but now I answered by simply nodding or shaking my head, and I continued eating. "Three minutes left," said Baba - then "two minutes." I started sucking the pulp from the seed. "One minute more," reminded Baba, as my back was to the clock. At that I started stuffing everything left on the plate, including the skin - everything except the seed - into my mouth. "Five minutes over," said Baba and clapped His hands.

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Baba then told me to wash my hands. I couldn't answer because my mouth was full, my cheeks puffing out like a big balloon. Looking at my mouth, Baba said, "You had better go into the next room and finish what you have in your mouth." It took me nearly half an hour to finish eating what I had thrust into my mouth, and by that time I was exhausted.

Baba never explained this incident. But later I realized that He had not only encouraged me to eat more quickly; He had given me a beautiful memory. Every time I eat a mango, I think of Him and the loving discipline He gave to us during those wonderful days we were privileged to spend with Him.



In my life with Baba I have learned through bitter experience that unless one is constantly watchful and alert, one is bound to slip, and the results can be extremely painful. On one occasion a large number of people were packed into a small room with Baba at Guruprasad. Baba said, "I want all the ladies to leave now. But before you go, come and kiss Me on the cheek."

The first woman got up, kissed Baba on both cheeks, then bowed down and put her head on His feet before going out. This last

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act of putting her head on His feet was her own addition to what Baba had asked. The second woman followed, kissed Baba on the cheek, bowed down to touch her head to His feet, and left. And so it continued with every lady who followed. Each bowed and touched her head to Baba's feet before leaving. As I watched, awaiting my turn, I became confused. Had I heard correctly? At that time the right thing for me to have done would have been either to ask Baba again or only to kiss Him on the cheek, as that was how I had heard Baba express His wish. And if His wish was my command, then I should have followed it. But the temptation to put my head on His feet was too great.

When my turn came, I kissed Baba on the cheek and then, like a fool, I bowed down and put my head on His feet. My love for my Beloved was still immature. As I lifted my head - and how this happened, to this day I do not know - my head hit His knee with quite an impact. And it was the knee on the side with the fractured hip joint. I could literally feel the silent groan that Baba gave, the physical suffering I had caused Him. Imagine the state I was in. I looked up at my Beloved, filled with sorrow and confusion, to find Him looking down at me with compassion.

Somehow I got to my feet and struggled out of the room like a crazed person. I walked right out of Guruprasad. *What have I done?* I

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thought. *I would lay down my very life for my Beloved, but instead I have given Him such suffering and pain.* I kept walking, without direction, until with bell-like clarity I heard a small voice inside me saying, "You see what happens when you do not obey Me? More suffering falls on Me. That is why I say, Obey Me above everything." This voice was so clear, so direct, that it registered in spite of my mental agony. Baba has told us, "I am the voice that eternally speaks within each heart."

While the lessons were sometimes painful, those days in Guruprasad in the glorious company of the Beloved remain among Adi's and my favorite memories. How fortunate we were to have been there with Him.



In December of 1963 I was privileged to make a second visit to Baba, this time to Meherazad for a one-day celebration of Mehera's birthday. Two hundred women were invited to attend this celebration, which began at around 9:00 in the morning, when we arrived at Meherazad by bus. After we had all greeted Baba and Mehera, we went over to Mandali Hall for a musical programme. Anyone who so

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desired could sing for Baba. At around noon, Baba wanted to retire for a short while, and for the first time I was one of the lucky ladies selected to carry Him in His chair.

After we had greeted the women mandali, Baba came out once again, and Mehera cut the cake while we all sang "Happy Birthday" to her. Then we helped ourselves to the delicious treats laid out buffet-style on tables in the garden, dining under the sky in the presence of the Lord and His beloved. Another programme in Mandali Hall followed, and at about 4:30 p.m. Baba indicated that it was time for us to leave and everyone should kiss His hand. I was one of the last in the queue. When Baba told me how happy He was that I had come, I kissed His hand. He then pressed my hand so lovingly that I kissed it again.

Outside Eruch was waiting for me with a packet from dear Mani. Inside was a sadra that Baba had worn, a great treasure for me to keep.

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*To Baba's right standing is Mino Kharas, sitting in front of Baba is  
Adi Dubash, Sahavas, 1958*

## CHAPTER SEVEN

In the summer of 1964 we planned to visit Guruprasad again, but on 1 March we received a circular from Adi K. Irani saying that although Baba would be at Guruprasad from 1 April until the end of June, He would not give *darshan* to anyone that year. The circular came to us with a hand-written message from Eruch: "My dear Adi-Rhoda-Merwan, Beloved Baba directs me to convey to you Trio His Love and Blessing and He wants you all three to know that He wishes that you do not visit India this summer for His *darshan*..." We are guessing that Baba asked Eruch to write this special message to us, as earlier we had written to Baba informing Him of our plans to visit Him in the summer of 1964, and He had agreed. We waited eagerly for a chance to be with Him once again.

Then, in June of that year, Mummy had to go to Bombay for several weeks to be treated for stomach ulcers. Adi accompanied her. When she was discharged, they went to stay with friends for a couple of days, then left for Karachi. As soon as they landed in Karachi, she started complaining of pain and uneasiness. We called our family doctor, but he couldn't diagnose the problem and called in a specialist. After giving her some tests, the specialist told us that she had leukemia and advised us to take her to Bombay immediately, not to



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delay even a day if possible. So within a week of leaving Bombay, Adi and Mummy were on their way back. They had telegraphed the hospital to admit her on their arrival, and she was taken there directly from the airport.

Minoo Kharas had sent a couple of telegrams from Karachi to Baba to inform Him of Mummy's health. When Adi phoned the friends they had stayed with during their previous trip to let them know that he and Mummy were back in Bombay, the friends told Adi that a letter had been waiting for him for a couple of days. When they came to the hospital to see Mummy, they brought the letter, which was from Baba. When Adi read it, two sentences gave him a clear indication that Mummy's end was near:

*Beloved Baba wants me to inform you to be brave and to do the needful. Remain resigned, as is usual with you, to His Divine Will.*

After reading the letter, Adi rang up Arnavaz and Nariman Dadachanji and asked them to visit Mummy that evening. When he gave them the letter to read, they agreed with him that Mummy was nearing the end.



*Beloved Baba in Guruprasad, Pune, 1960s*

After the doctors had taken several tests, they told Adi that the results wouldn't be available for four or five days, and not to worry until then. But because of Baba's letter, he decided to ring his father in

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Karachi and tell him to come immediately because Mummy didn't have much time left.

Fortunately, Adi's father and eldest sister-in-law were able to make it to Bombay the day after he phoned them, and they were at the hospital by late afternoon. They saw Mummy and talked with her. That whole day Mummy had been experiencing severe stomach pains, and none of the medication given her helped at all. Finally a doctor said he thought she was having a heart attack, and a cardiogram was taken. Sure enough, that was the problem, and although they tried to treat her, she started sinking. Around 10:00 that night, with Adi repeating Baba's name, she passed away. Adi said he had never seen anyone go so quietly, so peacefully, remembering Baba all the while.



In December of that year our family underwent another frightening ordeal. At that time there was trouble at the college Merwan was attending, and some students were rioting. Normally whenever he knew of trouble in advance, he would stay away, but one particular day he had to be at the college to pay his fees. He was standing in a line in front of the administration building when suddenly everything became chaotic. Students ran through the building yelling with the

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police in pursuit, and a riot broke out. Merwan was hit on the head by a policeman's *lathi* (a thick, wooden stick with a metal knob on the top). The metal knob hit his head so hard that he couldn't feel anything, and he frantically tried to find a place to hide. Then he touched his head and saw that he was bleeding badly. The police, assuming that all the injured were responsible for the riot, herded all of them off in a police van to the Civil Hospital.

Some of Merwan's friends quickly informed us of what had happened, and we went immediately to the Civil Hospital, a free public hospital, which was filthy. By the time we arrived, Merwan had been x-rayed and his wound stitched. He had a fractured skull. We pulled what strings we could to have him released from police custody and moved to a more fully equipped and cleaner private hospital.

By the time we were able to move him it was late afternoon, and the anaesthetic had worn off. Merwan was in excruciating pain, and the doctors informed us that the next 48 hours were absolutely critical. Rumour spread among the Parsi community that he had only 48 hours to live and could have no visitors.

Any time one of Baba's followers was seriously ill or injured, it was the practice to inform Baba, so we sent a cable to Him. Baba sent

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back a cable saying, "Give Merwan the best medical treatment and be resigned to divine will..." We had a long, difficult 48 hours to endure, but when they were over, Merwan was still alive, and the doctors assured us that he would make a full recovery. Once again we cabled Baba, and he replied, "...happy Merwan improving. Don't worry, My *nazar* is on you all..." Merwan's recovery was a slow process. He spent three weeks in hospital and suffered from double vision for months afterwards. It took nearly five months for him to return to normal, but we were all grateful that he hadn't sustained more serious injuries.



In 1965 we received a circular saying that Baba would be in Pune for the summer months, from 1 May to 6 May for a *darshan* programme at the Baba Centre in Pune, and after that at Guruprasad. Adi and I were asked, as usual, to come as volunteers and help out with the *darshan* programme. Baba asked Merwan to come later, as he would be having exams, and all three of us were given permission to stay on in Pune after the *darshan*.

During the *darshan* programme Merwan, who was still in Karachi, received his first cable from Baba. Just like a father inquiring

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about his son, Baba wrote, "How are you my dear Merwan..." Then, three days later, on Merwan's birthday, he received a second cable saying, "My love blessing to you on your birthday..." And when Merwan arrived at Guruprasad, after he had greeted Baba and bowed down to Him, Baba asked him about his recovery from the accident, then said, "If My *nazar* had not been on you, you would have died!"

As with many stories, there is a sequel to this one as well. Years later, after Baba had dropped His body, Adi and I were in Meherazad, and Bhau told us of an incident he remembered from the time he was doing night duty for Baba. He said that the night they had received the news about Merwan's head injury, he was on duty, and during the night Baba had become very restless and asked him if Merwan Dubash would die. Bhau told Baba that Merwan was a good boy, and that he was the only son Adi and Rhoda had, reminding Baba that Homi had already been taken from them, so he thought Merwan should be saved. But Bhau told us that Baba had remained restless all night, and that He kept repeating that He thought Merwan was going to die. Bhau knew from this that Merwan must be in an extremely critical condition. The following day, when the news arrived that Merwan was out of danger, Bhau said Baba was very happy. We remembered the doctors telling us that the first 48 hours were critical, and it was during that time that Baba spent the very restless night.

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Another lesson for me came that summer at Guruprasad when several of Baba's close ones were sitting with Him, reminding me of a father talking to his children. Somehow the subject turned to a disagreement that Adi and I had just had with the relatives with whom we were staying in Pune. A misunderstanding had taken place between our uncle and the two of us, and our aunt had been very upset because she loved us very much and tried to do everything she could to make us comfortable. So she complained to Baba about her husband's behaviour.

Baba listened and then told us exactly how to handle the problem. "Try to settle this situation amicably. Do it in such a way that you do not hurt the feelings of your aunt, and at the same time do not hurt the feelings of your uncle. I am in every heart, and if you hurt the feelings of any person, you are hurting me." Baba explained this all casually. But then He turned directly to me and said, "Rhoda, never hurt the feelings of anyone." With these last words His direction became an order for me - and it was more difficult than the order not to eat chicken which Baba had already given us.

In fact, I have found throughout the rest of my life that this order has been one of the most difficult to keep. All of a sudden I get angry with someone, and words begin flying before I can think. This

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happened once between a very close friend and me in Meherabad after we moved there from Karachi. Some problem occurred, and the woman and I ended up shouting angrily at one another. When I reached home, I began to think about how much I must have hurt this woman's feelings, as I really loved her dearly. The next morning we had to pick her up in our car, as we were going somewhere together. As soon as she came out of her house, I stepped out of the car and held my arms open wide to greet her. "Forgive me," I said. "I was so rude, and I hurt your feelings so badly."

"No, no," she answered. "I've been thinking that you were right, but I kept insisting, even though I was wrong."

We hugged one another and that was the end of it. For maybe fifteen years now we have been so close, so loving with one another. Baba took away that anger from my heart which otherwise would have stayed there and come up again and again.

"Never hurt the feelings of anyone." Short and simple.

After the 1965 *darshan* programme was over, Baba's health started deteriorating, and He hardly left His room. At times He would come into a side room and sit with us and the men mandali for a while;



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otherwise he would call the men into His room. As in other years, we were at Guruprasad from around 8:00 in the morning until late afternoon, but this stay with Baba was one of the most intimate for Adi, Merwan and me.

During our previous trips to Guruprasad there had always been great activity - lots of people, music and entertainment programmes, and visits to people's homes. But all of this was absent in 1965. Most



*Adi on the left of Baba, Pune, 1960s*

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of the time nobody was around except for the men mandali and the three of us. Only occasionally in the mornings there were others. Many times Baba would call Adi or Merwan to read the paper to Him or to massage His legs.

In late June Adi had to leave because of his business, but Merwan and I stayed on until 1 July, when Baba left for Meherabad. On the day Adi was departing, he was standing in the corridor outside Baba's room. Baba came out of the room in a wheelchair and told Adi, "I've come out of My room so that you may push Me into the side room instead of taking My usual route from the inside."

On 1 July 1965, Baba left Guruprasad for Meherazad with His mandali, and Merwan and I, along with many other Baba lovers, were there very early in the morning to see Him off. When we arrived at Guruprasad, Baba was already in the hall, and we all waited outside in the corridor. Baba asked each of us to come in and bow down to Him, and then we again waited in the corridor. When it was time to leave, Baba was wheeled out into the corridor. The wheelchair was picked up and carried to the car waiting at the steps. Baba was helped into the car, where He sat with the door open, waiting with Eruch by His side. Baba was deep in thought, and whenever He would ask for somebody, Eruch would call out the name, and that person would run

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up to the car. All of a sudden my name was called out. I ran and stood next to the car. With Baba sitting on the seat, we were eye to eye. Baba said, "Today is your wedding anniversary day, isn't it?"

"Yes, Baba," I answered.

"Have you sent a cable to Adi?"

"Yes, Baba."

"What did you say?"

After I told Baba, His fingers started moving, and He looked straight into my eyes and said, "Hold fast to My *daaman* to the very end."

While the Beloved was giving me this very important message, I was thinking I'd never noticed before that Baba's eyes were blue. (Although Baba's eyes were brown, at that moment they appeared to me to be blue.) Baba kept me there for a minute or two, and then asked me to go. I returned to the balcony and waited for Him to leave. As Baba's car started to pull away, we all stood there waving and shouting *Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai* until we could no longer see the car. All of us now needed to leave. People started saying good-bye to one another, laughing and hugging, but I just left the crowd and ran

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into Baba's room, which was open. There on the bed was the impression of His body, and it was still warm. I threw my head onto the bed and cried. Tears don't come easily to me, but that day I cried hard. A premonition, maybe, that this was the last time I would see Baba. But whatever it was, I stayed a few minutes in the room. Then we all left. And, as it turned out, this was indeed the last time I was to be in the living presence of the Divine Beloved.



On 31 January 1969, Meher Baba dropped His body. The news reached us early in the morning on 1 February. Adi's dad, who heard it on the radio, came down to inform us, but as we were still fast asleep, he just sat and waited. Soon, however, Minoo Kharas, who lived just across from us, came rushing in and barged into our bedroom, saying, "Adi, wake up! Adi Arjani just phoned up from Lahore saying that he heard on the news that Meher Baba has dropped His body."

Adi just turned his back and told Minoo it was probably some other Baba, and started to go back to sleep.

"But Adi Arjani said it was on the radio."

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Still no response from Adi. But somehow I felt it must be true.

Minoo told us he would go back to his house and would contact Bombay to find out, because it would be very difficult to get through to Ahmednagar.

I shook Adi and said, "Listen, they have heard it on the radio, so it has to be true."

Finally the news started to sink in, and Adi and I both got up and went straight to Baba's photo, bowing down before quickly dressing and going across to Minoo's house. Minoo had phoned up Arnavaz and Nariman Dadachanji, and the phone was finally answered by a servant, who told him that Arnavaz and Nariman had gone to Ahmednagar for Meher Baba's funeral that day. Then we knew the news was absolutely true.

We informed all the Baba people in Karachi, and soon everyone had gathered at Minoo's house. There was deep sorrow and pain in everybody's eyes. Nobody could speak. Together we recited the Master's Prayer and the *Arti*, by which time a cable arrived from Adi Sr. in Ahmednagar, confirming this momentous event. The cable said that Baba's body was to be interred the following day. When the cable

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arrived it was already too late for us to reach Ahmednagar in time for the funeral, but the next morning Adi and I went to the Indian embassy to ask if they could give visas in a few hours. The Indian officials said they had read the news in the paper, and they would give us the visas. They told us to come back as soon as we knew exactly when we wanted to go, and they would take care of everything.

In the meantime, that night we were able to reach Ahmednagar by phone and were informed that Baba's body was still lying in the crypt and had not yet been buried. It hadn't yet been decided on which day Beloved Baba's form would be interred, but doctors were watching and would make the decision. People from all over the world were coming, basing their plans on this information. Realizing that Baba's body might be buried at any moment, we decided not to go because we might not arrive in time. Also, a few months earlier, Baba had sent us information that He was going to give *darshan* in April. If we went now, we might not be able to get another visa to return in April, and whether Baba was there in the body or not, we wanted to honour His invitation. When we later heard that the interment did not take place until 7 February, we regretted our decision not to go, but at least we had the April *darshan* to look forward to.

The Great *Darshan* that took place in April was one of the most

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wonderful ever - people came not only from Pakistan and India, but from all over the world, to be welcomed by Baba's mandali. Before Baba dropped His body, He had sent out an invitation to His lovers everywhere to come to Guruprasad. The programme, which took place over a period of three months, had been set by Baba, each group having been given a particular date and time to be present. When He had asked the mandali to send the circular announcing this programme, they had told Baba that He was in no condition for such a strenuous *darshan*, that He wouldn't be able to sit for such long periods of time. But Baba's response was, "If at that time I am not able to sit, I'll give *darshan* reclining." And that was the end of the matter.

After Baba dropped His body, the resident mandali sent out a circular that they would be going to Guruprasad for the three months that Baba had scheduled for the *darshan*, and all those who wanted to honour Baba's invitation would be welcome. Adi and I had again been invited to work as volunteers, so we went in time for the first *darshan* programme in April, for the Western group coming from America by chartered planes. They arrived at Guruprasad, each one filled with love for Baba. For the programme the mandali placed a chair that Baba had always used at the front of the hall, on which a large photograph of Baba was placed. Those who came took *darshan* in their own individual ways. Some were filled with joy, others broke down

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in tears, but all of them felt Baba's presence vividly.

Each group had been asked to entertain Baba, so all presented beautiful programmes of stories, songs, and dances; it was just as though He were physically present. The Pakistani group was scheduled for a week in May, and we also sat in front of Baba's chair and entertained Him with stories and songs, and even played a game of *Larisque*, which we tried to do exactly as He had played it. This game brought a lot of laughter and loving memories. I sang a song that Baba had enjoyed hearing me sing before, the traditional Christmas carol, "O Come All Ye Faithful," with a slight variation here and there.

On one day each group had been scheduled to go by bus to Meherabad to Baba's *Samadhi*, returning to their hotels in Pune later on the same day. And so it went on, for weeks and weeks, different groups coming and honouring the Lord's invitation before going home with more love in their hearts for Him than ever before.



Several years later, after Adi retired, we decided to leave Pakistan and move to Meherabad, where we might serve Baba more fully. We live in a house on land adjoining lower Meherabad and have



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taken on a number of duties. I worked in the Trust Office with Mani and Eruch for many years until I developed macular degeneration, losing the sight in one eye, and the other weakening to the point that I was no longer able to read or write. My hearing had also deteriorated to the extent that it was not possible for me to follow normal conversations.

At first I was very angry with Baba. "How could You do this to me?" I asked. "We left all, our home, everything to come here and serve You, and now You take away my vision?" I received no answers to these questions. And every day I stood by Baba's photo or at the *Samadhi*, waiting for an answer, but none came. Then I started bypassing the picture of Baba at home, where I always stood to talk to Him. Though I was still going regularly to the *Samadhi*, I was bypassing Him there, too. This went on for weeks, even months, but no answer came to me, and I was terribly unhappy.

In my miserable state I talked with Arnavaz and Dr. Goher about my situation. Arnavaz told me, "It is Baba's way of drawing you closer to Him," but I somehow could not accept that idea, and I continued my stupid behaviour. Then one day, when I thought I simply could not bear the pain any longer, as I was bypassing Baba's photograph I stopped and looked up at Him. And suddenly I heard a voice, "But I am here." I looked more closely at Baba. Was it possible that He was telling me

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that? And as I stood there, looking up, the voice came again. "But I am here." I burst out crying, "Forgive me, Baba! Forgive me for being such a fool." Tears rolled down my cheeks and joy flooded my heart.



*Rhoda with women mandali at Guruprasad, Pune, 1960s*

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The next time I was at Meherazad I told Arnavaz about this incident. She smiled. "The next time you come to Meherazad, I want you to find me. I'll get Goher and you can tell us once again." And the next time I went to Meherazad, both Arnavaz and Goher were waiting for me. Arnavaz said, "Listen to me, Rhoda. One day, a long time ago, Mehera, Mani, Goher and I were with Baba in His room. And suddenly Baba turned to Mehera and said, 'Hold fast to My *daaman* with both hands.' Mind you, Rhoda, Mehera was closest to Baba. Then He turned to Mani and repeated His words, adding 'to the very end.' Then to Goher, 'Hold fast to My *daaman* till the very end.'"

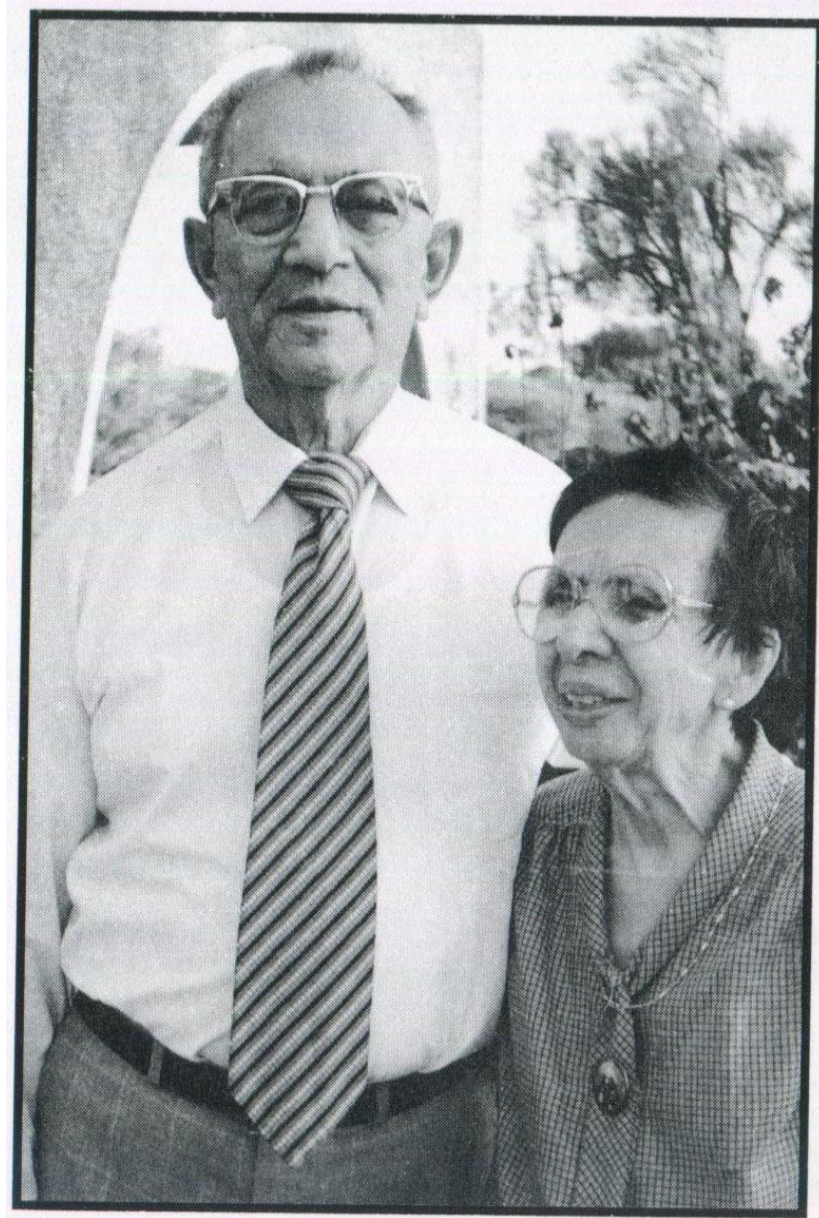
The memory of these words, the last that Baba said to me in Guruprasad in 1965, came back instantly. But my first reaction was anger. "Arnavaz, you knew how I was suffering for all those months. Why didn't you tell me this?"

Arnavaz answered with the wisdom the mandali imbibed from all their years with Baba. "This is something, Rhoda, that nobody else could help you with. Coming to understand that whatever Baba tells us has real meaning is something you had to find out yourself."

Tears came to my eyes. I said, "Yes, like a fool, I ignored Him for many months. But now I am back on my feet, and I will never question His ways again."

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Once again, as I had in the past, as I would have to do over and over again in the future, I found myself surrendering completely to His will.



*Adi and Rhoda, Meherabad, 1993*

## Register of Editorial Alterations

Page 37, para 4, line 5, tracking changed to trekking

Page 85, para 1, line 10, twiched changed to twitched

Page 85, para 2, line 1, mimickry changed to mimicry