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All These Things Take Time Mister

Stories of Padri

By Eric Nadel

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*ALL THESE THINGS
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STORIES OF PADRI

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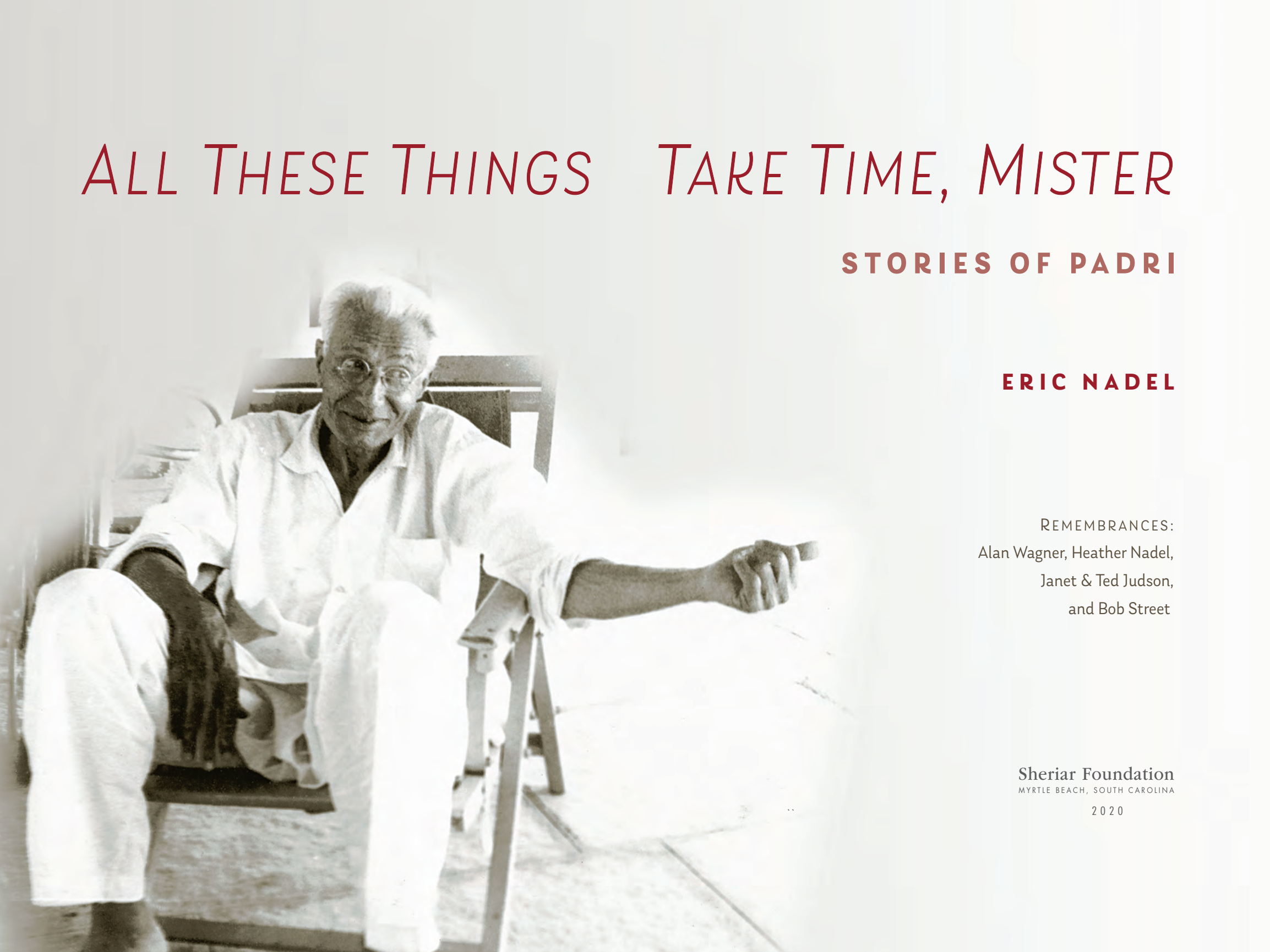
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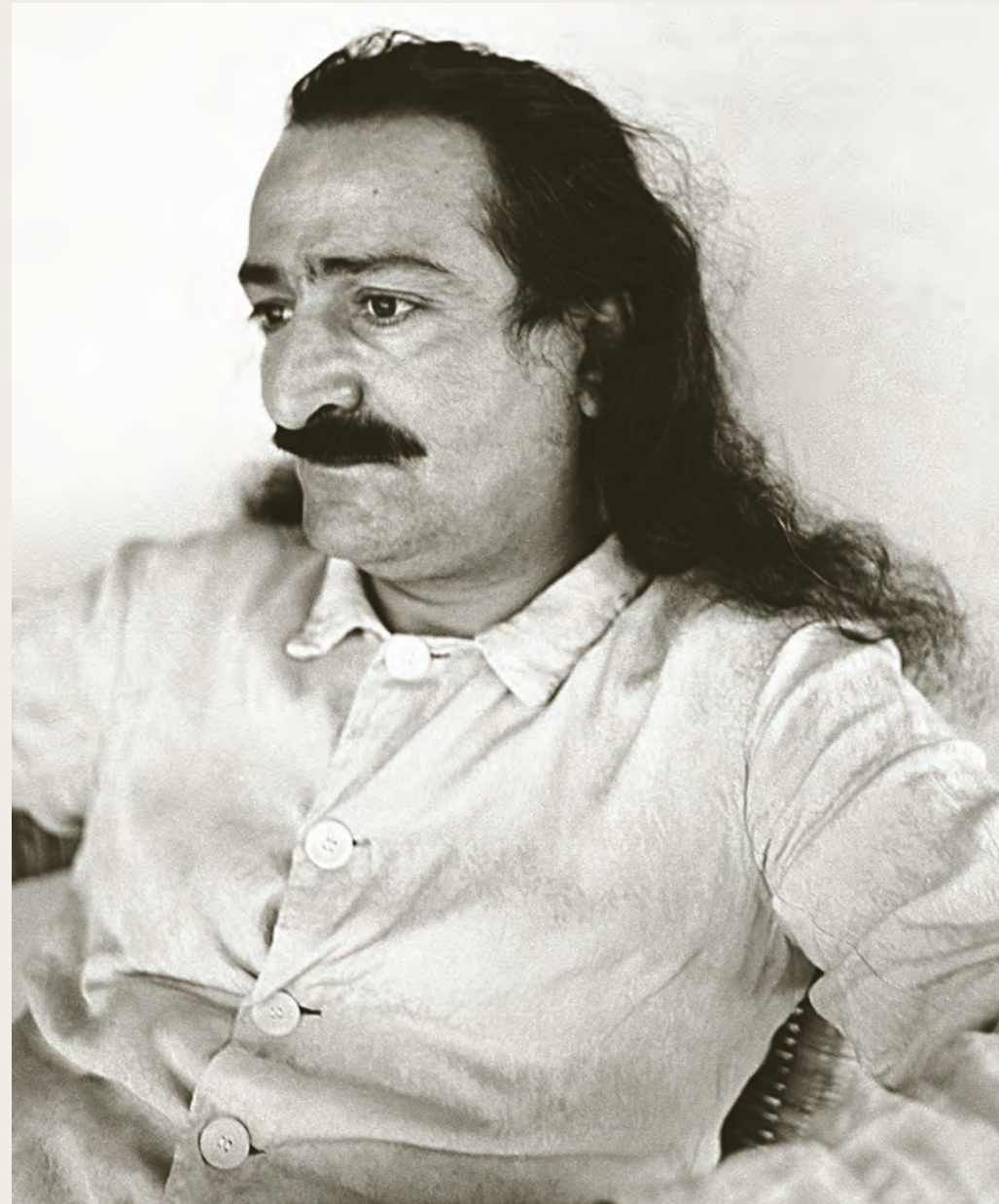
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TO BABA,
WHO MAKES EVERYTHING POSSIBLE

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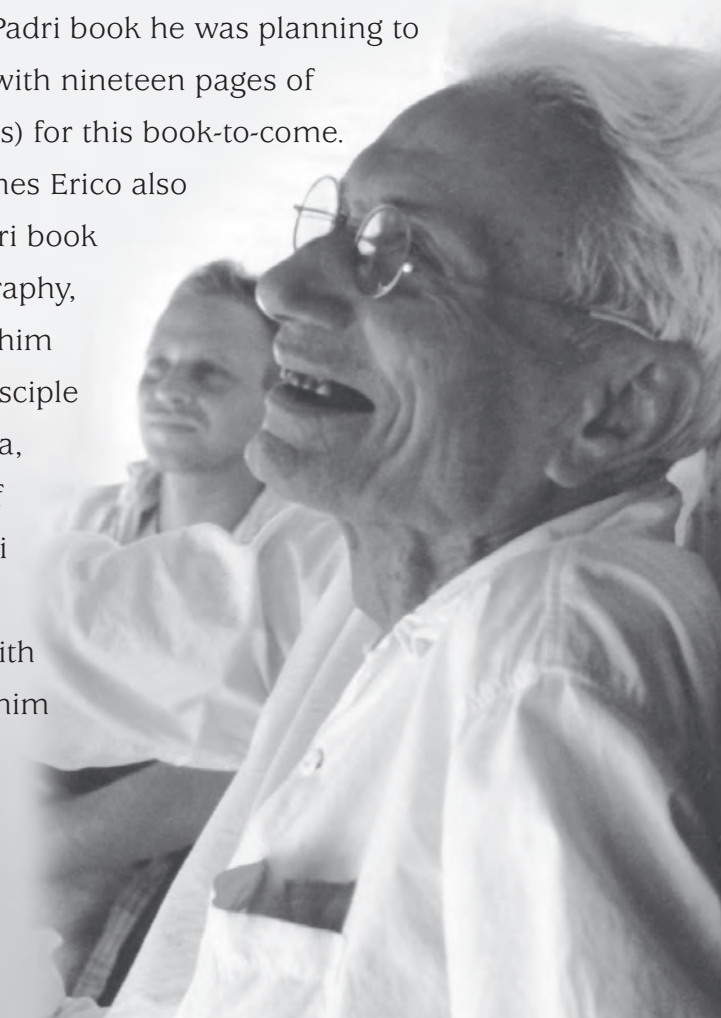
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INTRODUCTION

At any time of the day (or night) Eric Nadel would suddenly dash off to his computer, or pull out his little Post-it® pad and pencil, to make a note of something about Padri that suddenly occurred to him. All these points, he explained to me, were for the Padri book he was planning to write. He ended up with nineteen pages of outlines (yes, outlines) for this book-to-come.

A number of times Erico also told me that the Padri book would not be a biography, or a presentation of him as a very old-time disciple of Avatar Meher Baba, but rather a series of observations of Padri as a man during the time that we lived with him. And lived with him we did, at Lower

Padri and Erico, Meherabad



Meherabad, for six years from 1976 until 1982 when Padri suddenly passed away.

Around thirty years later, after Erico himself had gone, I began searching his computer for what I might find about the Padri book. What I discovered were a series of stories, lines, notes, poems, and random ideas for that project. The sixteen vignettes published here are the few complete stories in that collection. This is not the book Erico wanted (that would take up volumes!), but it is a gesture from all of us involved to share his skillful observations with others.

Quite independently, in 2018 a group of us who lived with Padri in the same years that Erico writes about met to tape our memories of him. These informal conversations, which give more context to that amazing time, are also included here.

Hopefully, all of this reveals some of the impact, the impressions, the atmosphere, and the lessons that our beloved God-Man, Meher Baba, gave us “raw recruits” through His well-seasoned disciple Padri.

– Heather Nadel
Meherabad, India
2020

PADRI'S BIOGRAPHY

Faredoon Naoroji Driver was born in Poona on November 29, 1903, the third of four sons, to his mother Freiny and father Naoroji. He grew up in the Camp area of Poona and was friends from a young age with Baba's brother, Jal Irani, and His cousin, Aspandiar Irani.

Freiny was spiritually inclined, and she persuaded her husband to purchase a flourmill (the family business at the time) just down the street from Hazrat Babajan's seat. After completing her daily chores and family responsibilities, she would lock the house and spend the day with Babajan. She realized the importance of Merwan (soon-to-be-called Meher Baba) because Babajan would make declarations about His special status.

Those close to Babajan also came to know of the other great Masters, such as Sai Baba and Upasni Maharaj. Daulat, Freiny's sister, was also spiritually inclined. Although most



Padri at Rahuri, 1936

of their family was not in favor of their spiritual interests, Freiny, Daulat, and her daughters Piroja and Mehera, would occasionally visit Upasni Maharaj in Sakori.

In January 1922, after Meher Baba's last long stay with Upasni Maharaj, He took up residence in a hut on Fergusson College Road in Poona. One day soon after that, Freiny sent her son, Faredoon, with a note "To Jal's brother, Merwan." When he came to deliver the note and Baba told him that his mother had already been there, Faredoon realized it was just a ruse to get him to meet Baba. He was smitten by Baba's charm, however, and enchanted by the atmosphere surrounding Him. Baba encouraged him to continue to visit. By May, the first serious, written commitment to stay with Baba was signed by many of the early disciples, including Faredoon, who remained with Baba for the rest of his life.

Near Ahmednagar a year later, Baba gave Faredoon and fellow disciple, Aspandiar, their nicknames: "Padri" and "Pendur." Both of them were with Baba on His first walk from Ahmednagar to the camp near Arangaon that would become Meherabad. Years later Baba would refer to them as two of the four pillars of Meherabad, the others being Adi K. Irani and Vishnu Deorukhkar.

Padri was one of the few men who was often in Baba's company during those early years, including being one of His disciples at Manzil-e-Meem. He attended to Baba during seclusion and accompanied Him on His travels, many of



Baba's 1955 Meherabad Sahavas; Padri can be seen center left



At Padri's request, Baba gestures as

Padri photographs Him, Bangalore, March 31, 1940

which were very difficult. Padri was proficient in several languages (Gujarati, English, Hindi, Urdu, Marathi, and Farsi), and he served as a teacher in the Meher/Prem Ashram. But his training was as a machinist and mechanic, and from the beginning he was involved with infrastructure and construction at Meherabad. He was also an excellent photographer, taking many of the “classic” photos of Baba. Along with a few of the other mandali (Meher Baba’s intimate circle of close disciples), Padri also developed a deep interest in homeopathic medicine and became adept, treating people for the rest of his life. Whenever Baba was away throughout the years, Padri would spend some spare time reading, and his general knowledge was keen.

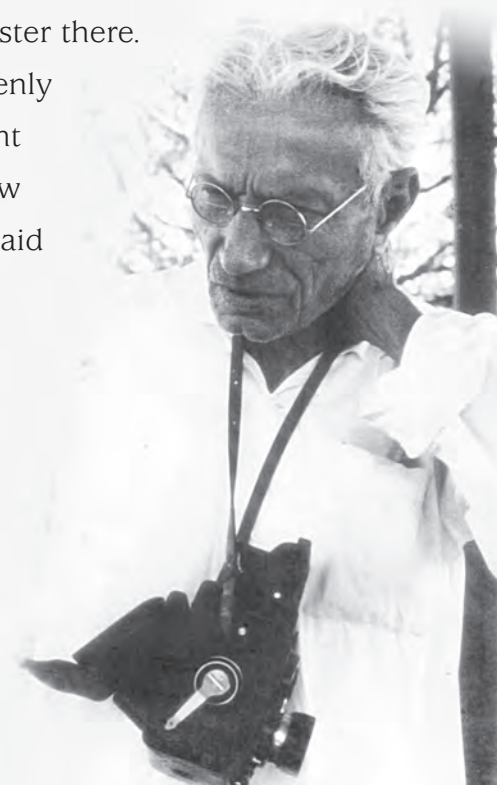
Padri would say, “When I was young, I tried to understand Him but soon realized the futility of it.” His precept became simply, “Obey the Master.” Like a few of His other rare seasoned disciples, Baba could praise Padri or humiliate him to make an example without being concerned about hurting his feelings.

Once when someone asked Padri about loving Baba, he replied, “Don’t ask me about love; I don’t know anything

about it. Go and ask those people at Meherazad. I only know to do the work He has given me with my two hands.”

By 1960, while most of the other mandali were with Baba, Padri was left at his post, diligently managing the affairs of Meherabad, although he would be called to Meherazad and Guruprasad occasionally. In fact, the last communication made by Meher Baba in His room at Meherazad, just before He dropped His physical form, was to tease Padri about his homeopathic treatment. Soon after, when Baba’s lovers began making pilgrimage to Meherabad, it was Padri who conveyed a sense of life with the Master there.

On March 13, 1982, Padri suddenly passed away while sitting on the front verandah of the Meherabad bungalow dictating a letter. The last words he said were its ending: “Yours Sincerely.” Someone with him there, who knew he was leaving, then said into his ear, “Meher Baba,” upon which Padri bowed his head and was gone.



Padri with his camera



Erico

ERICO'S STORIES

*The following sixteen stories
were written by Erico Nadel about his
observations of Padri at Meherabad during
the six years Erico lived with him. They were
in anticipation of a larger book Erico
planned to write about Padri.*

4 p.m.

If it wasn't raining and no work was in progress, around 4 p.m. the Old Man [Padri] would say, "Come on, let me stretch my legs/ I've been stuck here all day/ Let's get out of the house/ Let's go to . . ."

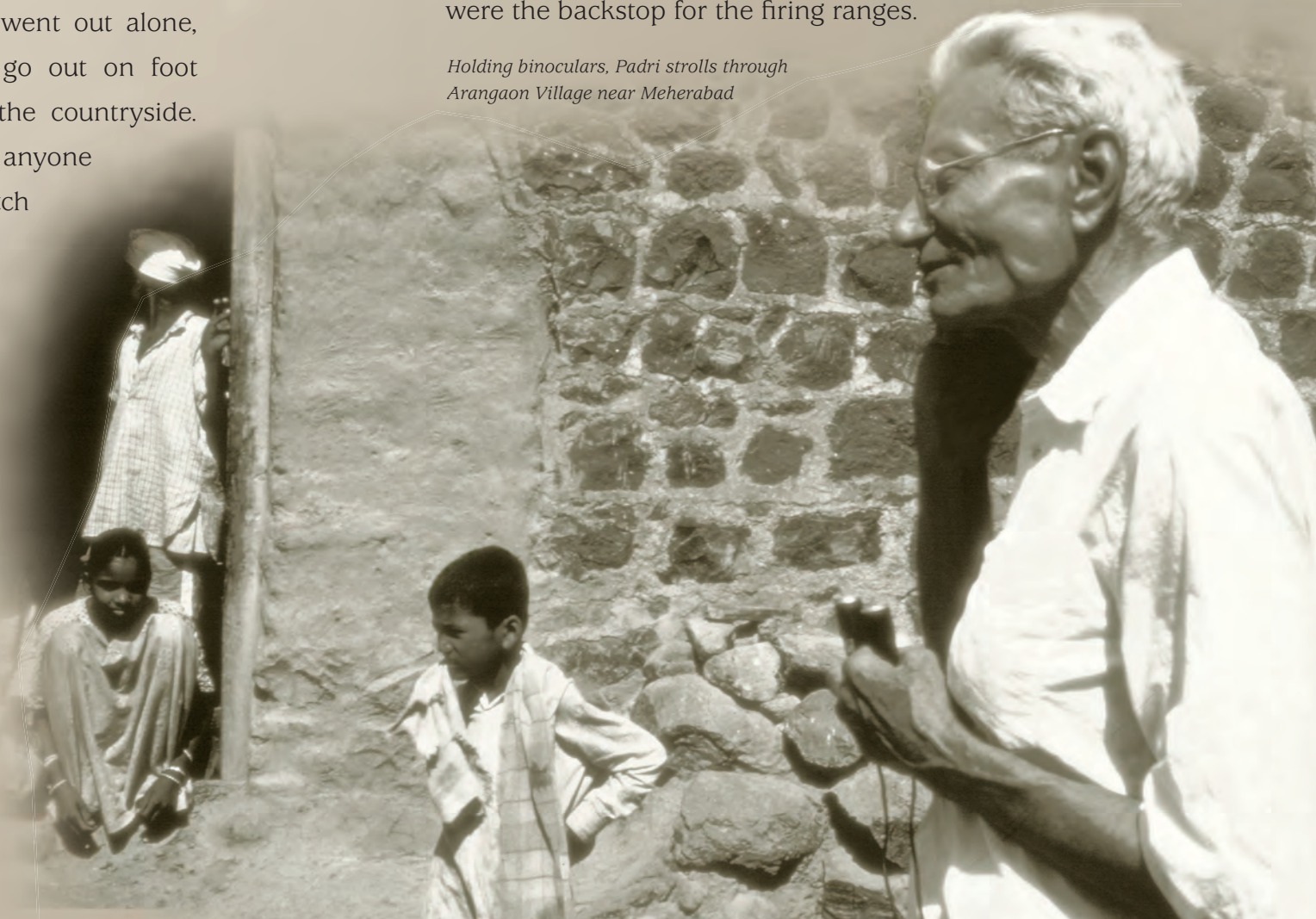
If I had been "pestering" him with too many questions and Lower Meherabad was empty, he might ask me to remain for "watch and ward" while he went out alone, or with Bob Street. Otherwise we would go out on foot or by bike and make a long loop across the countryside. If Heather was free, she would come too and anyone else who happened to be lucky enough to catch the moment.

He'd doff his sandals, put on socks and shoes, precisely tying the laces, and button tight the cuff of his white pajama pants.

Padri loved his bicycle. A beautiful, high, old black machine that could accommodate his large frame and long legs. He mounted the bike by leaning it towards him, swinging his right leg over the crossbar, putting his foot on the far pedal, then stepping down on it.

The outing had the flavor of a picnic jaunt of a benevolent father with his excited children. Before the construction of the Army's vehicles research campus behind Meherabad to the east, we would frequently go into the large meadows there. These had been the source of fodder for the horses of the Army's cavalry division, which had been headquartered in Ahmednagar until after World War I. There were shallow ravines. Padri pointed out where he once shot a marauding wolf with a large-bore rifle slug. There were also three bread-loaf-shaped artificial hills that were the backstop for the firing ranges.

Holding binoculars, Padri strolls through Arangaon Village near Meherabad



From the moment we left the bungalow, Padri's attention was directed most towards the features and details of the natural landscape.

"This plant with the purple flowers, milky sap, and pods like milkweed, is invaluable in times of cholera."

"The seeds of this yellow poppy are a narcotic, like opium."

"I am searching for a succulent that grows close to the ground in spires like coral. It is a remedy for an irritated stomach."

"The long-tailed, green, swallow-like birds are called 'bee-catchers.'"

"Look! This insect always curls itself into a spiral in your hand! It is harmless, go ahead, pick it up. I love to see that."

"The black cotton soil (a good growing soil for many local crops) collected here must be fifteen feet deep. It washed down off the slope. Ah! In Marathi it is called the 'flour of the earth.' Above you can see where the underlying stratum is now exposed."

His vast knowledge was illuminating and his excitement was infectious and self-communicative. We visited farms where he inspected crops and discussed with farmers the welfare of their children, families, and livestock.

He talked with the people we met. Some knew him, but all had heard of him.

Once he was asked by an old woman, "Did you come to shoot the birds at the lake?"

"Don't you know me?"

"Oh! You're the Irani doctor from Meherabad. Forgive me. I thought you might be a hunter. You treated me when I was sick with jaundice as a child, and gave my daughter your [homeopathic] medicine in the night when she had a difficult delivery. I am glad to see you again after so many years."

I interrupt him while he speaks to a village wrestler with a question about a word they are using. Padri gestures to a contraption of pipes and barrels, and says that it is slang for the moonshine-maker, which is his still.

He examined every well that he came across. "This site was shown by a child diviner. They struck *pani* (water) after 24 feet, a big spring that is as wide as your thigh, Mister. The hole filled up with water so quickly they had to scramble out. Two crowbars, a few *ghamelas* (large metal pans for carrying earth, etc.) and two *powdahs* (hoes) are still down there at the bottom."

He pointed out survey stones and old boundary markers and other archeological features, like the canals and tunnels of the old Mogul water system. "After the city was founded, the Nizam of Ahmednagar commanded the planting of 200,000 mango trees, and constructed the aqueduct that transports water from a bend in the river near Rahuri (a town about 40 km away), with a rise of over 300 feet, by means of something—but not exactly—like a siphon (an air ram); it supplied more water per capita than Nagar city gets now

and it ran without significant repairs for centuries. These large trees you see here are the descendants of those propagated by the Raja of Nagar centuries ago.”

It was incredibly thrilling to wander about with him when he was so relaxed and lively and refreshing himself. He wove a beautiful web of ideas with words that spoke of simple natural processes with delight, but at the same time resonated with deeper meanings. The *Book of Nature* spoke to us through him.

“Try this leaf. It’s mustard. Delicious isn’t it?”

Alchemy

The big wind-up alarm clock woke Padri at 10 before 5 a.m. each morning. A few minutes later he emerged from his tidy room, hair brushed, brown eyes shining keenly behind wire-rimmed spectacles, dressed in his loose, white pajamas and long-sleeved white shirt that buttoned down the front.

He collected the lantern hanging in front of the door and loped down the verandah to the large room sometimes referred to as Meherabad Mandali Hall. Above the door, the words on a plaque Baba ordered him to place there read: “Those who lose their all in Me find their all in Me ever after.” He sighed with deep feeling; the Farsi words “*Ay Khudawanda!*” or “Oh God, the-Sire-of-Creation!” exploded out of him. Then he opened the door to look inside at Mohammed Mast [a 5th plane God-intoxicated soul].

Resuming his journey down the verandah, he would chuckle and utter with much enjoyment, “*Madarchod!*”—another Farsi word meaning “Mother-fornicator.” Although it was a cuss word, his bright spirit and purity of heart illuminated it. It struck me like another name of God. Consider this: Who is the “Original Impregnator” of the “Mother of All”?



Francis Brabazon observing Padri's gesture of "Loonie" to a pilgrim

Moving further along, he would unlock the storeroom, drum on the kerosene barrels as he passed through, emerge on the back verandah, and enter his kitchen there. Sometimes to joke with him, I would hang signs above the door like: "Inquire Within," or "This way to the Egress." His sense of humor was robust. He might respond by playfully editing the sign with a pencil and returning it.

In the early 1970s, an exuberant group of pilgrims awoke at the end of their stay to discover a notice posted on their quarters in Padri's fair hand: "Keep Out: Only Lunatics Allowed." The same source supplied a name board for the "Savages' Kitchen" when some of the residents set up a communal kitchen in an old cowshed about 1977.

But the message my spirit inscribed above his kitchen door was: "Enter here for a World of Wonders, the Alchemist's Workshop." Every morning that I possibly could—at least 300 days out of the year—at some time between 5:20 and 6:30 a.m., exploding with anticipation, I tapped lightly on the door, paused, and entered. I cannot really describe the marvels I found within, but "alchemy" covers a lot of it.

Traditional alchemists seek the philosopher's stone that transmutes base metals into gold. Hafiz wrote, "What marvelous alchemy is the slavery of the Magian Pir!,"* which

* *Pir-e mughan* literally means the "Magian Master," the "Zoroastrian Master," i.e., the Perfect Master.

can transmute even the inert, stone-like consciousness of an ordinary man into the magical touchstone of Super Experience, the consciousness of a Man-God like Himself. Padri was indeed a fortunate slave of his Magian Pir and so, fresh from a night's sleep, in the early morning quiet hours at tea-time that began each day, Padri would casually convert our obstinacy and block-headedness into insight and cooperation.

How?

He worked with whatever was at hand. Take a seat and watch.

Ted (another resident) comes in about 6:15 for a quick cup of tea before *Arti* [a twice-daily recitation of Meher Baba's three prayers and devotional songs]. He announces that he now knows exactly where to site the ramp for the excavation of Jal's well [Jal Dastoor].

Ted is a meticulous engineer. But, although it is sound, the plan as he explains it is colored strongly by the assertion of youth against experience.

Padri listens as he calculates. He wants his young colleague to plan thoughtfully and also have faith in his convictions, but that should not close his mind.

He cups a hand to his ear as if he hasn't heard all the words clearly, leans forward, smiles: "I couldn't catch all that. Say again."

Ted responds, speaking more quietly, not more loudly, because in his mind he is turning to re-visit his solution without

the bias of his self-assertion. He senses that there is something to learn here.

Padri—"Hmmm."

And he squats on the floor to draw, in the light of the kerosene lantern, a circle in chalk representing the well. Now he carefully draws in the *thevan*, the ramp. He moves the chalk gracefully over the plan, more gracefully than Picasso or Leonardo.

Ted squats to join him across the circle. As he starts to summon his thoughts and prepares to speak, Padri says, "At this site, the rain water in the monsoon flowing down from the Hill will erode the ramp and contaminate the well." He continues on with four other solid objections.

Ted proposes another location. Padri considers it, and gently but swiftly reveals its shortcomings. He suggests a third location. Ted agrees. Then Padri points out a subtle flaw there and scoots around the circle.

They trade positions, on the map and in the discussion, back and forth. They lean over the chalk circle almost touching heads. Pro and con, round and round, sparring, cooperating, yielding, affirming, giving in, advancing, retreating, reexamining, refining, extrapolating, estimating, pondering, questioning, summarizing.

Padri hands the chalk to Ted. He draws in an idea of his and next to it another one of Padri's. They compare and contrast. They wipe away all the accumulated lines except the

Circle by Picasso. They travel around the ring again referring to the best points from the previous round. The chalk passes from man to man, hand to hand. It is like watching Pele play at the World Cup.

Padri skillfully leads Ted into a web of ideas while simultaneously spinning and elaborating it; his goal is to have him dance and vibrate there.

On the fourth time round the plan, Ted enjoys being freed from adherence to his first model, so much so that when he eagerly sketches in Padri's suggestion he does not recognize it as his own original starting point. He admires it, open-mindedly reviewing its possibilities.

Padri stands up and says, "This is the only sensible place for the ramp, Mister. Dress the edges of the thevan with the largest chunks of well rubble to protect it from erosion." And precisely, gently, steps on top of my foot with his—I am sitting nearby on the floor—a gentle reminder to me, as comprehension flickers, that this is his game and I should not speak.

As he was shaped and molded by his Master, he tried day after day to get us to develop the skills we would need for the future. In this example, all the insights and new ways of learning Ted discovered on his own. So he owned them fully; they were solidly his. All the talk and brilliant ideas were Padri's gambit, his tools to maneuver Ted towards a broader, more flexible understanding.

How did Padri follow the object and quality of Ted's understanding and at the same time keep track of the content and the context of the discussion?

How did he learn what learning is? How can we learn how to learn? How can we be taught that?

Padri gave us a love for the thrill of learning.



CLEOPATRA [to the old musician]: I want to learn to play the harp with my own hands. Caesar loves music. Can you teach me?

MUSICIAN: Assuredly I and no one else can teach the Queen. Have I not discovered the lost method of the ancient Egyptians, who could make a pyramid tremble by touching a bass string? All the other teachers are quacks: I have exposed them repeatedly.

CLEOPATRA: Good: you shall teach me. How long will it take?

MUSICIAN: Not very long: only four years. Your Majesty must first become proficient in the philosophy of Pythagoras.

CLEOPATRA: Has she [indicating the slave] become proficient in the philosophy of Pythagoras?

MUSICIAN: Oh, she is but a slave. She learns as a dog learns.

CLEOPATRA: Well, then, I will learn as a dog learns, for she plays better than you. You shall give me a lesson every day

for a fortnight. [The musician hastily scrambles to his feet and bows profoundly.] After that, whenever I strike a false note you shall be flogged; and if I strike so many that there is not time to flog you, you shall be thrown into the Nile to feed the crocodiles. Give the girl a piece of gold; and send them away.

—George Bernard Shaw, *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Act IV, Scene 1

Anil Nori

In August of 1977, a fine young man from Andhra arrived late in the evening. Padri greeted him warmly on the Lower Meherabad verandah by his room, asked why he had come so late when the Samadhi was closed, then listened as the youngster explained: He had received a scholarship to study Computer Science in America. His plane departed from Bombay in a few days. He would not be able to return to Meherabad for several years, and he wanted to stay the night if possible. Padri asked if he had food and accommodations; he had neither. He was wearing his good clothes, and his ever-present glasses. He listened respectfully to the Old Man's reply:

You may stay the night. Heather will prepare a place for you to stay. But there is no food for you here and all the cooks and staff have already knocked off and gone home for the night. Never mind.

I will give you a *thali* (large metal plate), which you can take to the village and beg for your supper there.

Early in the morning, you will sit with me for tea and *chapati* before setting off for Bombay.

The quiet dusk glittered like myriad minute diamonds in the hot still air. The charm of their interaction captivated me. I wondered what exactly our wise old fox was up to here. Padri was very generous with his time, labor, and food. He would prepare food for wanderers and would often ask us to make *chai* for them or to serve them from his kitchen.

This young man was a brilliant scholar and had just completed several years of intense study. But he was almost totally unfamiliar with both village life and Marathi. How would he get his chow in Arangaon when he spoke only English, Telegu, and Hindi?

The words of Milarepa's [eleventh century Tibetan Master] account of his arrival at the house of his Master, the great Perfect Master Marpa, began to play in my thoughts.

Marpa told Mila:

I am pleased that you want the Truth from me. That is what I am, and what I do is give the Truth to those who sincerely seek it. You may certainly have spiritual instruction from me, but I cannot also feed you. Oh no! That would never do. I cannot both teach you and feed you too from my kitchen! That would be too much! On the other hand, you may, if you wish, eat here, and seek your spiritual education elsewhere. The decision is entirely up to you.

This certainly was a delightful resonance, but Padri clearly wanted the young scholar to go beg and eat in the village. The village—rural, small, poor, and remote—was even farther from the familiar environs of his home in Hyderabad than his destination, the City of Salt Lake!

He obeyed Padri's instructions exactly. At the first place he went, a small clay and thatch hut lit by a kerosene lantern, a farmer's family quickly filled his brass tray to almost overflowing with delicious wholesome food. Our beggar tells me that he still remembers gratefully today their kindness and warmth.

The next morning, after being bitten by mosquitoes all night in Rahuri Cabin, a quick cup of tea, a few chapatis, darshan at Baba's Samadhi, and no lecture on foreign travel nor words of advice from the Old Man, he ventured out upon the first stage of his new life, which I can say has been and is extremely fruitful.

I admire the courage, faith, and talents that established him firmly in a new country and culture, both foreign to him. I admire too the great care that Padri took; the Old Man engineered the eager young man's experience and night adventure in the village to prepare and equip him with ideas and attitudes that would ensure his success.

Adab



The King of kings, Toka, September 9, 1928

I observed that Padri always displayed *adab*. This interesting Arabic word, spelled “alif dal alif be” with two long “a”s, pronounced “aadaab,” is a plural form and literally means “good manners, courtesies, etiquettes, politenesses.”

This is not to suggest that Padri always spoke with formal politeness. Although he spoke carefully and deliberately, he was famously straightforward and direct, and skillfully wielded rough language. Here “manners” imply not current society’s customs, but a mode of behavior appropriate for the court of God. Padri’s behavior was most suitable; it revealed his continuous respectful alertness to his Master’s Word.

For example, to record the names of the people present in old photographs, Heather would trace their outlines onto a transparent overlay, then give both photo and tracing to the Old Man to study and label.

One of these photos pictures a group of men on the eastern verandah of Original Mandali Hall at Meherabad. In the middle of the page, in the midst of fifteen rough images

of the photographed figures, between one labeled “Karim” and another marked “Masaji,” is the outline of Baba seated in a chair. Padri Kaka’s* well-formed handwriting precisely identifies this outline as “His Majesty.”

Note that he did not write “Baba,” “Merwanji,” “Merwan-Seth,” “Sri Sadguru Meher Baba,” “Sri Meher Baba,” or even “Meher Baba,” or any of the other beautiful appellations coined by His lovers. Padri simply recorded what was foremost in his experience, the most important fact he always remembered.

The Nobility of his Master resided in all things in creation, even in the heart of the young, over-eager interrupter of his breakfast. Poking my head into his kitchen in the early morning, he would often offer one word of greeting: “*Farma-iyay*,” which never failed to take me aback. This very elegant, respectful Urdu imperative verb form may be translated as: “Please kindly command!” or as, “Sir! What are your orders? Sir!,” which is familiar in military service.

From this and countless other signs, we knew he never forgot his Master’s Divine Greatness. We felt it as soon as we turned our face or footsteps towards him. We felt it even more brightly when we stood near him, even if he was sound asleep. It flowed from him in the same way fragrance flows down beneath a large flowering tree. It even impressed

Mohammed the Mast, who watched Padri walk by and then commented very pointedly: “*Padri-Seth Dada cha seva karto* (Padri does Baba’s service).”

Leaving aside Mehera, who is unique, of the mandali that I met only Nariman Dadachanji and Elizabeth Patterson had a similar adab. Bhau Saheb Kalchuri also exhibited adab when he was writing his masterworks like *Meher Darshan** during the early 1970s. Mo Mast, as we called him, was drowned by his feeling of adab for “*Dharma cha Dada* (Baba-of-Sacred-Duty)”; Padri felt it but wasn’t overcome.

It was not an attitude. These signs pertain to the outward, visible shape of the most intensely intimate, personal relationship possible; they hint at a depth that we ponder but can never even imagine.

For example, a group of visiting pilgrims came upon Padri reading the newspaper; they asked him for a “Baba story.” He chuckled with good humor and said that he was not a raconteur, but simply put: As a youth he promised his mother to visit Baba; he went to the Jhopdi or “hut” on Fergusson College Road in Poona where the atmosphere charmed him; he stayed; and now he advises us all to stick to Baba, too.

Delighted, the visitors drifted off. Turning back to his newspaper he muttered to himself in Gujarati:

* “Kaka” means uncle and is a term of respect for one’s elder.

* Hindi precursor of *Lord Meher*.

*Tamari saathe hamesha vaat karunch—
Tamari vaat bejaone soo karu?”*

I am always speaking with You—
How can I speak of You to others?

Baba wanted Padri to be relaxed and a good sport, play cards, bowl at cricket with his unchecked speed, bat with his full swing, and so on. There was so much give and take and shared experience between them. Padri wasn't stiff.

But this beautiful idea, adab, was obviously the shape that Baba wished for the relationship: never the slave oversteps his bounds. As Hafiz says in his Ghazal No. 37:

*Ghulam-e himmat-e an-am ke zir-e chark-e
kabud
zi har che rang-e ta alluq paizrad azad ast.*

I am the slave of the exalted aspiration of
He, Who, under heaven's blue dome,
Is absolutely free from everything that
accepts a color of attachment.



Often, as the Old Man strode from his room down the western verandah, he would savor the cadences of this line from Hafiz:

*sar-e ma khak-e rah-e pir-e mughan khwa-
had bud.*

The complete couplet is:

*Ta zi may o maykhana nam o nishan khwa-
had bud
sar-e ma khak-e rah-e pir-e mughan
khwahad bud.*

As long as the name and trace of wine
and tavern remain,
my head will be dust in the Magian
Master's path.

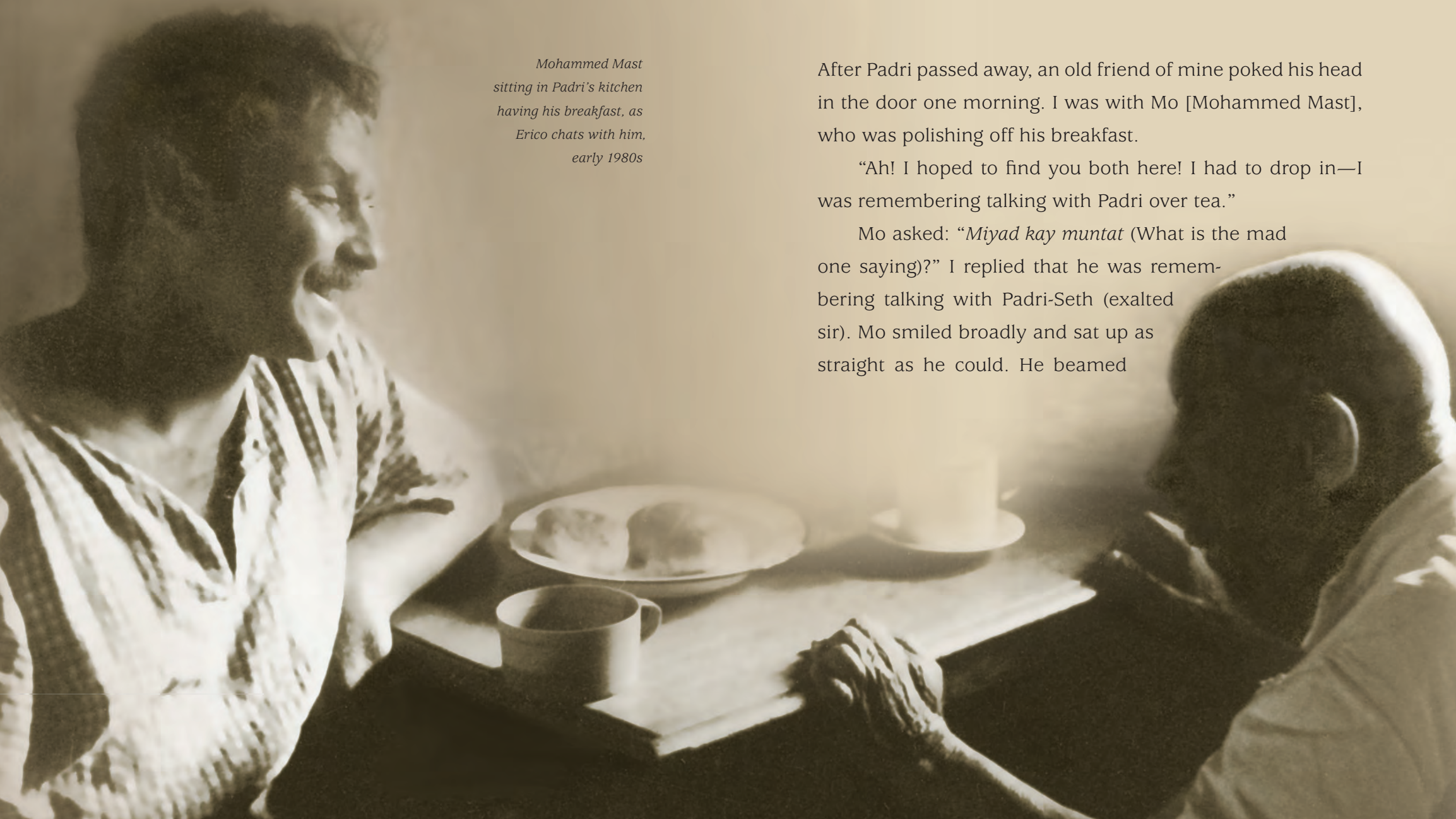
Gaslet Marlay Mistry Madarchod

*Mohammed Mast
sitting in Padri's kitchen
having his breakfast, as
Erico chats with him,
early 1980s*

After Padri passed away, an old friend of mine poked his head in the door one morning. I was with Mo [Mohammed Mast], who was polishing off his breakfast.

“Ah! I hoped to find you both here! I had to drop in—I was remembering talking with Padri over tea.”

Mo asked: “*Miyad kay muntat* (What is the mad one saying)?” I replied that he was remembering talking with Padri-Seth (exalted sir). Mo smiled broadly and sat up as straight as he could. He beamed



as he shared a memory of his own: “*Padri-Seth aisla boulisa: ‘Tujchi aiy chi gand!’* (Padri-Seth spoke thusly: ‘Your mother’s rectum’!)”

It was an accurate and convincing imitation. And typical of Padri’s non-English speech.

He swore often, artfully, elegantly, and with great creativity.

One day Kotkar, the milkman, delivered milk that included several small guppies. Padri extracted them into a glass jar and said:

“Now see here. If you must water down the milk, dilute it here from my tap where at least the water is clean.”

Kotkar: “Those aren’t fish, they are nose-fleas from my buffalo.”

Padri listened with great amusement, then began to versify spontaneously in Marathi something like this:

How uniquely fortunate are the barns and stables
of strong-limbed, bent-tongued Kotkar of Shinde-
wari [a nearby village]!

For this morning the Holy River Ganges
flowed through there, in spate, delivering great
blessings for us all!

The old man continued for several more, magical lines.

Both Kotkar and the slightly inebriated carpenter who rode pillion on the motorbike along with him unconsciously

drew nearer in wonder, like amazed children. The words were so lovely! The speech was charged with magic!

“Yes, I am exactly speaking of you, Kotkar, with a plug of tobacco eternally lodged in the side of your face, you, and that *Gaslet Marlay Mistry Madarchod* (the moonshine drunken carpenter motherf-r).”

With the timing and gestures worthy of a great Shakespearean actor, Padri concluded his broadside with that great line and then added a growl and a stamped foot. His intended targets snapped out of their enchantment and leaped away in case he decided to clobber them both for further dramatic emphasis.

I don’t have the keenness or the wits to even begin an attempt to translate that poetic outpouring. But it was afire with alliterations and well-wrought meter that brought delight and pleasure to the ear.

Before Meherabad, I had studied this same broad subject with excellent tutors: a Marine-drill sergeant-turned lacrosse coach, several famous Sicilian first mates at sea, and eloquent ne’er-do-wells in bars, construction sites, and logging camps. I always admired fine swearing and skillful turns of phrase.

But Padri’s flow of flowery language, energy, and clarity of expression was and is still unique in my experience. There was much, much more than just the words.

Adi K. Irani liberally interjected the Hindi word *sala* into English; it literally means “brother-in-law,” that is, “I sleep with

your sister.” He inserted it like punctuation—a comma, a full stop—to underline a main point. This surely was an elegant mode of usage. But Padri could carry his entire side of a conversation with only nuanced utterances of the same one word:

“Sala?”

“Sala!”

“Saa-LAH.”

“SA-lah.”

Adi and I chuckled about this. Then Adi explained that Dr. Ghani, elder to both Padri and himself and Baba’s close friend from childhood, swore admirably too:

“*Ap ki Ma ki gand* (Your Venerable Respected mother’s ass).” I was delighted.

Later, one afternoon Padri leaned forward to inspect a lovely stone and his cigarette case fell from his breast pocket. Since he had both a provocation and an appreciative audience he began a Hindi carol directed precisely at no one:

By the entire ill fortune and calamities of
all of them that are other than those, neither
near nor far,
and also not any of the ill-begotten offspring
of the improperly sired,
nor the ill-conceived progenitors of
unimpregnable, unknowable,

over-there-at-a-distance otherwise un-named
and not the merely utterly nameless illegitimate
progeny of . . .

His silver shaft of song arced heavenward, singing,
untroubled by gravity.

It was a *tour de force*. I burst out laughing and so did he.

“Kaka, how did you learn to swear so artfully?” I recalled my conversation with Adi and added: “Was it from Dr. Ghani? Adi Sr. said he swore very nicely.”

“Guess again, Mister.”

I didn’t see what he was driving at.

“Who?”

“Well, Who do you think?”

He watched closely as the light of understanding slowly spread across my face. He smartly clapped his hand to a thigh: “Ah! You should have heard Him! It was incomparable! He was the best!”

This revelation of a heretofore-undocumented aspect of the Avatar’s Perfection stunned me. But of course, how natural: under His command, even crude language became an excellent tool to remove the crudity of our age and its ignorance.



Chalk dates Padri wrote of supposed "DDT Spraying"

Padri Does A Slow Burn

Baba Himself appointed Padri the manager of Meherabad and Padri did that job with all his heart and all his marvelous skills.

Baba commented, "Padri, for instance, has not even the desire to know anything spiritual. All he wants and all he desires is to work for Me." Mohammed the Mast also remarked, "*Padri-Seth Dada cha seva karto* (Boss-man Padri serves Baba)."

He held Meherabad as if it belonged to him, as if he owned it, but at the same time he knew clearly it was not his. There was no taint of selfishness in this: he was Meher Baba's appointed viceroy.

Mani acknowledged this, too. She would only request an action from him, and left every decision regarding Meherabad totally to his wise discretion. Bhau likewise bowed to Padri's dominion. He very farsightedly wanted to acquire some land behind the Samadhi, but refrained when Padri voiced his opinion that the owners were poor farmers, land was their family's only asset, and selling it to the Trust at that

time would not benefit them in the long run. Instead, give them a loan.

What did his stewardship of Meherabad mean day-to-day? For example, when the Indian Government began a program of spraying DDT as an anti-mosquito measure, Padri judged it would threaten the purity of the wells from which all of Meherabad drew its drinking water.

When the first insecticide spraying team arrived, he greeted them warmly and told them that they did not have to trouble themselves; in fact, there was no standing water here for mosquitoes to breed (I can testify that was absolutely true of the time period of his management).

Moreover, he assured them, he himself had already seen to the matter of DDT. He showed them the date when he had recently tended to it, which was conveniently chalked below the roof along the front verandah; they could read it for themselves.

He sent one of us to fetch and display the backpack sprayer along with a sturdy airtight can boldly marked “DDT” that he kept exactly for such government visits.

The sprayer he had acquired from the bazaar looked impressive but was nonfunctional. The properly labeled can was in fact empty.

Years later, when Dadi [Kerawalla, a close Baba lover and professional horticulturalist] took charge of farm work, at one point he deployed insecticides, despite Padri’s strict regime.

Padri patiently explained his reasons for opposing it. Dadi resisted. Padri did a slow burn. He sat in his chair for a day. He was cordial and polite, but sharply ended every attempt to converse while he focused on grasping the situation.

The following day, he prepared a thorough, careful letter and dispatched it to the Trust office in Ahmednagar. Dadi made an about-face—no more pesticides—and vanished to Poona for several weeks.

The final score:

Padri: 1

Pesticides: minus 10

The Giant



Baba's Samadhi at sunset, photographed by Padri, 1972

It was a quiet night on Meherabad Hill during the autumn of my first year there as a night watchman. I was reading *God Speaks** aloud in my room and paused because I heard a strange noise. Someone was banging on the door of the Samadhi. It stopped, then someone began rattling the door loudly.

Something was definitely wrong.

My torch and stick in hand, I went out into the night. It was peaceful and calm; no one there. I made a slow and careful circuit of the Tomb, then the grounds outside the Hill compound. While passing outside the southern wall, there were more sounds: heavy treads, like a big elephant's footsteps that shook the earth, then all the water taps turning on and off. I rushed into the compound and, again, no one.

I went over to the other watchman's cabin. Maruti normally was asleep until midnight. I hesitated to wake him so I instead illuminated the inside of his cabin, expecting to find him snoring, and saw him sitting bolt upright, axe in hand, white as a sheet. His complexion was normally dusky so he was scared.

“Don't open the door!

I'm not coming out!

It's a giant!”

* Meher Baba, *God Speaks* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970).

“Did you see it?” I asked.

“Oh yes, big and black.”

I had only heard it, so I took another round inside the compound. Again slow heavy footfalls shook the ground, but I saw nothing.

The rest of the night was quiet.

At early morning tea, I started to relate all this to Padri, who interrupted to say, “You mean you have not heard? Don’t you know that Meherji Mama [one of Eruch’s uncles, Meherjee Satha, who lived in Ahmednagar] conked out about that time last night? Baba told us that He had given duty there on the Hill to the King of Ghosts. That must have been him, irritated that Satha Saheb has been liberated and not him, trying to attract your attention so you would intercede on his behalf with Baba. We’ll go have a look at Meherji Mama after my second installment of *cha* [tea].”

Mama was a lovely, wonderful, luminous old man. While working in Shanghai, he wrote to his sister Gaimai, Eruch’s mother, suggesting that she visit Baba. All the time I knew him, the 1970s, he was mostly in bed in the house at Akbar Press Compound (where the family resided in Ahmednagar). All around his bed, tucked between the mattress and the bed frame, was a library devoted to the lives and writings of the saints.

It was obviously the same fellow I saw in the simple wooden box by the grave, but he had never looked so good. He was no longer frail, weak, and grey. He shone like a ten

million watt light bulb. It was actually hard for me to look directly at him. Padri inspected him carefully, then picked up the lid and began nailing it down on the coffin.

I saw the giant clearly on another night. Since I was able to see the bricks in the wall through him, I had to conclude that he wasn’t there in the normal sense, but he projected an awesome physical presence.

He looked like a massive Oriental warrior. His straight black hair was parted in the middle and fell down to his ears. His skin was pale. He wore a dark green skirt or kilt, a black tunic over a grey shirt, an enormous belt with a buckle, and a sword and sheath about as long as I am tall. On his back were a gorgeous bow and a quiver wider than my waist. In his left hand was a lance. He wore sandals that were laced in diamond criss-crosses up his calves. He walked through the compound from the western gate, within fifteen feet of me, gazing intently ahead, and continued straight on to the east.

I did not get to tell Padri about that particular visit because he had been ill for several days, and the next morning after tea he went straight back to bed.

Later in the day, after we sent him to the hospital where he spent some days recuperating from walking pneumonia, I realized that Baba had reminded me, in advance, not to worry: He had already made His own arrangements to watch over all of Meherabad.

Morning Breeze



Esfandiyar Vesali enjoying the company of Mohammed Mast

After a night on Meherabad Hill, my every nerve and fiber sang and thrilled with delight. Meherabad Mandali Hall, the palace of seekers, the clubhouse for lovers of God, gleamed in the morning light, bejeweled with dust. I stepped inside. “Ah!” I thought, “a few nights like this and I will really begin to get somewhere!”

His Lordship, Mohammed the Mast, was unimpressed. His vast kingdom contained numerous bars of yellow Sun-light brand soap, innumerable wonders, and several *rumal* (handkerchiefs). His eyes, luminous with knowledge, flickered in my direction. His voice was resigned, simple, clear, unaffected:

“*Sirf bowcha sumasto* (But you comprehend the word ‘rectum’).”

Then in a thoughtful aside he added, “Suitable for washing my bottom,” and continued in a voice of command: “Bring water! Fill the tin can! Stand at ready! I will take a shit in my potty on the verandah; you will wash my bottom.”

This helped me put things in perspective.

His rapid transition from guileless, childlike simplicity to majestic command was a familiar feature. As was his sense of humor. Returning from the water tap, I politely inquired, “Sir, will this work earn me any money? Perhaps one rupee or two rupees?”

He was slightly bent over but straightened up to laugh. His big face bobbed up and down and he smiled broadly: “*Deve cha pashshi paisa nahi* (You know I have no money). *Tula arshirwad millal!* (You will be blessed)!”

“How much?” I asked. I held up my hand and showed him an inch and a half of air between my thumb and forefinger. “This much?” He laughed so hard he almost fell over. His arms spread out horizontally, farther and farther, a crouching fifth-plane guard on a basketball team: “Lots and lots! Like this! This much!”

“Now stand up straight! Feet together. No, not like that.” I moved my feet slightly apart. This was a familiar drill. “Stand like a soldier. Yes! Now lift your arms up high.” Padri swung by, paused to comment, “Boot camp, eh? More training drill for young recruits.”

The sun shone a bit more brightly, focusing its warmth on our patch of the eastern verandah. The air stirred gently like delicate silk, carrying a hint of music from an unseen orchestra.

A few mornings later, the routine changed. When I arrived, Mo had his *kafni* (the long white shirt that was his common garb) in hand, and greeted me thus:

“Change my shirt. I want a nice clean one, a new white one.”

Coordinating the dress change of a man who lacks gross consciousness can be difficult. A *kafni* is a simple garment, but we discovered many new ways to tangle it. Topologists would have been fascinated. When the job was done, he sat alertly on his cot to quiz me: “Is the button whole? Are the buttons done up correctly? Is it clean and white? Is it on nice and straight?” He may not have had gross consciousness—that is, he did not make new gross *sanskaras* nor experience them directly—but he could occasionally be fastidious, even picky.

Then he rose from the cot, exited to the western verandah, not the eastern sunlit side, and sat there on the wooden bench that was a piece of the old Circle Cinema from Nasik [a city four hours from Ahmednagar]. This was a further change of routine. This new morning scene was repeated for several days in a row.

Then one morning a motor rickshaw arrived with a Persian gentleman, Esfandiyar Vesali, and his wife Shirin. He spoke a bit of English and Hindi, his wife knew Gujarati. Mo invited them to sit beside him on the bench. Mo glowed and repeated to me, “*Banday Khuda* (Slave of God).”

Yes, our guest had a good glow about him, too. He clearly understood what Mo said. They both were bright, so bright, that I felt the air between them might ignite and burst into flame.

Our guest explained slowly that a small group of Persian Baba lovers would arrive shortly. He himself had lived at Meherabad as a lad in the Prem Ashram (the special, spiritually oriented school that Baba had in the 1920s).

A few minutes later, Padri greeted Esfandiyar warmly with an embrace; they conversed in Farsi. Padri said he remembered Esfandiyar well from the Prem Ashram days where he was a good student; he also recalled his later visit, and that he was a relative of Baidul [mandali member].

That afternoon, at tea with the Persian group, I asked if Esfandiyar felt inclined to say something about his experiences; I was keen to hear reports of these marvels. He replied sweetly, gently, in a mixture of Farsi and English. The gist of what I understood him to say, was this:

Actually, the experience of the subtle world was fundamentally indescribable to and not even imaginable by any ordinary gross person because their consciousness experienced only gross sanskaras; whereas subtle consciousness experiences only subtle sanskaras. They are so very different. The nature of the experience and the mental process involved are not even similar. The gap between them is greater than between dreaming and waking.

These very words, such as “subtle world, mental world,” really mean nothing in themselves; they

are just labels for something that is indescribable so we can speak about it in a general way. But this does not matter.

Even the most magnificent miracle of all, the love the Divine Beloved showers upon us, defies any description, but we feel we know something about it because we feel it. And that is as it should be; the experiences of the inner planes are also nothing; they too are not real; only His love for us is real; only His love for us matters.

I was slightly disappointed that I wouldn't be getting any first-hand information about such wonders, but very deeply moved by all *Amu* (Uncle) said. So I asked him about the *bahar ka umar* (the springtime of life), when he was living here together with his Beloved.

“Oh yes,” he said, that was the favorite time in his life; he always remembers it and thinks about it. There never has been a king on earth who was as rich as he was as a boy back then, when he sat knee to knee, face to face with his Beloved here at Meherabad. He recounted different events, snapshots of Baba's love, as He played with and taught love to the children back in that honeyed time. The history is so vast that it could never be told; every piece from it that he recounted for us was thrilling and heartwarming.

That wave of love Baba released was indeed like a spring-tide, a springtime in an eternal garden. This was not merely a

metaphor that poets chose for convenience. There is a similarity in flavor and quality in the ever-newness of His love and in the delight we feel in spring. Likewise, the very nature of the freshness and delicacy of the early morning shares some quality with the experience of the subtle world, the *bahar ka umar*.

Esfandiyar continued that thus Hafiz advised:

Rise early and listen;
the fragrance borne upon the hem of the gentle
morning breeze
that flows from the rose garden,
will bring you news from your Beloved.

So I say to dear Hafiz:

Thanks! Great men have explained to me that,
although I clearly don't understand a damn
thing,
there is fresh news from our Beloved every day.

Taj Mahal

Padri spoke clearly, carefully, and deliberately in a deep voice with a hint of an Irani rumble. His was not a British accent, but it had a bit of British crispness, not the mumble of American. He was very articulate; he chose, savored, and treasured his words, like a painter would his colors:

The Emperor, Shah Jehan, desired to construct a monument that all the world would admire and that would endure for at least 700 years. So he requested designs from the best architects in the world. The plan he selected was by a Persian; history does not record who that architect actually was.

The Shah was keen to complete the work. Accordingly he authorized the architect to procure materials, assemble them at the site, spend from the treasury, and recruit craftsmen and labor.

The work proceeded swiftly apace. The site was surveyed. The foundations were excavated and laid. The foundation is the most important part because

that is the support for the entire edifice, and cannot be repaired or changed afterwards.

Upon the foundations the architect then executed the plinth, the slab upon which the ensuing works depend. The design was intricate, elaborate, and far too complicated for anyone to properly understand except the master architect himself who had created it. It was painstaking work.

On the very day the plinth was completed, the master architect vanished. All the materials—marble, bricks, sand, etc.—were stockpiled at the site, along with an army of workers of every description. But without the master architect, work could not proceed because only he fully understood the plan of the entire work.

The King sent messages and men throughout all of India, Asia, and Persia to search for him, but to no avail. Perforce the work halted, except for the curing of the plinth.

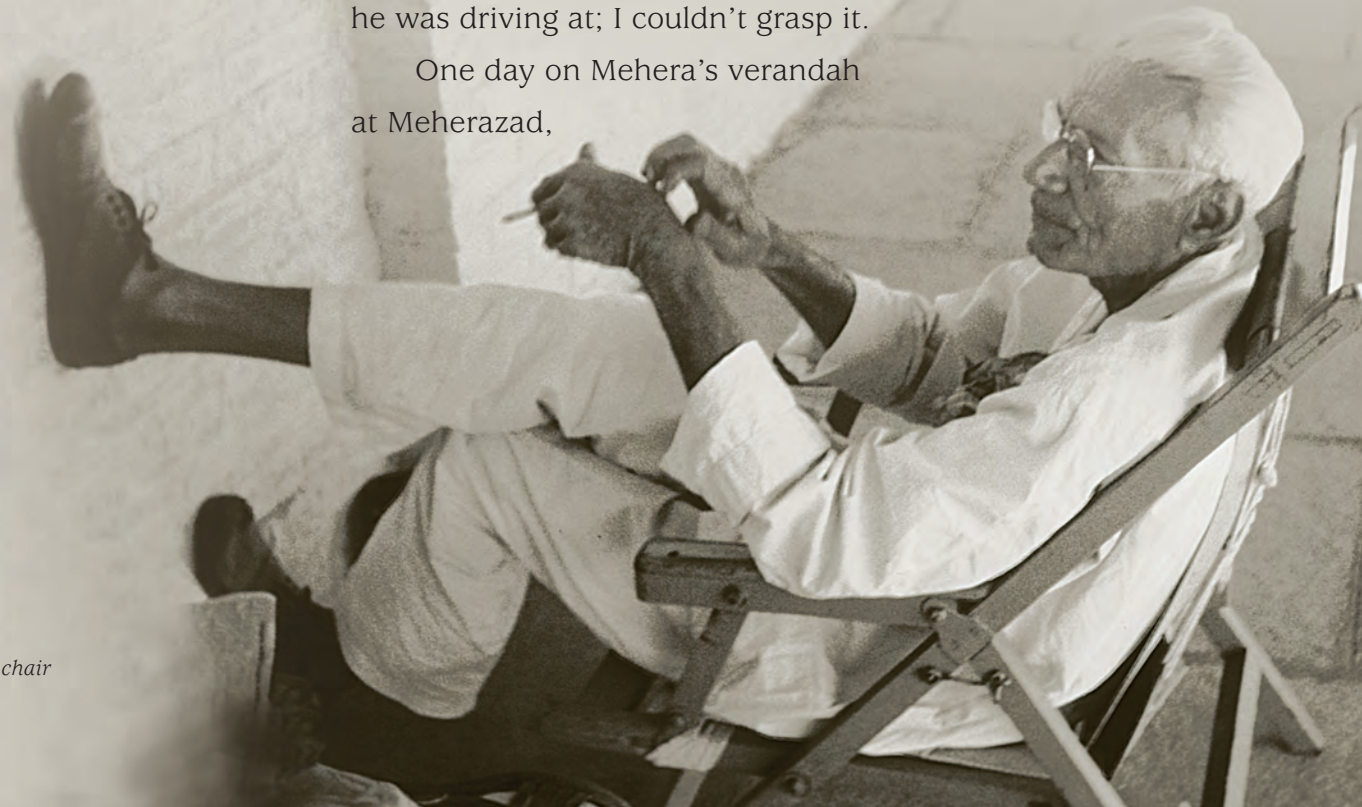
Seven years to the day that he had disappeared, the master architect, in disguise, walked into the Emperor's Divan-i-khas (the Red Fort in Delhi), stood before the King, and then revealed himself.

Shah Jehan: "Did you know that I have been searching high and low for you? Where have you been all these years? Why did you go?"

Master Architect: "I knew that your majesty was very eager to complete the monument. Had I remained, you would have pressed me to finish the job as quickly as possible. But you also asked me to guarantee the structure for 700 years. And now that the plinth and foundations have seasoned and settled through seven rainy seasons, cold seasons, dry seasons and hot seasons, I can fulfill this promise to you too. There was no other way."

I heard this same history from Padri many times in exactly the same details. The first time I heard it, I listened carefully. The second time, I wondered why he was repeating it. When he told it again, I wondered if he was having a lapse of memory. Finally, I began to ponder what exactly he was driving at; I couldn't grasp it.

One day on Mehera's verandah at Meherazad,



Padri relaxing at Meherabad in his favorite chair

I repeated the story to her; she was a great fan of both the Taj and any tales about it. More tales and discussion ensued, about:

- how much Shah Jehan loved his wife, Mumtaz
- the similarity between the descriptions Baba gave of the inner planes and their heavens and the layout of the minarets, gardens, and central and surrounding structures of the Taj
- the prolonged echos under the dome
- how the stone carvers were paid in gold powder, and so on.

I casually reported another frequent brief remark of Padri's about the Taj: "The exact formula for the glue that anchored the inlaid gems and semiprecious stones into the marble panels is still unknown to this day."

At that, Meheru piped in: "Why, that is no marvel. But the glue He used to stick you to Him, to stick all of you to Meherabad, now that is a real miracle!"

As I listened to her words, Padri's tale recrystallized in my mind: During Baba's physical lifetime, He made and established the foundation and master plan for His Universal work. Then He "left" in 1969. The "foundation" compacted, settled, and solidified for a few years. Now work on the edifice is continued again after a few years' gap.

I thought about it more and began to write down detailed comparisons; the Old Wizard's tale assumed many new dimensions.

After some months' wait for Padri to bring up the Taj again, I finally opened the topic myself.

He sat in his chair smoking, listening thoughtfully, and responded at the end with: "All these things take time, Mister."



Dr. Goher on her bicycle at Meherazad

You Are Asking Me That Question!

Doctor Goher arrived by car on a morning visit, a small list in hand.

Bags of goodies for the residents, medicines and *Amartithi* [gathering on anniversary of Baba's dropping His body in 1969] supplies that went into the East Room on the Hill, a few points for discussion with various Meherabadis—all were detailed on her little list. Flashing her joyful smile, she made her rounds, arriving at last on the western verandah to speak with the Old Man.

They were old, fast friends. Padri had made the trip to Quetta with Baba in the early 1920s when Goher and her sister Katie were youngsters there. In later years, as Baba's physician, unlike the rest of the women mandali, she had lots of contact with the men mandali. Also she was the managerial core of the Meherazad women; in that role, she bridged the two separate groups and also went out of the ashram into the wider world for errands and chores. Like Padri, she could listen and understand others quickly and easily.

Clearly delighted to see each other, they spoke in Gujarati. Padri sat cross-legged on a bench. Goher, his junior, open and selfless, in a simple loose frock, very much like the Old Man in her fiery nature and dedication to His service, sat next to him. She glanced down at the notes in her hand.

“Where did the name *Agrah-koti* [a reference to the Jhopdi at Lower Meherabad] come from?”

“*Bhul-jao! Bhul-jao!* Forget it, *madarchod* [Motherf-r]! That bloody fool Shahane [Kaka Shahane, a Baba lover who, from 1925, lived in Meherabad for a while with his family] coined it, but forget it. Baba’s Room has a perfectly fine name, the one that He Himself gave it: Jhopdi [Hut]. That’s what He called it, so that is its name, not something in Sanskrit a lazy Brahmin dreamed up and thought was cute. Never refer to it in any other manner. I don’t want to hear that silly, fabricated name ever again!”

Padri was clearly relishing the chance to speak so frankly with his old friend.

“What else is on your list?”

“What year did Baba begin His Silence?”

“I can’t believe you are asking me that question! *Sala bahinchod* [brother-in-law, sisterf-r], I’ll slaughter you!” He mimed a powerful throat-slashing sword cut with one hand.

“Madarchod, have you gone completely round the bend? Are you trying to drive me mad, too?”

His profanity grew more and more elegant. It was magnificent. He was on a good tear now. He snapped his pocket-handkerchief like a whip. Inspired, he was dazzling with one thunderbolt after another. He went on and on. Unperturbed, Goher smiled and listened to the tirade.

He paused just for a moment. As he reopened his broad mouth to begin again, she nimbly stood, gently placed her small, soft, healing hands over his mouth, smiled sweetly, and chuckled. So did the Old Man.

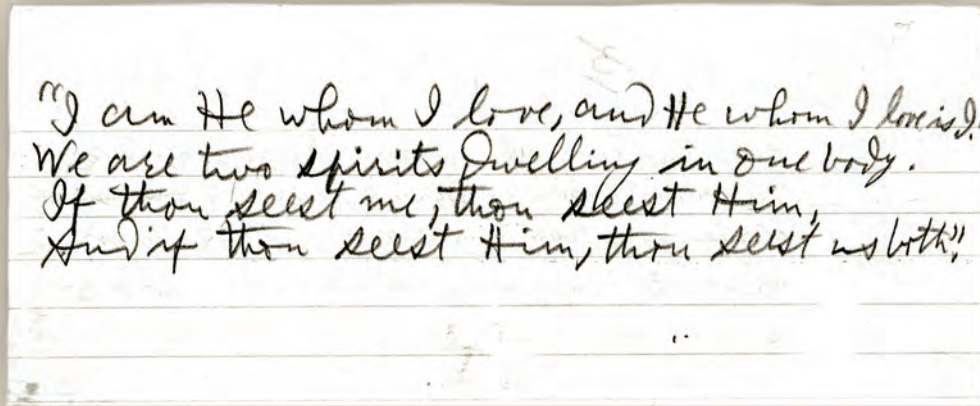
She explained: “Mehera asked me to inquire, just to be sure.”

Mehera was his cousin. His mother had introduced her sister Daulat, Mehera’s mother, to both Babajan and Upasni Maharaj. Padri, like Goher, accorded Mehera the utmost respect and deferred to her in everything; her words were imperial commands.

He *hmmmed* and nodded his head with understanding. “The 10th July 1925; it was a Friday.”

Two fortunate slaves, most obedient, smiled brightly at each other. Their only desire was to serve; their joy was their acts of service. It was a sight that even saints and angels would envy.

Two-in-One



Baba's handwritten version of a Sufi poem

Feram Workingboxwalla [long-time disciple] came into the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Office in Ahmednagar holding tightly before him Bailey's [Behli Jehangir Irani, Baba's childhood friend and disciple] Gujarati manuscript on Upasni Maharaj. He was stammering over and over something like this:

"It is Baba's hand! He wrote this Himself! Baba's own handwriting! Look!"

The attention of those who were busy with work in the office flickered towards Feram for a moment. Typically, I was there with nothing to do, and curious (a nosey parker), so I took a peek. Positive identification required no detailed examination or analysis.

Bailey, who had written Upasni's biography at Baba's direction in the 1920s, had asked Baba for a dedication. His Majesty took the sheaf of papers and turned back a page to inscribe in pencil these words:

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

Foreshortening had slightly warped the image along the right edge because the page was bent backward into the binding that was holding the thick file Feram read and translated.

Nagar had no Xerox machines then. I entreated Eruch to allow me to make a copy of the precious script with the help of an old photocopying technique that required pressing the page firmly upon a thin glass powder-filled case, like an Etch A Sketch, waving it outside in the bright Indian sun, and then racing inside to further process the plate in the semi-darkness.

This quote is a version of a short poem by Mansur al-Hallaj, which first appeared in a publication of the *Diwan al-Hallaj* translated by Louis Massignon in 1931.

Baba enclosed His words in quotation marks. Note that Massignon's version of the Hallaj poem, below, differs slightly from His:

I am he whom I love, and he whom I love is I;
We are two souls dwelling in one body.
When thou seest me, thou seest him,
And when thou seest him, thou seest us both.

Baba improved upon it a bit, changing a few words and adding capitalizations.

All these details are a preface to a beautiful idea that informed our experience in the early 1970s with all the mandali, particularly Padri with whom we lived so closely.

Here is the idea itself, in Baba's own words, extracted from the short book *Beams*,* beginning on page 46 at the end of the chapter titled "The Equation of Body and Soul":

Simultaneous use of the same body by different souls comes under a special exception, where the different souls concerned have to be in perfect harmony with each other. The harmony between the souls has to be so complete that one and the same bodily action or experience equally meets the needs of all the souls concerned.

Some advanced disciples are in such complete harmony with the master that the master can, if he so wills, sometimes "overshadow" the ego-mind and the body of a disciple, without supplanting his soul. Such overshadowing may take place for the working out of the wider plans of the master. Instead of replacing or wiping out the individuality of the disciple, it implements and amplifies his individuality. Here the disciple and his master are so merged into each other that they both find equal fulfillment through whatever the disciple achieves through his bodily existence.

* *Beams from Meher Baba on the Spiritual Panorama* (Walnut Creek, CA: Sufism Reoriented, 1958).

We often observed that Baba was active in Padri in exactly this dynamic way. All his individual traits were dazzlingly “amplified” and in play. Padri often observed it too, and would playfully comment, “That was my Irani half speaking, Mister!”

The two of them coordinated perfectly; it was exquisitely beautiful to behold, breathtaking. Padri seemed to be more himself during these moments. The effect upon us was that we felt we had entered the sacred Garden of Companionship with the Beloved through the gate of the Old Man’s open heart. We came away with the definite feeling that we had actually met Baba and He had loved us and played with us.

Even at other times, when Padri was not in this mood, we could observe the imprint that Baba had made upon him over long years of close contact. It was like reading the wax impression of a seal to try to visualize the shape of the Emperor’s signet ring that had made it. There we discovered a lot about Baba’s personality, nature, and character.

Of course, Mehera was the absolute zenith of this overlap between two spirits, the disciple and the Divine Master. In her presence on her porch at Meherazad or during her visits to Meherabad, there was no limit to her love; there is absolutely no limit to the lover’s love if the Beloved is Divine.

Sitting, listening deeply to discover the delicacy of her thought, my own thoughts and perceptions would become clearer from the clarity that flowed from her mind. That gift

arrived unhindered, despite the boundaries imposed by my being a male, or Mehera’s public shyness and modesty, or my general block-headedness, ignorance, and stupidity.

Padri, on the other hand, was very manly. Baba was active in him differently. For example, he could freely shout, imitate characters in a story, tell a salty joke, admire a carburetor, pantomime a hunter or a monkey, or banter, or explain.

I can still recall vividly when he stood on the eastern verandah and pointed towards his throat: “Yes! All Creation grows out from that Primal Sound! This voice is the seventh Shadow of the Original Word!”

Thus in His Great Compassion, Baba disclosed to us aspects of Himself, of His humanity, through myriad experiences with all the mandali. The experiences of those times, which might last as long as an hour or two, were so intense that the impression they left on our minds was often stronger than the impression that all our prior life had left upon us, so for a while we could barely remember what that was.

Mirror and Veil

You are the flowering fingers of His hand,
your face His lovely skin—
His pearly eyes glow in your face unseen by
you, He blooms within.
You are the veil on Creation; you are the veil
of God.

You are poised upon His name; in you His
feet are shod.
Praise the mighty Beloved! Nameless, Great
and Named!
Within the mirror of your heart His perfect
heart is framed.

The Color of Love

The records of the New Life begin with the story of how Baba orchestrated the transition: Hints, then plans, then fresh hints and changed plans. Meetings, discussions and firm plans, conditions, decisions, signed agreements. All companions would have to abide by the condition not to get angry. The histories report that Padri, one of Baba's earliest and closest disciples, said he could not meet that condition. He asked Baba to be excused. Baba expressed disappointment, acquiesced, and ordered him to remain and look after Meherazad. (Another of His close followers, Jangale Master, was the man "on the ground" at Meherabad when Padri was at Meherazad or away during the New Life.)

In casual talk, Padri himself had said, "I traveled with Baba all around in the '20s and I know what that is like. You can't imagine the difficulties."

All the facts seemed to fit. He was a passionate and volatile man with a keen sense of justice. His temper, sudden, fierce, and brief, could and did flare up, like a pre-monsoon storm. A single word from him could stop anyone dead in their tracks; he wouldn't even raise his voice. We had been the beneficiaries of his thunder and several shafts of his lightning.

One night alone on watchman's rounds, I pondered the mystery of these episodes' impact upon me: there was no bitterness, resentment, or trace of hurt in me.

Was this because he cared for us with such understanding and skill?

Was this because this old dragon radiated warmth we could feel?

Was this because Padri was so clean-hearted?

Was he so clean-hearted because Meher Baba Himself had actually "clobbered" him in his youth during his early training?

He warmly recalled, "We were raw recruits. And the Master was like fire! If He clobbered you, why, you would gyrate several times around about your own axis!"

It was a deep puzzle. I could not square the explosive brilliance of his temper with his warmth and care. Padri was kinder than both my mother and father put together, and they were exceptionally loving.

In solitude upon the Hill that night, I explored vignettes of Padri the Gentle and Padri the Kind:

The Old Man squatting patiently in the afternoon sunlight to tame a feral cat, then likewise wooing and adopting her kittens; or feeding the birds with separate foods and at different locations for the robins, sparrows, crows, song birds, mynahs, ground feeders, nightingales; or feeding us and the dogs and the ants and calves and wasps.

I moved on to scenes of Padri the Fearless and Padri the Fierce:

One afternoon while sitting on the front verandah, a young boy comes and complains. A fellow with a flock of goats has put them to feed on his family's ripe crop. He asks him not to. The intruder threatens him with a knife.

"Come along. A job to do, Mister."

We get up. Padri steps into his room, picks up a *chabukka* (a bullwhip), winds the tail about the staff, slides it into his shirtsleeve, and we set out to the lentil field. It is clear from a distance that the offender is huge, strong, oddly shaped, about 35 years old, almost a giant. A genetic abnormality, a fractured chromosome, made him thus: big, mean, always in a bad mood.

Padri says to him, "I hear you have a big knife. Show it to me. Dig it out."

The giant says, "I have an even bigger one at home," then hisses when the tip of Padri's whip bites through his shirt.

My blood roars in my ears. How will I defend Padri? I feel myself become an alert predator and time slows.

The two are in a balanced dance. One rushes forward swinging wildly; the other floats back

then forward, swinging the whip gracefully, never off balance. Padri drives the aggressor back. He is so full of light that he is almost transparent. On the other hand, I am ready to fight, adrenaline pumping through me, my heart racing; but my part in the dance is only to watch—I am a pivot point.

Strips of cloth fall. The giant freezes still. The knife falls from his hand. The whip slashes through his clothes. They remain exactly two yards apart while Padri circles around him.

The giant's eyes roll upward as he realizes this old man will kill him, carefully, skillfully, and

there is no escape from it, except surrendering his existence to God. His rage evaporates. He folds his hands in silent prayer. He lifts his face towards the heavens.

Padri turns away, rolls up his weapon, and we saunter leisurely back home. About fifty yards on, he turns to study the goats and their owner; they all now move rapidly down the road towards their home. He reaches out to pick up a small, sky-blue wildflower. His eyes are like diamonds. "Did you ever notice, Mister, how each of the five tiny petals is neatly bisected by the purple stripe?"



Baba with His disciples at the New Life

Meeting, October 13, 1949

Reviewing all this in the cool of night my heart is no longer hammering. A sublime breeze moves about the Hill like a cloud of magic. Even so, I am slow to grasp my discovery: Padri actually has control over his anger and passions because love controls him. This business about declining to go on the New Life simply can't be true.

The next morning, at about 5:30 a.m., I slipped into his kitchen with a mug of tea. It was a cold, dark, winter morning. He was wearing his wool jacket and a navy blue knit watch cap. His huge, weathered, lean face, brilliant brown eyes so bright they seemed a piercing blue, turned to scan me for a moment, then returned to his thoughts.

I felt like I was gazing at a real wonder of nature, like seeing the Rockies or the Himalayas for the first time. He nodded his head and "hmmned" once or twice; that was the only clue that he was in the midst of an intimate internal conversation with his Beloved that only they heard. This was the norm at that hour of the day.

He reached up above the table to inspect the Marathi calendar, noted the positions of the planets, counted a few days off with a finger, then, finally, crisply flicked the page at the bottom. Maybe he was planning a work schedule.

Then he looked at me inquiringly. The impact of his thought now was as unmistakable and as clear as if he had spoken out loud: "Well, Mister, what is it?"

"Kaka, I have worked and lived closely with you for

several months. I now have a good impression of your nature and character, both. So, I cannot believe that your temper or a problem controlling your anger prevented you from joining Baba for the New Life. No one here alive now is less ruled by stray emotions than you are."

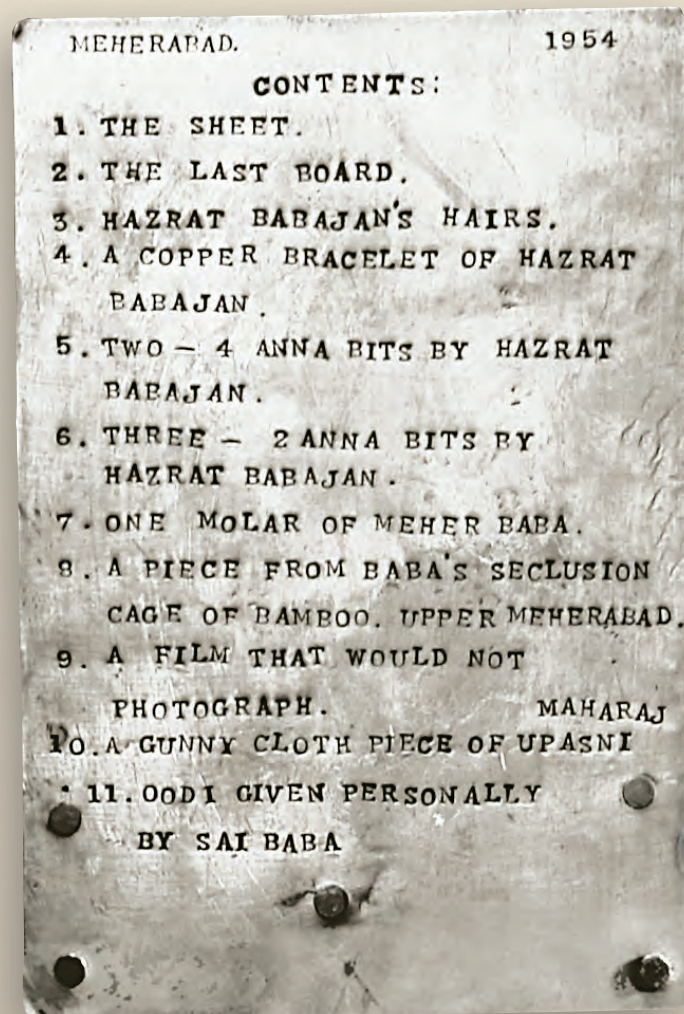
I stopped speaking as the recent instances of impeccably noble behavior over the many days we had shared flooded unbidden into my mind and overwhelmed me.

He thoughtfully absorbed my words, smiled, and spoke to me gently:

This is a subject you can't understand now. It was a part of living with Him, something solely between the Master and His servant. It was a prearranged drama staged by the Master Himself. He called me beforehand and told me privately what I was to say and do. When the time came, I performed as He asked and merely acted out my part. That is all there was to it. Now, don't ask me anything more about this and never speak of it while I am alive.

I sat there with my warm tea mug in my chilly hands, stunned and grateful. I shed a few gentle tears. The silence lasted about five minutes. When he began to outline what he wanted me to do that day, he clearly was both amused and pleased that I had sniffed out one of his secrets.

Poetry



*Padri's brass plaque
riveted to lid of his relics trunk*

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "A Psalm of Life"

[Variation I]

Lives of master crooks remind us,
We may do a bit of time,
And, departing, leave behind us,
Thumbprints in the charts of crime.

Life Magazine

[Variation II]

Wives of other men remind us,
With their endless moans and whines,
Of the bounty God bestowed us,
Bachelor lives, yours and mine.

Padri

Padri loved poetry in any language, and also wrote verse. He had lots of it in his head, beautiful, profound, moving, and also funny, as revealed by the two variations on Longfellow he quoted above.

He composed a long, very humorous ode entitled “Circular Yog” (circling around to find the right time) that sweetly complained about the constantly changed and revised dates, plans, and instructions that Baba communicated to His dear ones via published circulars.

He had a passion for it. On one slow, hot summer afternoon that we had spent crawling through a divan of Urdu poems by Jigar Moradabadi [Indian poet enjoyed by Baba], he suddenly suggested that we each retire to our desks for an hour of silence and just try to write one good line of English verse. My effort does not survive. I can’t even remember what it was.

But he gave me his:

I am that Eternal uncreated Silent Song.



Padri pointed out that the writing of one single poem could bring astonishing rewards. This was true for Simab, who wrote a ghazal a long time ago, beginning with: “*Ab kya bataon main tere milne se kya mila?*” (How can I express what I found when

I found You?).” As it was being sung before Baba, He stopped the singer upon hearing a certain line, and gestured that He had liberated Simab then and there. The line was “*Sub kuch mujhe mila jo tera nakshapa mila*” and translates as, “I found verily everything the moment I found Your footprints.”

Padri was very proud of his own reward. He had a standing order from Baba to report via a written note or “chit” any rainfall at Meherabad. So, once in the late 1950s after an exceptional, smart shower, he wrote a flowery letter to Him at Meherazad that contained some “doggerel” which was something like:

Today by the grace of Mighty God,
Rains blessed the lands of Meherabad.

Baba sent back a reply in Gujarati telling him in effect:

You can’t imagine how your flippant note irritated Me. It has made Me furious. Do you have any notion how drastically we need rains here, how we all are suffering in the drought? I am so angry that I promise you that all you have worked for will fail, all you cherish will be destroyed and you yourself and 72 generations of ancestors will be utterly annihilated. *Taru satyanash thase!* [This curse will happen to you!]

Padri said, “Those are harsh words, Mister. A raw recruit would have piddled in his pants. But I have it in writing, signed by the Old Man Himself! His promise to annihilate my ego and thereby give me eternal freedom! Mark this, it always pays to ponder the Master’s words.”

He kept that letter, along with other precious souvenirs of the Advent—the alphabet board broken into two pieces that was last used by Baba, ash from the Dhuni [Meherabad sacred fire] that Baba lit in ’54, and the sheet upon which Baba stood before giving up the board, along with relics from Babajan, Upasni Maharaj, and Sai Baba—all in a locked and sealed steel trunk under the head of his bed.

He showed it to us once. He laughed long and loud when I teased him by asking why he didn’t show us the rock Upasni threw at Merwan.

A Useful Mind

I don’t believe that the Old Man had ever studied abstract math, but he certainly knew how to think clearly.

He spoke several languages precisely. At Baba’s direction, at Manzil-e-Meem [His first ashram] Padri learned how to use a lathe and became an expert machinist. He absorbed the vast literature of homeopathy through purposeful study. He listened to Baba’s explanations of the universe. He spent years conversing with that remarkable group of men, the mandali. At different times in his life he managed the travel arrangements of Baba and His companions, clinics, dispensaries, movie theaters, and other projects, as well as Meherazad or Meherabad. All these experiences sharpened his mind.

But his outstanding clarity of mind grew simply and naturally from the absence of the confusions of desires. His major desire to serve Baba subsumed or dominated practically all the others. Although he was by nature a passionate and volatile man, emotional storms didn’t overwhelm him. In fact, they would sway him slightly for only a few minutes.

It is the Master’s task to bring his disciple out of the world, across the planes to Ultimate Freedom, and He labors to do



Baba watches Padri playing Seven Tiles at Meherazad

this in the best way. Padri was Baba's slave; he just wanted to serve his Lord and possibly be of some help to Him. Since he tried in his own way to help wherever he could, he not only did not resist his Master's effort to free him from ego, but actively tried to assist in that. He also sought to serve Him by attacking the problem of his own ego himself. Ultimately, in this regard, an individual's efforts are minor when compared to what the Master does, but clearly Padri's own efforts made Baba's work on him easier and more fruitful than otherwise.

When we met him he still definitely had an ego, but having worked together with Meher Baba, Padri had solved the problem of Padri: his ego no longer got in his way. As a result, his mind was useful to him and, very fortunately, it was also useful to us.

Safety from the storms of desires and the machinations of the ego lent clarity to his thoughts and feelings. He didn't hide anything. He seemed transparent; we felt that we could see, hear, and feel his thoughts.

It was always inspiring. It was like seeing the beautiful expanse of the Himalayas for the first time: breathtaking, marvelous, moving us to admiration and surges of noble feelings. Working with Padri, or even just observing him at work, was a profound education and a wonderful experience.

Though I would like to describe what it was like to work with him, I am afraid I am incapable of that, so instead I will try to show you a bit of its educational aspects.

Take some typical examples:

- a question to unravel, like “Why do the birds not come to the feeding station?”
- a motor to fix,
- a passage of text to understand,
- a small project to complete,
- a two-party conflict to resolve.

Essentially the same approach sufficed.

Padri began with observations. He looked at the object; he investigated the situation; he studied the event or experience.

Within two or three minutes, we could see him rapidly forming an image of it all in his mind. As his understanding of the parts and their relationships and interactions became clearer, the model became more detailed and elegant. The natural divisions and their structure emerged. That structure was incorporated into the model and itself might suggest a different angle of approach or a more appropriate point of view.

He also considered not just what his senses told him but also how his senses were working. Was he viewing the object upside down? Was another perspective simpler? Would it display more? Was it more useful?

The mental model quickly assumed a very definite shape and form.

If he was discussing the work with us, it was easy to follow:

This button must be the trigger for the shutter chain.

But Ah! See! I press it and the camera does not blink, Mister!

Hand me that tongue depressor. No, the broad one. Yes, that's right.

Look. If I place the wooden wand here and press gently, then the shutter fires and at the correct speed too.

But pressure further up the mechanical sequence moves nothing.

Some section of the linkage may be jammed.

Perhaps a small bearing or swivel joint is slightly misaligned.

He checked the model he held in his mind against the actual thing he was examining and then moved around them both, comparing them.

When the whole was clearly revealed, like a planet viewed from space that can be seen from every angle, Padri carefully re-examined it to see how exactly it connected to its relevant, surrounding context. Usually by this point his grasp

was so sure, his understanding so thorough, that the solution was obvious:

So you can see that the British at the end of the Raj with some foresight clearly anticipated some upheaval like that in Iran. So, although they publicly voiced acceptance of the bifurcation of Hindustan into Pakistan and India as a means to protect the rights of the large Muslim minority population, their undisclosed aim was to establish a friendly, tractable Muslim state near the Middle East and the oil fields.

We could follow all this because he was clear, bright, pure-hearted.

“Play with it”: this was his approach that brought the leaps of insight.

Book of Life (“Don’t Know Much About Geography”)

It is a quiet afternoon in gentle, tropical heat on the eastern verandah. Padri sits in his low blue wooden chair and reads the paper. His legs stretched out, his bare feet rest on the whitewashed wall he faces.

Nearby, Mohammed Mast (“Mo”) sits on his steel chair, facing the other way. His huge pearly eyes shine as he reads the *Book of Life* spread out before him.

Padri: “*Shaalat la gaylo* (Did you go to school)?”

Mo: “*Ho! Teen-char haftay* (Yes! For three or four weeks).”

Padri: “*Kootay* (Where)?”

Mo: “*Mulka la. Jarda cha kaali tin-putray lowlay* (In my country. Some tin sheets, beneath a tree).”

Two old wizards leisurely converse with pleasure.

Padri particularly savors the charm of the moment. His voice is rich and resonant. Behind the deliberate and careful enunciation of each syllable I hear, at the limit of



Padri with two men on Meherabad Hill

my perception, bell-like echoes of the reverberations of the myriad shadows of the First Word.

Mohammed's voice is high pitched, utterly without any artifice, simple, pure, sweet: a chorus of innumerable tiny silver bells that ring in reply.

In the endless afternoons of summer, neither of these men is in any hurry. Padri's face is rosy. He shifts his long legs. His every fiber sings joy, yet he seems utterly relaxed. He turns a page of the newspaper and playfully proffers it to Mo.

Padri: "*Gya. Wachto ka* (Have it. Do you read)?"

Mo: "*Mala nay yayet* (I don't read)."

Mo: "*Angrezi samachar* (An English newspaper)."

Padri gestures towards me with an edge of the paper.

Padri: "*Tay la samastay* (He understands)."

Mo: "*Tay la towdah samaste. Jaada nay samjut* (He understands a bit. He doesn't understand too much)."

Padri: "*Assa-kassa Bawaji* [Pointing to me] (How is that old man)?"

Mo: "*Yerdi zaat. Naasiba cha gosh* (That mad kind. A matter of destiny)."

After lunch, Padri browses through the chapters of the *Book of Life* while he reads the daily news, chats, or smokes. Mo clearly is engrossed in his favorite chapter, which must be about the experience of greater and greater intimacy with the Beloved.

I wish I could read.



A few mornings later a thrilling breeze rushes over me when Padri says “. . . and tell the old woman to make three cups of cha, open the biscuit tin and you come along too and pay attention. There is much to learn.”

It is one of the most astonishing mornings of my life and I am telling it again to you!

It is 9 a.m. and without any preamble Padri has just invited me to take tea with him and the lean, alert government officer who has arrived on the roadside verandah.

I run to his kitchen to tell “the old woman”, i.e., Tani-bai, his cook, and then run back lest I miss a word. Viswanath G. Patil, the newly assigned conservation officer, is introducing himself to Padri. Although they are obviously meeting for the very first time, the mutual respect and warmth they display makes them seem like old dear friends.

VGP: “. . . the Bishop’s School in Nasik where I was also captain of the cricket team.”

There is lots of back and forth between them in both English and Marathi that I can’t get. Padri told me to pay attention so I dare not interrupt, but I remember that I have seen the movie footage of His Majesty’s (Meher Baba’s) visit to that very school.

Padri: “I throw lefty and Baba did not like timid bowlers. He wanted us to play hard and offer Him our best.” He

enthusiastically mimes a springy run-up to an exactly aimed stiff-armed throw. Patil-Sahib smiles appreciatively.

VGP: “. . . all over Maharashtra. And agriculture, which ultimately supports everyone, is the most neglected department. I have five Jeeps, no driver; none of them work anyway, so I took the bus out from town. But never mind, now that I have been transferred here, at last I can do something for Baba.”

He turns to smile radiantly, very gently, very warmly at me.

VGP: “Most of the rainfall vanishes as runoff and does not penetrate the soil. First we have to shoot the levels, then draw the contours and I will call laborers to build bunds along the contour lines.”

I am sent to get whitewash, the survey level, tripod, and staff, and haul them. The sorcerer’s tools are delivered up the Hill. I start to set up the equipment when Patil-Sahib says, “I’ll show you a trick.”

And in the next four hours I run all over the Hill, pile stones, mark them with whitewash, carry or hold the survey staff, learn from him some of the tricks of field surveying, how to level test or re-calibrate the instrument quickly, double-check angles, choose the right locations to set up. Padri disappears down the Hill at intervals to reappear with water, another clipboard and paper, and his black umbrella for sunshade.

Patil politely refuses the offer of the umbrella.

In the cooling, late afternoon, the map is drawn and we climb again to compare it with the landscape. I get my first serious reading lesson. Reading the *Book of Geology and Geography*: study the landscape and see how the forces of nature have shaped it and written the *Book of Life* in enduring and changing lines.

The Horse

Tuesday was the Mangal Bazaar, the weekly market day in Nagar, and our day off. Padri's bedroom was also his office and his homeopathic clinic. He took the thumb impression or signature of paid workers and handed over their cash before they headed to town. If someone needed medicine, Bob Street was there to help with that. Since I sometimes helped Padri with the workers' accounts, I squeezed into his room, too.

There was little morning traffic in the mid-1970s on the Nagar-Dhond road, which ran right in front of lower Meherabad. That day, I heard the familiar lively clop-clop of a horse and tonga en route to the big town. Every Tuesday, a merchant made his way from his outlying village to Nagar to make his wholesale purchases. He was a jolly sight and well known, a big cheerful man, orange and red striped turban, small, light tonga with a bit of a roof on it.

Close behind it, a motorcycle running fast, shifted through its gears and grew louder and louder. A screech of tires was followed by a dull thud, then the rasp of metal against asphalt. Padri folded shut his ledger over his wallet, stood up, and stepped out the door.

What had happened?

A young man from the village was already reporting: “*Kaka, tukker zalla* [There’s been an accident].”

Padri grunted, nodded, which meant, “Yes, I understand,” closed his door, locked it, and hung the key on a nail on the post opposite. We followed him to the tarmac. Two stout men lay unconscious on the road. Beyond them was their crumpled motorcycle. Padri strode to the center of the road, stretched up his long arm, and with a wave from his big open palm, signaled the next truck, a flat bed, to halt. He then supervised settling the two motorcycle passengers in back and directed the driver to take them straight to the Civil Hospital.

The shattered tonga lay on its side in a ditch. The bloodied merchant, though howling in pain and shouting, was clearly awake. Padri guided his extrication from the wreck and improvised a sling for his broken arm. He sent him on to the hospital in the next vehicle, a three-wheeled cargo carrier.

Then he approached the horse. Its chest wound was bleeding heavily. On the same side the motorcycle had hit, the wooden shaft had cracked and pierced him like a long lance. Padri explained as he withdrew the spear: “This thing has to come out. Horses bleed profusely and it is damn difficult to staunch the flow.”

He asked the young men who had gathered round to move the broken pieces of the horse cart to the Meherabad

store yard and to get the motorcycle off the road. His self-control gave him a clear natural command over the men.

After he freed the animal from the cart, he led it into the shade of the trees that circle the Rahuri Cabin, removed the bridle, and looped a rope loosely about its neck to tie it to a tree. The creature was still extremely upset. Padri sent me off on an errand.

When I returned that evening, my wife asked, “Have you seen Kaka’s new horse?” I went outside to look. There was some more blood on the ground, but not as much as by the road. The poor animal was so weak I couldn’t imagine how it could stand.

The wound was dressed with several large, white cotton cloth pads soaked with a tincture of calendula, a giant African marigold, and *kulimuri* (*tridax procumbens*), the medicinal wildflower that was one of Baba’s favorites. There was water in a huge steel bowl and fresh alfalfa beside it. Padri remarked that horse blood seems thinner than ours, so it had taken time to stop the bleeding, and perhaps the horse would die.

The next morning at 6:30 a.m., Tani, Padri’s cook, entered his kitchen and announced: “They landed on their heads, the reckless motor-bikers. One was dead by the time they reached the hospital, the other died two hours later. They had been drinking before. The *lala* (merchant) broke four ribs and his arm.” We went to look at the horse. It was



Rahuri Cabin at lower Meherabad

sitting on the ground in a daze. I was surprised it had survived the night.

But within a few days it was clearly mending. The wound was closing cleanly. The horse walked with difficulty. It began to eat and drink regularly and pee. Padri had me move it by the Sahavas Well, away from the Rahuri Cabin, so the smell of urine would not distract anyone who went to pray there.

It would hobble towards him awkwardly, endearingly, when he went to dress the injury or give it medicine. When we spoke with Kaka, jestingly we referred to the horse as “your ardent lover” because we did not know its name.

About ten days after the crash, the owner was sent home from the hospital. A few days later he was at Meherabad, weeping for joy that his beloved horse had also been spared. He was so deeply moved that he tried to lay his head on Padri’s feet. Padri skipped lightly beyond his reach and restrained him with a gentle touch. He tearfully offered to pay for the expenses and medicine; Padri sweetly declined. Padri showed him the wreckage of his cart; he begged Padri to keep it and sell it off for a profit. Padri sat him down for a cup of tea instead. The next day he returned with a hired truck and a ramp to carry his dear horse back home.

About six months later, they both had healed. It was a fine and handsome horse—alert, graceful, strong, and silver-grey. On their first trip back to Nagar with a new tonga, as they approached the Meherabad Dhuni (sacred fire)

platform, the horse veered sharply from the road and went directly to Padri's room. There it stood, whinnied, and pranced until Padri stuck his white head out the door. He ducked back in again, got a few sugar globules, fed it, patted it, rubbed its head, spoke to it.

Thereafter some version of this routine became a fixed feature of Tuesday morning. If Padri was in his kitchen or workshop, the horse would find him there.

The Tuesday after Padri passed away, of course the horse was back. He stood patiently in front of Padri's door, then carried the lala all over Lower Meherabad while he searched, first at the kitchen, then the store rooms, the engine room and workshop, the outbuildings, the toilets, the medicinal herb garden, the Meher Pilgrim Centre, the Meherabad Trust Office, any and every place his fine and true friend might be. He finally returned to Padri's room, stood calmly for a few moments deeply gazing at nothing we could see, and then turned about and left.

We never saw him again.

REMEMBERING PADRI

In the mid-1970s, young

Westerners started coming to live in India.

A few stayed at Meherazad, a few in town, but most ended up at Meherabad. The early Meherabad group—Ted Judson, Janet Podmore (she and Ted later married), Alan Wagner, and Heather and Eric Nadel—never left. Alan, Heather, Janet, and Ted, along with Bob Street, living in town then, met recently to reminisce about their experiences with Padri.



COMING TO STAY AT MEHERABAD

JANET: When I first came to stay at Meherabad, I was managing the Meher Health Centre, after Lindesay [Reiter] had moved back to the States. I was staying in the Interview Cabin [at Meherabad] during the summer, but Pilgrim Season was approaching and Padri said, “No more staying here. You all go now.” I said, “But Kaka [“Kaka” means uncle and is used as a term of respect for one’s elder], I’m managing the Health Centre.”

He said, “Well, if you can find a place, you can stay here.” He said the same to Alan. I had a place in mind where I wanted to stay—I don’t recall where—but I thought I would suggest something else first. It was the space that is now the Post Office. Then it was one of Padri’s go-downs [storerooms]. Minoo [Bharucha, an old-time Baba lover who had moved to Meherabad to help electrify it] had been staying there. Padri said, “All right, you can stay there.”

But when Mani and Rano came out and saw it, they were horrified. Mani told Rano, “You have to take her to the bazaar and buy some furniture.”

ALAN: I remember baskets; you had baskets.

JANET: Oh, yes, I had a big cane basket, because I couldn't afford furniture. But I did have a bed. We were given a bed and a chair, I think, wasn't it?

ALAN: That first summer, I stayed in what were Donkin's old rooms, right next to the banyan tree, with Bobby. Bobby was in one room and I was in one room.

HEATHER: What year was that?

ALAN: I think it was March 1977; Janet and I both moved to Meherabad within two days of each other. At the beginning of the summer, when I asked Mani for permission to stay at Meherabad, she said, "I don't want pilgrims to see you staying here. Go away until after the pilgrims have left. And then move out to Meherabad."

So when the time came, I went to the Trust Office in town to get Mani's permission to stay at Meherabad. She dictated a note to Rano, who typed it up and Mani signed it. Rano came out of the office to the rickshaw where I was sitting, ready to go. As Rano handed me the note, she leaned into the rickshaw and said, "Would you like some advice?" I said, "I'll take anything." She said, "If you want to live in the ashram, you have to be adaptable," and then she gave me a kiss on the cheek and said, "Jai Baba" and sent me on my way.

I arrived and gave the note to Padrikaka, and he had me stay in Donkin's rooms. That was during the summer—March, April, May—but when June came around, he said, "Okay, Mister. I need those rooms for pilgrims. Get out." [In those days, during Pilgrim Season, twelve people at a time were allowed to come to Meherabad and stay there for four days.]

So I scoured Meherabad and found what would become my old room, the corner room of the old Dharamshala building—filthy, kind of falling down a little bit. But, I realized, it's a room!

HEATHER: The roof was a little bit falling down.

ALAN: The roof was not visibly falling in at that point, but it actually was. I asked Padri if I could stay there. He said, "You can stay in that room but you have to fix it up. I'm not doing it for you. You have to pay for everything."

When I told Mani about it she seemed a little taken aback and said, "You're going to stay in that room?" I said, "Yeah, I'll stay in that room."

I fixed it up a little bit and cleaned it out; this must have been June 15th or 16th, something like that. I had only my two suitcases and a carry-on bag, and Heather and Erico temporarily loaned me an old bed that Alu [Dr. Alu Khambatta, an old-time Baba lover who managed the nearby TB Sanitarium] had given them under instructions from Goher.

But I was in heaven getting to interact with Padri. I already adored him but I had no idea how thoroughly adorable he

was, from head to toe. He was so lovely. He was so direct; he was so simple; he was so definite. I marvel at how Meher Baba, his Beloved, had placed him like this great post driven into the ground at Meherabad, for all of us to tie off on to.

HEATHER: Mani also told Eric and me about adjusting, because Eruch had asked us to stay in Meherabad. They needed someone to stay up the Hill at night, as the watchman had just died, and so Eric did that. By the way, he was the first Westerner to stay there in that way. Mani and Eruch were sitting in Eruch's room, and they called us in. Eric had been working in Bombay and I was staying in Pop's house [Goher's father's place], and they said, "Okay, you can stay in Meherabad but only if you get along with Padri. If you can't, if Padri doesn't want you to stay there, you are out." Mani repeated very emphatically, "You are out."

So when we went, we were walking on eggshells because we had to get along with Padri if things were going to work there. That was August 1976.

And just as you have described, our accommodations were minimal. When I first went into the room that we were going to have at Meherabad, Padri made it clear that only half of the room was ours. For ten years we lived in half of the room. The only thing in it were two beds that Goher got from Alu and made sure that Padri gave us.

JANET: Otherwise, you'd be sleeping on the floor.

HEATHER: We moved in, and what we had was nothing. His idea of staff quarters was to have us walk into a bare room and get nothing. That was it. Half the room.

ALAN: Me, too.

TED: Me, too. I'm trying to recall: I first came in early February 1976, before any of you arrived. So he looked after me in a distant kind of way. I guess it was he who must have allowed me to stay in the Rahuri Cabin. But in terms of a bed or furniture or tools or anything, it was up to me to find them.

He would make tea in the morning and sit at his table; he was always up before I was. But when I came in, tea would be ready and we would just silently drink our tea. We hardly ever said a word.

HEATHER: I remember at one point, Padri said, "You know what it is about a neem tree?" He kept going back to this thing about neem trees, talking a lot about the difference between the neem, whose taproot would go way down to find water and could survive drought, and these others trees, with shallower roots, which were always falling down. And over the years, it finally came to me. I think what he meant was, there was a reason for the way he treated us. He was making our taproots go very deep, in order to survive. Living there, with Padri, we had to go really deep.

And, sure enough, all of us who were here at that time, we're still here. Of course, this must be what Baba wants. It

is all Baba's grace that we're here. I'm not saying that having to develop deep taproots is why we're all still here, but I think learning to go deep has helped us a lot.

EARLY LESSONS

Padri was not a "teacher" in the traditional sense. He didn't sit down with us, the new residents, and explain what we should or shouldn't do. But in our day-to-day interactions with him, we couldn't help but start to pick up on what we needed to do, and how we had to be, if we truly intended to live at Meherabad for Baba.

TED: When I first arrived, he asked me a lot of questions about problems they'd been having. He might ask, "What would you do to fix this?" or "What would you do to fix that?" I would give him my considered opinion and, invariably, he would say, "That won't work," and we wouldn't do it.

I didn't always believe that it wouldn't work. In fact, often I felt it would work, but he kept saying, no, it wouldn't. Once we were on the roof of the Samadhi looking at the clerestory windows, which were a real problem. They always leaked. In the old days, all you had was tar to waterproof things. He and I were up there, crouched over the windows, and he asked, "So what are we going to do?" I made a suggestion. "Nah, that won't work." "You know, I think it

would, if we did this." "Nah, that won't work." "But, you know, it would be good if we did that." "Nah, that won't work." I got frustrated and said, "Padri, do you think I'm a fool?" He paused a bit and then put his face right up to mine: "Do you think I'm a fool?"

So then I started to get it. I mean, it wasn't that he was training me exactly. I don't know. I couldn't even say precisely what he was doing. I guess he was helping me to not be a "know-it-all," that whether I was really right or wrong in each incident wasn't the point. And that was a big one for me. It helped me understand a little about what he was doing.

BOB: I first met Padri in 1971, and I came back to India to work in Adi's office in '73. By '75, I was practicing biochemic medicine and had become interested in homeopathy. So I would take my bicycle at 5:30, 6:30 in the morning from the Trust Compound in Nagar, cycle out, put my bike by the tree at the Rahuri Cabin, walk up the Hill for arti, and then come down and see patients with Padri. I would have to leave about halfway through.

That was my first experience with him. He would treat patients outside his room, on the verandah, and if I had any questions, he would often explain even before I asked. He was remarkable.

This went on for a month or so, and one morning, as I pulled up my bicycle as usual and put it by the Rahuri Cabin, Padri, who was on the back verandah, said, "Mister, have you had your tea?"

“No.” “Come, there’s a mug for you.” So I went in and had tea with him. The next day I came and the same routine. I put my bike away and started walking up the Hill and he said, “Hey Mister, where are you going? Your tea’s here.” I had tea with him for seven years.

He was so generous, kind; that was a side of him. Conversation could be about anything at tea. I didn’t ask him much, you know, what was this like with Baba, and that kind of thing. I didn’t have those questions. He might bring up anything from Hafiz to some con man that he read about in the newspaper. He would sometimes just recite in Persian and say, “It can’t be translated. It loses its charm.” And other times he would translate. It was very spontaneous.

HEATHER: I think all of us began to dote on him. Although he was strict with us, he had that charm; he had that something. He was such an example of who we would want to be.

So I remember I fell into a kind of trap. I wanted him to approve of what I was doing, in the sense that I wanted to please him. But I found that, gradually, the more I did that, the more he removed himself from me. Little by little, he got colder, more indifferent. I was losing him. I didn’t know why that was happening, and finally one day I said to myself: “You are thinking about him too much and trying to please him too much. You’re here for Meher Baba. Let’s just face it; let’s just cut this out.”

So I stopped doing that. It took me two days. It wasn’t necessarily what I was doing or not doing. It was what was inside me. One day, I needed to use the typewriter, so I came out of the room with the typewriter, as there was a table, which is still there, in front of his kitchen. I put the typewriter on it. There was a chair near the table, but it was too low, so I started typing, standing up. I had turned my focus away from Padri and was totally absorbed in the work I was doing. Suddenly Padri showed up. He came out of his kitchen with an iron chair. He plunked it right next to me and said, “You’d better sit down,” and walked right off.

I sat down and I did my work. Then I realized that it had been his kindness to put me off until I focused again on Baba, and got out of that phase with him. Then he would interact with me again. He would help me live the life that’s focused on Baba, but he wasn’t going to help me lead a life that was focused on anybody else.

Although it was difficult at first, I learned to really appreciate the extent of his self-effacing nature and the way everything was only for Baba. I loved that.

ALAN: I always felt that he supported us to become the best we could for Baba.

Another thing, that I think should be said about Padri, is that of all the mandali he was the most naturally *fakiri*. He was the most naturally renunciate by nature. He loved

simplicity and he loved everything, essentially. And because he loved it, everything was very simple.

TED: Once I was walking around with Padri. He reached down and picked up a stick, a dry piece of wood that was on the ground, and I can't remember how I knew this, but he went and put it in a place for it to be used to heat pilgrim bathwater, not his own. He would not use it in his *chulla* [earthen stove for heating bathwater]. He didn't own it. He didn't acquire it for himself, or pay for it. A stick on the ground.

HEATHER: The attention he gave to honest dealing, the extent to which he took it, was just amazing. When he would be doing homeopathic work, which was for other people, or something for the Trust, he would use a Trust light bulb. But when it was just private stuff for himself, he'd change the bulb to one he'd bought. Do you remember that?

TED: I remember that, and it was very typical of him. I mean that thing about finding a stick on the ground; he wouldn't use it in his *chulla* because it wasn't his. Nothing that was part of Meherabad belonged to him. He didn't have the right to use it. If it was for him, he had to pay for it, himself.

ALAN: He always referred to himself as a slave.

HEATHER: One day, one of the long-time servants, Tanibai, was working in Padri's kitchen. I stayed in the room right next to that back verandah, so of course, I could hear everything. There were always people dropping in to visit with her,

and there was always a fair amount of noise. Back then I was kind of full of myself, and one day I just got fed up and told her, "Don't do that. Stop that. I don't like all that noise."

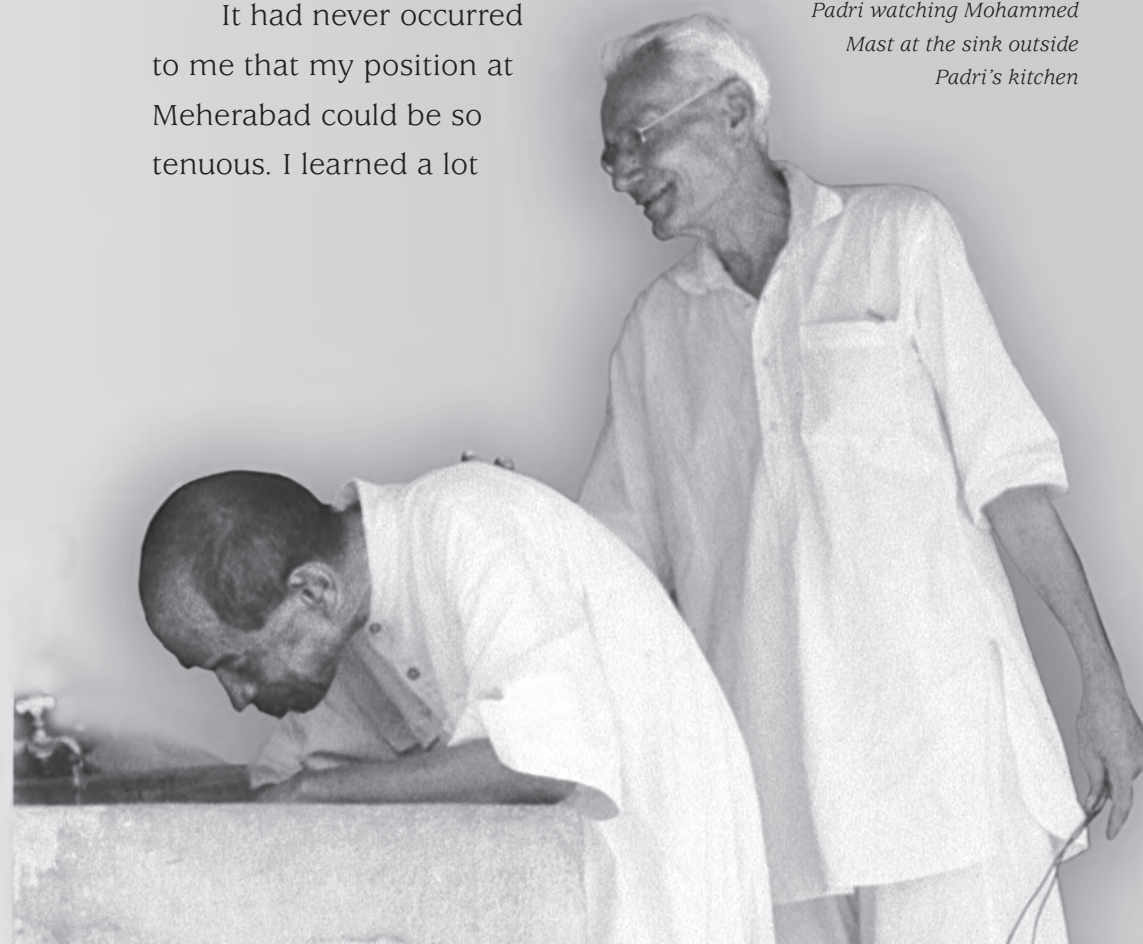
I knew a little Marathi and I said it very arrogantly, as if I were somehow in charge. Padri happened to be walking through Mandali Hall; he came racing over and told me very forcefully: "You stop that right now. Who are you compared with her?"

"Do you know who she is? Do you have any idea of the service she's given? Who are you and who is she?"

I was so stunned that I didn't even know what to reply, so I just stood there. And he said to me, emphatically: "If you don't treat her better than this, you're out."

It had never occurred to me that my position at Meherabad could be so tenuous. I learned a lot

*Padri watching Mohammed
Mast at the sink outside
Padri's kitchen*



from that. I learned to treat others with more respect, to think about all the years they had served Baba—years taking care of Mohammed Mast, which was not an easy thing; helping Padri when things were so basic at Meherabad, no amenities at all.

And you know at that time, they really weren't paid much at all. But they stayed because of Padri, because of the respect he showed them. And the funny thing is that over the years, I truly did come to appreciate them, but Padri had made sure that I showed it immediately.

ALAN: I have never met anyone who exemplified that aspect of respect the way Padri did. He respected everybody and he related to everything from that perspective, honoring the individual. He was remarkable to me.

TED: That reminds me. When I was in the Rahuri Cabin, Rambhav's [local labor contractor] son used to stand at the window and stare at me for what seemed like hours. Just peering in. I complained to Padri about it once and he said, "Why does it bother you? What's the problem?" As if acknowledging that the boy had a right to stare at me.

ALAN: What curiosities we all must have been. Really speaking, why wouldn't you stare?

JANET: You know, speaking of appreciating others, this is about Mohammed. One time Padri called me over and he got hold of Mohammed's hand and he said, "You see this

hand? You think it's just a hand, but it's a tiger's paw," he roared!

TED: I just remembered a little skit we did. I was playing Padri and Alan was playing Mohammed Mast. We were singing "*Swanee*" and Alan was bent way over as if searching for *deesh* [Mo's invisible items on the ground]. I put my foot up on his back.

ALAN: Like a footstool.

TED: Well, Padri saw that, and said, "Mister, you just never do that." He was disgusted.

ALAN: We thought it was funny but we had no idea how disrespectful of Mohammed that was.

TED: We were so stupid.

HEATHER: Did I tell you about putting *God Speaks* on my *chappals* [sandals]? Once, I was standing in front of the Jhopdi and took off my chappals to go inside. I was holding a copy of *God Speaks* and, for some reason I don't remember, I didn't want to take it in with me, but I knew it wouldn't be right for me to just put it down on the verandah. So I put it on top of my chappals so it wouldn't touch the ground and went inside.

And, of course, just at that moment, Padri wandered by and I heard him call out sternly: "You!" I came out. He said, "Did you do this?" I didn't know then that one would never put a holy book in any contact with shoes.

I said, “Yes Kaka, you see I didn’t want to . . .” but he cut me off. “If I were a Muslim and this were the *Qur’an*, it would not only be my right, but it would be my duty to kill you!”



Terrified, I grabbed *God Speaks* and ran to my room barefoot.

TED: Yeah, I was having a conversation with him once outside in front of his room. I had a piece of cake and some crumbs fell on the *farsi* [flagstone floor] so I flicked them away with my foot. He gave me hell for that: “You

don’t treat food like that; you respect food and you never do such a disrespectful thing to food.”

ALAN: Did I tell the one about him wanting my room as a storeroom for the Amartithi kitchen? It was an educational moment for Alan with Padri. This was when Balkish and Bakshi and Sitaram [the Baba lover cooks from the north] were doing the Amartithi kitchen. And because they were all staying in the Dharamshala, it would be convenient for them to use my room as a storeroom for their kitchen stuff.

And of course, it meant me completely moving out, which I didn’t want to do. This shows two things: Padri’s authority and his consideration. He came to my room, sat down on my bed, and said, “Mister, I need you to clear out your room. I need it for a storeroom for the Amartithi Kitchen.” I said, “Couldn’t they use the Savages’ Kitchen?” which is right across from my room. “You know, it’s right there, and they can

lock the door and they can keep stuff in there.” I thought that way I wouldn’t have to move. That’s all I really cared about.

“Mister, I said I need the room for a storeroom for the Amartithi Kitchen. That’s the way it’s going to be.” So I said, “Okay.” He said, “Have it cleaned out by so and so.” And I had to move all my stuff into the Savages’ Kitchen and that’s where I spent Amartithi.

But it was also interesting to watch how he used his authority, but with tremendous consideration. He could have really nailed me on that, but he just let me know that I needed to respect his authority and trust him. Fortunately, I was prepared to do that, instead of trying to reason more. I remember how I appreciated the way he dealt with me. Dealt with a brat, in a very considerate way.

BOB: After I got interested in learning homeopathy, I went to Padri and asked if he would teach me. He said, “All right” and handed me a book, the *British Pharmacopeia*. It’s a technical book. It’s how you take the plants and the substances and what part you use and how you make it, and boil it, and this and that. I read the whole thing. I was thinking to myself that he’s just given me this book to discourage me, or to see if I’m that interested. I was interested, but at the time I wondered, why did he give me that book? Years later, I realized he started me at the very beginning. Where does the plant come from? What part do you use? Why do you use it?

He was just a masterful teacher. Later he showed me the library. He said, “It’s a jungle. It has many, many books. You need a guru. Otherwise, you’ll get lost.” And he gave me five books. “You read these.” And till today I still read those five books—the masterpieces of homeopathy.

Then I’d see patients with him every morning, and it was just a wonderful experience. And today there’s not a day that I don’t think about homeopathy and patients, and it’s become my life.

TED: I just thought of something. I had better say it or I’ll forget it. I just remembered about the building where Dadi [Kerawalla] lived in one end and Mehroo Billimoria in the other end. Padri was still around when we built that. We would grind up the mud *murrum* [rough stony soil] from the Family Quarters building, which had been torn down for the new Meher Health Centre, and use it to build the staff quarters. The rooms are identical, at least they were until Dadi came and added some stuff. In the beginning, there were six identical rooms. On the end rooms, there was an opportunity to put in another window. The middle rooms could have two windows, one on the rear wall, and the other on the front wall, but the end rooms could have a third window on the side. So I put a third window in the two end rooms. Padri came by and said, “Why did you do that? Take it out.”

“Padri, we’ve already built it. It’s in there; it’s going to cost more money to remove it. It’s a big deal to take it out. Why not just leave it?”

He told me, “If you leave it, the people who live in the middle are always going to want to move to the end. They’re always going to be dissatisfied. And when that person moves out, then the next person is going to want to move in there. So you’re just creating a lot of dissatisfied people by doing that. Make them all the same. It’s better for everybody.”

ALAN: I remember that we would rehearse Mehera’s birthday play on the amphitheatre stage on the Hill. Padri would walk up and watch the dress rehearsal and then, when I saw him in the evening of that day, he would have notes for me.

HEATHER: Oh, wow.

ALAN: He was so interested. He liked the plays, and he would have suggestions. I called them rehearsal notes, but they were suggestions for things that he thought would make it better. They were so insightful and good. They showed a great sense of performance actually.

TED: I was permitted to stay at Meherabad because I was to supervise the construction of the Pilgrim Centre. I don’t remember exactly when the work started but I remember Mehera came out and swung a pick for the groundbreaking, and so did Padri.

Padri, in a way, deferred to me because I was educated, I had credentials. He would write notes with suggestions or ask for tools or make some excuse to be at the Meher Pilgrim Centre site. He would come over every day just to watch

quietly, and I realized after a while that he was doing it mainly to show the workers that he had my back.

Because, as far as they were concerned, I was just an idiot. I didn't speak the language. They couldn't imagine me knowing how to do anything in India. I mean I did know how to do things, but they didn't believe it, so Padri came there to demonstrate that he respected me and my training and experience; therefore, they should, too.

ALAN: I was also going to say something about him having your back. India, as you know, is a very different place from the States. When the Pilgrim Centre opened, I hired two men who were cooks in Ahmednagar. I didn't have a lot of experience but Eruch helped me find both of them, I believe.

Even so, trying to figure out menus and getting the kitchen together and stuff like that was a big deal for me. In the first few months of the operation of the kitchen, Padri would come in, unannounced, and kind of cast an eye around. After he did that two or three times he called me outside into the corridor between the verandahs, and said, "If they start giving you any trouble, just let me know and I'll twist their tails for you." So he had my back.

JANET: Oh, yes. I didn't have very much money saved when I came here. I didn't even know that I was going to live here at the time. But I was working at the Health Centre so Padri let me stay at Meherabad.

Then Mo started asking me for soap. He would tell me that he wanted so many cakes of soap. And it had to be yellow soap sometimes, and it had to be green soap other times. So I would bring him the soap. And then I had to bring him *pishwees* [small cloth bags] to put the soap in.

HEATHER: Oh yes, endless pishwees.

ALAN: And kerchiefs.

HEATHER: Kerchiefs that he would put on his head and lie down on. Like those little towels.

JANET: Oh yes, napkins, I used to bring him those napkins. So it was soap, pishwees, and napkins. Padri came by one day and said, "Ah, he's swindling you again," which made me feel that I didn't have to do every little thing Mo wanted.

ALAN: I used to have to bring him all this soap and stuff too, and it would clean me out. Padri caught Mo asking me one day; he knew none of us had great finances. He said, "Come in here with me." I don't know what he said to Mo, but it was always amazing to watch him. He said, "Promise me; take your throat and promise me, never ask this man for soap again."

JANET: And he didn't?

ALAN: And he didn't. Mo deferred to Padri's authority, 100 %; he had the authority in the house. He never asked me

for soap again. He didn't even sneak it (because Mohammed could sneak stuff).

JANET: You know before Mo got his soft mattress, he was sleeping on that hard mattress and would get bedsores. Padri told me I was to dress them. So I would go over there and I would pull up his kafni [garment], and he'd pull it down. I'd pull his kafni up, he'd pull his kafni down. Once, when I pulled it up, Mohammed picked me up, and threw me off the verandah, literally off the verandah, and I landed in the dirt.

Padri was sitting there. He turned around, had a look, and said, "Oh, well, what happened to you?"

I said, "Mohammed threw me off the verandah."

Well, he gave Mo a big scolding and made him apologize to me. Mohammed said, "*Maafi, Janabai, maafi* [Forgive me, Janet sister, forgive me]." I loved that. He didn't throw me off again.

HEATHER: And Mo called Padri Seth, you know, that special "Sir."

ALAN: It sort of means "Exalted Sir."

HEATHER: If something got really, really bad and Mo was really out of it and was going to do something that Padri wouldn't like, I'd say, "I'm going to go tell Seth." And he would go, "Oooo." Just the idea of Seth was enough to bring him around. He was like a little child at school being told you were going to report him to the principal.

COMPANIONSHIP

There was no doubt that we all had tremendous respect for Padri, and took what he said very seriously, but, on a day-to-day basis, we just enjoyed being around him. He might have seemed stern to others but it was a delight to spend time with him.

ALAN: One day he called me over to his kitchen and said, "I've ordered some raw mangos. Come over here tomorrow afternoon, we're going to make *kairee marumba* [mango jam] and *sharbat* [a concentrated fruit syrup which is added to water to create a drink]." So I thought, let's see what this is. He loved to cook. I don't think many people knew that.

The thing that comes to my mind is he was such good company. He was really good company. And we liked it, savored it.

HEATHER: Remember when we would watch the stars with him? We would sit outside; we didn't have those tube lights then. Do you remember that?

ALAN: I remember sitting out in the summer months.

HEATHER: Yes, and we would look up and he'd take that blue canvas chair of his. Was that the one he passed away in?

BOB: Yeah.

ALAN: Yeah, that was his chair. He would move it out into the road in front of his room.

HEATHER: He knew so much about the stars. I had this little star map that Erico got from some place and we used to go out and lie down on the ground and look up at the stars. Padri would put his head back and point out things about the stars. It really encouraged us to appreciate that kind of natural beauty.

*One of Padri's many cats
enjoying being petted*



ALAN: Such a Renaissance man.

JANET: I would bring him things. I'd catch bugs and then give them to Kaka. I'd leave a bug on his desk, or somewhere. Then one day, after I had left many things for him, I went back to our house and there was a bug caught on a little yellow piece of yellow cardboard and there was written, "Compliments, P."

HEATHER: I love it. Do you remember those notes he would write? They would be written in pencil on a piece of scrap paper. You wouldn't get the whole sheet, you'd get part of the sheet, and that would be torn off very carefully, and then you'd get this note. And he used the most elegant language; his English was so precise.

TED: And he had beautiful penmanship.

HEATHER: And beautiful penmanship. And lovely ways of signing, and addressing . . . just beautiful.

ALAN: About bringing things to Padri . . . the first time I ever killed a cobra was out behind the staff quarters near my old room, in that field back there. One of the women came over, screaming. She had seen this cobra and ran back to get me. I went out to see; it was molting so it was not real active. I walked up to it and bashed it on the head. It was good-sized, probably an eight-foot cobra.

JANET: Eight feet?

ALAN: Yeah. Bashed it on the head a few times, and, you know, crunched it. Meanwhile someone ran and told Padri that Alan's killed a cobra out in the field. I got a message, "Padri's calling for you." So I went over to the back verandah by his kitchen and he said, "I hear you've killed a cobra. Go get it."

Now I was fine killing it, but I wasn't really into trying to pick it up. Keeping it the length of a stick away from me was one thing, but I felt a little uneasy about handling it. But I got a *ghamela* [large metal pan], somehow got the snake on a stick and into the *ghamela*, and I brought it to Padri. He said, "Come here, Mister. Let me show you its fangs."

He was fussing with the cobra's head, which I'd broken up so much, probing and showing this and that, and pulling the fangs out. I was terrified that he was going to prick himself and get poisoned because he was so cavalier about it. But very deftly he showed me the fangs, and the little venom sacs, and then he called someone and said, "Now take this off and burn it." And that was that.

BOB: He had various little vials in his room. One day when I was there with him, he picked up one. There were two fangs in it. He said, "Well, this was a Russell's viper." That's a very poisonous snake. He said, very matter of factly, "I was in the crapper [toilet] one day and he tried to bite me but I grabbed him. I got his fangs."

JANET: I used to climb the neem trees and take the stem borers out and take them to Kaka. Then one day, in our loo, there was an enormous centipede. So I managed to get it, I enticed it out and rolled it up and put it in a *ghamela*, and was very careful because it was so big. It was green—it had a gray-green body, and big red legs and red antennae and nippers [pincers].

Anyway, I took it over to Padri. He really was horrified. He said, "That terrible thing! Kill it! Kill it!" So I dropped it onto the ground and squashed it, and he said, "You're a very odd woman. I've never met one like you."

TED: That's interesting because if you pointed out a scorpion to him, he would just pick it up.

ALAN: He knew how to pick them up by the tail.

HEATHER: You know, he was Mehera's first cousin. When scorpions would bite Mehera, it didn't really much bother her. We later found out she was bitten once in bed and just turned over and went to sleep. The same with Padri. He could take a scorpion bite and it wouldn't bother him much, but they both had a lot of trouble with mosquito bites. They felt pain from that. So that's why he would sit in the evenings with a towel on the end of a short stick of bamboo to flick at mosquitoes.

TED: It looked to me as though a scorpion actually did sting his fingers once, when he picked it up. He didn't want to kill them. He would say, "They have a right to live, Mister."

ALAN: Ants, too.

TED: Pretty much everything.

JANET: Remember all those big green caterpillars? I planted something Mehera gave me and she said not a leaf should be damaged, and it got full of big green caterpillars. I filled a ghamela half way up with those green caterpillars and killed them. The next time I filled it up with caterpillars Padri got cross with me. He said, "They have the right to live."

Although once he had me tip them out on the ground and put a board on top of them, and said, "Now jump on it." So I jumped on it and all these squashed caterpillars came out on my dress. I was smothered in gooey caterpillars.

HEATHER: His idea of fun.

JANET: We must have amused him.

ALAN: Remember the first time I made a pudding for Christmas at the Savages' Kitchen? We didn't have an oven but I realized I could make a steamed pudding, so I did. I said to Bobby, "I really wish we had some brandy to put in the hard sauce." But alcohol wasn't allowed at Meherabad. Bobby said, "Let's go ask Padri."

And so we went over to Padri. I said, "I've made this pudding and I'm making hard sauce to go on top and I'd like to put brandy in it. Could I? Would that be okay?" And he said, "Yes, that would be okay. You're not going to drink it, are you? You're going to eat it."

Then he pulled out a bottle of VSOP Cognac someone had given him, which he was using for medicine, and gave it to me. And as we're leaving, he called out, "And bring me a piece."

Not only was alcohol forbidden at Meherabad, but he had seen so many people (from the village) ruin their lives with alcohol. But one time when we were at a resident's place in town, Padri came in to take off his coat and leave it in the bedroom. He saw a bottle of Jack Daniel's Black Label on the dresser, went over to it, took the lid off, tipped it back, and took a swig out of it. "Ahh," he said, put the lid back on, and went out.

There was something so matter of fact about the way he did that, but you know, it speaks to how expansive he was. He was not a man who had limitations. He was, what was that wonderful statement you made, Ted?

TED: He knew what he was doing.

ALAN: He knew what he was doing. From moment to moment, he knew what he was doing.

TED: He used to take walks, but before going out on the road, he would check the wind and the traffic, and then walk on the side of the road where the dust wouldn't blow at him. He thought and made choices like that all the time.

PADRI AS HEALER



Padri practiced homeopathy at Meherabad since the 1920s. If pilgrims got sick, had diarrhea, anything, they would come to Padri, who would patiently listen to their symptoms and then prescribe some homeopathic treatment. Outwardly, he was dry and matter of fact and didn't seem that sympathetic, but the fact that he truly cared was evidenced by the time he would spend just to find the proper remedy.

Padri at the door of his room, clinic, and office

HEATHER: Once there was a pilgrim who was sort of mad and sort of not mad. He was both at the same time and Adi [Adi K. Irani, Baba's secretary, who lived in what had become the Trust Compound] had just had it with him. He said to Padri, "I can't get him to leave and I'm not going to have him staying in the Trust Compound or in the town. I can't deal with him anymore so I'm sending him to Meherabad." Padri told me, "We're going to put him up in the Dharamshala, so go there and make up a bed."

The pilgrim arrived and came into the Dharamshala, where I was making his bed. He was helping me, we had a sheet down, and then we were putting the *chaddar* [a thin cotton blanket or bedspread] on top, like we did in those days, and we were tucking it in. He was at one end of the bed, and I was at the other. I had my side tucked in, but he was just holding on to the other side, not doing anything.

I said, "Could you please tuck it in?" He just continued to stand there, holding on to the bedspread. I said, "I'm sorry, but I've got to go and the last thing to make is your bed. So you can tuck it in, or I'll tuck it in for you."

But he was just standing there with a vacant look on his face, so I asked, "Can you understand me?" He didn't respond. So I said, "Please, let go."

I knew that he wasn't really crazy. Adi had said that too. And that's what Kaka thought: "He's not as mad as he seems." So I was getting really irritated that he wasn't responding. I tried to take it from his hand but he wouldn't let go. And we started getting into a little battle.

In fact, I completely lost it. I got absolutely wild. I was infuriated, and I went up next to him and bit him on the hand so he'd let go of the sheet. Sure enough, he let go. But then he said, "I'm going to go tell Padri." Suddenly he was completely sensible. And he went out. I thought, "Oh my God. What have I done?" I turned to a photo of Baba and said, "Baba, I bit a pilgrim. I actually did. A pilgrim, at Meherabad." Then I went to see Padri.

“Kaka, I don’t know what’s happening. I actually bit that pilgrim.”

“Hmm. Why?”

“Because he made me so mad.”

“All right. Don’t worry. I’ve given him a dose.”

That was it and he kind of waved me away. But the story doesn’t end there. About a year later, we got a lovely pilgrim who, unfortunately, really was crazy.

TED: Seriously psychotic.

ALAN: And he had been taking anti-psychotic medicine. But because he heard no drugs were allowed at Meherabad, he stopped his medicines and went into a full-blown psychotic episode. Meherabad was paralyzed for ten days. All of us were involved with taking care of him.

HEATHER: He wouldn’t take his [allopathic] medicine. And we needed him to take the medicine so that he could get well enough for us to send him to Bombay where he could get real treatment. After some days, I dressed up as a nurse, and went to him with the pills and water and sternly told him he’s got to take his medication.

He became calm. He took the pills. Everything was under control. I handed him the water. Then he suddenly turned around and bit me, in the exact same place that I had bitten that other pilgrim. Same hand, same place, only I really started bleeding.

I went to Padri.

“Kaka, he bit me.”

“Hmm,” and he went into his homeopathy. So it was my turn to take his remedy for human bite.



BOB: Tell them about your boils.

ALAN: The Boils, brother and sister.

JANET: You had boils and I had boils.

ALAN: We had them at exactly the same time, for months, months. As I recall, we took only homeopathic remedies. Which of course, probably brought out the boils. You know Padri gave us Silesium first thing, and I said, “It’s worse, Padri.” He said, “Good, good.”

JANET: I think we finally did take antibiotics. I think we took something that Goher snuck out to us, or something.

ALAN: But that didn’t work either.

JANET: I don’t think anything worked, but Padri eventually said, “For God’s sake, take something and get rid of this,” because I was really suffering. But there was nothing to take.

ALAN: We were both a mess.

JANET: Yeah.

HEATHER: And I think you had them in the Indian summer.

ALAN: It was hot. It was very hot.

TED: But with the boils you would only eat rice, right?

ALAN: That's because we both had amoebic dysentery at the same time as the boils. I had picked up amoebas in Bombay. I came to Meherabad two days later than you did, Janet, and you had picked it up somewhere else, and so we were on the white diet already. The boiled vegetable water and rice diet. And then we got the boils right after we started that.

TED: And you were skeletons.

JANET: Yeah, I got so thin that Mani said if I didn't gain weight I would have to leave. But I couldn't gain weight with Padri having me fast all the time on the water from the boiled vegetables.

ALAN: I think we had plain white rice and vegetable water for months. I didn't mind losing the weight; it was heaven for me.

HEATHER: Remember when some of us had dengue? Did you have it, Ted?

TED: Yes.

ALAN: We all had it at the same time.

HEATHER: We all got it. Padri came in and he said, "All right, looks like you have breakbone fever." It was called breakbone because of the ache, the body-ache. And then he said to me, "You'll recover" and he wandered out.

ALAN: You can't believe you're not physically injured.

HEATHER: It's so horrible. But the thing was, Padri knew that even though it was painful, there was really nothing to do except wait it out.

BOB: I remember when the Western pilgrim patients would be worried, although he was giving them homeopathic treatment, and would ask, "Am I going to be all right?"

And he'd say in that deadpan way of his, "Oh, you're not going to die. You're not that lucky."

"Well, aren't you going to give us medicine?" by which they meant allopathic medicine. He'd just point toward Nagar and drawl, "Medicine is that way. Six miles. Go on, if you want."

ALAN: I remember when I had the infection in my foot and you two [Janet and Heather] were both attending me. You were worried, because the first Westerner who came here died of an infection in his foot.

HEATHER: Oh yes. Nelmes [Louis Nelmes, an English Christian, who lived at Meherabad in the very early days with Baba].

ALAN: And there I was in that little room. Nelmes had died right on the other side of that wall in the old Dharamshala. Padri was giving me homeopathic remedies all day and having the servants come in and foment my foot. The fever was incredible. I was hallucinating then—snakes coming out of the walls and stuff.

Padri was in there every thirty minutes checking me. Literally, every thirty minutes. It was amazing; the fever broke in the afternoon and it cleared up completely.

BOB: I remember that. It was about 5:30 or 6 in the morning and I brought Padri to your room and he said, “Take his pulse.” You were burning up. You must have had 104°F fever, at least, maybe 105°F and the pulse was only 65 or 70. Now your pulse normally was 56.

So the pulse was out of synch with the temperature. For that kind of fever, you should have had 120 pulse. And that was an indication for the remedy, Pyrogen. Padri knew that was the remedy. So he just gave it every half an hour and the fever broke.

ALAN: One day. It took one day. Morning serious, afternoon on the mend.



ALAN: Padri had been a compounder at one time, hadn't he?

BOB: Yes, in 1925, in the Meher Hospital and Charitable Dispensary. Padri was practicing homeopathy but it was mostly allopathic that was being practiced at the hospital. Padri was the compounder, meaning the chemist, meaning the pharmacist, because there were very few readymade medicines, and they were expensive. So the doctor would write a prescription: two grams of this and one ounce of that. And Padri had a scale and he would make up the formula and give it to the patient.

The hospital had ten beds and patients would come every day as out-patients and take treatment. Padri told me of many interesting cases. In 1925, there were no antibiotics, there was only what he could make up; he would treat bronchitis and all those things.

JANET: Well, Padri liked it when I would make things, when I was managing the Health Centre. Do you remember that I used to make a tincture out of *Tridax procumbens* [a species of flowering plant in the daisy family], which we used like iodine. It was bright green and it was wonderful.

BOB: He was very ingenious in making things out of other things. When somebody died and was cremated, the family would give him their eyeglasses. He would examine them to see if they were different strengths and then he would take out the glass and saw it in half and make bifocals. But they were so perfectly sawed and put together that they fit perfectly.

I remember once, Bart Flick had come. He was going to medical school and was also interested in homeopathy and would go down to the Health Centre to help out. A little boy came in who had shoved a chickpea up his nose. Bart tried to remove it. But he didn't have any surgical tools. So he tried this and he tried that but he couldn't get it out, and eventually we had to send the boy to the Civil Hospital.

We saw Padri after the clinic: "Well, how many did you kill today?" Bart said, "There was an interesting case. This boy came who had pushed a chickpea far up his nose. I tried to get it out but that only pushed it in a little farther. Have you ever seen that?"

Padri chuckled and went over to a little metal box on his shelf, opened it, and took out a long tool, made from a bicycle spoke that he had twisted into a curve at the end. "Ah, you just (flicks his wrist), it comes right out."

Padri's descriptions of the old cases before there were antibiotics were very interesting, because the fever would come on and he would treat it successfully. Nowadays, patients run to the doctor right away and they suppress and suppress. And many homeopaths don't have much experience treating fevers. But his book of fevers was about two inches thick and well read.

I remember him treating Mohammed for malaria. I was confident that he would treat him successfully. But two days went by, three days went by, a week went by, and the fever kept coming back. He'd be okay for a day and then

it'd be coming in the morning and then it'd be coming in the afternoon, constantly changing. So Padri would change the remedy he'd given, using five or six different remedies.

After about three weeks he said to me, "Well, have you noticed the old man has involuntary urination?" "Yes, I had observed that." "But have you noticed that it's only during the heat of the fever, no time else?" I thought, "Yes, I have observed that." He would have 105°F fever; prior to the fever he'd have severe rigors, you'd have to hold him down on the bed. He said, "He has it at no other time. Not during his good days, not during the chill, only during the heat. Look that up."

So I looked it up in the fever book and there was only one remedy for involuntary urination during the heat of the fever: sulfuric acid. Three doses, four doses, every couple of hours, and then he was fine.

And he didn't have it again for the next ten years. No return of the malaria.

PADRI AND THE WOMEN

In the early days at Meherabad in the 1920s, Padri was often at odds with the women, especially about the use of water. Water was very scarce at Meherabad, and Padri was in charge of pumping water up the Hill for the women's use. But their use, in Padri's mind, was extravagant, as they would use lots of fresh water for the plants that they were growing to beautify the Hill for Baba.

Baba would often play upon this friction by telling the men the women wanted certain things that were expensive or difficult to arrange, even when they had made no such requests. Decades later, you could still get a glimpse of some of this dynamic.

JANET: When the old Pilgrim Centre opened, Mehera didn't want pilgrims sitting on the verandah to look out at graves [of the men mandali]. So she told me, "Now, it's not going to be nice for people to sit on the front verandah and look across at graves, so you plant *luce* [a thick-growing, bushy plant] for a hedge around it." I went to Kaka and I was nervous to mention it. I knew how he'd react. I said, "You know, um, . . ." I told him what had happened and sure enough he said, "Over my dead body." Or something along those lines.

HEATHER: That would be about right.

JANET: And I thought, what am I going to do? Mehera has

told me to plant the hedge, but if I do I'm going to be chucked out of Meherabad.

ALAN: So what did you do?

JANET: I didn't do anything. I kept very quiet. I thought, maybe Mehera will forget about it. But Mehera didn't forget.

She said, "You haven't done that yet."

"No."

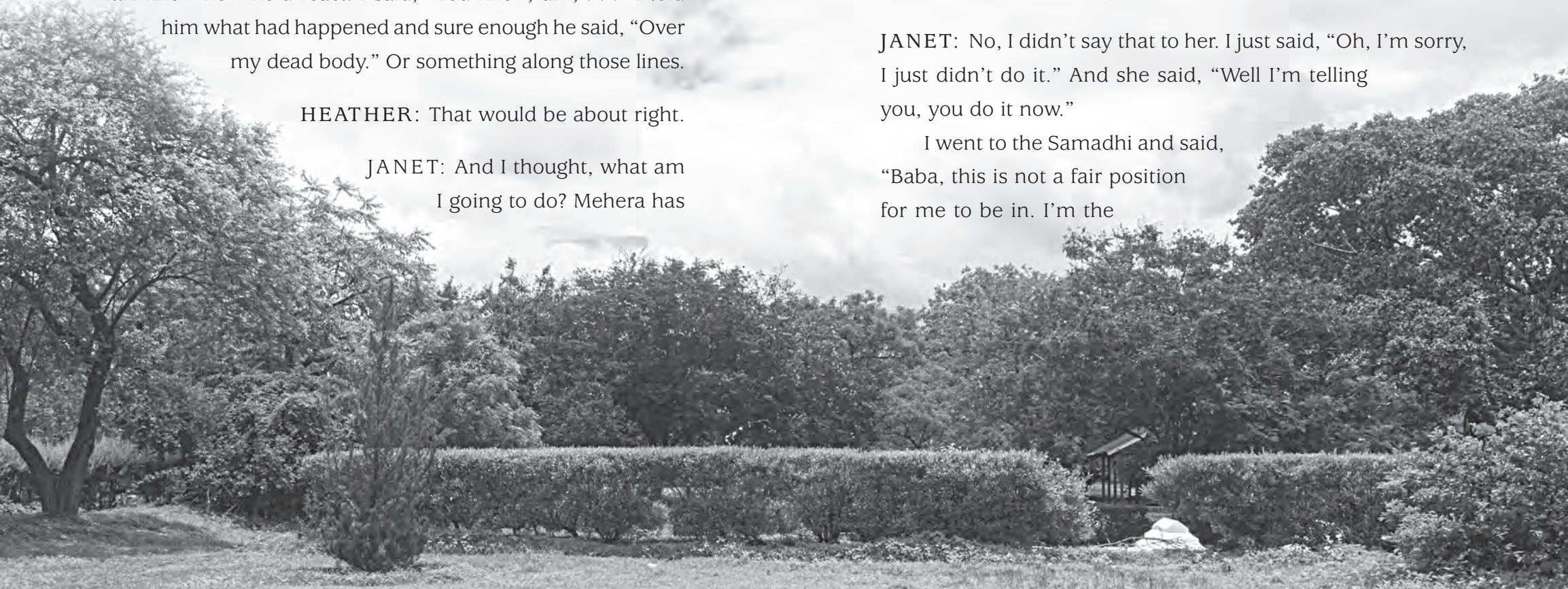
"Why not?"

"I just haven't, Mehera," because I knew Padri would kill me if I did it.

TED: But you didn't say that to her.

JANET: No, I didn't say that to her. I just said, "Oh, I'm sorry, I just didn't do it." And she said, "Well I'm telling you, you do it now."

I went to the Samadhi and said, "Baba, this is not a fair position for me to be in. I'm the



The "luce" hedge surrounding Baba's

men mandali graves, lower Meherabad

meat in a sandwich between Padri and Mehera. Please do something.”

Then I went to Padri and said, “Kaka, Mehera really wants me to plant a luce hedge around the mens’ graves.”

ALAN: And Padri suddenly relented?

JANET: He said I could, but no *pani* [water].

ALAN: Ahh.

JANET: But then it rained and the hedge came up and everybody was happy. Of course, being Meherabad, it didn’t rain again and the hedge died. But by that time, the Meher Pilgrim Centre had opened. So I got a pump and we put it on the septic tanks and this old man Gyanu would sit there all day pumping out septic tanks to water the hedge.

The day before Padri died, he came to me and said, “There are gaps in your luce hedge.” Then he gave me some seeds and told me to plant them.

TED: Beautiful.

ALAN: That’s perfect.

HEATHER: Mehera once gave me a bougainvillea that I planted by the Jhopdi. Padri came over to our room and said, “That goes out, or you go out.” And he took off.

Eric said, “That’s going out right now. And if you don’t take it out, I’m going to take it out.” Sure enough Eric marched

right over there and ripped it out. I was ready to strangle him. Then I had to go tell Mehera. She just couldn’t believe that had happened.

I actually blamed it on Erico, who really adored Mehera. But Padri said the plant had to go or we had to go, and Eric didn’t hesitate. He had that kind of relationship with Padri.

ALAN: I was just remembering that Padri made a comment once: “Yes, every summer I go out to Meherazad, and that niece of mine [Meheru] has taken all the slats out of the beds and built things with them. And then I have to go back and forth to Nagar getting slats to put back in the beds.”

JANET: She loved building things.

TED: I made some wooden trays for the feet of Baba’s bed to rest in, and the women would put boric acid in them to keep the ants off the bed. And then they complained that they were sticking out too much, so I had to chamfer [angle at 45 degrees] each corner, correcting it, and perfecting it, again and again.

Padri said, “You have to learn it, Mister. You can give them gold; you could give them twenty-four carat, you could give them fifty carat gold, and what do they say?” He put his nose right up to my nose and said, “Not pure.”

ALAN: Classic, classic.

TED: One time we were up in the library study hall, and Padri said, “You see those windows? They’re all on the same level. The women came out and they wanted a window over here, this high, because there was a tree over there. And they wanted to see this hill over here, so they wanted the window over here, and they wanted it only this high because. . . . I said, ‘Baba, you really need to keep a continuous lintel all around, so the windows structurally should be the same height.’ Baba said, ‘You’re right. Okay, do it that way.’” Padri said that was the one time he ever won an argument with Baba over the women.

STORIES WE HEARD FROM PADRI

Padri didn’t sit around and tell us stories about his days with the Master. He was focused on his day-to-day duties. But over the years, in the course of ordinary conversation, we did hear a few stories.

TED: Padri told about an experience with Baba that seemed really important to him. He was with the other men mandali, this was back in the ’20s. Someone came who was kind of a guru type, or at least someone who seemed serious about the spiritual path, and they started talking to him, asking him questions. Baba came and was furious with them, and said, “I don’t want you around anymore.”

HEATHER: He was furious with the mandali?

TED: With the men mandali, for talking with this guy. Baba said things like, “Go follow him. Go on, go on. I don’t want you. You’re interested in what he has to say? You better just follow him and leave Me. I don’t want you, I don’t want you.”

Padri explained to us, “Baba—really, He demands everything from you, your full attention.” This guy wasn’t bad or anything, but when you’re with Baba, that’s who you pay attention to, and nobody else. And that was a big lesson for him.

Then there’s the story about the Cabin on the Hill.

ALAN: It was his opus. It was going to be his great work.

TED: Right. Baba said to Padri: “Okay, you’ve done all this temporary stuff, and it only gets torn down and you can only use *chuttai* [bamboo-woven sheets] and tin sheets and stuff. I know how much you love to build, to do things well. I’m going to give you the opportunity to do something really well this time. I need this cabin. How long do you think it will take to do it really well?”

I don’t remember what Padri said, but it was something like six months. Padri told me he said to Baba, “I want to build it in stone, be a really proper building for you, Baba.” And Baba said, “Good, good, do your best. Do something really good.”

Padri was all excited. He started building the plinth and Baba came over, maybe two days later, and said, “How much



Baba surveying construction of His Cabin on Meherabad Hill, 1935

longer is it going to take?” “Baba, you gave me six months.” “Can you do it in half the time? Maybe three months?” “Okay, Baba, I’ll do my best.”

So, a day later, two days, Baba came back and said, “When are you going to finish this?” “You gave me three months, Baba.” “No, we need it faster than that. How much can you. . . .” “One month?” “Okay, okay, you got one month.” And the next day I think He said, “A week.” So they built the stone plinth carefully and then they just had to throw everything else together at the end.

ALAN: Another interesting part is that Padri brought all the materials from Nagar on a bicycle, going back and forth, hauling the wood beams, the wood stuff that was used, the metal sheets.

TED: Still, it’s beautifully crafted. It really is.

HEATHER: And while Padri was sweeping it out and picking up the tools that were left, Baba was pacing, back and forth in front. The second Padri came out the door with all the tools and everything in his hands, and it was hardly nicely cleaned or anything, Baba said, “I’m moving in right now.” He went inside, slammed those doors for His seclusion, and that was that.

TED: Padri told me: “This time the Master said I was going to have the chance to do something really nice. But [when]

the Master says to have it ready, you have it ready. It means nothing whether it's good, whether it takes longer, whether it costs more. You do what the Master tells you."

HEATHER: Padri would say, "It's not what you want." His satisfaction was not in the building but in doing what the Master wanted, not what he wanted. But he was very proud of that building anyway.

SOME ANECDOTES ABOUT PADRI

JANET: Do you remember when Annarosa [Karrasch] would come? Annarosa took over from Harry Kenmore as the head of the Society for Avatar Meher Baba in New York, which was a particular group of Baba lovers who had been close to Harry.

TED: She would bring the whole gang over.

JANET: But they weren't allowed to talk to us. She would bring them all over to get stories from Padri, because they were allowed to talk to Padri. After she had gone, Padri would look at us, and say, "Ah, I'm the only Brahmin here."

ALAN: I remember him with Carrie Ben Shammai, from Israel. She was a talker. I mean TALKER. And so she made

an appointment to meet with Padri to talk about Baba. I saw them sitting over by his room, for a couple of hours, I think. After she left I walked by and said, "Did you enjoy your talk with Carrie?" Kaka said, "I couldn't hear a word she said. I just kept saying, 'Hunh,' and she was happy."

HEATHER: He was a little deaf. And he'd do this sort of grunt, making a noncommittal noise as a response to whatever the other person was saying, without letting on that he couldn't hear. Carrie never knew because he didn't want to lean over to put his ear next to her mouth or ask her to speak up.

TED: There's another story, about when Jimmy and Roda [Mistry] came to live at Meherabad in the 1980s, and Roda started planting flowers.

JANET: Oh, yes, yes. Padri called me over to look at Roda's garden, because he didn't want me to plant things either. He said, "Hmm, I think this one's got a root disease." Pulled it up by the roots, looked at it, "No, that one's fine. Let's see about this one." And he pulled that one up, too. And he kept doing this until he had pulled them all out. There was no root disease anywhere.

HEATHER: You know we used to have a picture of Baba in the Savages' Kitchen. It was a younger picture and Baba looked

rather serious to me. One day, Jimmy Mistry was casually walking by and happened to glance at the photograph. I said, “Isn’t that a good picture of Baba?” He said, “He didn’t look like that. He was ferocious.” And he kept walking.

I was amazed because his very close contact with Baba had been since 1948. And my impression was, by that time, Baba wasn’t so fiery. Yet Jimmy felt that this photo, which struck me as rather serious, didn’t even begin to capture Baba’s true nature.

ALAN: Tell about Padri and the movies.

HEATHER: Okay. Anyway, at one point, we had gotten into the habit of showing Baba movies in the Dharamshala.

ALAN: In the summer.

HEATHER: So we asked Padri to come to the first one. It was a 1956 Myrtle Beach film [Baba was gently greeting many newcomers in this film], but then he didn’t come to the second film. So I said, “Kaka, don’t you want to come to the movie? We’re going to show it at 8 o’clock.” He said, “In the movies, they make Baba look like a cow,” by which he meant, docile, tame, passive. “He wasn’t like that. He was a lion.”

JANET: He told me Baba was fire.

TED: He was fire, that’s what I heard him say.

ALAN: Fire, I heard that also.



Baba with Padri, Jim Mistry, and others, Guruprasad

LIVING AT MEHERABAD

There was no question that Padri was in charge of Meherabad, but it was usually in small, gentle ways that we felt his authority.

JANET: Did I say what happened when my parents came? Well, they came to try to take me back to Australia, but when they got here, they were really happy that I was here. My mother got on very well with Mehera, and Eruch made a big fuss over my father, and so forth and so on.

Now, we couldn't go anywhere without Padri's permission. So when they were going back to Australia, I said to him, "My parents are leaving and I would like to go with them to Bombay."

He said, "Oh, and what will you do when they leave?" I said, "Well, I'll come back here."

"Oh no, you won't. You'll go out and you'll gorge and then you'll come back here shitting and vomiting and expect me to look after you."

ALAN: I don't know if you ever told the story of you slamming the door and Padri walking by.

HEATHER: I'm not sure. But there's the time I wanted to strangle you.

TED: Tell that one.

HEATHER: You know we lived in a room in the Mandali Hall building. There was the main hall in the middle, some rooms on either side, and verandahs in front and back. Our room was between Padri's kitchen and his room. So Padri was constantly walking up and down outside our room, and we had to be careful about what we were doing. But over time we got kind of relaxed in there. I remember once Alan came over and we got into a fight, as usual. We were in a brother-sister fight phase.

ALAN: Daily fight.

HEATHER: Daily fight. I don't know, he just drove me so nuts. So what happened was, I was trying to get Alan out of the room. Erico was laughing, and he went off somewhere because he thought it was hysterical when Alan and I would fight. I told Alan, "Get out of this room," pointing to the screen door. I said, "Get out. Out, out." He says, "I'm not leaving." I said, "You have to get out, right now." And I went over to him; he was clinging on to my bed.

ALAN: To the mosquito net pole.

HEATHER: He just put his arm around it. He was really strong and he held on. "I want you out of here." I couldn't get him out so I started to strangle him. Now his neck is like a bull's. It was like trying to put my hands around a tree trunk. I tried to strangle him with all my might and he just laughed. I was so furious that I couldn't get him out and I was swearing,

you know, like a fisherman's wife. I won't repeat the things I was saying. Padri walked by, and looked in. He said, "Hmm, having a good time?" (Laughter)

ALAN: I like the story of when you were mad at Erico and you just kept slamming the door.

HEATHER: Yes. Eric and I were having a big fight. Out the back of our room there's the verandah and some steps going down. I was so wild with Eric that I just wanted him out. I was sick of him in the room, so I pushed him out the door. I pushed him so hard that he went out backwards and his momentum carried him to the bottom of the stairs.

I was using the "F" word, often and very loudly.

ALAN: Expletive, expletive, expletive.

HEATHER: Expletive, expletive. "You expletive, you . . ." and all.

ALAN: And you kept slamming the door, punctuating your swearing with door slams.

HEATHER: I was standing there on the outside, slamming the door, and Erico was down there, full of dust. And while this was happening, Padri was in the main hall next to our room. Then he came through the hall to the verandah. We were both shocked to see him. He stopped. He looked at each of us. He looked at the door. He said, "Easy, easy," and walked on to his kitchen.

ALAN: It was like, "Easy on the door, lady."

HEATHER: That's right.

ALAN: To me, Padri, of all the mandali, had the most developed aesthetic. He had an incredibly refined aesthetic, and was sensitive to beauty, which most people don't know, because they think of him as being so strict, so rigid. But to me it seems like a myth of how strict he was.

I would never use the word strict. He inspired respect and he was respectful and out of that you behaved.

TED: When I first came, I asked him lots of questions about building because I was very impressed with what was the Pilgrim's Kitchen at that time. It's now the Trustees' Office. He had designed it and it had been built according to his instructions.

We were at the Pilgrim Centre once, doing all this stuff, and I was asking him questions about this and that. He didn't hang out there long, and we walked back together to his room next to Mandali Hall. As we passed this rusty, dilapidated, almost-about-to-fall-over tin shed, Padri said, in a way very apologetically, "You probably think I'm crazy, but I like this building. I really like it."

He didn't know me. He thought I was going to be some big shot type of architect, I guess because that was my reputation. You know, there's this guy from America, he's been asked to design the Pilgrim Centre, and the Westerners are going to pay for it, so he must only like new, big buildings.

His telling me that about the shed meant a lot to me, because I liked it too. I liked that building even though it might be considered something useless and ugly. But it wasn't useless and it wasn't ugly, and it's still there.

HEATHER: I remember, one time, he took Lindesay and me on a walk, way out, on what would become the Meher Pilgrim Retreat (MPR) road or just a little after the MPR road. He took us way out there to this little stream . . .

TED: A spring.

HEATHER: And he said, "Look here." And we looked down and there were crabs in the spring. Little tiny crabs. And to see a crab when everything is so barren around you, no trees or anything, except for babul trees, was so amazing, but we worried about what would happen to them in the summer and he said, "Oh, they know what to do." They dig into the dirt and bury themselves there.

TED: Sometimes we needed to carve a big stone for something, like the ones you see as you're driving up the paved road to the Hill. On either side there are stone walls, but then at the corner of them there are these big carved stones. Well, he knew where these stones were on the property. We would get on his motorcycle and drive off; he knew exactly where to find them. We would walk out and see if one was big enough. Then he'd hire workmen—Machindar to come and break it up and then Kisan Muske to dress it.

BOB: I remember Padri describing planting those three baobab trees in front of the bungalow, with Eruch. In '56 I think. I can't remember the year but his idea was to plant them to mark the place of Lower Meherabad, because they have an extremely long life. They can live ten thousand years.

HEATHER: That ought to do it. And I also thought when Padri did that, it would be like a fence because they all grow so big and wide, and it would grow out, right together.

ALAN: So typical of Padri, utility and beauty.

HEATHER: You know in the early days, we had a lot more snakes around here and we used to kill them because the night watchmen didn't like to do it. But one time that kind of freaked me out was when Padri squatted down right next to a snake.

BOB: The story started when Glenn [a resident] came to Padri and said he had seen a snake. "Where did you see it?" "Well, just before the road." "All right."

He took a stick, and said, "Show me where." "It went in those rocks." So he rumbled the rocks and the snake came out. Padri pinned it to the ground with his stick.

HEATHER: Then Padri squatted down and was telling Glenn all about the snake, pointing out this and that. Everybody was nervous except him.

BOB: Meanwhile, as soon as Padri had pinned it, it hooded up. It was a cobra. And it started trying to strike.

ALAN: Padri had it pinned down in the middle, not just below the head. So it was striking from the point where it was pinned. And what was frightening everybody was it could have bitten Padri because he was so close to it.

BOB: When Glenn saw the hood, he exclaimed, “Padri, it’s a cobra.” Padri, unflappable as ever, said, “I know that. Kill it, damn it.”

ALAN: Classic: “I know that.”

HEATHER: After Glenn took a few swings at the snake, it got free from Padri’s stick. It raced around the tree and was right at Padri’s feet. He just took his stick and flipped that cobra right to Glenn, who bashed that snake over and over and over. Finally, Padri said, “Alright. It’s dead.”

HEATHER: I remember we would see him dress up when he went to a Trust meeting in Ahmednagar [he was a trustee appointed by Baba]. He would put on this certain pair of pants for the meeting. Then he tied a rope around his waist to hold up his pants. And he put a strange kind of cap on his head.

BOB: It was Chinese military. Stovepipe.

HEATHER: With a big brim. He’d get on his motorcycle and start up, *vrroom, vrroom, vrroom*, and then he was off like a flash. I mean, he went pretty fast for an old guy.

ALAN: And how handsome was he?

HEATHER: He looked so fabulous.

JANET: Oh, he was incredibly handsome.

HEATHER: Always. He really was. He had that beautiful face, and when he was young, if you see those early pictures of him? Amazing. Just amazing.

*Padri off to the
Trust Office*



But anyway, I remember once, being at the Trust office when Padri came in for a meeting, and Mani said to him, “Padri, do you need a belt? Should I arrange for a belt for you?” Padri gave her that look—he knew what she wanted—and pulled out the rope to show her: “I’ve got a belt.” I loved that about him.

Mani laughed. She didn’t go there again.

JANET: He was the most independent person I’ve ever met, I think. I’m not talking about *masts* and people like that. He was independent even of Mani. Mani told me, “I could manage everyone, but not Padri.”

ALAN: I know Mani would always defer to him. Maybe that’s because, when talking about doing what other people wanted, Padri once said, “Well, there’s only one person who can tell me what to do. And He’s not here.”

PADRI’S WAY OF TALKING

Padri was always very direct and economical in his speech, almost to the point of being curt. This gave some people the impression that he was gruff, or forbidding, or even aloof. Nothing could have been further from the truth.

ALAN: Padri was particular in not referring to Baba as Baba. He would say Master or Lord or Emperor but he never referred to Baba except in exalted terms, that I ever heard.



Padri supervising the lowering of flagstone into the crypt of Avatar Meher Baba’s Samadhi, Meherabad Hill, February 7, 1969

TED: Padri once told me that on the day of Baba's interment, they had to remove the ice that had been around His body. So he wondered what to do with it. He rushed down the Hill and threw it in the original well. I always thought homeopathy gets stronger the more diluted it gets.

BOB: He actually said to a person at the time, "Well, that drinking water will never be the same."



BOB: Somebody asked Padri if he missed Baba after He had dropped the body. He said, "No." They were surprised: "You don't miss Him? Why not?" He said, "Well, He's here, isn't He? And I'm obeying Him, doing what I've always done. He's given me orders. I obey Him."

HEATHER: Once someone asked him something about "loving Baba," and Padri said, in effect, "I don't know anything about love. I only know about obedience."



HEATHER: I know all of you had the experience of Padri addressing you as "Mister." But for someone who didn't know him, that can seem a little off-putting.

ALAN: It wasn't a negative thing. It was just the way he addressed you, familiarly like, "Mister, listen to this," or "Mister, this is how that happened." It was just his jargon.

BOB: He might say to me, "Mister, put on your shoes, we're going for a ramble," and we'd go out for a friendly walk. But then, if we saw someone chopping a branch off a tree on Meherabad property, he'd tell that person sternly, "Okay, *Mister*, get out."

HEATHER: Do you remember how particular Kaka was about how we pronounced words, Indian words?

ALAN: Awtar. Awtar, not Avatar.

HEATHER: Oh, was that what he was after you for?

ALAN: Oh yeah, at the Dhuni. "Awtar Meher Baba ki Jai. Not *Avatar*. Awtar, right?"

TED: Yes.

HEATHER: Well, with me it was "Nagar." Most Westerners pronounced it "Nahgur," whereas the correct pronunciation was "Nuhgur." It would be the middle of the morning and he'd be drinking his tea and I would go up to him, because we had to get his permission to go anywhere, and I would say:

"Kaka, may I go to Nahgur?"

"Nahgur? No."

"Kaka, I can't go to Nahgur?"

"No, you can't go to Nahgur. You have to go to Nuhgur."

I couldn't hear any difference. And it went on and on and finally I just left.

Another one was chappals. He'd say, "It's not chahpulls. It's chuppuls."

And what happened is, I finally got fed up with everything here: you couldn't go anywhere you wanted, there was nothing here, no beach, you couldn't go to the cinema, you just stayed here all the time, and Padri told you yes or no for every little thing and you couldn't even get away with saying anything. I went over to Dr. Donkin's grave and sat there, and I said, "Now I understand why you used to get mad all the time. Now I really understand how difficult it was for you to live here and why you'd fight with Padri all the time. You were English."

Of course Dr. Donkin was a linguist so he probably didn't have the Nahgur, Nuhgur problem, but I said, "I understand perfectly, and I know what you went through." And I was crying, and crying, and crying and then I got it all out and I went: I'm not going to even say those words. I'll say, "I'm going to town," or "I'm going to go put something on my feet."

Then I got up, and I thought, "Don't be stupid, you are so lucky to be here." And that was the end of it. That was the end of the pronunciation story.

And then I remembered something that Kaka said, and it struck me so much that I wrote it down. He said, "We're all shipwrecked humanity." Shipwrecked. That's why we were at Meherabad. We were shipwrecked.

ALAN: I always wondered if that meant we had washed up on the shore here. That was my interpretation. We were

wrecked out there somewhere and washed up here. And with great relief we went, "Ahh . . . shore."

HEATHER: There's another thing about his language. There were loonies, and then there were savages. And our kitchen was called the Savages' Kitchen. And I think we were ranked below lunatics. We were savages.

ALAN: I loved being a savage.

HEATHER: You were very proud of it.

TED: Right, but we're trying to figure out why he called us savages.

ALAN: I always thought it was a compliment.

BOB: He had seen you sitting on gunny sacks on the floor and he said, "Ah, you're savages. Cave people."

ALAN: But the funny thing is that he was the one who told us to use them.

*Padri, with Jeff Shev,
gesturing "Loonie"*



HEATHER: This was when we first ate together, by your room. On the verandah.

JANET: Yes, and we would usually just sit on the farsi.

ALAN: Padri came by and said it was Baba's order never to sit directly on farsi. "You need to get gunny sacks; that was what we had." So we got gunny sacks.

HEATHER: Padri used to sit on the verandah, in that chair of his, and sometimes he would recite, I think in Persian or Farsi. He would recite poems, just by himself, very quietly. He would never do that when people were around. Sometimes I would come out and see him and then go back in and come out the other door, because I didn't want to disturb him.

But I remember one morning particularly, because soon after that I went to Bombay and while I was there, he passed away. So it is one of the last memories I have of him, looking up like that and reciting. And I thought: it's like he's having a conversation. He was saying this all out in Persian and I didn't understand what he was saying; it was more like a poem. But it struck me, the way he was relaxed, it wasn't as if he was reciting for his own amusement; he was talking to Baba; he talked to Baba all the time. It seemed so private and intimate. And even from way down at the other end of that long verandah, I still got the impression of his being with Baba, of talking to his Master.

ALAN: That inner relationship he didn't talk about, he just lived.

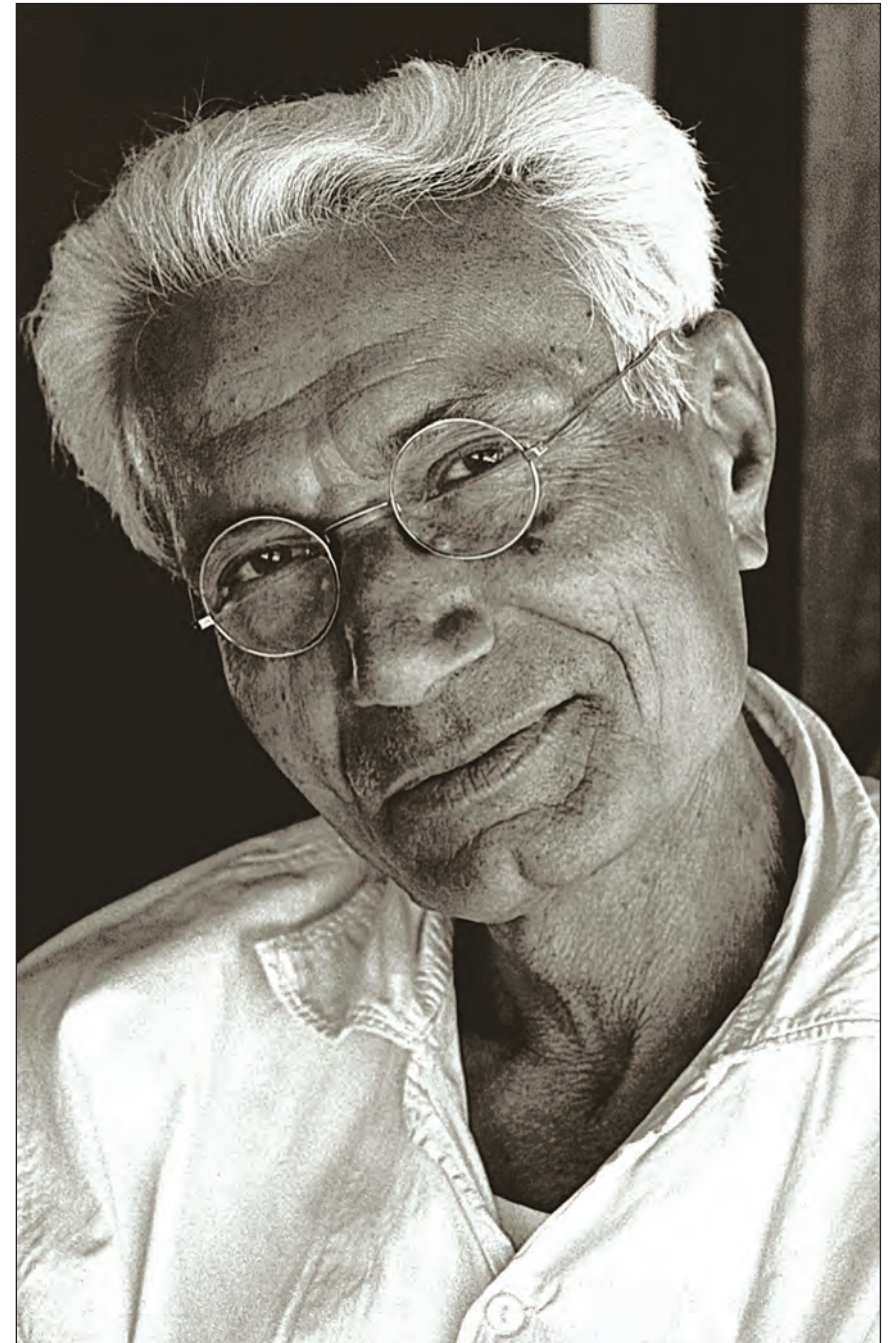


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- 68 Brass plaque riveted to the lid of Padri's relics trunk. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives.
- 74 Padri with Baba in Meherabad, still image from *Stay with Meher Baba*, 1959, filmed by Don Stevens. Courtesy of Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives.
- 80 Padri on Meherabad Hill, 1969, photographer: Sam Ervin. Courtesy of Sam Ervin.
- 88 Rahuri Cabin, Meherabad, photographer: Bif Soper. Courtesy of Bif Soper.
- 92 *Top left:* Mehera and Janet Judson, Meherabad, photographer: Anne E. Giles. Courtesy of Anne E. Giles.
Top right: Padri and Alan Wagner, Meherabad, photographer: unknown. Courtesy of Alan Wagner.
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