

Fortunate to Love Him
Stories of My Life with Meher Baba
By Khorshed K. Irani

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook Copyright © Avatar Meher Baba
Perpetual Public Charitable Trust 2023

Source: Fortunate to Love Him

© Copyright 2017 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust.
Second edition 2023.
All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America by
Sheriar Press Inc.
603 Briarwood Drive
Myrtle Beach, SC 29572 USA
ISBN: 978-1-880619-46-9

eBooks at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Web Site

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

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

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

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

FORTUNATE TO LOVE HIM

Stories of My Life with Meher Baba

KHORSHED K. IRANI



*F*ORTUNATE
TO LOVE HIM

FORTUNATE TO LOVE HIM

Stories of My Life with Meher Baba



KHORSHEED K. IRANI

2017

Sheriar Foundation

© Copyright 2017 Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public
Charitable Trust.

Second edition 2023.

Credits for images used in this book can be found on page 411.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form, or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopy, recording or otherwise without prior written permission of
the publisher, except by a reviewer who wishes to quote brief passages
in connection with a review written for inclusion in a magazine,
newspaper, broadcast, or on the Internet.

For information, contact Sheriar Foundation, 603 Briarwood Drive,
Myrtle Beach, SC 29572, USA, or visit www.sheriarbooks.org.

ISBN: 978-1-880619-46-9

Contents

Preface **vii**

Introduction **xiii**

1. A Gift from the Goddess **1**

2. Meeting My Beloved **17**

3. Manzil-e-Meem Memories **33**

4. Keeping Baba's Order **63**

5. Becoming Friends with Mehera **84**

6. Baba Staying in Our Home **105**

7. Receiving Baba's Call **116**

8. Learning Baba's Ways **128**

9. Baba Begins His Silence **146**

10. Making Something Special for Baba **163**

11. Being with Baba in Toka	182
12. My Father's Kidnapping	201
13. Baba Journeys to the West	222
14. Living on Meherabad Hill	237
15. Journey to France	257
16. Resuming Our Life at Meherabad	268
17. Blue Bus Tours	282
18. The New Life	305
19. Baba's Two Accidents	323
20. With Baba at Guruprasad	338
21. The Last Years with Baba	357
22. Baba's Last Caress	376
Epilogue	387
Appendix—Correspondence with Beloved Baba	395
List of Credits	411

Preface

In December 1993, I made my first pilgrimage to India to visit Meher Baba's Ashram at Meherabad, which is located near the town of Ahmednagar in the state of Maharashtra. At that time, many of Meher Baba's closest disciples, known as His *mandali*, were still alive—Eruch Jessawala, Mani Irani (Meher Baba's sister), Bhau Kalchuri, Dr. Goher Irani, Katie Irani, Bal Natu, Ali Akbar Shapurzaman (Aloba), and others. But a friend who was showing me around insisted that I also meet a less well-known mandali member who was living in the Meher Baba Trust Compound (Meher Nazar) in Ahmednagar. Her name was Khorshed Kaikhushru Irani.

At that time, Khorshed was living with her caretakers/adopted family, Sudam Wagh, his wife Asha, and their two daughters, Mira and Darshana. The five of them were living very simply in two rooms. Sudam and his family greeted us at the door. We walked through the first room, which served as the family's kitchen, pantry, washroom, and bedroom, and into the second room, which is where Khorshed, Sudam's wife, Asha, and the two children slept.

The room was not well lit—only one fluorescent tubelight was on. Khorshed, who was less than five feet tall, was sitting on her bed. She was 83 years old at that time, and she could barely see due to

cataracts—but how the room was lit by her presence! As I walked in and looked at her, I saw a smooth narrow ring of golden light burning in the air above her head. It was a halo that remained visible to me during the entire time I was with her that day.

Our meeting was simple. We talked a little, she told me a story about how she knew Meher Baba liked flowers, and then she gave me some small candies as *prasad* (a spiritual blessing). Meeting Khorshed that day started for me a very special relationship that I treasured. It offered me a direct connection with someone who had lived with Meher Baba from the early days of His Advent—while Baba was still speaking and singing, and before Meherabad or Meherazad had been established—even before many of the other living mandali had joined Him.

I visited Khorshed many times during my subsequent trips to India each year. During those visits, I would sit with Khorshed in her room. While she told stories of her life with Baba, time for me seemed to stop, and the power and peace of what I understood to be Meher Baba's (God's) presence filled the room.

After my first trip in late 1993–early 1994, I brought a video camera and a tape recorder so I could capture the amazing stories that Khorshed and the other mandali told. Khorshed's stories were about an incredible life—one that was dedicated in love to God as Meher Baba. Her life with the Avatar was extraordinary and filled with intense challenges and hardships. As Khorshed said, "Our life with Baba had everything—fun, trouble, and love."

Before she passed away in 1999, Khorshed asked me to write a book containing the stories of her life. Finally, this book has come to fruition. I, and all those who have worked on it through the years, invite you to get a glimpse of Khorshed's life with Meher Baba.

DEVELOPMENT OF THIS BOOK

This book was compiled from video and audio recordings of Khorshed telling her life stories on various occasions during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s. Our primary sources were recordings made by myself, Win Coates, Wendell Brustman, Irene Holt and Pat Sumner, David Fenster, and Helene Epstein. We also used notes from interviews with Khorshed that were conducted by the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives Committee. In addition, we had access to translations from Gujarati of Khorshed's personal diary that she kept for decades, as well as copies of personal letters sent to Khorshed and her family by Baba throughout the years. These materials were kindly provided by the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives Committee, Sudam Laxman Wagh, Sheriar Foundation Archives, Sufism Reoriented, David Fenster, Susan White, and others.

The process used to create this book was involved. Because Khorshed gave her stories orally and from memory, the order in which they were dictated was not always chronological and the same story may have been told several different ways, depending upon the point Khorshed was trying to make and the individuals to whom she was speaking. Sometimes two or more stories would be interwoven because they were focusing on the same theme in Khorshed's life with Baba. After the stories were transcribed word for word from the source tapes, they were first put into chronological order; then the different versions of the stories needed to be unified so that one account could emerge that contained all of the details Khorshed gave in the multiple versions. Since English was not

Khorshed's first language (it was actually her fourth), a substantial amount of work was required to smooth and enliven the English text for readability. Finally, facts were checked with other sources to resolve inconsistencies or gaps.

Khorshed had an especially delightful, interesting, humorous, and expressive way of telling her stories. At the same time, her English was very basic, because Khorshed left school to be with Baba just before her thirteenth birthday. To present a book that is readable and interesting to a broad audience, the team who worked on this project extensively edited Khorshed's original English renderings of the stories. Although this was done with the utmost care, no doubt there are many places where we fell short of being able to fully convey Khorshed's voice and charm through the printed version of the stories.

The manuscript itself has gone through multiple rounds of editing, with the intention to keep language changes to a minimum. Fayre McKeig did a great deal of work to edit the raw transcriptions and to unify the stories while making only minimal changes to the language. Realizing that more enrichment of the text was necessary, I spoke with several people about the issue. Rustom Falahati, who was a great friend of Khorshed's, pointed out that Khorshed expressed herself very differently when she was speaking in her native Gujarati than when she spoke in English. In Gujarati, Khorshed used much richer language and vocabulary, as well as more complex sentences and verb tenses. So the team was faced with the question of deciding what was Khorshed's true voice. Rustom had some recordings of Khorshed telling a few of her stories in Gujarati, and he translated them into English for us. After reading these stories, the

team believed that Khorshed's true voice was closer to how she could express herself in Gujarati, in terms of sentence structure and complexity, as well as diction. Using these translated stories as a guide for Khorshed's natural level of expression, we then started smoothing and enriching the text more. Steve Klein played an important role at this time organizing, editing, and streamlining the text.

After the work of both Steve and Fayre, as well as editing on my part, we showed the book to Meheru, one of Meher Baba's closest women mandali and a relative of Khorshed. Meheru's wish was for us to smooth the language in the book even more. At that point, Judy Robertson, who had been doing the historical research for the book, began doing significant detailed editing and reorganizing of the text. Moreover, as additional materials became available to us, Judy was instrumental in integrating these substantial new materials into the manuscript. The result is the book you have now.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to thank Beloved Meher Baba for providing this opportunity to gain a greater insight into His ways and His life on Earth as seen and experienced through Khorshed's stories. I would also like to thank Khorshed herself for her patience in allowing me to spend so many hours with her recording her stories. Moreover, I am grateful to Sudam and Asha Wagh, Khorshed's caretakers, who welcomed me so kindly into their home while this recording was going on. Sudam and Asha's kindness, friendship, and help have been a treasure to me throughout the process of putting this book together.

To bring this book to press, it has taken the loving contributions of many people. I have worked with wonderfully talented and experienced editors and writers, including Judy Robertson, Steve Klein, and Fayre Makeig. Ward Parks and David Fenster were instrumental in providing senior editorial guidance and they were sounding boards when challenges arose with the materials. Others involved with providing materials, translations, pictures, or helping with the manuscript include Sudam Wagh, Rustom Falahati, Kishore Mistry, Bif Soper, Jehangir Daver, Susan White, Tom Brustman, Helene Epstein, John and Barbara Connor, Martin and Christine Cook, Elaine Cox, and Tony Gris.

I would also like to thank Sheila Krynski and Sheriar Foundation for their help and suggestions regarding the publication process and help with obtaining photos and copyrights for the book. Thanks also go to the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Archives Committee, Sufism Reoriented, Sheriar Foundation Archives, Meher Nazar Publications, MSI Photographic Collection, and Susan White for providing access to documents, photos, and recorded materials.

Finally, I would like to thank Rafael Villafane and Bob Underwood for their support, without which this project would not have been possible.

David M. Raffo, PhD
Portland, Oregon, USA
2015

Introduction

Meher Baba was the central focus of Khorshed K. Irani's life from the moment she met Him when she was twelve years old. It is her connection with Meher Baba, and who He is, that gives Khorshed's life a very special significance.

MEHER BABA

Meher Baba was born in Poona, India, as Merwan Sheriar Irani on February 25, 1894. He grew up in a Zoroastrian family and later attended Deccan College. In January 1914, He began an intense period of training with the five Perfect Masters of this Age—Sai Baba of Shirdi, Upasni Maharaj, Narayan Maharaj, Tajuddin Baba, and Hazrat Babajan. During that time, they unveiled to Merwan His role as the Avatar of the Age—the Ancient One—who has come again to rekindle the torch of Love and Truth and to give a spiritual push to all creation.

In 1922, Merwan began to gather around Him a small circle of men and women disciples, including Khorshed and her parents. One of these early “mandali,” as they were called, gave Him the name Meher Baba, which means “Compassionate Father.”

On July 10, 1925, Meher Baba began observing a profound Silence, which lasted for the rest of His life. In His “Universal Message,” Meher Baba said of His Silence: “When I break my Silence, the impact of my Love will be universal and all life in creation will know, feel and receive of it. It will help every individual to break himself free from his own bondage in his own way.”

During the next four decades, Meher Baba traveled extensively throughout the world, working with the poor, the sick, the mad, and also with God-intoxicated souls known as *masts*. He met personally with tens of thousands of individuals, benefitting each one both physically and spiritually. After completing what He called His Universal Work, Meher Baba dropped His physical body on January 31, 1969.

KHORSHED K. IRANI

Khorshed Kaikhushru Irani was one of Meher Baba’s earliest and closest women disciples. She was born on May 2, 1910, and she loved Baba from the moment she first saw Him on May 9, 1922. Khorshed devoted her entire life, from that moment on, in love and service to her Beloved Baba, until she passed away on August 4, 1999.

Khorshed’s father, Kaikhushru Masa Beheram Irani, was one of Meher Baba’s very first disciples in 1917. He was instrumental in introducing Meher Baba to many of those destined to become His closest mandali, including all of Adi K. Irani’s family. Khorshed’s mother, Soona Irani (Soonamasi), also helped bring her sister, Gulmai Irani, into Meher Baba’s fold. Baba referred to Gulmai as His spiritual mother.

Baba often visited Khorshed and her parents at their family home in Bombay during the early 1920s, and Baba instructed the three of

them to come every day and be with Him at *Manzil-e-Meem*, where He was staying at that time. Khorshed had the joy of hearing Baba speak and sing for more than three years before He began His Silence. She was one of the only mandali at the end of the twentieth century who could remember Meher Baba's indescribably beautiful voice.

In August 1923, Baba introduced Khorshed to Mehera J. Irani, His Beloved, and they immediately became best friends. Baba told them that not only were they best friends in this life, but also they had been with Him as best friends in many lives before. Baba said that in this Advent of the Avatar, Mehera was playing the role that Radha played as Krishna's Beloved, and that Khorshed was playing the role of Radha's best friend, Chandrika.

Beginning in 1924, Mehera and Khorshed lived with Baba as close companions under His orders. Baba would say to the other women mandali, "I love Mehera first, Khorshed second, then Naja, then the others."

Although her family was wealthy and could have provided Khorshed with the many pleasures of this world, she traded them all without a second thought to be with her Lord. Khorshed's single-pointed love, dedication, and obedience to Meher Baba, through thick and thin, as well as her inner strength and motivation to be near Him, distinguish her as one of the great souls who loved and served the Avatar of the Age.

Judith G. Robertson
Seattle, Washington, USA
2015

A Gift from the Goddess

Khorshed's father, Kaikhushru Masa Beheram Irani, was an ardent spiritual seeker and one of the earliest disciples of Meher Baba. He journeyed to Shirdi in 1914 and received Sai Baba's darshan (blessing of the master). Later, Kaikhushru learned from Sai Baba that his disciple, Upasni Maharaj, had moved to a cremation ground on the outskirts of Sakori in July 1917. Kaikhushru went to Sakori to take Upasni's darshan. After meeting all of the five Perfect Masters of the Age, Kaikhushru first encountered Meher Baba in 1917 during one of his frequent visits to Upasni's ashram. Upon meeting Baba, Kaikhushru immediately had an experience of Meher Baba's divine spiritual qualities. Returning to his home in Bombay, he told his wife, Soona, and his daughter, Khorshed, about Meher Baba.

During this time, Baba was working closely with Upasni Maharaj and the other Perfect Masters to integrate His universal consciousness with His human consciousness in order to assume His full responsibility as the Avatar.

My father was a very spiritual man, but he was always sad. Why? Because he could not devote his life to spiritual practice. His father



*Kaikhushru Irani,
Khorshed's father,
Bombay, circa 1917*

had died when he was only fifteen years old, and as the first-born son, it became his responsibility to look after the whole family. He had a sister, two brothers, and his mother to take care of. Later, after he got married, he had his wife, too. His father had owned a liquor shop that sold brandy, whisky, and other foreign alcohol, and Kaikhushru took over the business to support the family. But he wasn't happy about having to do this. You

see, my father had no interest in such things. He wanted to spend all his time praying and devoting himself to God. It made him sad that he was forced to immerse himself in such worldly affairs.

His family life was not the happiest either. He had become engaged to Soona Irani, Gulmai's sister, when he was sixteen and she was only twelve. As was traditional at the time, this had been arranged by their families without the couple having seen each other. When Kaikhushru's family went to Ahmednagar to make wedding plans, his sister saw Gulmai and Soona sitting together and mistakenly thought that Gulmai was the intended bride. Gulmai was quite fair and taller than my mother, so she was considered a good match. Later on, when Kaikhushru's sister discovered that Soona was the one spoken for, she was upset. Soona was quite a bit darker than Gulmai, and this was considered a disadvantage—so much so that Kaikhushru's sister and the rest of his family hesitated about whether the marriage should go forward. They dragged their feet for a long

time, until finally my father declared, "I have given my word that I will marry this woman, and I will keep my promise no matter what."

So around 1907 they got married, and Soona moved to Bombay to live with my father and his family. But the family did not make her feel welcome, and she suffered greatly because of this. There was a lot of tension in the home.

My father used to think, "If only I had money, I wouldn't have to do all this. I could take care of my responsibilities and devote myself to God." His dream was to go and live with Babajan or one of the other Perfect Masters.

At that time, they were living in the Parel district of Bombay. The only way to make money quickly back then was to win the horseracing lottery. Many people bought tickets because it was worth a lot of money if they won. So my father used to buy derby lottery tickets in the hopes that he might win. He was always buying tickets, one after another, but he never won. My mother told him to stop wasting his money on tickets. But my father said, "No, no. If I win, I can retire and devote myself to God."

During this time, my mother gave birth to a boy named Eruch. He was a big baby, and very beautiful, but he contracted a childhood disease. When he was just over a year old, he died. My mother was heartbroken.

One day a Muslim friend of my father's asked him, "Kaikhushru, why do you always look sad? Your face is so full of worry. If you are having trouble, tell me. Perhaps I can help you."

At first, my father said that nothing was wrong. But finally he admitted that he needed money so he could take care of his family and devote himself to the spiritual life. "Oh, so you want money and

spirituality? There is a way to get everything you want, but it is a very hard way.”

My father was anxious to know what it was. His friend told him, “If you want to fulfill your wish, you have to do the *chilla-nashini*. Draw a circle on the ground, and then sit inside it. You have to sit there for forty days, never coming out of the circle. Just sit there and repeat God’s name, without eating, sleeping, or drinking anything but milk or water. Also repeat the prayer that I will teach you. You have to be absolutely determined and very strong-willed, because you will see all sorts of terrifying visions. Wild animals and other frightening apparitions will make you want to flee, but you must not leave the circle, no matter what. Once you step inside, you have to stay there. Only those who are brave can stand it. But if you succeed, you will get whatever you wish for.”

“Yes, yes!” my father said with great excitement, “I will do this!” You see, Kaikhushru was very strong-willed, so he thought he would be able to do it so that he could get the money, which would free him to follow his spiritual path.

My father was very happy. When he came home, he told Soona all about it. He said, “I have to do the chilla. I can’t eat or sleep for forty days. And I must stay inside a circle; so please do not disturb me.” Then he made a circle in a separate room, where no one else would come. He began the chilla the very same day that he had heard about it from his Muslim friend.

My father’s determination to withdraw from the world and undertake the chilla reminds me of the famous Persian king Kaikhushru, for whom he was named. Kaikhushru was a popular name amongst Zoroastrians. (Actually, there were three Kaikhushrus in our

family—Adi's father and Sarosh's father were also named Kaikhushru. But my father was known as Kaikhushru Masa, meaning maternal uncle, because he was married to the sister of Adi's mother.) King Kaikhushru was renowned for his spirituality. He renounced the world and retired to a cave and never came out again. This is known as "taking living *Samadhi*" (meditative union).

So my father began, and, just as his friend had warned him, it was not easy. He had many terrifying visions of snakes and lions and many other scary apparitions, but he did not leave the circle. These visions occur to test the will power of those who undertake the chilla.

But my father was very determined and he managed to make it through thirty-eight days without food or sleep. Then, on the next to the last day, he could not stay awake any longer. Despite his best efforts, he fell asleep. He just couldn't help himself. He dozed off and he had a dream. In the dream, Lakshmi Devi, the Hindu Goddess of Wealth and Beauty, appeared to him. In her hands she had a baby, a little baby girl. She approached him, and holding out her hands, said, "Take this."

When he saw the child in her hands, my father said, "No, no, I don't want a baby!"

"What do you want then?" she asked. "Why are you sitting in this circle?"

"I want to win the lottery," my father replied. "I want money so that I can devote myself to spirituality."

Lakshmi Devi said, "No. *This* is the lottery. If you want money and spiritual fulfillment, then you must take this baby. She will give it all to you—money, spirituality, everything. What you want, you will receive through her."

My father wasn't sure what to do. He had not been enduring the hardships of the chilla for thirty-nine days to receive a baby! But on the other hand, how could he refuse the Goddess? He thought, "Why not take the baby?" So he reached out to receive the baby, and as soon as he touched her, he was amazed to see that his arms suddenly changed from flesh to silver. They were pure silver from his elbows to his hands.

Lakshmi Devi placed the baby in his silver arms, and as soon as he set eyes on the baby, he saw that she was very beautiful, very charming, and very active. He was entranced by her loveliness and he asked, "What is her name?"

"Khorshed Banu," Lakshmi Devi replied. Then she added, "Now remember, you have to keep her happy. Give her every comfort; look after her very nicely. You must not ever make her sad or worried or cause her any distress. Always make her happy and look after her every need. If you do this, you will receive everything you have longed for through her."

And with that, Lakshmi Devi disappeared and the dream ended. My father woke up and exclaimed, "Oh, what a mistake I've made!" You see, he had come so close, but he fell asleep before the end, on the 39th day. Even though he had had this amazing dream, all he could think of was that he had ruined his chance to succeed at the chilla. All his hard work had gone for naught. Since there was no point in staying in the circle any longer, he got up and walked out of the house and down the road. His one chance for happiness had been destroyed, he thought.

As he walked down the road, a man approached him. He stopped my father and asked, "Would you like to be my partner? I have a jewelry shop, and I need a partner. It's an established shop and it's in a good location in the Fort area (the central business district of

Bombay). There are eleven young men who look after it, but I need a partner to help me run it. Would you be willing to be my partner?"

Kaikhushru answered, "Yes, I would like that." So my father became this man's partner. My father had wanted money so he could devote himself to his spiritual pursuits. And he became devoted to Lakshmi Devi. He offered flowers to her statue every day. His partner was not a spiritual man. But my father began to make money right away. My father did so well with the jewelry business that he was able to give the liquor shop, which he had never liked, to his younger brother. My father was good to everyone. He would always fold his hands in Namaste to anyone he met. He didn't care about caste or position. Others would scold him for respecting low-caste people, but he would say, "Even they have good hearts."

Several months passed, and my mother became pregnant. She gave birth to a baby girl on May 2, 1910. The baby was very active and also very beautiful. They wanted to pick an equally beautiful name for the child. After ten or twelve days, they called an astrologer and asked him what the baby's name should be. The astrologer looked at the baby's horoscope and said: "This baby's name should be Khorshed Banu."

As soon as Kaikhushru heard this name, he remembered his dream. "Oh," he thought in wonder, "this is the baby Lakshmi Devi gave me. She has the very same name! She told me that the baby's name was Khorshed Banu." After that, my father always looked upon me as a gift from the Goddess. He loved me so much and tried his best to keep me happy. And he refused to eat meat after my first birthday. My father realized that Lakshmi Devi's promises in his dream were coming true. The jewelry shop on Meadow Street in Bombay was very successful, so he no longer had to devote all his time to making a living.

The jewelry store had a large staff to take care of business, and my father could afford to leave the store when he wanted. So, whenever he heard of some saint or master, he would rush off to visit them. In this way, my father met all five of the Perfect Masters. He went to see Tajuddin Baba, Narayan Maharaj, and Babajan. He also heard about Sai Baba and went to visit him at Shirdi.

Through his contact with Sai Baba, he found out about Upasni Maharaj and visited him at Sakori. After meeting Upasni, my father

stopped visiting other masters and used to go to see only Upasni. In this way, the next few years passed. My father continued with the jewelry business, but he would visit Upasni whenever he could.

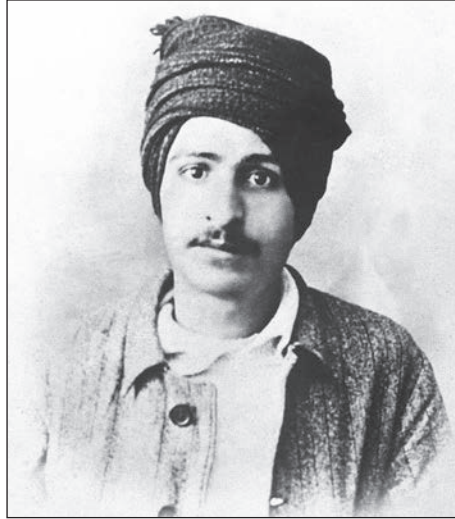
My mother had another baby girl, but she died after just one year, like my older brother. So I grew up as the much-loved child of my parents, Soona and Kaikhushru. We were all very happy.



*Kaikhushru,
Soonamasi, and
Khorshed Irani,
Bombay, circa 1917*



In 1917, when I was seven years old, my father saw Meher Baba in Sakori for the first time and immediately had an experience of Baba's divinity. But no one was calling Him Meher Baba then. He was known as Merwan. I remember when my father came back from Sakori, he told my mother, "Oh, Soona, Soona, do you know what has happened in Upasni Maharaj's place? A Persian boy has come. His name is Merwan, and He is very fair and very handsome. He loves Upasni Maharaj one hundred percent and Upasni also loves Him. They sit together under the neem tree. We don't know what they talk about, but they spend a lot of time together like that." I remember what he said, because I used to listen intently when my father told us about Sakori.



*Meher Baba
(Merwan Sheriar
Irani), 1917*

My mother was spiritually minded also, but not to the extent of my father. Later on she became completely devoted to Baba, but at that time, she did not know who Merwan was. So I would always listen. Every time my father would come back, I would hear him tell my mother about Merwan.

I started thinking to myself, "Who is this Merwan?" I was only a little girl, but I was very curious intellectually. I wanted to know

everything. I started wondering, “When will I get a chance to see this Merwan?” I was eager to see this person who was so beautiful and who loved Upasni Maharaj so much. So I kept thinking to myself, “When will I see Him?” I didn’t tell anyone what I was thinking, but that was what was in my mind.

My father continued to visit Sakori. Upasni Maharaj would come out of his *jhopdi* (hut) at eleven o’clock each morning and talk with my father. He would give him some teachings. These talks would fill my father’s heart, and after a couple of days, usually, he would come back to Bombay.



In April 1918, when I was almost eight, it was time for my *Navjote*, or *Kusti* (sacred thread), ceremony. This is like Confirmation for Christians, but the *Navjote* is for Zoroastrian children. Since my father was doing so well with the jewelry shop, he decided we should go to Udwada for the ceremony and do it in a very lavish style. Udwada is a famous place of pilgrimage for Zoroastrians. All the Parsis (Zoroastrians) like going there. The sacred fire in the temple there was laid on a foundation of ash from a fire temple in Persia centuries before. Some accounts even say that the fire itself was transported from Persia. In any case, it is considered to be the

oldest continuously burning fire temple in the world. Because of that, many Zoroastrian priests are there, and people come from all over India to have their *Navjote* ceremonies performed at



Udwada Fire
Temple, circa 1905

this temple. So everything could be arranged very elaborately there, with plenty of good food and whatever else was needed.

My ceremony could have been done in a fire temple in Bombay, but my father thought it would be nice to go away for two or three days and we would be able to enjoy ourselves. Also he wanted to do the ceremony with as much pomp as possible. Because this would cost a lot of money, my mother said, “Kaiku, why are you spending all this money for a Navjote? We can do it here and be finished with it.” She remembered when our family had needed money so desperately.

But my father said, “Don’t worry. I am treating this as if it were Khorshed’s wedding. I don’t know if I will be here when she gets married, so I am making sure that she has the best of everything for her Navjote. That will make me feel satisfied that I have done my duty to look after her properly.”

My father was not, by any means, an old man at the time, but he knew his horoscope predicted that he would not live long. And, in fact, he died quite young, when he was only fifty-one. So that was why he wanted my Navjote done at Udwada, and why he wanted to arrange everything perfectly. So my father rented an entire train bogey for our family and our friends, and we all traveled together to Udwada, which is about 120 miles north of Bombay.

We stayed together in a comfortable rented bungalow. It was such a happy time that brought us such peace of mind. Before we left Bombay, my mother had purchased some special saris made of elegant silk, which had been brought from Shanghai. She had kept them for this occasion. My special sari was all white and came in a nice wooden box. I also received a lovely dress to wear for the

ceremony. Both my sari and my Kusti dress were made of the finest silk, elaborately embroidered with beautiful gold thread.

Later on, when I was with Mehera in Nasik and Upper Meherabad in the early 1930s, we used that sari and my Kusti dress to make a special robe, crown, and garland for Baba. Mehera designed them and we girls made them. Three crowns and all that embroidery on the robe, as well as a large rose garland, were all made from my white sari and my Kusti dress.

Everything was done elegantly for my Kusti ceremony. I wore a ruby necklace and other jewelry too, because, after all, I was a jeweler's daughter. We spent three or four days happily in Udwada. It was near the ocean, so we went swimming in the sea and we ate delicious fish. I got to ride on a palanquin and had a joyous time. After the Kusti ceremony was performed, we returned to Bombay, where I turned eight years old a few days later.

At home, our lives continued as before. My father would go to work in his jewelry shop, and my mother would take care of me at home. We were all very happy. Then one night I had a dream. I saw so many things that actually happened later at Meherabad. In the dream, I was remembering those days, as if I had already been living at Meherabad. Mehera and I were staying at Lower Meherabad, and we would wave to Baba every day as He would go up the Hill for His work. In my dream, Baba looked like a fairy, with His long white *sadra* flowing in the wind.



One day in 1919, just before I was nine years old, I had an important vision. We were living in the Irani Bungalow in the Parel district of Bombay with our extended family. It was a large compound with two buildings, including space for our family's horse-drawn carriage. The building we were staying in was a small bungalow with only two stories. On the ground floor were the kitchen and go-down (storage room). The upper floor had a bedroom, a sitting room, and a balcony. You could get to the balcony only from the bedroom. There was a narrow staircase, almost like a ladder, leading up from the balcony to a terrace on the roof. Only one person could go up at a time.

On that day, I was in the upstairs bedroom and I started to go out to the balcony. Suddenly, two little angels appeared, one on each side of me. They were very attractive with golden curly locks and blue eyes, and beautiful faces. They looked just like we see in pictures of angels, but they were real. They were the same size as me, and each had two white wings and wore a white dress with a blue ribbon. I was fascinated just looking at them. They were so lovely. Quickly, they came and took hold of my hands—one on each side.

I was taken aback. "What is this?" I wondered. "Now what will happen?"

They held my wrists tightly and flew me up the narrow staircase that led to the terrace on the roof. I thought to myself, "Let's see what they are going to do next." So I went with them to the little landing on the top, where there is a small place to stand up just before you go out onto the terrace. And what did I see when I looked up? I saw so much radiant light—like a hundred suns. And the air was filled with a strong, fragrant perfume that I had never smelled before. It was such a nice smell. As I looked around, I saw Lakshmi Devi sitting on

a golden chair in the middle of the terrace. She was so beautiful. She had a crown on her head and her body was resplendent, shining even brighter than the sun. She was so brilliant that I couldn't even look at her; the light was blinding.

Now I knew why the angels had come. They pulled me toward Lakshmi Devi. As soon as she saw me she said, "Oh, my daughter. Oh, my daughter." Then she put her hands out, palms up, and the angels put my hands into hers. Lakshmi Devi drew me near and held me to her chest lovingly. She said, "Oh, my daughter, today I caught you at last. I have wanted for so long to tell you something important. Finally, today I have found you—so listen to me."

I was just standing there, looking at her, wondering what she was going to say. She started, "My daughter . . ."

Then, suddenly, I remembered—my father had told me that Lakshmi Devi had given him a child, and I was that child. This made me eager to hear what the goddess was going to tell me. She continued, "Do you know why I called you? Listen to me carefully and intently: Don't marry!"

She said this forcefully and then repeated it a second time, "Don't ever marry!"

I nodded my head both times she told me, but I was only eight years old, so I didn't really know what it meant to marry and all that. But I said "Yes" anyway. I kept looking around at everything. Lakshmi Devi was so beautiful, and the smell was so good. Everything was just perfect. And I was enjoying it all.

Then for a third time Lakshmi Devi told me, "Don't ever marry!" Then she added, "No, no, don't just shake your head like that. This is a serious matter. Think over it carefully, and give me your real reply."

This time, she opened her hand, holding it out palm up. I knew she wanted my promise. So I put my hand in hers, and sincerely promised never to marry. I thought, “Oh, now I have given her my promise.” As soon as I had promised, Lakshmi Devi got up from her golden chair and lifted me the way you lift a little baby, picking me up under my arms and swinging me. Then she placed me on her throne and let me sit there. Again she said, “Not ever in your life are you to marry.” Then she embraced me so lovingly. As soon as she embraced me, I saw I was becoming like her. My body became shining like hers, with the sweet scent of perfume. Then Lakshmi Devi took off her crown and put it on my head.

I was very much surprised to experience all this, but I didn’t say anything. I was filled with joy and just kept quiet. Lakshmi Devi then said, “Never forget, never forget, my child. I am giving all this to you, because you have given me your promise not to marry. So remember this forever—you should not break your promise to me as long as you live.”

Then Lakshmi Devi showed me a vision of men behind bars. She said to me, “The men of the world are giants, kept behind bars. Never trust them. I’m showing you this to warn you. Be careful, and remember your promise to me not to marry. It is for your own good.”

Then she embraced me tightly, so lovingly, and suddenly the vision disappeared. I found myself at the bottom of the staircase, where the angels had first caught my hands, as if none of this had happened at all, as if I had been dreaming. But to this day, I can still see that scene with Lakshmi Devi as if it were happening right now.

After I came to my senses, I thought, “What have I done?” I told myself, “I have given Lakshmi Devi my promise.”

I took this very seriously and thought about what it meant. “What am I going to do now?” I wondered. “I have to keep my promise as long as I am alive, but if I tell my father or mother or anyone else that I cannot marry because I have had a vision, they will never believe it. They will say, ‘You are just a little girl. What is this vision of Lakshmi Devi, and all that? You are just a child. It means nothing.’ And they will force me to marry and I will have to break my promise.” I thought about this and worried, “So what am I going to do?”

Then, suddenly, I realized that I needed to keep the vision and my promise to Lakshmi Devi a secret. I should not tell my father, or mother, or anyone, because they would not believe it. I knew I would have to keep it to myself. I would have to be brave like a warrior and keep my promise without explaining to anyone why I was doing it. As the days passed, I held on to this thought—to keep my vision a secret and to not tell anyone. It made me feel happy that I had a purpose in life now. I knew what I was supposed to do. It gave my life meaning from then on.

Meeting My Beloved

Khorshed's father, Kaikhushru, continued his visits to Sakori from 1917 to 1922, often accompanied by Soona and Khorshed. Meher Baba spent extensive periods of time in Sakori during those years, working intensely with Upasni Maharaj to integrate His divine and human consciousness. In January 1922, Upasni completed his work with Merwan and saluted Him as Avatar of the Age.

Kaikhushru and Soona were instrumental in bringing her sister, Gulmai Irani, who Baba called His spiritual mother, and her entire extended family, into Meher Baba's fold. After years of longing to meet her Beloved Merwan, Khorshed's wish was finally fulfilled on May 9, 1922, when she first met Him on the train to Sakori to celebrate Upasni Maharaj's birthday.

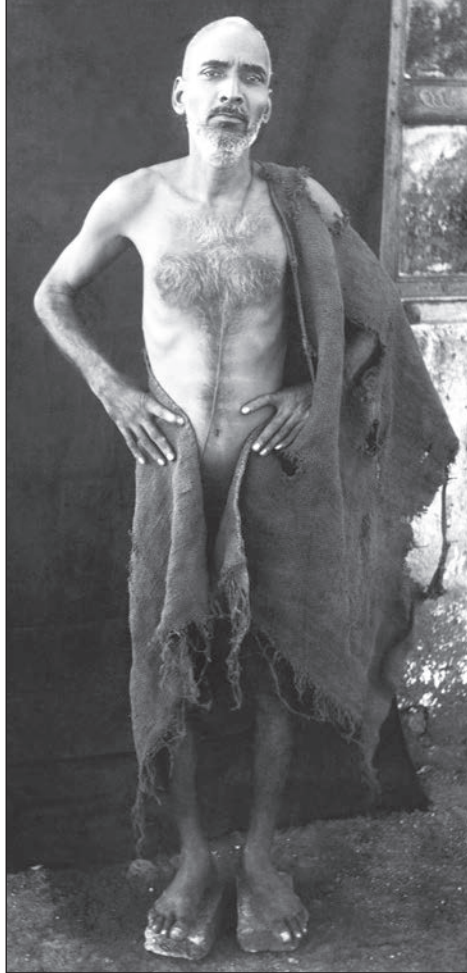
My father continued to visit Upasni Maharaj in Sakori whenever he could. One day in 1918, he told Mother and me, “Come, let’s go to Sakori. I want you to meet Maharaj.” So we all went. But, you know, in those early days, Sakori was not like it is now. It was just like a desert; all open with nothing there but two little jhopdis—one hut for Upasni Maharaj and one for Durgamai, his closest woman disciple. She was a widow, but she wore a red-colored sari, like a nun, and had a shaved head. She cooked for Maharaj. There was a little neem tree in the middle. If anyone came to see Upasni Maharaj at that time, they had to stay under that neem—just out in the open, under the tree without shelter. So we also stayed there in the open under the neem tree, with only our bedding rolls. There was no bathroom, no kitchen, nothing, nothing at all.

On the other side of the open field, there were a few neighbors. They were poor villagers. They would make *bhakri* (unleavened flat millet bread) and chutney for themselves, or perhaps a simple vegetable. We had no facilities for cooking, so we would give the villagers money and ask them to make us some *bhakri* or *bhaji* (vegetables) for lunch and dinner. We also asked them for a little water so we could bathe. Since we were going to see a spiritual master, we especially wanted to bathe every day. But there was no water and no rooms for bathing. We had to go outside in the fields.

Early in the morning, at 4:00 a.m., when it was still dark, we would get up and ask the village people to give us a little water. Then we would relieve ourselves in the field and use some of the water for that. With the small amount that was left over, we would bathe. But there was so little water that the “bath” was more to satisfy our minds that we had done it, than to actually get clean.

After that we would go to see Upasni Maharaj. I remember this **very** vividly. The feeling it created in me was something quite different than anything I had felt in my life until then. Everything else in life seemed insignificant compared to being with Upasni. I was intensely interested and absorbed in everything he said and did.

Upasni's jhopdi was small and primitive. It was just a mud hut, with a grass roof. Durgamai's hut was also very small. That's all there was. I saw all this and thought to myself, "What a wonderful thing: No possessions, nothing." Upasni would come out of his hut each morning at eleven and talk to us. I was enthralled. I would



*Upasni Maharaj,
Sakori*

watch everything keenly and think, "What is the need for so many possessions? Just imagine being so free from everything!"

After two or three days we returned to Bombay. We couldn't stay under that neem tree forever. Also, we were afraid of the snakes and

scorpions, because we were just out in the open, but nothing ever happened to us while we were there.



In August 1919, my family and Gulnar (Gulmai's sister-in-law) went to Sakori together. We were all happy there, perfectly content to stay and enjoy having Maharaj's darshan and *sahavas* (company of the master). But this time, my father had some work he had to attend to in Bombay, so we had to leave immediately after having Maharaj's initial darshan. Maharaj tried to convince my father to stay longer, but he said he couldn't delay—that he had to leave immediately.

At last, reluctantly Maharaj told the *tongawalla* (horse-drawn carriage driver) to take us to the railway station and treat us with great care. But what really made an impression on me was that as Maharaj was sending us off, he was crying and saying “*Nakoo jao, nakoo jao* (Don't go, don't go).”

On the way back, we came to the river, and it was flooded. We couldn't cross it and we had to wait overnight. It was only with great difficulty that we finally reached Bombay. Then we understood why Maharaj had wanted us to stay longer in Sakori.



I remember that on another visit to Sakori in January 1921, Pilamai Irani was there from Karachi. She was related by marriage to my mother's sister, Gulmai. Pilamai had met Gulmai when she was in Karachi visiting her brother, Dr. Minochershaw Irani. At that time, Gulmai had invited her to come to Sakori to meet Upasni. Pilamai had brought her children with her, and Upasni gave her

little boy the name Vithal. We spent a few days there at that time, and although I had heard of Merwan, I still had not seen Him. My father had met Merwan and used to talk about Him in glowing terms. So I felt anxious to meet Merwan, because of everything my father had been saying about Him. Also, since I was very drawn to Upasni, I wanted to meet someone he loved so much, and who loved him dearly.



Then, in April 1922, Gulmai wrote a letter to my mother, extending a welcome invitation:

Dearest Soona,

Now is a very good opportunity to go to Upasni Maharaj's place and to see Merwan there also. Merwan wants Upasni's birthday to be celebrated in a lavish and grand style. So this is a wonderful opportunity to go to Sakori all together for his birthday.

Since there are no supplies or stores in Sakori, we need to bring everything necessary to celebrate Upasni's birthday from Bombay—prasad, firecrackers, decorations, gas for lights, and flowers. Keep it all packed in a box and come to the 'Nagar station on May 9th. Then we can go together with Merwan and the others coming from Poona on the afternoon train. When their train stops at the 'Nagar station, we can join them and go to Sakori together.

I felt excited when I saw the letter. I was so anxious to meet Merwan. Ever since I had first heard Merwan's name, some five years before, I was keen to know everything about Him. It's due to our past connection—that's why we were drawn to Him, to talk about Him, and to go to see Him.

Because my father was quite affluent at that time, purchasing everything needed for Upasni's birthday celebration was not a problem. So my father bought and carefully packed all the necessary items and kept them ready for the day we would go to the Ahmednagar station. I was counting the days until I could meet Merwan.

Finally, on May 9, 1922, my mother and I went to Ahmednagar to meet Gulmai. My father stayed behind in Bombay to pacify his family, since they all opposed his involvement with spiritual masters. So my mother and I went on our own.

We had to wait for a while on the platform, and every few minutes I kept asking Gulmai when Merwan's train would come. Gulmai said, "We still have to wait for some time. At eleven o'clock it will come from the Poona station and stop here, and then we can join them." I was so eager to see Merwan that it was hard to wait patiently. Gulmai said that Merwan would be coming with his friends and that there was a special bogie reserved for them.

At last, the train from Poona arrived and I immediately rushed onto it when the door opened. There was a woman sitting in the doorway of the compartment and I blurted out, "Where is Merwan?" I wasn't interested in anyone else. I only wanted to see Merwan. Later I learned that the woman who was sitting in the doorway was Merwan's mother, Shireenmai, but I didn't know that then. Looking at me, she pointed into the train compartment at a little distance and said, "There."

And then I saw Him. Though I was still some distance away, I thought, “Oh my! He really is just as young and beautiful as my father said!” I fell in love with Merwan the moment I saw Him. I felt such a tremendous peace in my heart—it was a wonderful feeling. I loved Him so much and felt tremendously happy just to be with Him. I had such a good feeling in my heart at that moment that I felt as though all the years of my life had been wasted until that moment of seeing Him. I felt that I had finally found everything that had been missing in my life. I loved Merwan so much, in that first moment.

“Oh my!” I thought, “He is not like other people at all.” Merwan had such beautiful big, brown eyes. They were a lovely light brown color like rose petals, but very intense and



*Shireenmai
Irani, Meher
Baba's mother*



*Merwan
playing a
vina, 1922*

active, always moving here and there. They flashed back and forth. And His nose was noble and beautiful. Merwan's mustache was fine and narrow and pointed at the ends. His skin was peach-colored and so attractive. And He was young, with a silk scarf wrapped on His head like a *pagri* (wedding turban). Really, He was so **very** beautiful, just as my father had said. I was drowned in His beauty.

As soon as I saw Merwan, I felt such relief in my heart—as if I had found a treasure I had lost and had been looking for for a very long time. I felt such a sense of satisfaction that I cannot express it in words.

I just kept looking at Merwan. I don't know for how long. Then Merwan asked me, "Who are you?"

So I told Him, "I'm Adi's cousin. My name is Khorshed." Adi was there also, with a few of the other mandali.

Merwan said, "Yes, all right. Sit down." So I sat down, and soon the train started, as we all settled in for the journey.

Merwan got down at every station where the train stopped, and He played ball with the mandali. The train never stopped for long, but Merwan always got off and played. Then He would hop back on before the train would leave. I did not go close to Merwan to listen or talk more with Him. I just watched Him from a distance, and I enjoyed this so much. Merwan never sat still. He was always moving.

When we reached the Sakori station, there was no one to meet us. In fact, we could not even find a vehicle in which to travel to Sakori. No rickshaws, nothing. Finally, we managed to hire three *tongas* (horse-drawn carriages)—one for Shireenmai, one for Gulmai, and one for my mother and me. Merwan and the mandali had to walk.

By the time we got to Sakori it was dark, but I could see that Sakori had been built up quite a bit since my last visit. Several buildings were there and there were many more people. Some of Upasni Maharaj's disciples showed us a room to stay in. The room was long, and there was nothing in it—no beds, no tables, no chairs—nothing. It was just a big empty place. So we went in and put our bedding rolls down on the floor. They were the only things that we had brought with us, other than the *prasad* and decorations for Upasni's birthday celebration.

Merwan put his bedding roll down in the doorway. Gustadji was on one side and Adi Sr. was on the other. They made their place to sleep right in the doorway.

We all settled down, and prepared to go to bed. Suddenly, my cousin Sarosh—a college student at the time, who later married Viloo—said, “Merwan, Merwan, Khorshed sings very well.”

At that time Merwan was speaking—He had not begun His silence. So Merwan said, “Oh, Khorshed, come along and sing a song.”

I was so embarrassed. I didn't know what song to sing or what I should do. I was only twelve years old and I was tired from the morning-till-night journey. So, I didn't answer Merwan. I didn't say anything. I just put my head on my bedding roll and went to sleep. I don't know what anyone else said or did. But now, sometimes when I think back, I feel it would have been better if I had sung for Merwan.

Early the next morning, we all got up and took baths, brushed our teeth, and got dressed. Then we all had some tea. Upasni came out of his hut just before *arti* (prayers), which was at 4:00 a.m. Even though it was very cold in the morning, everyone attended *arti*.

After arti, Upasni came to our room and sat with us. He was showing us that he could mix warmly with us. Later, on the verandah, I saw Merwan playing a long *dholak* (two-headed drum), accompanying Adi who was singing. Upasni Maharaj heard them from his hut, and because he loved Merwan so, he came out. As soon as Maharaj came, he also wanted to join in. So Maharaj pretended to play a *sitar* (a long-necked Indian lute)—standing and holding the air in one hand and doing little tricks with his other hand. It was only for one second, but it was such a lovely picture that I saw—Maharaj and Merwan “playing” music together. It was a very sweet time—we were all like a family. Then Maharaj asked Merwan to go with him, and they sat under the neem tree. Each day Merwan and Maharaj would go off together. We don’t know what they talked about. In the evenings, Merwan would play cricket with the mandali.

Upasni Maharaj’s birthday was celebrated for four days, but the main event was on May 14, 1922. The previous day, Upasni



Merwan
reclining on
a drum with
Gustadji,
circa 1922

Maharaj had said, “I want three baskets full of *bhajia* (a chickpea fritter) prepared tomorrow. But not just ordinary *bhajia*. Take the leaves from the neem tree where I sit with Merwan and mix them with chickpea flour. Then fry them in oil to make the *bhajia*. Shireenmai has to make one basket, Gulmai has to make another, and Soona has to make the third. After the three baskets are finished, put them near my hut, so they are ready for me to give as prasad after arti.”

Usually, neem tree leaves are very bitter. They are good as medicine, and people use them for brushing their teeth, but no one puts them in food. Yet the three women did not say anything—they just kept quiet and followed Upasni’s instructions. The next morning, on Upasni’s birthday, they got up early and bathed. Then they made three baskets full of *bhajia* with the neem leaves and put them near Maharaj’s hut.

We all got up very early and prepared for the elaborate celebration in a special way. Baba liked having lots of activity going on all the time, and He had arranged a grand celebration for Upasni. The decorations and flowers and firecrackers were lavishly prepared. And since there were no electric lights in Sakori at that time, we had brought gas lights from Bombay as a special treat.

A dais was erected at the threshold of Maharaj’s hut. At first he refused to sit there or to remove his gunnysack and change into new clothes. But after much resistance, Merwan finally persuaded Upasni to dress in a fresh white *dhoti* (lower garment) and wear a pink turban and new sandals. Then all of us garlanded Upasni. People put flowers on his head, as well as garlands around his neck. Although Maharaj was not naturally beautiful like Merwan, in his own way, he looked very, very nice.

When it was time for arti, the hut was full of people—all kinds of people—Hindus, Parsis, Muslims—everyone was there, except for Merwan. I was standing there, looking outside, wondering, “Where’s Merwan? What is He doing?” Everyone else was there; the three baskets of bhajia were there; but Merwan was not there. So I was thinking, “What has happened?”

At last, just when the arti was about to begin, Merwan came in through a second doorway. The hut had two doors, and Merwan came in through the door opposite where the rest of us came in. He knelt down in front of Upasni Maharaj and put both His hands together in prayer—as they do in church. With folded hands, Merwan put His head on Upasni’s hand and was doing *namaz* (prayer).

I thought, “Oh, see what a humble disciple He is. We are not like Merwan! Really, Upasni Maharaj chose the right person to be his chief disciple.” That’s what I was thinking as the arti was beginning.

After we all sang Upasni’s arti together, many *bhajans* (Hindu devotional songs) were sung. Then a large photograph of Upasni was carried on a palanquin through the village of Sakori.

When everyone returned from the procession, Upasni called us all back to his hut and said, “Come, one by one, and take prasad.” So each person came forward and took prasad until all three baskets were empty.

Upasni then said, “Now all of you eat your prasad.” So everyone ate the bhajia. Then he asked, “How does the prasad taste?”

People said “Oh, so delicious. We have never had bhajia like this before.”

“Did it taste at all bitter?” Upasni asked.

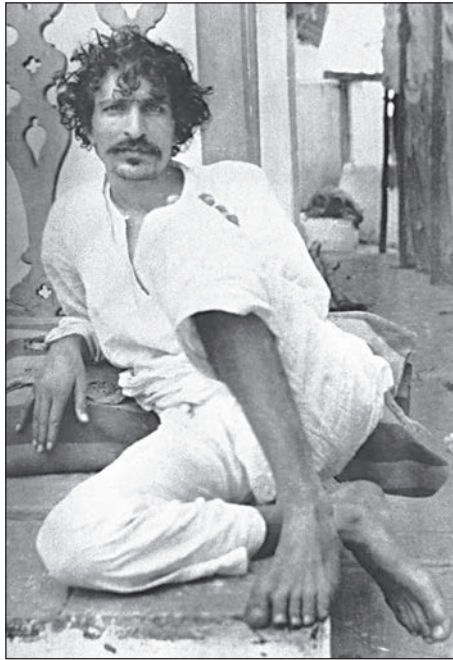
“No, not at all,” people replied. “It was very good.”

So then Upasni said, “Do you know how it was made? This bhajia was made from neem tree leaves.”

Everyone was surprised and said, “Oh, we didn’t detect any bitterness in it. It was very tasty; and very, very delicious.”

Upasni explained, “This is because I gave it to you.” So everyone was happy. And Merwan was very pleased with the celebration. Maharaj had been garlanded profusely and everything had been done exactly as planned. This was how Merwan had wanted Maharaj’s birthday to be celebrated, and we had all helped. So Merwan was very happy, and all of us were very happy.

Then Upasni said, “Now you should not leave this hut. I have called all of you here to tell you something important. Listen carefully. From today you are not to come to me any more. I have given my spiritual key to Merwan, so you have to go and be with Him! He is the Avatar, like Ram and Krishna. Merwan will make the whole world dance on His little finger! From now on, you have to follow Him. I have turned over my power and all that I have to Merwan. If anyone needs anything or wants to ask anything, you all should go straight to Merwan. Catch hold of His *daaman* (hem of His garment) with both hands—not just with one hand. It may



“Merwan will make the whole world dance on His little finger!”

slip from one hand, so you have to catch it with two hands, and hold tightly. Hold onto His daaman forever! Stay with Merwan and love Him always!"

Upasni continued, "Many people will come here from the West, showering their love on Merwan. They will ring bells and sing songs to Him. You have no idea how much love they will have for Merwan. You will be surprised by all that they will do." At that time, not a single Westerner had come. So I wondered what Upasni was talking about and how it would be possible that Westerners would come here.

Upasni added, "Remember, if I tell you something different after some time—that Merwan is a false master and that I have not given my spiritual power to Him—you should not listen to that. Instead, you have to remember what I am telling you now. Don't forget this."

Then Upasni told us, "Now you should all go back from where you have come." So we had to leave Sakori and return home.

Merwan also told us, "Now you have to go. I will stay here for a few more days, but you should leave tonight." So we called three tongas and all of us got ready to go.

As we were about to leave, first we said goodbye to Upasni. Then we went to Merwan, who was standing outside the verandah in the open. One by one we went to say goodbye to Him, to embrace Him and put our heads on His feet. Shireenmai did this first, then Gulmai, then my mother, Soona. When my mother went to Merwan, He caught her hand and asked, "Would you like to come and stay with Me?"

My mother replied, "Yes, Merwan. I am willing and ready whenever you call me."

Merwan responded, "Really? Would you like to live your whole life with Me?"

Again my mother said, "Yes. I would love to be with You." Then she asked, "But where would we stay? You are always going here and there. So there is no place to live with You."

Merwan replied, "Later on, I will stay in one place, and then I will call you. Will you come?" Merwan had the habit of asking a question two or three times.

My mother again replied, "Yes, I would love to." So Merwan put out His hand and my mother put her hand into His, as a sign of her promise to Him. Then she put her head at His feet, embraced Merwan, and turned to leave. She went and sat in the tonga.

Now it was my turn. As I went up to Merwan, in my heart I was hoping that He would also ask me to stay. But all He said as He embraced me was, "Be good and think of Me, and I will see you later on." I looked into His eyes, bowed down at His feet, and then I left. But I felt so sad that Merwan had not asked me to stay with Him that I started to cry.

Gulmai asked me, "Khorshed, why are you crying?"

I replied, "Merwan did not tell me to come and stay with Him, but He invited my mother. That is why I feel so sad."

Gulmai said, "Don't be silly. When Merwan calls your mother, you also will go and be with Him. So don't cry now." This made me very happy, and I stopped crying. Then we all left for the station. My mother and I took a train for Bombay and we arrived there the next morning.



At first, many people who had been at Sakori on Upasni Maharaj's birthday started to follow Merwan. But after two or three months, Upasni began to speak against Him, and then they refused to follow Merwan. They forgot what Upasni had said that day. And when new people would come to Upasni, he would tell them, "Merwan is not a spiritual master. I have not given Him my key." Many people who had not known Upasni earlier, including a lot of Parsis, would say "Upasni Maharaj says that he has not given Merwan any spiritual authority. Merwan is not a spiritual master, and we do not believe in Him. We believe only in Upasni Maharaj."

But my mother and I were not fooled by Maharaj's later comments. We had a connection to Merwan. And we had known Babajan and other masters and had some understanding of such things. So we stayed with Merwan. Upasni had told us, "Take Merwan's daaman with two hands and never let go. Never leave Him." That is what Maharaj said first about Merwan. After that, he said different things, but by that time we were already listening to Merwan, already holding on to His daaman with both hands.

C H A P T E R T H R E E

Manzil-e-Meem Memories

After celebrating Upasni Maharaj's birthday in Sakori in May 1922, Meher Baba met with him privately for five days before returning to His hut on Fergusson College Road in Poona. Two days later, on May 22, 1922, Meher Baba left Poona with forty-five men on a walking pilgrimage to Bombay. After renovating a large house and compound in the Dadar area of Bombay, Baba moved in on June 7, 1922. Baba named the building Manzil-e-Meem, the House of the Master, and it became their residence for the next year. During that time, Khorshed and her parents visited the Manzil for several hours every day at Baba's order.

After finally getting to meet Merwan in Sakori during Upasni's birthday celebration, Mother and I returned to Bombay. Merwan stayed in Sakori for a few more days. Since I was still a child, I continued to go to school every day, but my mother and I thought of Merwan all the time as we went about our duties. We loved Merwan very much. We would wonder, "When will we see Him again? When will He come?" As the days passed, we kept thinking, "When will He come? When will He come?"

After about fifteen days, Merwan and His men mandali arrived in Bombay from their foot journey from Poona. They moved into a house in the Dadar area that they named Manzil-e-Meem. It was about a ten-minute walk from where we lived at Irani Bungalow in Parel. Merwan surprised us one day by coming to our bungalow to see us. I remember it was on a Saturday, because Saturdays were only half-days at school, so I would be home by lunchtime. That day, I had just come home from school and had gone to the kitchen to find out what I would be having for lunch. I saw that there was *kitchiri* and spinach on the table. Kitchiri is a mixture of rice and *dal* (lentils) cooked together with tumeric. I didn't like kitchiri and spinach *at all*. So when I saw it, I thought, "O, God, please do something to distract my auntie so I can throw this food out the kitchen window." Maybe it wasn't right, but that's how I felt. The only way to avoid eating the kitchiri was to throw it out, because my aunties were always very strict and admonished me, "Why don't you eat this? You should eat everything." So there was no possibility of simply not eating it.

Just at that moment, I heard my auntie calling out to my mother from the other side of the compound: "Soona! Oh, Soona! Come quickly! There is a mad man entering our compound!"

My mother rushed from the other side and saw Merwan entering the compound. He was barefooted and wore long pants and a shirt. His hair was short then, and He had tied a little kerchief around His forehead to hide a wound there. Merwan's eyes were *jalali*—very fiery. And He was walking very fast.

When my mother saw Him, she said, “No, no, this is not a madman. It is Merwan.” So she took Merwan's hand and led Him to the kitchen verandah, and offered Him a bench to sit on. During all this commotion, since nobody was watching, I took the opportunity to throw my food out the window. I had prayed to God for help, and I had received it. That's how I remember that it was a Saturday, because otherwise I wouldn't have been home having kitchiri.

After I threw the food out the window, I went to see what was happening. I had heard my auntie yelling, but I had not heard my mother say that it was Merwan. So I came out onto the verandah, thinking there might be a burglar. But it was Merwan. When I saw Him I greeted him by saying, “Sahebji Merwanji.” In those early days we called Him “Merwanji” out of respect—not “Merwan.” But about this time, we began to call Him “Baba” or “Meher Baba,” which was the name given by one of His earliest disciples.

Then I sat down on the bench next to Baba so I could hear everything that was being said. Baba, who was still speaking at the time, scolded my mother, “Why didn't you come to Manzil-e-Meem? I have been staying there for the last fifteen days.”

“No one told me you were in Bombay,” my mother replied.

“Adi didn't let you know?” Baba asked.

“No. I didn't know,” my mother said.

Then Baba asked for my father, “Where is Kaikhushru?”

“He is working at the shop near the Fort (the central business district) in Bombay,” my mother responded.

Baba said, “Tell him to come to Manzil-e-Meem every day at seven in the morning to attend arti with us, and also in the evening. And whenever you can, you should also come to Manzil-e-Meem.” He gave my mother the address, since at that time no one was allowed to go there without Baba’s permission.

Baba then turned to me and asked how I was. He told me, “When you finish school each day, you should come to Manzil-e-Meem at 4:00 p.m.” But I felt upset at this. All I wanted to do was be with Baba, but I had to wait *all day* until 4:00 p.m. to see Baba, and my mother could go any time she wanted.

Turning back to my mother, Baba asked, “May I look around at your bungalow?”

“Yes, of course you can,” my mother replied.

Baba went through all the rooms and looked at everything. He even climbed up to the terrace on the very top, where I had seen Lakshmi Devi. When Baba came down He told us, “This place is very good. You should not leave it; stay here for a long time.” Then He said that He had to go.

So my mother told our coachman to bring our victoria carriage for Baba. But our white horse that pulled the carriage had the naughty habit of taking off as soon as someone put even one foot inside the carriage. He would not wait for the coachman or anyone. He would start running and wouldn’t stop. So as soon as Baba got in and sat down, the horse took off.

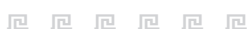
At that very moment, Gustadji and Adi were entering the compound with Baba’s sandals. Baba had come alone because He walked so fast that they had not been able to keep up with Him. Now they

wanted to get into the carriage so they would not have to walk all the way back again. But the horse would not stop. So they started running after the carriage, yelling. But they could not run fast enough to catch it, and the horse would not stop, so they kept chasing it.



*Gustadji,
Meher Baba,
Adi K. Irani,
Quetta,
June 1923*

I enjoyed the whole show. It made me laugh to see Gustadji and Adi running after the carriage. And I felt happy that our horse wanted to take Baba alone in the carriage. But I knew that once it reached the corner, the horse would slow down. Sure enough, when the carriage turned to go around the corner, it slowed and they were finally able to get inside with Baba.



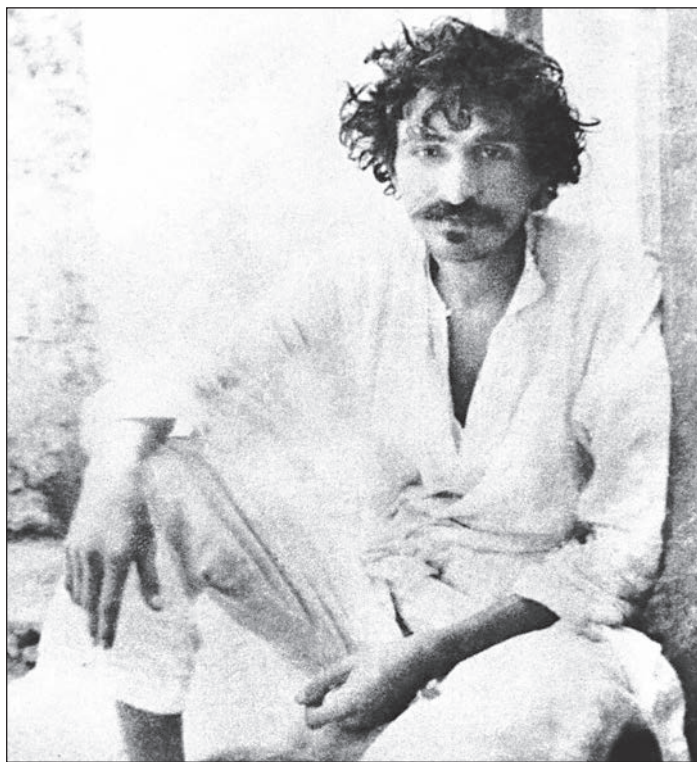
After Baba's visit, we naturally started following the orders He had given us. So every day my father would go to Manzil-e-Meem in the morning to do the arti with Baba. My mother would go whenever she could, and I went every day at four o'clock after school was over.

At that time I was attending the Jesus and Mary Convent High School. At first I would go to Manzil-e-Meem to visit Baba directly from my school, so I would still be wearing my school uniform. But Baba did not like my knees showing under my dress. Baba was very strict then.

He said, "Now that you are all grown up, you have to wear a sari. What do you have on? It doesn't look very good." But I was required to wear my uniform to school. Baba told me to wear long pants under my dress, but the school would not allow that, so I added a little more fabric to my skirt to cover up my knees. I did not mind that others would say mean things or make jokes behind my back about how I looked. I wanted to please Baba. And He liked us girls to cover our knees and wear long sleeves.

So I started coming home from school first, and bathing and changing my clothes. Then I would go to Manzil-e-Meem. My father would come to be with Baba every evening at six. He would bring

*Baba sitting at
Manzil-e-Meem,
Bombay, 1922-23*



my mother if she was not already there. I came by foot, but they would come in our horse carriage. We would all sit together with Baba and the other mandali.

One day while we were there, Baba asked Adi, pointing to my mother, "Who is she?"

Adi replied, "She is my auntie."

Baba said, "She is My auntie, also." So Baba always called my mother Soona Masi,

which means Auntie Soona. Soona means “gold.” And He called my father Kaikhushru Masa, meaning Uncle Kaikhushru.

So we would do arti as a family with Baba at Manzil-e-Meem every evening, and then we would all leave together in our victoria carriage around 8:00 or 8:30 p.m. In those days, Bombay was very pleasant, not crowded like it is now.



Manzil-e-Meem was the name Baba had given to the compound where He was staying with the men mandali. It was such a beautiful bungalow, and it had such a huge garden! The compound was so

*Manzil-e-Meem,
Bombay,
circa 1971*



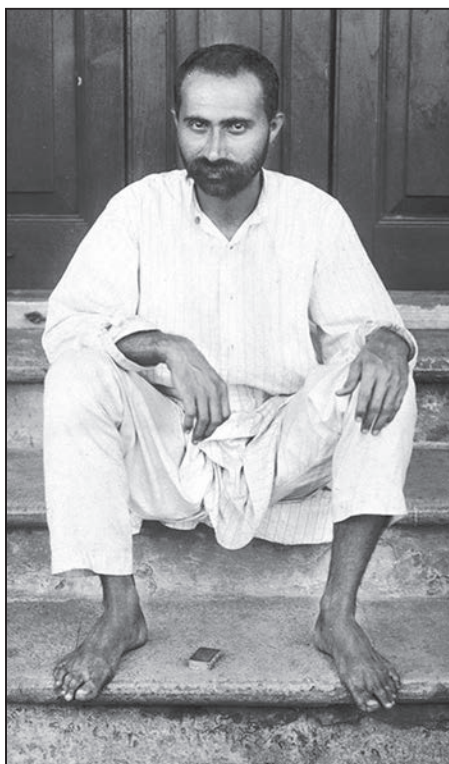
luxurious! Just inside the gate where you entered was a beautiful fountain surrounded by many mango and other fruit trees. There was a lovely verandah surrounding the large bungalow. When you stepped inside, it was like a palace.

Once you came in through the gate, you could go either left or right, but I always went to the right, because that was the way to Baba. It led upstairs to the Darshan Room, which was where Baba would meet with visitors. So that's where I would head.

Attached to the Darshan Room was a very small room for Gustadji and another separate room for Baba. Sometimes I would sit in Gustadji's room. When I came to the Manzil, I was allowed to speak

only with Baba or Gustadji. Although there were almost forty other mandali members staying together, I was not allowed to speak with any of them, even though some of them were my relatives.

The ground floor of Manzil-e-Meem was where Baba's men mandali stayed, usually two in each room. Adi Sr., Sarosh, Ramjoo—all of the early mandali stayed there. But I did not see them when I went to the Manzil or have any connection with them at all. Although they were staying



*Gustadji, outside
Manzil-e-Meem,
Bombay, 1922*

with Baba, I did not know anything about them. I would only go to the Darshan Room and to Gustadji's room, where he would tell me spiritual stories. Gustadji was one of the earliest devotees of Baba. He would tell me little stories about how Ramdas and other spiritual masters became saints, and I would listen and feel very happy.

Gustadji had a kind and noble nature. Because he was trained by Sai Baba, he never got angry. Sometimes when I would be with Gustadji, Baba would come by and tease him about the food he had prepared or something else, but Gustadji never got upset. He would reply softly, with great devotion, always maintaining his good humor. I liked him very much and appreciated his pleasant nature.

*Baba and
some of the early
mandali, 1923*



But Baba's uncle Masaji, who cooked for all the mandali, had a hot temper. Sometimes Baba would tell Masaji that he had made a mistake, and Masaji would answer back to Baba. So he had the opposite nature of Gustadji.

Gustadji was a Parsi from the city of Indore. He was a good person and well educated, but from a young age he was only interested in leading a spiritual life. When he heard that Sai Baba of Shirdi was a great spiritual master, Gustadji went to him to take his darshan. He sat at Sai Baba's feet for some time, maybe half an hour, and he didn't move.

Sai Baba told him, "Now you go. You have taken my darshan, so now go."

But Gustadji replied, "No, I don't want to leave. I want to stay with You."

Sai Baba did not like to have anyone stay with him, so he took a long bamboo stick and beat Gustadji very hard. But Gustadji never moved or cried. He just stayed where he was and did not move at all. For three days Gustadji stayed there and for three days Sai Baba beat him. Gustadji sat there without food or sleep as Sai Baba beat him. Sai Baba wanted to find out if Gustadji's desire to stay was wholehearted or not. After that, Sai Baba stopped beating Gustadji and he let him stay.

Gustadji stayed with Sai Baba for a long time and was deeply devoted to him. When it came time for Sai Baba to drop his body, he sent Gustadji to Upasni Maharaj in Sakori with this message: "Look after this person; see that he is happy. Give him every comfort and keep him with you till you drop your body, because he has deep spiritual connections and sincerely loves God. Take care of him as long as you are alive."

In this way, Sai Baba sent Gustadji to Upasni Maharaj. Gustadji was young then, and he was very determined. He stayed in Sakori for some time attending to Upasni. Gustadji was at Sakori in 1917 when Baba was also there. Later in 1918, Upasni Maharaj instructed Gustadji to stay with Baba, who was then residing in Poona. Gustadji accompanied Baba on the foot journey to Bombay, and Baba gave him the little room attached to the Darshan Room at Manzil-e-Meem. There, Gustadji looked after Baba's tea and food, and His personal effects.



I used to be a very picky eater. It was not just kitchiri that I refused to eat. I would eat hardly anything at all. I didn't like any vegetables or meat. Each evening I would eat just one boiled egg—nothing else. That was my habit. My auntie and my mother were fed up with my routine, because every day I would do the same thing and never eat what they asked me to. Sometimes, if they wanted to punish me, they would say, "If you won't eat this good food we have made for you, then you can't have your egg tonight!" But I was so stubborn, I wouldn't care! I would say, "Fine," and go to bed without eating anything. I used to cause them so much trouble and was very naughty in that way.

The first day I went to Manzil-e-Meem, something unusual happened: I learned how to eat! I arrived at four o'clock in the afternoon. At six a bell rang and Gustadji told me, "Khorshed, take this plate and have your dinner, because everyone will be eating now."

I thought, "Oh, but how can I? I'm sure I won't like it!" I didn't say anything, but I refused to take the plate from him. I just thought,

“Let me see what happens.” Gustadji did not know anything about my fussy eating habits, and he did not say anything more. I just sat there for a while and began wondering what was going on outside. How did the mandali get their food? What was it like? So I walked out of the room to see what was going on.

I saw all the mandali standing in a line on the other side of the verandah. Baba was sitting on the floor, holding a big spoon beside a large pot of food. Each of the mandali would walk by and hold out his plate, and Baba would spoon food onto each plate. When Baba served the food, He never gave just a little. He always gave so much. And you had to eat all of it. You could not throw it out. So I saw that Baba Himself served the food and that everyone seemed very happy.

As I thought about this, I began to get jealous. I thought, “Oh, they are all eating food that Baba has served with His own hand. I am not going to miss this opportunity!” So I went back to Gustadji and said, “Give me that plate,” and I went and stood in line. Then Baba spooned the food onto my plate *with His own hand!*

Baba had not been told that I was a fussy eater. He just put the food on my plate, and He gave me so much of it! I exclaimed, “Oh Baba, that is too much!”

But Baba said, “No, you have to eat it all.”

And it turned out to be . . . ough! . . . cauliflower. As I said, I did not like a lot of things, but I especially did not like cauliflower. Yet Baba had given it to me with His own hand. And I loved Baba so much that I didn’t even care about the fact that it was cauliflower. My only thought was, “I must eat this, because it is from Baba.” So I ate it.

When my mother and auntie heard that I had eaten what Baba had served me, they were so happy! They said, “Baba has taught

Khorshed how to eat food!” After that, I began to eat more types of food, because I would go to Manzil-e-Meem every day after school and Baba would give me different things to eat.

The next day, for example, Baba served me cabbage. This was something else I did not like, but I ate it because Baba had given it to me with His own hands. And Baba’s order was not to waste anything, not to throw any food away, however much He gave you. So I had to eat it all. Gradually, I got into the habit of eating everything. And I even started to like the foods that I couldn’t stand to eat before.

But I still did not like kitchiri. So I began to eat everything but kitchiri! I continued to think, “Oh, I don’t like that. I won’t eat the kitchiri.” I was very stubborn and very strong-willed. If I had to go without getting anything to eat because I wouldn’t eat kitchiri, I didn’t care. And I did not regret my stubbornness, because all I cared about was Baba. I loved Him so much! And I was very happy. That is why I say, even today, that “Everything, everything depends upon Him.”



During this period, my mother had been cooking for Baba whenever He asked her. But Baba was often fasting at that time—sometimes for three days, or five days, or even seven days. One time I heard Baba say to her, “Soona Masiji, sometime soon I will have to fast for a few days, and then when I am finished, I will want to eat only kitchiri. So, I would like you to make it for Me, if you can. I will let you know the date. On that day, you should take a bath and then make the kitchiri in an especially clean manner. Then bring it to Me and I will eat it to break my fast. Will you do this for Me?”

My mother replied, "Oh, very joyfully. I am so happy that you asked me to do this. Whenever You want it, please let me know."

We would go to see Baba every day, and one evening, Baba told my mother, "Tomorrow, you should bring the kitchiri at about eleven o'clock. Before that, prepare everything as I said, and then bring it."

I heard this request and was very excited about my mother cooking for Baba. The day to make the kitchiri was a Sunday, so I did not have to go to school. I got up early and sat in the first room in the hall so I wouldn't miss anything. I stayed there the whole time, watching to see what was being done. My mother took a bath. Then I watched as she carefully prepared the kitchiri as Baba had asked.

When she finished, she took the pot of kitchiri, tied it up with a cloth, and took it in the horse-drawn carriage. My mother told the coachman to go very fast so that the food would stay hot. She arrived at Manzil-e-Meem at eleven o'clock. Because the carriage had gone so quickly, the food was still hot. When she showed the kitchiri to Baba, He was very happy.

"You brought it just in time," He said. Baba unwrapped the cloth, opened the pot, and just put His hand right into the kitchiri. He ate two or three handfuls, nothing more.

Then He told my mother, "Now take it back home."

So my mother said, "But Baba, there is more. You should keep it here. Maybe Gustadji or the other mandali will want some, or maybe You will want more later. Please keep it here."

Baba replied, "No. Take it back home."

So she closed the pot and wrapped the cloth around it, and returned home. I was sitting there, waiting, just as I had been ever since my mother left, anxious to find out what Baba had done.

When she arrived, I ran up to her and asked, “What happened? How did Baba eat it? And why are you back so soon?” I just blurted out the questions without even waiting for an answer.

She replied, “Wait a minute. Let me come in and I will tell you.”

I was so excited to know how everything happened that I hurried her inside. Then she opened the pot, explaining, “Baba ate only a little bit. Then He sent the whole pot back here. He said, ‘Now, no more; take it back home’.”

I was very happy. “See,” I thought, “Baba has sent it back for me! Otherwise He would have kept it. Yes, He loves me.”

Then I asked my mother again, “But how did Baba eat it? Did you put the kitchiri out on a plate, and then He ate it?”

My mother replied, “No, no, not at all. He just put His hand in two or three times and ate it like that.” She demonstrated how Baba ate it. Then He said, ‘Now take it back’.”

“Oh,” I thought in wonder, “Baba ate it with His own hands from the pot, and then He has sent it back here!” I was very, very happy. “How wonderful that Baba has put His hand into this pot. I should now put my hand in the pot—here, where Baba’s hand has been.”

I was so excited about the idea of putting my hand where Baba’s hand had been and having Baba’s prasad that without even thinking about it, I had some kitchiri. And, Oh, it was very delicious....So I ate more. I was so thrilled to think that my hand was near where Baba’s hand had been, to eat what He had eaten, and to have His prasad! I thought, “Why not have some more?”

That’s how I started to eat kitchiri. And every time Baba would fast, He would ask my mother to make kitchiri for Him. He would

eat just a little with His own hand to break His fast. Then Baba would send the rest back home with her, and I would happily eat it.

From that time on, I liked kitchiri. And I learned to like all kinds of food. Before that, I used to make so much fuss! I was *divani*, as they say in our language. It means “crazy” in the sense that when we are young, we have so much energy that we just rush around doing things, whether they are right or wrong. We don’t care; we just go on doing them anyway. I was that way.

Now that I had learned to eat more than just eggs, my mother and auntie were so happy, saying, “Baba has taught you how to eat. You didn’t know before. You were like a baby.”

So, today I am “Baba’s baby.” Now I eat everything. But cauliflower was the first food Baba taught me to eat.



So I would go to Manzil-e-Meem at four o’clock every day after school. Sometimes, Baba would come into the room where I was sitting with Gustadji and ask me, “What did you learn today in school?” Then He might look through one of my books before going back to the other side of the compound.

I remember at times Baba would be in a jalali mood, very angry. One time Baba’s aunt Dowla Masi brought Him a big jar of pickled chutney, thinking that Baba would be very pleased. Instead, Baba got very angry with her. He told her to take the jar of chutney and leave immediately. She grabbed the jar as fast as she could and started running. She almost fell and injured herself. But then Baba called her back and embraced her.

Even though Baba would sometimes get very angry in those days,

I was never afraid to go near Him or talk to Him. I always felt free with Baba. From the moment I saw Him, I felt so much oneness with Baba. So even when He got angry, I was brave and would go to Him. I knew that His jalali mood would pass quickly. Sometimes I would go to the well and just wait. Then, after a little while, I would go to Baba and He would talk to me with a smile on His lips. Gustadji used to tell me that I should never be afraid of Baba, because He was God.

But my cousins, Dolly and Piroja, were very much afraid of Baba when He was angry. They had come to stay with my family in Bombay so they could be near Baba and go to better schools. One day, as the three of us were walking to Manzil-e-Meem after school, we could hear Baba shouting angrily at some of the mandali, even from the street. Dolly and Piroja were afraid and stopped at the front gate. "Let's not go inside," Dolly said. "Baba is too angry."



(Top, L-R) Dolly K. Irani, Piroja K. Irani
(Bottom, L-R) Gulmai, Soonamasi, Khorshed, Sakori, 1923



But I said, "Never mind. I will go first and you can watch. If anything happens to me, then you will know what to do." So I went into the garden through the back entrance and talked with Gustadji. When Dolly and Piroja saw my courage, they followed my lead. After two or three minutes, Baba walked out laughing. He came over to us and quietly asked, "Oh, you've come? What did you do in your school today?" Then Baba sat in the garden and talked with us. We showed Him our schoolbooks and after that He played with us.

Later I told Dolly and Piroja, "See, Baba was not angry with us. So we don't have to be afraid of Him."



Baba was so strong. Sometimes in the Manzil, He would ask His disciples to press on His whole body with all the force they could, all together at the same time. Within a few minutes, the mandali would be out of breath and drenched with sweat, yet Baba said the force was still not enough.

Baba also liked to play games with little children. So I started bringing my Uncle Minochershaw's daughter with me to Manzil-e-Meem. She was very small, only four years old. She and her family lived with us. But her father, who was my mother's brother, was very much against Baba! He was a doctor, and his clinic was just outside our home on the main road. When he did not have any patients, he would often stand outside his clinic. And we had to pass by there to get to Baba. So Dolly or Piroja would watch to see when he went inside with a patient. Then one of them would call out, "Come on, come on, come on!" And we would run, run, run past his clinic as fast as we could. I never told Baba all this. But maybe He knew, because He is God.

Baba was very pleased to see my little cousin, and she liked being with Him. Baba would carry her on His shoulder from one room to another. And then He would sit and play games with all of us. So we enjoyed this very much. I brought her a few times, but without her parents knowing. My uncle did not like Baba bringing people of different religions together—Parsis and Hindus and Muslims. So he did not want me to follow Baba, but I did not listen to him.

At that time, hardly anyone in our extended family accepted Baba. Everyone was against Baba because of his age. They would

all ask, “How can He be a spiritual master when He is so young?” Only my aunt Gulmai, her children, and her nephew Sarosh followed Baba. Sarosh’s father did not believe in Baba, and this caused Sarosh a lot of trouble. When Sarosh was with Baba in Manzil-e-Meem, he would dream of his father every night. In these dreams, Sarosh’s father would go on scolding and scolding him! Baba asked Sarosh to tell Him about his dreams. Sarosh had a very humorous nature, but he was also a little bit timid.

I was the bold one in our family. So I would bring my uncle’s daughter with me, because I loved Baba and thought this would make Him happy. I also brought her for her own benefit—so she could enjoy Baba’s company and have His darshan. I had much foresight, but I was also very naughty!



Although I would spend my time at Manzil-e-Meem with Gustadji or Baba in the two rooms at the right of the Darshan Room, I would sometimes see the mandali and other visitors in passing. There was an older Muslim fellow named Munshi Rahim, who loved Baba and frequently used to visit. He had been given a contract by the government to do landfill work in Bombay and to build Marine Drive and another road. At that time, Bombay was very close to sea level and the ocean tide would come in and flood parts of the city. The land had to be filled in before the road could be built, so while that work was going on, Munshi had been offered a very good bungalow to stay in. Sometimes he would invite Baba for lunch there, and Baba would go with the mandali. Usually during those outings, Gustadji

and I would stay at Manzil-e-Meem, but one day we also went along. This was the first time I had seen his bungalow, which was beautiful and spacious, with the ocean right in front of it.

Gustadji and I sat on the verandah while Baba and the mandali ate lunch in a separate room in the bungalow. I tried to catch a glimpse of Baba while He was eating, but I could not see Him. Munshi knew that Baba loved *ghazals* (poems of love for God set to music) and *qawaals* (Muslim spiritual laments), so he had invited some good singers to entertain Baba.

After Baba had finished His lunch, two of His close Muslim disciples took a big white cloth sheet into the room. I wondered what they were doing with it. When they came back with the sheet again, I asked them. They explained, “Baba’s hands are so precious. When He washes them, we keep the sheet under His hands to catch all the little bits of food that drop. Then we collect these from the sheet and eat them as *prasad*.”

I was very impressed and thought, “See how much they love Baba—one hundred percent! They don’t want to waste even a single particle of food from Baba’s meal. This hasn’t even occurred to the rest of us! We are not truly loving Baba; we just throw out His *prasad*. These Muslim followers show much more love.” This made such an impression on me.

Later, when Baba was sitting in His room at Manzil-e-Meem, I thought, “I must get the dust from the chair and keep it, because Baba sat on it.” So, when He got up, I gathered all of the dust and kept it in some paper, very carefully. I kept this with me all the time.



There were two staircases at Manzil-e-Meem, one on the inside and the other outside. One day as I was sitting with Gustadji in the Darshan Room, Baba came down the inside stairs and called Adi K. Irani to meet Him. Even though Adi is my cousin, we weren't allowed to talk to each other at that time. But Gustadji and I could both hear their conversation on the stairs.

Baba asked Adi, "Will you love me forever?"

Adi replied, "Yes, Baba."

Baba asked, "Will you stay with me forever?"

And Adi said, "Yes, I will."

Baba then queried, "Will you come begging for food with Me and live in the forest for twelve years, if I ask you?"

"Yes, Baba, I will do whatever you want," Adi replied.

Then Baba asked, "Would you give lectures for me the way Vivekananda gave lectures for his master Ramakrishna Paramahansa, if I give you My power?"

"Yes, Baba, whatever is Your grace," Adi responded.

So Baba said, "Now, don't forget to do all this."

And Adi said, "Yes, I will remember."

All four of us heard what was said: Baba, Adi, Gustadji, and myself. But Adi forgot all about this conversation.



*Adi K. Irani,
Bombay, 1922*

Many years later, during the New Life, Baba took Adi to beg with Him from house to house, and they camped on the ground in orchards. Then, after Baba dropped His body, Adi was invited to America and England to speak to large crowds about Meher Baba. People reported what a wonderful spokesperson for Baba he had become. I was in India, but I heard about Adi's lectures. One night, I remembered that day, almost fifty years earlier, when Baba had asked Adi if he would do all these things. I realized that Baba must have given His power to Adi, which was why Adi's talks were so moving.

When Adi returned to India, I asked him, "Do you remember what Baba asked you in Manzil-e-Meem, about begging for food with Him in the forest and speaking for Him like Vivekananda when He gives you His power? Do you remember?"

After thinking about it for a few minutes, Adi replied, "Yes, now I remember. I had forgotten all about it, but now that you remind me, I remember." After that, I noticed that Adi took a greater interest in speaking about Baba and he did more and more of it.



A few days after Baba's talk with Adi on the staircase, I was sitting in the corner of the Darshan Room in Manzil-e-Meem. Baba walked over to me from His room upstairs. He had started letting His hair grow long at that time. Holding out a few papers in His hand, Baba said, "Khorshed, look, I was sitting alone in My room, and I just composed this song. It only took ten minutes. Now I will teach you the song, because I want you to sing it for Me."

So Baba began singing, “Prem ne seema . . .” As He sang, I would follow. Baba gave me the melody, which is the same as “Ishtiake.” The song has twenty lines and includes words in Gujarati and other languages. Baba said, “If anyone sings this song every day, it’s like a prayer.” That song is called “Jalva Giri.” It is about love. “Prem ne seema” means, “Out of everything in the world, the greatest thing is love.” Part of the song, roughly translated, says:

All the world is connected by love.
Even the little things are connected by love.

Everything is done out of God’s love.
Flowers open for God’s love.

Whatever trouble or difficulty arises brings the
lover closer to God.
In love, the king and the commoner are just alike.

Even the king is brought low in love.
When love is there, one is always humble,
because love is most important.

In those days, Baba was still speaking and singing. His voice was especially loving and beautiful. And Baba loved music. Many times He would have professional singers come and perform. He liked bhajans, but his favorite songs were the qawaals. Baba appreciated the great love for God expressed in these songs.

Whenever I think back to those days, I remember how fortunate I was to have the pleasure, the happiness, and the joy to hear His lovely voice and to spend time with Baba. I had so many good times

in those days. And I even wrote a song for Him, “Pal Pal Ma Aawe,” which is translated as “Comes Every Moment”:

Pal Pal Ma Aawe

*Pal pal ma aawe che
Meher Baba ni yad.*

*Pal pal ma aawe che,
Meher Baba ni yad.*

*Meher Baba ni yad.
Aawe che pal ma, aawe che pal-palma.*

Naam leata umang uchle.

Mard man tan dhan tya urpan.

Pal pal ma aawe che, Meher Baba ni yad.

Yezdan no aa mazhab motto.

Dhayn thi leawo naam nirantar.

Comes Every Moment

Meher Baba’s remembrance comes upon me every
moment.

Meher Baba’s remembrance comes upon me every
moment.

Comes upon me every second, every moment,
Comes upon me every moment,
Meher Baba’s remembrance.

Enthusiasm leaps in my heart on taking His name.

Enthusiasm leaps in my heart on taking His name.

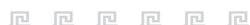
I am offering my mind, body and wealth at your feet.

Meher Baba's remembrance comes upon me every
moment.

This religious school of thought of *Yezdan* (God) is great.

Take His name continually and with attention.

Later on, when Mehera and I became best friends in the ashram,
I used to sing it for her because she liked it.



My father always allowed me to go to Baba whenever He called me. My father would never say "No" to me about that. But my daily visits to Manzil-e-Meem created a deep longing in me to be near Baba, always. I used to ask Gustadji, "When will Baba allow me to come and stay with Him?"

Gustadji would tell me, "Wait a while. Maybe that day will come."

Sometimes Baba would visit our home during the day when I was in school. As soon as I would get home from school, I would always ask, "Did Baba come today?" If my mother said, "Yes," I would ask, "What time?" Baba didn't always come at the same time. Sometimes He came at twelve o'clock, sometimes two o'clock, sometimes three o'clock—but always before I got home from school. And I felt so bad that I was not at home when Baba came. I felt that school was coming between Baba and me. If I was not going to school, then I could see Baba when He came to our

home. And I wanted every chance to be with Him. Having to go to school and not be with Baba was a real struggle for me. I can feel it even now. It was pulling on me very much, because all I wanted was to be with Baba.

So even though I was a clever student and stood first in my class up until the seventh standard, I did not like to go to school because I might miss precious moments with Baba. As my attention focused more and more on Baba, I devised ways to get out of going to school. Sometimes I would stay home with a “headache.” Sometimes I really would feel so unhappy that I would vomit. Then Baba Himself would give me weak tea. When I was very upset and getting sick, I would go to Manzil-e-Meem instead of school and stay there. Baba would give me medicine and make me rest and sleep there. I had such a longing to be near Baba.

Sometimes when I was in Manzil-e-Meem, our servant would come and say, “Come home now, your music teacher will be coming.” His name was Hermes. I learned to play the harmonium, *dilruba* (Indian harp), and a little on the sitar from him. He was a very well-known music teacher and very expensive. He would come twice each week for thirty rupees. Nowadays thirty rupees is nothing, but at that time it was so much! Still I said, “No, I don’t want to come today. Let him leave.” I didn’t want to miss the chance to be in Baba’s presence. So the servant would just have to go.

My mother didn’t mind me missing my music lessons. But the teacher minded. He felt, “I am coming from so far and this girl doesn’t even come to meet me. This is not right.”

One day, after I had refused to come home for my music lesson once or twice, Baba saw the servant and asked, “Why have you come?” He replied, “I have to take Khorshed with me. The music teacher is coming.”

So Baba came and told me, "Go and take your lesson."

I said, "Baba, there's no need."

But He insisted, "No. You should go."

So I went, but I felt very angry about my music lessons. I thought, "I want to quit these music lessons, too. I don't want anything to come between me and Baba! I don't want it!" That's when I decided that at the first opportunity I would quit school and stop taking my music lessons. I did not want to miss any opportunity to be with Baba.



During this same time, Baba had instructed Gulmai to find an appropriate young woman for her eldest son, Rustom, to marry. After much searching, Baba indicated that Mehera's sister, whom He gave the name Freni, would be a good match. So Baba called Freni and her mother, Daulatmai, along with His own mother, Shireenmai, to come to Bombay from Poona. They all stayed at our house for a few days and we looked after them. In early March 1923, Rustom and Freni's engagement was held at Manzil-e-Meem in Baba's presence. I felt very nauseous that day; I didn't know why. As I watched the engagement, suddenly I began to think, "What will I do if Baba tells me to marry? I can't break my promise to Lakshmi Devi."

This really concerned me, because my family had already tried to arrange a marriage for me. Before I first met Baba in Sakori, my mother's brother and his young son were living with us in the Parel district of Bombay as a joint family. My Uncle Minochershaw was a doctor who had received his degree in London. He loved us very much. One day, as I was playing together with his son and some of

my other cousins, the little boy suddenly said to me, "Oh, Khorshed, when we get older, you will be my wife."

I said, "What? I won't ever be anyone's wife!"

He got upset, and went and told his mother and the rest of the family. My parents were thinking, "What is this? Khorshed would not say something like that."

So my mother explained to me, "We promised my brother that when you grow up, you would marry his son."

But I blurted out, "No! That is your promise, not mine! You have to break it! I didn't know anything about it. I never promised to marry anyone. You promised each other, but I have nothing to do with your promise. I am not going to marry!" But I did not tell them

about my vision.

My family thought that maybe I did not like that particular boy. So they showed me other boys. They tried so hard to find a match for me. But after that first boy, my mother was very kind to me. She always took my side when I said no to the boys.

But my father's sister, my Aunt Motibai, was very keen for me to marry. She was a widow,



Aunt
Motibai,
Bommay,
circa 1918

and I was her eldest brother's first child. So she was very much after me to get married. She tried her best and I also tried my best. She kept showing me all these other rich and good-looking boys and I said, "No!" She took me to parties and was always pressuring me. But whenever my family showed me the boys, I would not even look at them. I would just say, "N-O, no! N-O, no!"

So when Rustom and Freni's engagement ceremony was over, I thought, "I have to tell Baba about my promise not to marry, so that He knows. It will be better that way." I wanted to find a quiet time to tell Him, but I never had the chance. There was always something going on. But my promise not to marry stayed on my mind all the time, and I kept looking for an opportunity to tell Baba.

Freni stayed with our family in Bombay for the next two months before her wedding. During that time, Baba made preparations to leave for Ahmednagar, which is where the marriage ceremony would be performed. After staying in Bombay for over ten months, Baba closed Manzil-e-Meem in April 1923. When Baba left for the wedding in Ahmednagar, my family was to go as well. I realized this was my opportunity to quit school in order to be with Baba all the time. So I told my school that I would not be coming back. My drawing teacher was very disappointed and told me, "If you can't afford the fee, then come even without paying tuition." But I said, "No, I have to go." So, I took my name out of the school just before my thirteenth birthday. Thinking that I would never be returning to Bombay again, I even had all the cavities in my teeth filled by the dentist before leaving for Ahmednagar.

I felt lucky that I did not have to go to school, because it meant that I could be with Baba. If I had continued with school,

then I would not have been able to be with Baba and have all the opportunities to serve Him that I did. So, I did not mind missing out on school. Serving Baba was most important to me.

If I had stayed in school longer, I would have had a very different life. My music teacher used to give me a lot of attention, and he wanted me to sing and perform on stage. My experience would have been quite different if I had gotten attached to such worldly things. But I pushed all that aside in order to be with Baba.

Keeping Baba's Order

In April 1923, Khorshed and her family traveled from Bombay to Ahmednagar for the wedding of her cousin Rustom and Mehera's sister, Freni. Baba and His mandali had also come for the wedding, and they stayed together at Gulmai and Kaikhushru Irani's residence, called Khushru Quarters (which is now the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Office).

After being there for about two weeks, gossip and criticism flared up against Baba. As a result, on May 4, 1923, Baba and the mandali walked out of Khushru Quarters to a place near Arangaon village. They spent four days there cleaning out the old Post Office building and mess hall, before returning to Ahmednagar for the wedding. This marked Baba's first stay at what became known as Meherabad.

On May 9, 1923, Rustom and Freni were married in grand style. A few days after the wedding, Baba and His men mandali returned to stay again on the property near Arangaon. One day during this short stay, Baba called Soona and Khorshed to come to the property, and He Himself showed them around Meherabad for the first time.

*Rustom and Freni's wedding party in front of the
Ahmednagar Parsi Fire Temple, May 9, 1923.
Khorshed is in the group of people to the right*



*of Rustom and Freni,
standing behind
a little boy.*





We had all come to Ahmednagar for Rustom and Freni's marriage. Before the wedding, Baba spent seven days in seclusion in Feramji Workingboxwala's room in Khushru Quarters. Adi and Gustadji attended to Baba's needs, and Gulmai cooked for Him. During this period, Baba instructed Gulmai to keep an oil lamp burning day and night in the room dedicated to Upasni Maharaj. Baba later told Gulmai He attended a meeting of the Perfect Ones during His seclusion.

Many other Parsis and Iranis had also come from Poona and Bombay for the wedding. At that time, the Zoroastrian community had already turned against Baba, and some were asking, "Why is Merwan here?" My mother's brother, Dr. Minochershaw Irani, was especially speaking against Baba to other wedding guests. When Adi came and told Baba about all the gossip that was going on against Him, Baba abruptly walked out of the compound all the way to a small village called Arangaon. The mandali who were staying with Him dropped whatever they were doing and followed Baba immediately. After walking six miles, Baba and the mandali saw some old buildings and took rest under a neem tree near a well.

When Rustom found out that Baba had left Khushru Quarters, He rushed on his motorcycle to find Him. Rustom finally found Baba sitting near the well. He told Him, "Baba, if you won't return to my house and attend my wedding, I won't get married. It is only because of Your advice that I agreed to the wedding, and now You won't come?"

Baba said He would not return to Khushru Quarters or attend the wedding, but He assured Rustom that He would return later to bless his marriage. Baba sent Rustom back to Ahmednagar to arrange for His and the mandali's belongings to be sent to Arangaon. A local villager brought Baba a bucket so that He and the men could drink from a well near the road. This man also provided Baba and

the mandali with their first meal at the place Baba later named Meherabad. They spent their first night sleeping on the platform under a neem tree by the well. After staying near Arangaon for a few days, Baba and the mandali returned to Ahmednagar.

Rustom and Freni's wedding was a grand affair. We all went to the Parsi fire temple in Ahmednagar, but Baba did not attend the ceremony. A large *pandal* (canopy) was put up in the middle of Khushru Quarters, and special food was prepared for all the guests. Rustom and Freni later went to Baba, who blessed their marriage and embraced them. A qawaali singing program was held for Baba, and another one the following day, which Baba especially enjoyed.



After the wedding, Baba told my mother and me to remain in Ahmednagar so we could come regularly to take His darshan. This made us very happy. Baba and the mandali walked back to Gulmai's property near Arangaon. They stayed there and slept in the old Post Office building. One day, my mother and I went out to Arangaon with Gulmai to see Baba. That day, Baba Himself showed us around the property and where He was staying. Since I never missed an opportunity to be with Baba, I was very happy to see Him and to see Meherabad for the first time.

There was plenty of fresh air, with lots of open space, and seven streams flowing into its well. At the top of the Hill was a huge empty water tank that had been used by the British. It was a very strong building with thick walls made of large stones. At that time, the second floor over the water tank had not been built, so there were



The old water tank at Upper Meherabad that had been built by the British army, 1920s

just two big rooms. The building had no place for doors, since it had been used to hold water. The pump for the water was in the small room that is now the library. There was a metal ladder going down into the water tank, so we all climbed down into it. When we came out, Baba looked around at everything and said He liked it very much. Baba said to Gulmai, “This is the perfect place for My work.

Will you give Me this place?”

Gulmai replied, “Yes, Baba, it is Yours. Everything is Yours. Why do You even have to ask?” So Baba happily accepted her gift.

Gulmai loved Baba very much, and Baba treated Gulmai with great respect. Baba said, “Shireenmai gave birth to Me, but Gulmai is My spiritual mother.” As with Krishna—Devaki gave birth to Him, but it was Yashoda who raised Him and was known as His spiritual mother.



Meher Baba's spiritual mother, Gulmai, and his biological mother, Shireenmai, circa 1923

Some months earlier, while Baba was still staying at Manzil-e-Meem, Gulmai had gone to Bombay to invite Baba to set up His ashram on property that she and her husband owned about six miles outside of Ahmednagar, near the village of Arangaon. The British had built an army camp there, which they used during World War I. After the war, they sold the land at auction to Gulmai and her husband, Kaikhushru (known as Khan Saheb), who was a construction contractor for the military. This was the property where Baba first stayed on May 4, 1923. Gulmai wanted to deed the property to Baba at that time, but her husband would not agree. Finally, in 1936, Khan Saheb transferred the deed to Meherabad from his name into Baba's name. This property became the seat of Meher Baba's work.



During my first visit to Meherabad, while we were all on the Hill, I remembered Baba had told my cousin Piroja, Adi's sister, that she had to get married. When I had heard this news, I thought, "What if Baba tells me to marry some day? How could I break my promise to Lakshmi Devi?" Now was the chance I had been looking for to tell Baba about my promise to Lakshmi Devi, so that He would not give me an order to marry. When we turned to go back down the Hill, Baba was walking very fast out in front of everyone. I ran quickly down after Him, and called out, "Baba, I have to tell you something; wait, wait. Please wait, I have to tell you something." Then Baba waited and I ran over to Him.

He said, "Tell me. What is it?" Baba was still speaking at that time. I said, "Baba, please, never give me an order to marry. Please, because I

want to stay with You.” I did not want to tell Him about the whole vision, because everyone was coming down the Hill just then. I only had time to tell Baba the main point—that I was not to marry. Baba replied, “It’s all right. I know everything. My *nazar* (divine protective gaze) is on you. Don’t worry. You will be safe. I will never tell you to marry.”

I felt so happy and relieved to hear this! After that, I felt better, because now there would be no more difficulties in keeping my promise to Lakshmi Devi. It was done.



On May 25, 1923, Baba embarked by train from Ahmednagar on His first journey to Karachi and Quetta. Before He left, Baba named the place He had been staying near Arangaon “Meherabad,” meaning “Compassion Flourishing.”

Khorshed and Soona were among the few women Baba asked to accompany Him on His trip to Quetta. Baba had also invited Kaikhushru, but his family prevented him from going with them.



While Baba was staying at Meherabad just after Rustom and Freni’s wedding, He decided to travel north to Quetta. Baba asked Gulmai to tell me privately to prepare to go with Him. So Gulmai told me secretly, “Baba is going on tour to Quetta, and He wants you to come with us. Don’t tell anyone else, but you have to prepare yourself.” Gulmai’s daughters, Dolly and Piroja, were also there, but Baba had told them that they could not come. So I was the only girl who went

with Baba on His first trip to Quetta. My mother, Gulmai, and Pilamai also came. Pilamai brought her baby boy Vithal with her. I was happy to be going on the tour with Baba, but I was a little nervous and also a little scared, because there was no other girl but me.

My father had also been called for the journey, but his relatives intervened and did not allow him to accompany us. My father's brother and his family were adamantly against Baba. My mother's brother was also against Baba. He used to say, "My sister used to love me, but now she cares only for Meher Baba." So they saw to it that my father did not come with us. Baba told my father, "Never mind; you come a few days later." But my uncle and the rest of the family would not let him join us. As a result, my father became ill from worry. He felt he had not done the right thing and had broken Baba's order.

At the end of May 1923, we began the tour—Baba, all the mandali, myself, my mother, Gulmai, Pilamai, and Vithal. We traveled together all the way to Quetta in one train compartment, so I got to be near Baba and look at Him the whole time. I hardly saw anything on the journey, because I was always looking at Baba. But He didn't like us to stare. One time, I even pretended to be asleep at His feet, so I could be close to Him. But when I woke up, I was someplace else. They had picked me up and moved me.

Pilamai had brought a good chair for Baba, so He could sit comfortably on it during the journey. But Baba asked her to sit on it. Pilamai responded, "No, I brought it for You, Baba. I don't want to sit there. It would not be proper for me to use the chair." But Baba wanted us to learn that obedience to His orders was more important than showing respect in a more traditional way. When He had told Pilamai to use the chair, even though He had said it casually, it was His order. But we did not

understand that at first. So to bring this lesson home to us, when Pilamai refused to use this expensive chair, Baba got angry and actually picked up the chair and threw it out of the train window as we were moving.

On our way to Quetta, we stopped at Agra, Mathura, and Karachi. When we arrived in Agra, Baba took us to see the Taj Mahal. I saw the Taj Mahal three times, all three times with Baba. I even saw it in the moonlight. But this was the first time, and it was wonderful to see it with just us four women and Baba. At the Taj Mahal, we saw the elegant houses of the Moghul queens. They had very large bathing rooms, where they would swim in perfumed milk.

After visiting the Taj Mahal in Agra, we took the train to Mathura, Krishna's birthplace, which is on the Jumna River. In the afternoon, Baba took us to Gokul, where Krishna was born and had played with the *gopis*. There we saw the Brindavan Gardens, which is a very large compound with many life-sized statues of Krishna, his mother, Radha, and the *gopis*. These were all interspersed in the gardens that were full of flowers. It was very beautiful to see. But the best part was seeing it all with Baba.

In the evening in Mathura, Baba took the four of us women out in a boat on the river. We saw a peacock on the edge of the river, and I remember watching the peacock get into a fight with one of the monkeys.

While we were in Mathura, Adi did something that displeased Baba, so Baba slapped him. This injured Adi's ear and made it bleed. Baba was very worried about Adi's ear and lovingly nursed him for several days.

We spent the night in Mathura. There were iron bars on all the doors and windows in the city, because there were monkeys that ran freely everywhere. I didn't see what happened on the men's side, because we women were always kept separate. But I heard that when

Pendu's father, Rustom, who we all called Masaji, went to the river to wash, a monkey stole his trousers! When he saw that the monkey had taken them, he wondered what to do. Someone said, "You have to buy an earthen pot with a narrow neck and put *channa* (dried chickpeas) inside it. Monkeys like channa very much. So when the monkey puts its hand into the pot, it will take so much channa that it won't be able to get its hand out again. Then, as the monkey struggles to remove its hand without letting go of the channa, it will drop your clothes." So Masaji did this and managed to get his trousers back.

From Mathura we went by train to Karachi. As the train approached Delhi, we were able to see the Qutub Minar. We met with Baba lovers in Delhi before traveling on to Karachi.

At that time, Baba was fasting. He was eating only watermelon. Baba gave special attention to where I sat on the train, because He did not want me to mix with the men mandali. So, I got to sit with Baba and the three women. We had brought boxes of dry food, like potato chips, to eat on the train. Gustadji was passing out food to everyone, and he gave me extra chips. Baba said, "Oh, don't give Khorshed that much. She can't digest it." But Gustadji said, "No, no, she is young and she needs to eat." But still, he took out a few of the chips to please Baba.

So I ate the portion Gustadji gave me and, oh my, I got a really bad stomachache! It was very, very bad! Baba admonished Gustadji, "See, I told you she wouldn't digest them, and you didn't listen to Me." Gustadji said, "But I took out some of them." Gustadji then gave me some medicine and it made me feel better. But really, it had been very painful. You see, I wanted to eat the chips. I had thought, "What's the big deal? There won't be any problem." But Baba's words came true. So, you know, we always have to listen to what He says, because Baba knows better than we do.

When we got to Karachi, we stayed at Pilamai's house. Her home was used for the women, and Baba stayed with the mandali in another bungalow. Baba had given me the order not to mix with the mandali, so I wasn't allowed to go to the other bungalow. Baba told me to read silently from the Zoroastrian prayer book for one hour at a certain time every day. He instructed, "You should say this prayer every day." Looking back at it, I think Baba knew that I didn't have anything to do all day, so He gave me that order. But at that time, I took it very seriously. I thought, "Oh, Baba told me to pray." So I took it seriously and said the prayer every day.

Baba asked me, "Are you saying the prayer every day?"

I said, "Yes, Baba."

During our stay in Karachi, Baba took us to Malir, a village not far from the city. There was some kind of machine works that Baba wanted us to see. While we were there, Baba bathed His feet in a stream off the Malir River, and we all had a picnic. Another time, we all went to see a beautiful garden with Baba in the evening.

After a week in Karachi, we went on to Quetta, where my mother, Gulmai, and I stayed with Pilamai's uncle. There was another bungalow where Baba and the mandali stayed. The children of Pilamai's brother, Rusi Pop—Goher, Katie, Aspi, and Jal—were all little then. Goher and Katie were very young. Their cheeks were smooth and round like peaches. A lady named Banu would watch after the children as they played in the orchard. In the evening, she liked to go for walks in the fresh air. Baba told me, "The children here go outside to play every day. You should also go."

You see, I just wanted to stay inside and watch Baba. But He said, "No, you go outside," and it turned out to be very nice. There were

grapes and all sorts of other fresh fruit on the trees and we could take them and eat them. So I had a very good time.

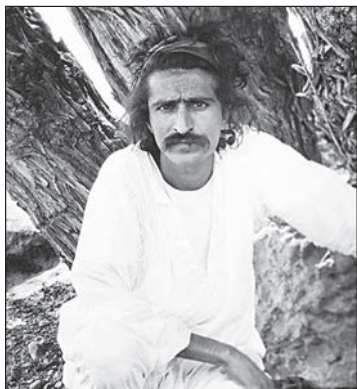
It was quite cold in Quetta at that time. And I must have been mad, because I still washed my hair every day. But I never got sick. Now I realize that when we were young, nothing bothered us. We could do whatever we liked and not be affected.

Baba loved Goher and Katie's father, Rusi Pop, very much, and he loved Baba also. In Quetta, Rusi Pop had a good restaurant and a cinema and a comfortable way of life. He knew how to make cakes and pastries and chocolate. So every day, Rusi Pop would make fresh cakes and pastries and bring them for Baba. Baba wouldn't eat much, but to please Rusi Pop, He would take a little. Because Rusi Pop loved Baba so much, Baba would have a little taste. And in the evenings, Rusi Pop would do magic tricks for everyone. Rusi Pop's brother, Sohrab, was also there and loved Baba very much. He was fond of taking photographs, and he is the one who took all the photos of Baba in Quetta.

But Goher and Katie's mother did not have much faith in Baba. A few years later, Baba warned Rusi Pop to sell everything and come to Ahmednagar. But his wife did not want to leave. She thought they had a good house and a successful restaurant—so why leave everything and go to Ahmednagar? So they stayed, but after a few months there was an earthquake. And after a few more days, another. Then she changed her mind and the whole family moved to Ahmednagar, but they couldn't get a good price for their property because of the earthquakes.

On June 21st, we all went on a trip to Urak Mountain. I helped my mother and Gulmai cook lunch, and we all ate outside

Baba at
Urak Mountain
near Quetta,
June 21, 1923



near a stream. Afterwards, Sohrab took photographs of Baba and of the whole group by the stream. Later, Baba climbed a steep ridge, and Sohrab took several more photos of Baba.

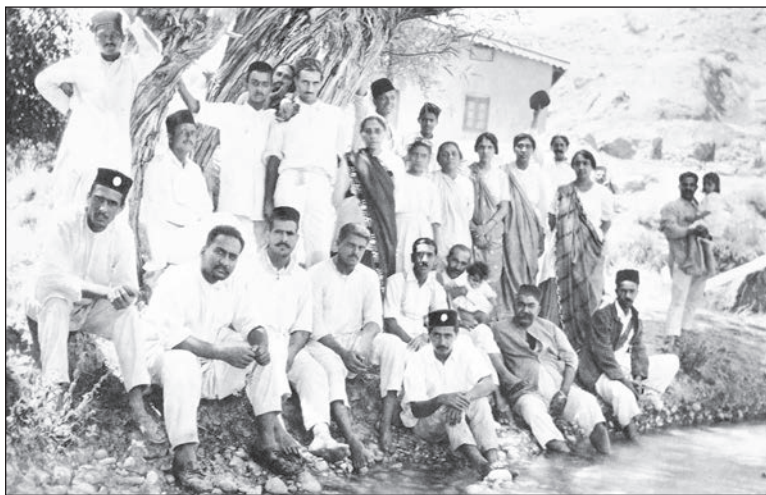
During our stay in Quetta in June 1923, Baba used to call meetings with the mandali every day to

discuss His future travels. Baba suggested various plans after Quetta, including a foot journey from Kashmir or Calcutta to Bombay, or a journey to the Himalayas and to Bhutan. He said to the mandali, "I have to go in the jungle for twelve years. Will you come with Me?"

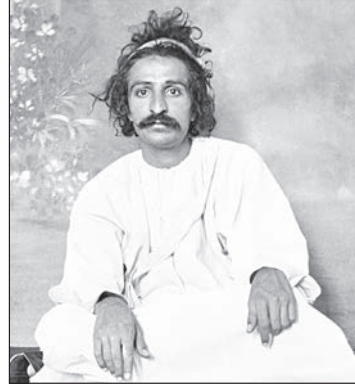
They all said, "Yes."

Baba then asked, "Who wants to come? Put your hands up." Everyone raised his hand. "You cannot take many things—only a *kafni* (men's upper garment), one blanket, one mug for tea, and one plate. That is all."

The group
accompanying Baba
to Urak Mountain,
June 21, 1923.
Gulmai, Khorshed, and
Soonamasi are together
in the center of the
photo next to
Khorshed's cousin,
Sarosh Irani.



They were going to be like *fakirs* (mendicants). So the tailor made kafnis for everyone to wear, and the clothes were kept ready for the journey. A picture was taken at this time of Baba with all the mandali wearing their kafnis, and another of Baba alone in His kafni.



Baba in His kafni, Quetta, June 1923

Baba continued to meet each day with the mandali and talk about their plans. But I felt very upset by this, because I didn't like the idea that Baba would be gone for twelve years. In the end, they didn't go to the Himalayas or the jungle after all. Baba suddenly changed his plans, and we all went to Gujarat, arriving in Ahmedabad on June 27th.

While we were in Ahmedabad, Baba told Sarosh to take Gulmai, my mother, and me to stay in Ahmednagar. He told my mother and me: "You need to stay in Ahmednagar until I call you. Do not



Baba and the mandali wearing their new kafnis in preparation for their foot journey, Quetta, June 23, 1923

go to Bombay or anywhere else. Even if the sky falls, don't leave Ahmednagar."

Then Baba and the mandali set out on a two-week foot journey to Navsari and other places. It was very hard for them, and they encountered a lot of trouble on their journey.



While Baba and the mandali were on their foot journey in Gujarat, Gulmai, my mother, and I returned to Ahmednagar as Baba had instructed. We stayed in Gulmai's house, called Khushru Quarters. My father was still in Bombay, since the rest of our family had not let him leave there to accompany Baba and us on the journey to Quetta.

My father's family had been very troublesome, because, about a year earlier, my father had given all his wealth to Baba. My father not only sold jewelry at his shop, but he also designed pieces especially for us. He used to keep all this jewelry in a safety deposit box at the bank. Then one day he thought, "Now I belong to Baba, so I want to give everything I have—all my money, wealth, and possessions—to Baba."

So he asked for the box from the bank and placed everything in a metal jewelry box that had a lock and key. Then he put that box at Baba's feet and said, "Please, Baba, accept this from me. I am very happy to put it at Your feet. So accept it kindly. And Khorshed and Soona also—I give them both to You for Your service."

At first Baba said nothing. He simply accepted my father's gift. But when He opened the iron box and saw all the jewels, Baba was surprised. He said, "What am I going to do with all these jewels?"

So my father asked, "What would you like me to do?"

Baba said, "Sell all these jewels and bring Me the money; then I can use it for My work." So my father took that box to the bazaar and sold all the jewels inside. Later, Baba used that money to build the schools, dispensary, and other buildings at Meherabad.

My father's jewelry designs were unique. So when these pieces of jewelry started showing up in the bazaar, his business partners and the rest of our family knew that my father had sold all his jewelry and given his wealth to Meher Baba. They did not like that at all, and they could not understand why he had done such a thing. But they could not say anything. Still, they kept thinking that Kaikhushru had given everything to Baba, and would do so in the future as well. My auntie and my father's family were very upset.

My father, who loved Baba so much, had wanted to come and join Baba on the trip to Quetta, but our extended family would not let him leave Bombay. This upset him greatly and he had become nauseated, thinking about it all the time. So, two days after we arrived in Ahmednagar from our journey with Baba, a telegram came from my uncle in Bombay. He was looking after my father. The telegram was addressed to my mother, and said, "Soon: You and Khorshed should come to Bombay soon, because Kaikhushru is very ill."

When my mother read the telegram, she knew that our family was just trying to get us away from Baba. They were against Baba and Upasni Maharaj—against spiritual masters. The year before, when my father had planned to come with us to Sakori for Upasni's birthday celebration, they stopped him. My auntie and uncle—my father's sister and my mother's brother—would not let him come. So this time when my mother read the telegram, she thought, "This is

a ruse to get us away from Baba's contact." So she took that telegram and tore it into little pieces and threw it away. She didn't tell anyone except me and Gulmai. Nobody else knew.

What could we do? At that time, we couldn't say, "We have Baba's orders," or anything like that. We had to keep His orders to ourselves—not tell anyone, yet still carry them out—because almost no one believed in Baba at that time. So we didn't tell anyone about the telegram.

The next day, a second telegram came. It read: "Kaikhushru's condition is serious. He is very ill and he wants to see Soona and Khorshed. You should come soon!" That was all. My mother knew this, too, was a hoax—that my father wasn't seriously ill. The family did not like us being with Baba, and that's why they were sending the telegrams. But my mother said, "No, no. We won't go anywhere, because Baba said, 'Even if the sky falls, you should not leave.' So we will stay here."

She took that second telegram, too, and tore it up and threw it away. She remembered that Baba had told us not to go to Bombay. So, how could we go? But we couldn't let anyone know that Baba had given us this order. When Baba gives an order, we have to observe it ourselves. We did not like to talk about it even amongst ourselves. We just kept quiet, but I knew what my mother was doing, and I also was happy to obey Baba. So because of Baba's order we didn't leave Ahmednagar.

The following day, the third telegram came. This time, it was addressed to Gulmai's husband, Khan Saheb, who was Adi Sr.'s father. This telegram said, "What has happened? We have sent two telegrams. Have they not arrived? Kaikhushru is very ill and will die soon. Khorshed and Soona should come right away!"

Adi's father had a very hot temper. As soon as he read that telegram, he came storming toward us across the compound. He was very angry and very upset. He asked my mother, "Did you get two telegrams before this telling you to go to Bombay?"

Calmly, my mother replied, "Yes."

Then he said, "**What?** You got them and you are not going there?"

She said, "Oh, I am not feeling well. It would not be right for me to make a journey, so I cannot go." Then he turned towards me and demanded, "Why didn't **you** go? Because you can go, even if she can't." I said, "No. No. I can't go without my mother. How can I go all alone?"

Disgusted, he ordered both of us, "You should go!"

See what a situation we were in? It was his house and he had told us to go, which meant we had to go. But still we didn't say we were following Baba's order. So we said, "We do not want to go."

He chided us, "What kind of wife and daughter are you? Kaikhushru is dead or dying, and you do not want to go!"

I replied, "No, we don't want to go."

Then he left the room very angrily. But we remembered Baba's order; that's why we were not going. Yet we couldn't tell him that. Baba's orders are to be kept within us. They are not to be shared. So, we had to make up an excuse for why we were not leaving.

Then Adi's father must have sent a telegram to Baba telling Him about this. Khan Saheb knew the address where Baba was staying in Gujarat, which was quite a distance away. On July 9, 1923, Baba and the mandali came straightaway by train to Ahmednagar. They walked the five miles from the station back to Meherabad, where they stayed in the old dharamshala. That evening, Baba finally broke the six-month liquid fast that He had been keeping.

The next day, He called my mother and me to Him. When we got there, He asked us, “Did you receive two telegrams from your family telling you to go to Bombay?”

“Yes,” my mother replied.

“So why did you not go?” Baba asked, looking very serious. I didn’t say anything. I just kept quiet. Out of respect for Baba, my mother did not say, “You told us not to go!” She just quietly replied, “I was not feeling well enough to travel.”

Then Baba asked us again, “But why didn’t you go?”

I was very naughty and direct. I said what was on my mind. I was still a child—not too small, but not a grown-up either. So I blurted out, “Do You remember what You said to us? You told us to stay here. You told us not to go to Bombay or anywhere else, even if the sky falls. That’s why we are here. We are keeping Your order. We did not go because of Your word.”

Baba’s face lit up and He looked radiant and happy. “Really?” He asked, looking at both my mother and me. “You did not go to Bombay because of My word? Does My order mean that much to you? You think that much of Me?”

“Yes! Of course!” I said. “What else could we do? We remembered all the time what You had said. We did not want to break Your order.”

“Ah,” Baba declared, “I am very happy. And do not worry about Kaikhushru—he is well and strong, and I am taking care of him.”

Baba called us to Him and embraced us and said, “I am very happy with you. If you had broken My order, Kaikhushru would have died. But now He won’t. You have saved him by obeying My instructions. Now I am telling you to go to Bombay tomorrow by train. You and your mother should go there and tell your father that

I request that he go to Poona. Take him there and stay together in Poona. I will also come to Poona and we will meet there. So be happy. I will meet you in Poona. I am very pleased with you.”

So I said, “Yes. All right. We will go.”

The next day we went by train to Bombay. When we got there, the family members were furious with me. They said, “Why did you not come?”

I replied, “We couldn’t come. My mother was also ill, so we couldn’t travel.” Then I greeted my father and said, “You are ill. Why should we stay here in Bombay in this bad weather? It is not good for you. We should all go to Poona for a change. You will feel better and recover there.”

My father replied, “All right. But who will look after me on the train, and how will we go?”

I said, “I will do everything. I will look after you. Don’t worry at all. Leave everything to me.”

So I went and made reservations and purchased the tickets, and we all went to Poona. I did everything. Baba gave me the strength to do it. I was very young—only thirteen. But Baba gave me His strength.

Becoming Friends with Mehera

Baba returned to Bombay from Ahmednagar on July 13, 1923, where He and the mandali stayed in the small office behind Manzil-e-Meem, which was under repair. They worked on binding Upasni Maharaj's biography by hand for the next month. After spending a few days with His followers in Lonavala, Baba arrived in Poona on August 23, 1923, the day that Mehera and Khorshed first met. That evening, they all watched the Muslim festival of Muharram together, and over the next few months, Mehera and Khorshed became close friends.

Following Baba's order, my mother and I brought my father to Poona in July 1923. We stayed at my uncle Tawas Kaka's house. Tawas Kaka was my father's younger brother. He had become wealthy after meeting Sai Baba, and used to go to Poona every year from Bombay for the horseraces. He kept a bungalow in Poona, and since it was empty at that time, we stayed there.

Tawas Kaka loved me *very much*. He was always telling me that he wanted to adopt me. He would say, "You will be my daughter. I will show you the world and leave you all of my property." A few years later, when he traveled to Europe, he brought back a harmonium that he had bought for me in Paris.

Even though he loved me very much, my uncle was friends with Mehera's uncle, Colonel M.S. Irani, and they were both strongly against Baba. Almost every day they would write something against Baba for the Gujarati newspaper. Colonel Irani would claim that Baba had taken his sister, Daulatmai, and her daughters, Freni and Mehera, and all of her material possessions by force. Of course, this was nonsense, but he would write things like that.

Now they wrote that even though my father had only one daughter, Baba had taken her too. They implied that Baba wanted these followers so he could take advantage of all their wealth. They wrote many things like that. Because of their opposition, the Parsi community had a very negative impression of Baba.

This didn't bother us, because we knew the truth and because we loved Baba more than we cared about the Parsi community. But it did make life more difficult for us. My aunt used to watch us very closely all the time, to see where we were going and what we were doing. Actually, we weren't really doing much of anything, other than waiting for Baba to come and be with us.

One day we went to visit Baba's parents at their home. Shireenmai's mother, Golandoon, who is Baba's grandmother, was also there. She was very beautiful, with long black hair and a smooth complexion. She didn't look old, even though she was. She asked my mother about our family and where we stayed. Then she told us, "You are relatives of ours. Soona's father is my cousin." I did not know until that day that my grandfather was in Baba's family. So Baba's maternal grandmother, Golandoon, and my maternal grandfather, Beheramji Shapoorji Irani, were cousins. Baba's father, Sheriarji, was also related to my mother, and he came to her sister Gulmai's wedding. In that way, I learned that I am related to Baba on both sides of His family.

I was not sure where to sit when we were visiting Shireenmai and Golandoon. So I sat on a bed. I learned later that the bed was Baba's. Then I felt bad that I had sat on it. But Shireenmai hadn't told me not to sit there.



Finally, in August, Baba came to Poona, and He called me and my parents to come and see Him. So we all went and took His darshan. He was very happy because we had brought my father to Poona as He had instructed.

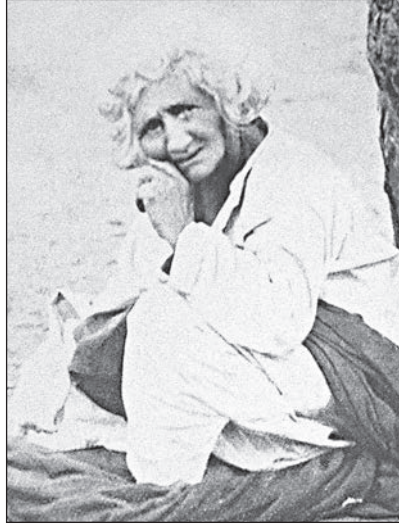
Baba then asked my mother and me, "Did you go to visit Babajan?"

We said, "No Baba. We wanted to see You first."

He told us, "Go and take her darshan."

So my mother and I went to see Babajan. My auntie was with us, too—the one who was always watching to see what we did.

When my mother went up to Babajan for the first time, Babajan took my mother in her arms and embraced her very tightly and very lovingly. Babajan embraced her three times and said, "Oh my *beti*, Oh my *beti*, you are my loving daughter. How happy I am to see you and meet you!"



Babajan, Poona

Babajan kept on embracing her and kissing her, saying sweet words to her and embracing her again. This went on for a long time, maybe five minutes or more. I was watching them and thinking, "What is going on?" I felt jealous.

Then I went up to meet Babajan. But she did not say anything to me. She simply embraced me. Babajan's eyes were very blue and very beautiful, and she had white curly hair. She lived under her neem tree.

After we saw Babajan, we went to see Baba again, and He told us to come to see Him every day. So we would go to Ramjoo's house, where He was staying, every day when Baba was there.



The next day, on August 23rd, Mehera came in a tonga with her dog Peter to meet me for the first time. Her sister Freni had stayed in Bombay with my family for the two months before her wedding. So I knew of Mehera,



*Mehera J. Irani,
Meher Baba's
Beloved*

but we had never met. She had not come even to her sister's wedding, because her knee had been so swollen. Mehera's mother attended the wedding, but Mehera was in Sakori with Upasni Maharaj, and he wouldn't let her leave to attend the marriage. He had said, "No, let her stay here."

Mehera knew of me, too, through her mother and sister. In the Parsi community we always knew about everyone else, and Mehera knew that I loved Baba. And we also felt like family, because her sister had married my cousin. So she came to visit and to take me to the Muslim festival of Muharram. It is a famous festival in Poona. Ganpati is for Hindus, and this festival is for Muslims. They make big objects, called *Ta'zieh* (colorfully painted paper and bamboo mausoleums), in their homes for prayers, and after a few days they carry them in a great procession and put them in the river. So all the *Ta'zieh* float down the river, and it is very interesting to watch.

Mehera asked me, "Would you like to come and see how they put the *Ta'zieh* in the river? It is quite a spectacle. There will be a lot of jesters and dancers. We can go together."

"Yes, I would like to go to the festival with you," I told her.

This was my first meeting with Mehera, and we lovingly talked with each other. I felt like I was meeting an old friend.

Then we fixed a time and went together to enjoy the festival. Baba had arranged special seats for us to watch the parade. Because Mehera had attended the festival in Poona since she was a child, she was able to tell me all about it. We quickly became friends.

After that, Mehera used to come to visit me almost every day. Baba also called Mehera and her mother to be with Him at Ramjoo's house. So they would come from their home on Todiwalla Road, and we would all be there together.

Mehera's dog Peter also came to my house every day, on his own, to visit me. He was a big brown dog—very tall with lots of fluffy fur. I liked him a lot. I would give him milk and play with him.

One day, when Mehera and I were talking, she said, "Every day Peter leaves our house and goes somewhere. I wonder, does he come to see you?"

I laughed and said, "Yes, he is also my friend, because you are a good friend of mine." Mehera was very innocent and was not cunning. That's why I liked her so much.



When Baba first came to our home to visit us, we were staying in the Parel district of Bombay with my uncle and auntie and the rest of the family. But Baba did not want us to stay there anymore with the rest of our joint family. So before He left Bombay on a foot journey to Sakori in October 1923, Baba asked us to move to Irani Mansion No. 6 in the Dadar district. This was the large flat where Baba and the mandali had been living. My mother had been caring for her father who was very frail. When she told her father that we would be moving to Dadar, my grandfather cried and said to her, "Oh, but you are looking after me so well. If you go, who will take care of me? Please don't go."

So my mother told Baba, "My father is telling me not to go. What should I do?"

Baba replied, "It's all right for now. Keep on staying there in Parel." And in less than a month, my grandfather became so sick that he died.

After that, there was no bond to keep us in Parel. My uncle couldn't make us stay. So in late December 1923, my parents moved to Dadar, to the upstairs apartment where Baba had stayed. This was the first house that Baba had stayed in after Manzil-e-Meem. It was very convenient, with its own staircase. And Baba liked it very much. I was away in Sakori at that time, but that's where I lived when I came back. It was a very nice apartment on the second floor. There was a spacious drawing room and two bedrooms with a separate dressing room. It also had a good-sized kitchen with two balconies. But when we moved, there was no place to keep our victoria carriage. So we had to get rid of it, as well as the horse and coachman. Someone suggested that we could buy a car, but my father said that a car would be too much trouble to look after.

Next to us was a separate apartment where the famous cricket player, Homi Vajifdar, lived with his family. He and his two sisters, Jerbai and Hilla, loved Baba very much and later accompanied Baba on His second tour to Quetta. While Baba had been staying in Irani Mansion, He had been storing the Marathi and Urdu versions of Upasni Maharaj's biography in wooden cabinets there. Partly to make space for us to move in, Baba asked Vajifdar to sell the books house to house. Sometimes people insulted him, since most Parsis didn't like Upasni because he was a Hindu. But Vajifdar loved Baba so much that he put up with their harassment. Later, he did something that displeased Baba, and Baba gave him the punishment of standing on one leg.



*Sheriarji
Moondegar Irani,
Meher Baba's
father, 1890s*



One time, Baba's father, Sheriarji, came to visit us in our home in Bombay. I remember that he sat on our big wooden bed with my father, and Sheriarji told my father about his years of wandering in the desert and the jungle long ago, looking for God. As Sheriarji told his stories, I was hiding so no one could see me, but I listened carefully. My father

asked him, "What did you find to eat when you were hungry?"

Sheriarji replied, "When it became dark, a cloth would be spread in front of me, and many dishes of food would be laid out on it. But I never saw anyone place the food there. And when I became thirsty, I would hold my hands in front of my mouth and water would flow into them, and I would drink."

For many years, Sheriarji searched for God in the wilderness. One time when he had to cross a river, he just stood still and the river parted, so he was able to cross on dry land. Then one day, he heard a voice tell him to return to life in the city. The voice said that he would find God through his son.

So Sheriarji went to Poona and stayed with his sister. She urged him to marry and settle down, but he kept refusing. Finally, one day, Sheriarji saw a very young girl playing in the neighborhood. She was quite beautiful and active. So he told his sister that if he was ever to marry, it would only be to that little girl. He thought this would stop his sister from nagging him, because the girl was so young. But his sister convinced the girl's mother to arrange the marriage. And a few years later Baba was born.



In mid-December, just before we moved to Dadar, Mehera said to me, “Khorshed, my grandmother is going to Sakori to stay for some time, and I would also like to go there with her for a few days.”

“I would like to go with you,” I said.

Mehera replied, “Then we have to ask Baba.” At that time, we couldn’t do anything without Baba’s permission. Every single thing, we had to ask Him—and whatever He said, we had to do. But we wouldn’t tell anyone else that we were doing it because Baba had told us. We simply did it ourselves, quietly.

So, Mehera said to Baba, “My grandmother is going to Sakori. May I go and stay a few days with her?”

Baba replied, “Yes, but only fifteen days.”

And then I said, “I also want to go with her.”

Baba again replied, “Yes, you can go with Mehera. You can both go, but you should stay no more than fifteen days.”

We said, “Yes, Baba. We will go for only fifteen days.”

So Mehera and I went to Sakori with Mehera’s grandmother, but this time we stayed in the ashram with Upasni’s nuns. It was a very simple life. We had no bedding, just one sheet that we put on the ground. And we went barefoot, even though it was so cold! There was nothing delicate about Sakori. But we were rough and tough, so we felt that the atmosphere was very nice. We would get up early in the morning and join Upasni Maharaj and the others for arti at 4:00 a.m. They had a lovely way of performing arti, but I remember being so cold there at that time in the morning!

After arti, the other young girls staying in the ashram used to sing and accompany themselves with sticks, rhythmically hitting them together. Mehera, too, played the sticks, because Maharaj told

her to join in. We heard that when Baba had been staying in Sakori, He had told the girls to play the sticks and had taught them one or two bhajans to sing, as well.

While we were there, we did what the other girls did. We had a good time, and we especially enjoyed spending time with Maharaj. Usually, we would eat with Mehera's grandmother, if she was cooking. Sometimes, Upasni Maharaj would give food to all of us girls as prasad. The food was offered to Maharaj by some of his followers, and then he would give it to us. Maharaj warned us that we shouldn't touch any food brought by other people, because it all came with those people's karmic impressions, or *sanskaras*. Maharaj said, "By offering something to me, they give their *sanskaras* to me. So, you shouldn't take it yourself, because then you will suffer. When I take the food and then give it to you, that's different." People gave so many delicious things to Maharaj, and they all were just sitting there. But, we didn't touch any of the food before Maharaj had given it to us.

One day, a woman brought a gold ring for Maharaj and he had her put it on his toe. When Mehera came up to take darshan, Maharaj took the ring and put it on her finger. Mehera wore that gold ring for the rest of her life. Sometime before this, Maharaj had also given a gold ring to her grandmother.

On another occasion, someone brought a harmonium with foot pedals and gave it to Maharaj. Upasni started asking everyone, "Who knows how to play the harmonium? Who knows how to play the harmonium?"

I knew how to play, but I didn't saying anything. I felt very shy. How could I play in front of so many people? I hid myself, but

Mehera went to Upasni and told him, “Khorshed knows how to play the harmonium very well.”

So Maharaj called for me and everyone started looking for me. When I came forward, Upasni told me, “You have to play the harmonium every day after arti, while the others play the sticks.” So Mehera and the other girls played the sticks, and I played the harmonium. I felt very nervous playing in front of other people, because I only knew how to play in a simple manner. And I had not practiced at all. But by Upasni Maharaj’s grace, I was able to play every day.

One day, a group of highly educated and sophisticated people came from Bombay. They looked disapprovingly at me as I was playing the harmonium for Maharaj. It was obvious that they wanted to play the harmonium themselves. So the leader of their group said, “She does not play so well. Shall we play for you?”

But Upasni Maharaj didn’t answer.

So they turned to me and said, “We want to play.” Naturally, I got up to let them take my place. But when they started to play, their singer got stuck. She just couldn’t get the words out. Not even a sound came out of her mouth! So the musicians couldn’t go on. When they looked at Maharaj, he said, “I didn’t say you could play, so what am I to do?”

Then Maharaj told me, “Khorshed, do your job again.”

So Maharaj was happy, and I had to play again while darshan was going on. It was like a miracle that they were unable to sing and play for Maharaj, but it was because Upasni had not wanted it.



After fifteen days, we asked Upasni Maharaj for permission to leave, saying, "Now we have to go, because Baba ordered that we could stay for only fifteen days."

But Maharaj said, "No, no, no, you should not go; you have to stay here."

So we couldn't go. We had to stay, because how could we break Maharaj's order? Of course, we wanted to obey Baba, but we also had to obey Maharaj. So we just accepted his order and kept staying there without giving it much thought.

After one month had passed, Baba sent Gulmai to Sakori to bring us back to Bombay, so that Baba could see us before He left on His first trip to Persia. Baba asked her, "Why are they staying there? I gave them only fifteen days; so why are they staying longer?"

When Gulmai came to Sakori in January 1924, she told us, "Come on, girls. Your holiday is finished. Baba is calling you back. He wants to see you before He goes to Persia. So come with me now."

We replied, "But, how can we come? Upasni Maharaj won't let us leave."

So we asked Maharaj again, but again he said, "No, stay here."

Gulmai also asked Maharaj, but he told her, "Why do they have to go? Merwan is going to Persia. No, let them stay here. You go back to Bombay." An argument went on between Gulmai and Upasni, but in the end, Gulmai went back without us. What could we do? We were helpless.

After eight or ten more days, Baba again sent Gulmai to Sakori, saying, "Go again and bring Mehera and Khorshed back."

Gulmai thought, "But how can I do that? Maharaj says that they are not to go, and we cannot break Maharaj's order."

Nonetheless, Gulmai came to Sakori and said, “Come along now. Baba wants to see you before He goes to Persia.”

But again Upasni Maharaj said, “No.”

We also asked his permission to leave, and again he said, “No.” For a second time Gulmai had to return to Baba without us.

By then, Baba was making His final preparations to go to Persia. So Baba told Gulmai emphatically, “Now you *must* bring Mehera and Khorshed back from Sakori. Otherwise, don’t come back.” So Gulmai came to Sakori a third time. This time, she told us, “No, no, now you *have* to come, because Baba is waiting to see you before He goes to Persia. He wants to meet with you.”

So I felt very sorry that we had not come when Baba first called us, because I loved Baba very much. I loved Upasni Maharaj also, but I loved Baba more.

Because I loved Baba so much, I felt that it would not be good to remain in Sakori any longer. So I plucked up my courage and I told Upasni Maharaj, “We cannot stay any longer. We have to go, because Baba is waiting for us. Baba wants us to return. And we also want to go to Him. Baba wants to see us before He leaves for Persia. This is the third time that Gulmai has come. So please give us your permission to go.”

Upasni Maharaj said, “Ah, I know why you want to go—because Merwan is very young and beautiful, and that’s why you want to stay with Him. But I am old and ugly, and I wear only a gunny sack.” He said this just to tease us.

But I said, “No. You are wrong. We love you both—you and Baba. We love you also, but now Baba is waiting for us, so we have to go.”

Mehera was with me when I said this, but she didn't say anything. She wasn't the type to complain; she accepted things as they were. Although I was younger than Mehera by three years, I was the one who would speak out and take the initiative. That was my nature. I was very bold and forthright.

Maharaj relented and said we could go, but then he played a trick on me. As we were about to leave he said, "Yes, you can go now, but will you come back on Shivaratri?" That is Shiva's festival night, which would be celebrated in fifteen or twenty days. Maharaj said, "Will you come here again then?"

"How could I know?" I wondered. So I said, "Yes, I will come." I thought it would be very easy to come back.

Maharaj said, "Promise? Promise?"

I said, "Yes, I promise." So I gave my promise to return. But Mehera didn't promise, because Upasni had not asked her.

Then Maharaj told us, "Merwan will keep you secluded and not let you mix with men. Merwan will do everything for you. I wanted to make Mehera like Babajan. But you would have to stay here with me and do my work. Now never mind. Merwan will do this for you." We didn't really know what Maharaj meant at the time. But years later, I remembered what he had told Mehera and me, and I realized that everything happened just as Maharaj had said.

Maharaj then said we could go. When we left, he was crying. We returned to Bombay with Gulmai that very night. He did not want us to go.

When I left to go to Sakori, my parents were still living in Parel. While I was in Sakori, they moved to Irani Mansion in the Dadar district. So Mehera and I went and stayed with them in Irani Mansion when we returned to Bombay.

The next day we went to see Baba at the Bharucha Building, where He was staying. Baba asked us, "Why didn't you keep My order and come back? I told you to stay no more than fifteen days."

We replied, "Maharaj would not let us leave. What could we do?"

Baba said, "Never mind." Then He asked us, "Did you both like being in Sakori?"

I said, "Yes, we were staying with the other girls and doing what they did, and we liked that kind of life."

Mehera was always silent and didn't say much, but I was *very* bold and very naughty. I told Baba, "But I have to go back after twenty days because I made a promise to Upasni Maharaj that I'd be there on Shivaratri." I said it just like that, and Baba got very upset. He asked me "How could you promise?"

I said, "What is there to that? I can go. Who would not let me go? I can go myself. It is not a big deal." I was *very naughty* then to speak my mind so freely to Baba.

He asked, "Why did you give your promise? Your father would not like it if you went there."

I said, "No, Baba, my father won't mind." My father had regained his health, at least temporarily, and we were all staying together again in Bombay.

Baba asked a second time, "Why did you promise? If you have to go after fifteen or twenty days, then just go tonight."

I said, "All right. I will go tonight."

But Baba said, "No, no. You should obey your father. I will call him tomorrow and talk with him. Then I will tell you if you can go."

I never heard what my father said, or what was discussed or anything. As it turned out, I did not go back to Sakori at all. Not then, not ever. Baba

wouldn't let me. He let Mehera and Daulatmai and everyone else go to Sakori and stay there, but not me. Sometimes I feel very bad that I broke Baba's orders and that I promised Maharaj I would return. Maybe that is why Baba wouldn't let me go again. I never saw Upasni Maharaj again.



When Baba finished His reprimand, He told us, "Now, I have to go to Persia soon." He said to Mehera, "Remain in Bombay until I leave for Persia, then go back to Poona and stay there." Baba told me to stay in my house in Bombay. He said that when Mehera returned to Poona, we should write to each other every day—about Baba and our thoughts and how our life was going. Then Baba said to us, "After I return from Persia, I will call both of you to come and stay with me in Ahmednagar." We were thrilled to hear this.

So Mehera and her mother stayed with us in Bombay until Baba left for Persia in February 1924. We would go to see Baba every day at the Bharucha Building. One day when we were together, Baba said, "Mehera, you and Khorshed are both good friends, but you are not just friends in this life. You have been friends in many lifetimes together with Me. Many, many lifetimes you have come together. That's why you are such good friends in this life."

Sometimes Baba came to visit us at Irani Mansion, where we were all staying. During one of His visits, Baba asked me to play the harmonium and sing "Kaanah Tore." This is a Meerabai song about Krishna that I learned from the nuns at Sakori. Meerabai was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Krishna. Baba liked the song very much. The words are very beautiful.

Kaanah Tore

Kana tore gungaria pahe re
Holi khele kishan girdhari

Aali kade ganga maata
Pali kade jamuna
Bichme Gokul nagari re
Holi khele kishan girdhari

Mor mukut pitambar shobe
Kundal ki chab nyari re
Holi khele kishan girdhari

Meera kahe prabhu
Girdhar naagar
Charan kamal balhari re
Holi khele kishan girdhari

The translation means:

Krishna, please keep on your *gungaria* (ankle bells).
Krishna, the upholder of Mount Giri, is playing Holi.

On the one side is the river “Mother Ganges.”
On the other side is the river “Jamuna.”
And in the middle is the city of Gokul.
Krishna, the upholder of Mount Giri, is playing Holi.

He wears the resplendent yellow silk cloth
and a crown of peacock feathers adorns His head.
The luster of his long dangling earrings is heavenly.
Krishna, the upholder of Mount Giri, is playing Holi.

Meera says, “Oh, my Supreme Lord,
Upholder of the mighty Govardhan Mountain and
resident of its city,
I am lost in Your sweet remembrance and surrender my
whole heart
and all that I am at Your Divine Lotus feet.”
Krishna, the upholder of Mount Giri, is playing Holi.

Baba said that the gopis loved Krishna so much—that their love
for Krishna was so great that it was beyond love.

Then Baba asked Mehera to sing a song. She sang one that she
had also learned at Sakori. Mehera was wearing a pink sari that day,
and she looked so lovely. After Mehera finished the song, Baba asked
us if we knew the meaning. We replied, “Yes, Baba.”

Baba said, “Look how much Radha loved Krishna. When Radha
and the gopis went for even one day without seeing Krishna, the
whole world looked dark to them.”

At that time, I thought, “How could that happen?” But later on,
I had that very same experience. Then Baba said to Mehera and me,
“That is love. That kind of love, you have to create. That is the kind
of love that you should have for Me.”

Then Baba talked with the others who were there. It was a very
relaxed and homey feeling. Then Baba sat at the harmonium and
played something Himself just for fun.

After we finished the music, Baba got up and walked into another room in our flat, which had five cupboards with full-length mirrors on the front. Baba stopped and looked in one of the mirrors and smoothed His mustache. Mehera and I peeked in from outside the room and watched Baba looking in the mirror. When Baba saw us watching Him, He asked, "How do I look?"

"Wonderful! Very beautiful and handsome, Baba," we replied.

"Am I handsome and beautiful?" Baba asked.

"Oh yes, Baba! You look so nice!"

Then Baba said, "If you think I look beautiful outwardly, how much more beautiful—how infinitely more beautiful—I am within. You can't even imagine my inner beauty. Only a few very fortunate ones can see it."

"Baba, we, too, want to see Your inner beauty," Mehera and I implored. "Please let us see it."

"If you could see My inner beauty, you would fall down and become unconscious," Baba replied. Then He walked back and forth looking into the five mirrors, before walking out onto the verandah.

As Baba was getting ready to leave, I told Mehera, "Go to Baba and embrace Him." Mehera was a little older than me, and she was taken aback that I would suggest that she embrace a man. She said, "What are you telling me?"

I said, "You must go and embrace Baba, because we love Him. There's nothing wrong with that."

Mehera hesitated, so I went first and embraced Baba. Then I pushed her toward Him. But she did not know how to embrace Baba. So she gave Baba a kiss on His cheek.

I teased her about it, saying, “Ah, at first you would not go, but then you didn’t just embrace Him, you kissed Him on His cheek! I didn’t dare kiss Him on the cheek! I only embraced Him.”

I teased Mehera about that for many years. I would tell her, “You were very naughty, I just gave Baba an embrace, but you did more than me!” Although I teased Mehera, I always felt very close to her and very fortunate to have such a friend, who always remained dearest to Baba.

Even in those early times, I would ask Baba who He loved most. And Baba would say, “First I love Mehera, then you, then Naja.” But I was never jealous of Baba’s love for Mehera. Baba Himself said that I alone, among all the women, was never jealous of Mehera.

C H A P T E R S I X

Baba Staying in Our Home

Baba returned to Meherabad from His first trip to Persia at the end of March 1924. Mehera and Khorshed were called to Meherabad by Baba to attend a large celebration for Upasni Maharaj's birthday held on May 20th. After staying only a few days, Khorshed returned to Bombay by Baba's order to look after her father. Baba followed soon after and stayed with Khorshed's family in their home in Bombay before traveling on to Quetta in June 1924. Baba arranged for Mehera to stay there with Khorshed for a week after He left. When He returned at the end of July, Baba, Mehera, and several others stayed again in Bombay with Khorshed's family.

After Baba left on His trip to Persia in February 1924, Mehera and Daulatmai returned from Bombay to their home in Poona. Mehera and I wrote to each other every day, as Baba had instructed us. In this way, we became even closer friends.

While Baba was in Persia, I stayed with my parents in Bombay. We had a special place in the house with Baba's picture, and I always kept a flame of coconut oil burning there. Every day while Baba was gone, I prayed and prayed in front of that picture that Baba would come back soon. And He did come back in just over a month.

After Baba returned, He called Mehera, me, and some of the other women to Meherabad in May to celebrate Upasni Maharaj's birthday. It was a joyous occasion with lots of flowers and fruits and sweets. In the evening, a loud thunderstorm interrupted our procession; but when it stopped, singing went on until midnight.

I had only been at Meherabad for a few days when my father, who was in Bombay, became ill again. He had high blood pressure and other ailments, caused by stress and worry. His brother and all the family were giving him so much trouble because my father loved Baba. They caused many problems for my mother and me, as well, because we all loved Baba and were following Him. Up until the end, they gave us trouble. They never left us in peace.

My mother's brother also did not believe in Baba, although her sister, Gulmai, loved Baba very much. My father's youngest brother did not live near us, so he could not give us any trouble. But the middle one, that Tawas Kaka, gave us a lot of trouble. Irani Mansion, where we were living in Bombay, belonged to my father's sister, Aunt Motibai. She and her husband were also against Baba.

So, because of all the worry over this opposition, my father had become ill. But during those years, Baba would send letters in His own handwriting to my parents to show His love. Once He wrote:

*Dear Masaji Kaikhushroo and Masi Soonamai,
Received your letter. Read its contents. My nazar is
eternally on you. Masaji, do not be worried in the least about
any matter. Know that I am always there with you. Keep
faith in God every moment and live in His remembrance.*

Merwan

After Upasni's birthday celebration at Meherabad, Baba told me, "Go back to Bombay, and I will come there in a few days."

Baba sent me with my cousin Sarosh in his car, but we were not allowed to talk to each other. We just rode in the car silently, all the way to Bombay. Baba had also given me, and the other women disciples staying with Him, the order to tie a kerchief on our heads like nuns, even though this was not fashionable. We also had to wear saris with long-sleeved blouses underneath. We were not allowed to wear dresses, as we do now, because our legs would have shown. At that time, even when we did our work, we would wear saris.



So I returned to be with my parents in Bombay. Baba and four of His mandali arrived on June 3rd and stayed with us for three days, before Baba departed for Quetta. Baba often came and stayed with us in Irani Mansion after we moved to Dadar at the end of 1923. Sometimes all forty mandali members stayed in our large main room. Baba slept on the floor in another small room where we kept a little altar

with Baba's photos and an oil lamp that was kept burning day and night. My father wanted it like that. He would sit and pray in the corner and we would join him. In this way, my father became well again.

Baba stayed with us whenever He came to Bombay. And whenever any of the mandali were sent to Bombay, they stayed with us also.

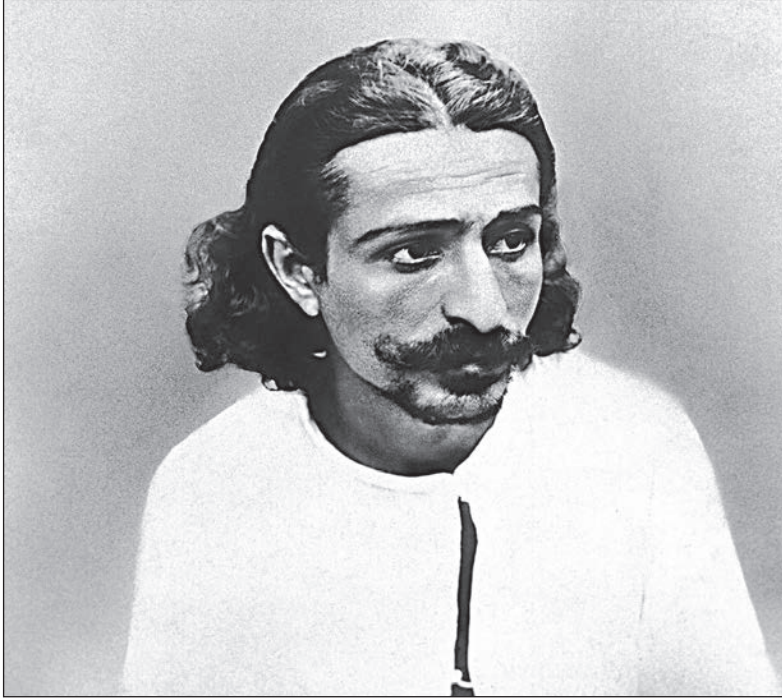
When Baba stayed at Irani Mansion, all the mandali slept on the floor in the large drawing room or on one of the two balconies. We had no beds at that time. Many of the mandali were there—Arjun, Vishnu, Ramjoo, Adi Sr., Sarosh, Padri, and others. I don't remember Pendu being there, because he was in Quetta for some time in those early days. My parents and I stayed in the two bedrooms. We could close the door for privacy. But when the mandali were visiting, that door was open all day long, and there was much coming and going. There was also a large kitchen.

The day before Baba would arrive, He would send Padri with a message for us. Baba would say, "Tomorrow morning at ten o'clock, dal and rice has to be ready, and two kinds of vegetable also." So we were able to prepare food for everyone ahead of time.

Whenever they came, we quickly cleaned the flat and prepared all the food, so it would be hot when they arrived. We felt so much happiness having Baba and all the mandali visit us like that.



Then my father became ill again, so ill that he had to be moved to my auntie's place in Byculla, in central Bombay. We also stayed there with him. But our other flat in Dadar still had to be cleaned and kept up, so we sent a servant every fifteen days to look after the flat and clean



*Meher Baba,
Ghatkopar,
October 19, 1923*

it. One day in early June 1924, when the servant went to our flat to clean up, Baba was there with two of His mandali. The servant came right back and told us, "Three persons are there at your flat, and one has a long beard." The servant didn't know Meher Baba, so he just described what he saw to my mother and me.

My mother knew it was Baba, and I also knew, because I had just had a vision of Baba. Whenever Baba used to come to Bombay, I would see Him in a vision the day before He arrived. That way, I knew He would be coming. So when the servant told us, my mother said, "Khorshed, I must go find out what is happening."

I responded, "I also must come!" because I was sure it was Baba. So I got ready and went with her.

When we arrived, we saw that Baba was sitting in the corner of the prayer room, and He was very happy that we both had come. He had arrived that same day, and He had grown a long beard since we'd last seen Him.

Baba called my mother and me to Him, and He asked me, "Do you know who is coming in a few days?"

I said, "I don't know, Baba. Who is coming?"

He replied, "Your best friend Mehera is coming! Your *sakhi*!"

At that time, Mehera was staying in Meherabad with Baba. We had all been staying at Meherabad together for Upasni Maharaj's birthday celebration, and then Baba had sent me back to Bombay because my father was ill. Mehera had stayed on with Baba for a couple more weeks, and now she and the other women were all coming to Bombay on their way to Quetta, according to Baba's instructions. Baba had arrived ahead of them, so we were getting the chance to see Him.

Baba said, "Since your friend Mehera is coming, don't go back to your auntie's place right now." He told my mother, "Let Khorshed stay and be with Mehera for a few days. Don't take her back with you. Let her be with Mehera."

My mother replied, "All right, Baba."

I was very happy. Baba stayed with us for a few days before leaving for Quetta with three of His mandali. The other mandali were to follow later. I remained at our flat while my mother returned to Byculla to take care of my father. Mehera arrived with Daulatmai, Naja, Dowla Masi, and the wife of Baba's older brother Jamshed, who was known as Big Khorshed, because she was older than me. Baba had sent three of His mandali to accompany the women to Bombay.

They stayed with us for a week, and we all went to see a play together and to have a drive along the seaside.

Before leaving for Quetta, Baba had told my family that He would not return for twelve years. My father asked Gustadji if that was really true, and Gustadji said that it was what Baba had decided and nothing could be done to change Baba's decision. Because I had been in close company with Baba ever since Manzil-e-Meem, the very thought of separation from Him was unbearable to me. But when I heard Baba say that He was not returning for such a long time, I didn't really feel it, because I was sure that I would also be going with them. I told Mehera that I would like to go, and she also assumed I was coming.

Baba left for Quetta on June 6th, and a week or so later it was time for the women to leave. Gustadji and the rest of the women went to the station, and I was there with them. It was not until then that I found out I would not be among the ones accompanying Baba to Quetta. And Baba wasn't there to ask. So, I had no way to change anything. When I realized this, the tears started pouring from my eyes. I cannot describe the pain I felt in my heart. It wasn't that I wanted to go with the women; it was just that going with them meant being with Baba, and that meant everything to me.

So I had to stay back in Bombay, and I cried so much. Every day I would go to Baba's photo, fold my hands, and tell Baba, "Please come back soon, because I can't bear this."

Really, I was so upset, so constantly restless that there's no way I can describe the torment I was feeling at that time. And then, after a few weeks, I heard that Baba was coming back. Oh, then I felt very happy! Even though Baba had decided He would not be

returning for twelve years, He came back to Bombay at the end of July 1924. He told me that it was because of my weeping that He had come back.



When He returned to Bombay from Quetta, Baba stayed at our flat in Dadar for some days, and all the cooking for Baba and the mandali was being done in our kitchen. So I told Mehera, “We should also cook something for Baba that He would enjoy. We can’t cook the main dishes, but do you know of some little sweets we could make for Baba?”

She said, “Oh, yes, I know how to make *dudh-pak puri*.”

So I said, “Good. Then let’s make it very secretly.”

Because this was my house, I could arrange things how I liked. So we set up in one corner of the kitchen and, silently, we made the *dudh-pak*, which is like custard, and the *puris*, which are small fried *chapattis* (flat whole wheat bread). But we did not know the exact recipe, so we just did what we thought would work. *Puris* are very troublesome to make—you have to fry the *puri* batter in a big pot of boiling oil. When we finished frying the *puris*, we had to place the vessel of hot oil on a high shelf, but my hand slipped from the pot and all the oil splashed on my face. My eyes were not hurt, but my cheek was badly burned! But I didn’t scream or call out. I just swallowed, because even when I am hurt, I have the habit of not making a sound.

No one in the kitchen knew what had happened to me, but I was in such pain! So I ran out onto the verandah, and as I was

standing there, blisters suddenly started popping out all over my cheek. I didn't want to tell Baba, because I was afraid that then He would not eat the puris. Not knowing what to do, I just stood there like that, while Baba ate His food inside. When He had finished His lunch, He was offered the dudh-pak puri.

Baba looked at it and asked, "Who has made this? Call them."

So they called us, but I didn't know what to do. So I stood behind Mehera to hide my face. I had put some medicine on that I had used before, since I often burned myself whenever I cooked. I used the medicine that Padri had brought from the hospital when I had gotten burned before.

Baba said to us, "This is food for an invalid. I'm not sick." After a pause He said, "Even so, you made it with love, so I will eat it." And He had a little bit of it. Then we left, because the mandali were there.

Later that day, Baba put up a little net in the hall at Irani Mansion and played ping-pong on the floor with the mandali. Then He called all of us from the kitchen again and gave us each a bottle of soda to drink. Mehera felt awkward because we had not made the dudh-pak puri properly for Baba, and now He was giving us fizzy bottles of soda to drink. Suddenly she started laughing, which then caused her to choke.

Baba asked what was happening and then told us, "Go and drink your sodas in the kitchen." Mehera was fine and we were happy to finish our drinks with no one looking on.

In the evening, after Baba had taken His dinner, He called us and asked if we had all had our dinner. But I didn't come to Baba, because I didn't want to show anyone that I'd gotten burned. Perhaps Baba had noticed before, but He hadn't said anything. Baba was still talking at this time.

So I was standing outside on the balcony when Baba came out. I just stood there with my back to Him, not showing my face.

Baba asked me, "Have you had your dinner?"

I said, "No, Baba, no. I will take it, I will take it."

He said, "Come on. Why aren't you coming?"

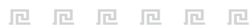
So I had to go to Him. I turned around and Baba saw my face.

He asked, "How did this happen?"

I replied, "Baba, the hot oil burned me."

Then Baba said, "Your face is burned, and that is not good. You shouldn't cook until you learn how to do it properly. And if you want to stay with Me, you have to learn to cook. But you don't have to have dinner with the other people tonight."

So I was saved. The hot oil had not affected my eyes. If it had gone in my eyes, it would have been terrible. But it only splashed on one side of my face. I was not burned on both sides.



The next day, Baba asked us, "Do you know how to make potato patties?"

We replied, "No, Baba. We don't know."

He said, "Tomorrow I'll show you. Boil some potatoes and grind some garlic and other spices together, and then I'll show you."

So the following day, He came in the kitchen and sat on a low stool in the corner. It was just Mehera and me, nobody else. Baba took the potatoes and showed us how to peel them and smash them and add garlic, ginger, onions, salt, and other spices. Then Baba made them into round balls, patting them into shape with His own hands.

Baba said, "Now, we must fry them on the stove." So we heated the stove, and Baba fried them.

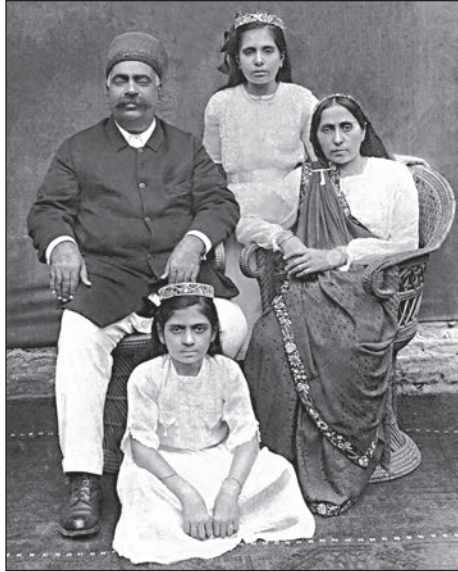
"Oh, my!" I thought, "Baba's hands made those patties!" They were wonderful! We loved them so much! They were so tasty. Everyone had a little bit. And Baba also ate some Himself. And I was very happy to have had Baba as my cooking teacher.

Receiving Baba's Call

After spending a few days in Khorshed's home in Bombay, Baba left on an extensive journey throughout India in August 1924. Before leaving, He told Mehera, Daulatmai, and Khorshed to move to Khushru Quarters in Ahmednagar. After Baba returned in September from His arduous journey, He stayed with Khorshed's parents in Bombay. During the next three months, Baba traveled back and forth between Bombay and Ahmednagar several times. Each time He went to Meherabad, Baba would call Mehera, Daulatmai, and Khorshed to visit Him there. Finally, in October 1924, Baba called them to come live as the first women residents at Meherabad.

After Baba returned from His trip to Quetta, He called me to stay with Him. He told me to come to Ahmednagar, while He would be traveling to different places in India. He had already called Mehera and her mother, telling them to come with only one trunk of their possessions to last for one year. So they had come to Ahmednagar in July 1924, and I came alone from Bombay to join them in August.

We stayed in what was known as Khushru Quarters, my Aunt Gulmai's home. I had been there the previous year, when Baba remained in seclusion for seven days in two rooms in Khushru Quarters. My mother and I had stayed in another house during the celebration of Rustom and Freni's wedding. In those days, Khushru Quarters was only half the size it is now. The side that has Upasni's Shrine Room had not been built in 1923. I used to come and sit outside the room where I knew Baba was in seclusion. I just wanted to be there near Him. So,



Khorshed's Aunt Gulmai Irani, with her husband, Kaikhushru (Khan Saheb) and their two daughters, Piroja (standing) and Dolly, circa 1923

I sat silently in case I could see Him through the window. Baba had the habit of looking out the window sometimes, because He liked to see what was going on. I hoped that maybe I could catch a glimpse of Him. I shouldn't have done that, but I was still a child then—about thirteen years old. Once, I saw Baba come near the window, but then He stepped back, maybe because He saw me.

When His seclusion was over, Baba called me. I was very fond of playing cards, and I think someone had complained to Baba that I played cards all day. Baba asked me, “How are you passing your time? What do you do all day long?”

I replied, “I play cards—a game called ‘Patience.’”

Baba said, “Bring your cards to Me; I want to see them.” So I brought Baba the pack of cards, and He asked, “May I keep them?”

I replied, “Yes, take them.” Ever since then, I don’t like to play cards.



So when we came to live at Khushru Quarters, Baba gave us the two rooms He had used for His seclusion work. Mehera’s mother had one room, and I shared the other with Mehera and Adi’s sister, Dolly.

Baba told us now that we had come to be with Him, we would have to obey His orders. “At six o’clock, you have to get up and take a bath.” So every morning a tank of water would have to be heated on a stove. “After that,” Baba said, “you have to meditate for one hour.” During the meditation we had to recite, “Yezdan, Yezdan . . .” for one hour. Yezdan is one of the Zoroastrian names of God. When we finished, we then spent one hour writing “Yezdan.” Pads and pencils were ordered for us from the bazaar. After writing, we had to take scissors and cut each “Yezdan” separately and put the little pieces of cut paper in a box. Baba told us that He would drop these papers in the river near Sakori for the fish to eat.

By then, it was lunchtime, and after that we had to sew shirts for Baba to give to the boys in Arangaon village. In this way, we were

kept busy all day. At six o'clock we would have supper, and at nine o'clock we had to go to sleep, as per Baba's orders.

Part of Baba's work at that time was distributing clothing to the poor, so we helped by making shirts. We had to sew three sizes of shirts—one for small boys, one for middle-sized boys, and one for larger boys and men. Daulatmai, Mehera's mother, bought the cloth from the bazaar to make the shirts. She had to find good cloth that was very soft, yet strong. She brought a whole roll of fabric and cut all the patterns. Then Mehera and I sewed all the shirts. We used two treadle sewing machines, one foot-operated and one hand-operated. Dolly would come and make the holes for the buttons, but she didn't take much interest in the sewing.

Baba told us, "You have to make many, many shirts and bring them to Arangaon. Later, I will call you to come to live in Meherabad with Me forever." This made us very happy, and we worked very hard to make all the shirts, so that we could go to Meherabad to live with Baba.

After eight or ten days, Baba called us to come and see Him at Meherabad. So all of us went to see Baba—Mehera, Daulatmai, Dolly, and me. Baba asked us how many shirts had been finished. When we told Him about twenty, Baba said, "Oh, only that many? I thought many more would have been done by now."

We said, "Baba, we tried our best. We did as much as we could do."

"All right," Baba said, "Just keep on going."

So that way, we went on. Baba stayed in Meherabad with the mandali, and every fifteen days we would go to see Him—we would go and come back the same day. The road to Meherabad was very rough and unpaved, so it was a difficult trip to get there. There were

no motor cars in Ahmednagar in those days. So Mehera and I would go with Daulatmai in her tonga, and Mehera's white horse Sufi would pull us. The tonga would jostle back and forth for five or six miles. But we were happy, because we were going to see Baba.

We used to grab every opportunity we could to go to Meherabad. Once, when Vishnu Master came from Poona to see Baba, there was some empty space in the tonga he had hired, so we took that opportunity to go to Meherabad. Baba was happy to see Mehera and me there.

Another time when we had gone to Meherabad, I thought how nice it would be to spend the night there. So I said to Mehera, "I don't want to go back to Ahmednagar tonight. I would like to stay here and be near Baba." So Mehera returned to Khushru Quarters without me.

Later, when Baba saw that I was still at the Post Office, He asked, "Oh, you didn't go back to Nagar? Why are you still here?"

"Baba, I don't want to go," I replied. "I would like to stay here tonight."

But Baba said, "No, you have to go. If I tell you to go, then you must go."

I agreed to leave, but I was crying as I walked along the road. I thought, "I will go myself on foot. I don't care how it looks. I'll just walk all the way back."

After a few minutes, Baba came up behind me and said, "How are you going to get back to Nagar?"

"Like this," I replied. "I'm going by foot. You don't want me, so I am going."

But Baba said, "No. You shouldn't go like this. Wait." Then He called a tonga, and I went back to Khushru Quarters in the tonga. Baba took care of me, because I was following His order.



When we were with Baba at Meherabad another time, He said, "I have something causing an itch on my head. Maybe it is lice or something else." This was possible because some of the Arangaon boys had lice, and Baba would sit near them or would embrace them. So it would have been easy for Him to get lice, too.

We said, "Oh, Baba, shall we check and see if You have any lice?"

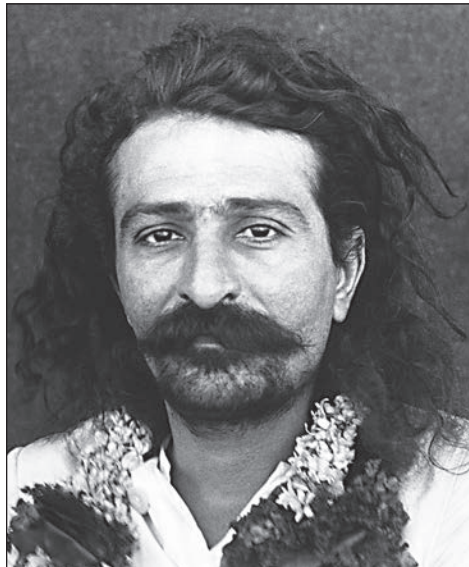
He said, "Yes, why not?"

We were surprised that Baba agreed. Until then it had always been Gustadji or Gulmai who would comb Baba's hair. As much as we wanted to, we had never touched Baba's head or hair or anything. So we were very happy to get this opportunity. I stood on one side and Mehera stood on the other and we looked very carefully through Baba's hair.

Baba had very long, beautiful hair at that time. After a while, I found a louse. I was so surprised! I said, "Look, Mehera, this is a white louse. I got it!" So I took it out and showed her.

Mehera said, "Kill it; kill it; throw it away."

But I said, "Oh, no, how can I kill it? This louse is precious. I won't let it die." You see, I was very young at this



*Baba, Lower
Meherabad*

time, and I thought that because the louse had been on Baba's head all day and all night, it was precious. I didn't want to kill it, so I took out an empty matchbox and put it in that. Then I put the matchbox where it would be safe. But I don't remember what happened to it after that.

That was the first time Mehera or I had ever touched Baba's hair. Then we returned to Nagar in the tonga and went back to our usual routine of prayers and sewing.



On one of our next visits to Meherabad, Baba asked us how many shirts we had made. We said, "A hundred, Baba." But Baba told us that He wanted more than a hundred, so we started sewing even faster. By then we had become better at using the treadle sewing machines. We couldn't work longer hours, because Baba had told us when we had to get up and when we were supposed to go bed. But we could try to work faster and make more shirts. And because we wanted so much to please Baba, we tried our best.

There were other people staying in Khushru Quarters at that time, but we were so busy we had no time to talk with them or see them. We spent every waking moment doing what Baba had told us to do.

After about two months—I don't remember exactly—we had made well over a hundred shirts. So Baba said, "That's enough. Now bring Me all that you have done." He gave us the date and told us to come to Meherabad at two o'clock with all of the shirts. We were so happy. We thought, "Oh, now Baba will be so pleased." In addition

to the shirts, Baba had asked us to bring puffed rice and channa as prasad. So on the appointed day in October 1924, we hired two bullock carts. In one we put two gunnysacks of puffed rice and two gunny sacks of channa. The other cart we filled with the shirts—there were so many of them.

We left Khushru Quarters in our tonga along with the two bullock carts at ten in the morning. We didn't reach Meherabad until two in the afternoon. Baba had told us to come with our bedding rolls, because we would be able to stay with Him from then on. This was our dream come true!

When we got to Meherabad, we saw Baba sitting on the platform, singing bhajans and playing a drum with a large crowd of people. Baba looked very happy. When He finished the bhajans, Baba had the men mandali take all the channa and puffed rice and shirts out of the bullock carts and put them near Him. Baba said, "I am so pleased with all that you have brought."

Then Baba asked the crowd of people to make three lines—one for small boys, one for medium size, and one for large boys and men. When they had done this, He said, "Now, come one by one to receive My prasad." As each one came to Baba, He gave each person a shirt in his size and placed the channa and puffed rice on top of it. Baba gave so much prasad! He cupped both His hands together and filled them to overflowing with the chickpeas, and then did the same when He gave the puffed rice. Baba gave two handfuls of prasad to the small and medium-sized boys and three handfuls to the large boys and men. I don't know how Baba was able to give so much to everyone—because we only brought two gunny sacks of each. But when the darshan program was finished, Baba still had prasad left over!

There were so many people that Baba didn't finish handing out the prasad until six o'clock. Everyone was so pleased to have Baba's prasad and darshan. Then they all went back to their homes in the village. We women had stayed and watched Baba the whole time. Then He turned to us and said, "You should also go now and settle into your new place." Baba told Padri to show us where we were going to live.

Padri took us to a solid stone building near the railway tracks. It had been used as a Post Office by the British army. This is the first building that I stayed in at Meherabad, along with Mehera and her mother. There were just the three of us. We were so happy that Baba had finally called us to live with Him there.

It had one large room and a verandah on two sides. We women were to sleep inside and Baba and three of His mandali would sleep



*Model of the
Post Office at
Meherabad as it
was when
Khorshed first
stayed there
in 1924 with
Mehera and
Daulatmai*

out on the verandah. During the day, the verandah was used as a kind of storeroom, and Gustadji was in charge of it. Baba slept outside on the verandah at night, and did His seclusion work up on Meherabad Hill during the day. But no one lived at Upper Meherabad at that time.

The building had one long room with nothing in it. It was completely empty—no furniture, nothing. Since soon it would be time to go to bed, we just settled down on the floor with our bedding rolls. We opened them in a row—first Daulatmai's bedding, then Mehera's, then mine next to Mehera's.

At that time, life at Meherabad was very simple, even austere. There were no cups and saucers, no china. Baba drank His tea from a *lota* (a big aluminum mug), which would have been very hot to His lips. This was the same mug He used for bathing and washing His face. So I had the idea that this was what spiritual life should be like—austere.

When we had been getting ready to move to Meherabad from Khushru Quarters, I had said to Mehera as we were packing, "Mehera, why are we taking these pillows? We are going to become fakirs, so we do not need these pillows and so many comforts." Mehera listened to what I said and agreed.

So now, when we unrolled our bedding, we had no pillows. At about half past six, as we were sitting on the floor of the Post Office talking, Baba came over. He asked us, "Are you settled into your room?" Baba was still talking at that time.

"Yes," we replied.

"So whose bedding is this?" Baba asked.

"Mehera's."

“And whose is this?”

“Khorshed’s.”

Then Baba noticed that there was no pillow in Mehera’s bedding roll. And in mine also—there was no pillow. So He asked Mehera, “Where is your pillow? Did you forget to bring it?”

Mehera replied, “No, Baba, I have not been using one for some time. And now I do not have the habit. So I don’t use a pillow.”

Then He asked me, “Khorshed, where is your pillow?”

I also said, “I don’t use one anymore, either.”

Baba had the habit of asking a question two or three times. He wanted to find out the real reason for our not using pillows. So He asked Mehera twice more. Finally Mehera said, “Baba, Khorshed told me that since we are coming to live a spiritual life, we should not have anything comfortable and nice. So we just left our pillows behind.”

Baba asked me, “Khorshed, did you tell Mehera this? Is this true?”

“Yes, Baba,” I replied. “I said that.” I have always been a little bold; so I continued, “Because we are living with a spiritual master, we don’t want to seek comfort. We did not use pillows in Sakori. In Upasni Maharaj’s place, we did not even use *chappals* (sandals). We used to go barefoot everywhere in Sakori, all the time.”

Baba said, “Forget Sakori! That rule was there, but here it is My rule! If you want to stay with Me, you have to listen to Me. Otherwise, you can leave. Do you want to listen to Me or not?”

I said, “Yes, yes, Baba. We want to listen to You.”

“So here, you have to put on chappals and do the other things that I have told you to do.” Then Baba asked Padri to bring two pillows from His bedding roll. Baba gave one of His own pillows to each of us—one for Mehera and one for me. He said, “You should not

sleep without a pillow. Always use a pillow. Now go to sleep, so in the morning you will be fresh for your work.”

All this happened on my first day of staying with Baba. And from that time, I always remember to use a pillow. Even now, sometimes I don't want to, but I think, “No. Baba told me to use a pillow; so I have to.”

Learning Baba's Ways

In October 1924, Baba called Mehera, Khorshed, and Daulatmai to live as the first women at Meherabad. They took up residence in the Post Office building, where Baba had previously stayed. Soon after they had arrived, Baba called His cousin Naja, His aunt Dowla Masi, and His brother Jamshed's wife, known as Big Khorshed, to join them. In late November, Baba and the women then went to Bombay, where they stayed for two months.

Once we were settled in the Post Office, Baba telegraphed Naja, Dowla Masi, and Jamshed's wife to come from Poona and stay with us. Naja's brother, Pendu, and her father, Masaji, were already staying with the men mandali. Naja's mother, known as Pila Masi, was Shireenmai's younger sister. She loved Baba very much, and Baba used to visit her almost every day when He was in His early twenties. But she had died when Naja and Pendu were young.

Dowla Masi was Shireenmai's older sister and had raised Shireenmai's first child, Jamshed, as her own son. Shireenmai was only fifteen when Jamshed was born, and she wasn't ready to be a mother yet. It was a common custom in the Zoroastrian community for an older woman in the family to raise the first child.



*Dowla Masi,
circa 1923*

When Shireenmai's second son, Merwan, was born, not only was she older and more capable of caring for him, but she instantly fell in love with His beauty. Merwan had golden hair as a child. He was fair and very handsome, so Shireenmai happily raised Merwan, as well as all her other children.



*Shireenmai,
circa 1923*



At Meherabad, Mehera's mother, Daulatmai, was given the primary duty of cooking our food, and Dowla Masi had been called from Poona to help her. They cooked the food on a little wood fire on the verandah of the Post Office, and a stove was set up inside to make Baba's tea, because He did not like the smell of wood smoke in His tea. Baba would drink His morning tea with milk. In those days, all of us, including Baba, would drink our tea out of metal cups. Baba had

told Mehera and me not to cook or prepare the food, but to clean all the vessels after the cooking was finished.

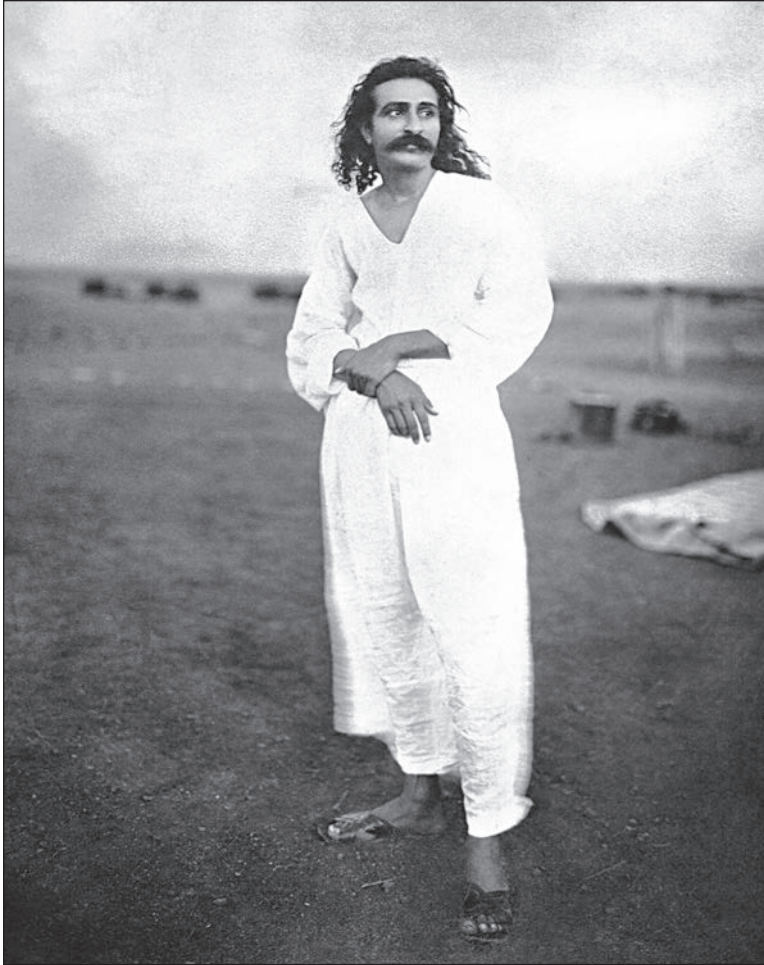
After Naja and Dowla Masi arrived, Baba instructed us girls to meditate for two hours each day. While Daulatmai and Dowla Masi were cooking, we would meditate on Baba's face. Of course, we loved doing this, but sometimes, when we tried to picture Baba's face, we would fall asleep instead. It's only natural, isn't it, that when you calm your mind, and you're tired, you fall asleep?

Not far from the Post Office was a well with a platform where we could wash our clothes. Baba gave me the duty of washing Gustadji's clothes, and Mehera washed Baba's clothes. When Baba had been at Manzil-e-Meem, He used to wear a shirt and *lengha* (loose pants). Afterwards, Baba told Gulmai that He wanted to change His dress—He wanted to wear a big *sadra* (a long upper garment) with long sleeves. So Gulmai bought muslin from the bazaar and I sewed the sadras for Baba.

At that time, we were free to go wherever we wanted. Baba had told us, "You may go wherever you like, even into town." But we didn't go anywhere. We stayed at Meherabad and attended to our duties. After washing our clothes at the well, we would come right back to the Post Office. Sometimes we would play cricket on an open field nearby, because Baba wanted us to get good exercise.

So in the beginning, Baba tested us to see if we wanted to go and explore different places. But we had no interest in going anywhere else. We only wanted to be with Baba and please Him. Later on, Baba gave us orders to stay only at the Post Office.

One morning, very early, we heard Baba singing. There was a little opening in the window of the Post Office, and we could hear



*Baba wearing
a sadra,
Meherabad,
circa 1924*

Him singing. Baba's voice was so beautiful! And we heard Him coming closer and closer. So we ran to the window to see Him. Baba had a white shawl wrapped around His head, and He was dancing as He sang. We could see Him just for a minute. But we had a lovely glimpse of Baba singing in the morning light. The words He sang

meant: “To be your lover, I had to leave everything. I left all my gold jewelry and bangles for your love. Now I wear just a simple kafni. But Your love brings me true happiness.”



Sometimes, Baba would have people come and sing bhajans or tell stories of one of the Avatars or saints, like Rama or Tukaram. These singers were often very good. Mehera and I also liked to sing, so I asked my father to bring a harmonium the next time he and my mother came to visit from Bombay. I knew how to play, but we didn't take part in the programs. We would just join in from the Post Office when we heard the people singing. The rest of the time, Mehera and I would sing by ourselves. Just the two of us. We had no thought of performing as musicians, but we sang privately in the Post Office just to pass the time—especially in the beginning, when we had very little to do. I enjoyed singing and playing music very much, and Mehera liked it too.

Baba knew that my father had brought me a harmonium. After some time He asked me about it, “Khorshed, would you be willing to give your harmonium to a bhajan singer that I like? He is very poor and blind, and he cannot afford a harmonium. If you give your harmonium to Me, then I will give it to him. This would help him very much.”

I said, “Baba, it is Yours. You can do whatever You like with it.”

So I gave the harmonium to Baba, and Baba gave it to the blind bhajan singer. That was the last I saw of it. That blind man was very happy, because now he could earn money for his food and shelter.

Baba was happy to have helped him. And I was happy to do what Baba asked. So everyone was happy. Baba knows the reasons behind everything that happens.

A little later, I wrote to my father again and asked him for another harmonium. That first harmonium had been an especially good model, and very expensive. It cost 3,000 rupees, which was a considerable amount of money at that time. Knowing that it might be used for Baba, my father had gotten a very high-quality harmonium and brought it from Bombay.

The second time, my father sent one that was also very nice. I received it a few months later. But again, Baba gave the harmonium away to someone else. This time, He gave it to a man who sang bhajans and explained their meaning. Baba had told me, "He plays well, but he can't afford to get a harmonium of his own. Yet he needs one to earn his living." Then Baba asked me, "Shall I give your harmonium to him?"

Of course, I said, "Yes, Baba."

And so my second harmonium was gone. But I didn't mind. If it made Baba happy to give away my harmoniums, I was happy to have Him do so. Why not give them away, if that's what Baba wants?

Then Mehera and I talked about it, and we realized that Baba did not want us to become attached to anything for the sake of enjoyment. That's why Baba was taking the harmoniums from us. He didn't want us to have things that took our attention away from Him. Also, in the ashram, He didn't want me to feel that something was "mine." Baba wants us to rely only on Him, to focus on Him and the work that He has given us. Baba doesn't want us to be attached to anything, except His love. And He wants us to remember Him all the time.

After that, Mehera and I stopped singing. We started to use our time to make garlands and a crown for Baba, and other things that helped us remember Baba more directly.

When Baba took that first harmonium, I didn't understand His real intent. I just knew that Baba had asked for it, so I gave it to Him. After He took the second one, Mehera and I realized Baba's intention. Now, after all these years, I see even more clearly that Baba did not want us to entertain ourselves in that way. But back then, I didn't realize that. Gradually, I began to see. Baba said, "This world is a big joke." It's true; and we have to keep alert.



During those early times at Meherabad, there was a family that stayed in Arangaon who loved Baba very much. Kaka Shahane and his wife had four daughters and three sons. One of his sons, Mohan, wrote the first arti in Marathi at Meherabad. Mohan used Baba's tune to the "Gujarati Arti." Every day the family would sing this arti to Baba.

One of the daughters was named Shanti, and she was especially good looking. She sang very well and loved Baba very much. Every Thursday their mother would make bhajia and an Indian sweet called *rava* for Baba. Then they would invite Baba and the mandali to their home and sing arti to Him.

One time, a singing competition was held at Meherabad, with Baba and the mandali as the judges. Mani was very young then and was visiting on holiday. She had a very good voice, so I taught her to sing a song in Gujarati that I had learned as a child, but I added Baba's name to the song. Its words meant, "You are very fortunate if

you love Meher Baba.” We just pushed Mani forward to sing it, and she won second place. But Shanti had sung a song by Kabir with a very difficult tune, and she won first place. The meaning of her song was, “Without a Guru you can’t progress on the path and attain God realization.”

The Shahane family was very poor, but Baba supported them. Later they moved to Bombay, and Shanti’s sister Lela became a famous singer. Mohan’s arti made the family well known.



When we first stayed at the Post Office, Baba would seldom enter our room. But He used to come to take His lunch outside on the verandah. After Baba finished eating, we would pour water over His hands so He could wash them and catch it in a bowl. The soapy water would have little bits of food from Baba’s hands in it. I noticed this and remembered how those Muslim fellows who were staying at Manzil-e-Meem had collected the crumbs as Baba washed His hands. Their love for Baba deeply impressed me. I had told Gustadji, “See how clever they are. See what they are doing because their love is so great. We don’t love Baba like that.” Their example had stayed in my mind.

So I said to the other women at Meherabad, “Do you know that some of Baba’s Muslim followers love Baba one hundred percent? They collect the crumbs from His hands and take it as prasad each time after He eats. We do not love Baba like that, because we just throw His hand-washing water out. Our love is not as great as theirs.”

The other women were very impressed with what I said, even though they were all older than me—Daulatmai, Mehera, and Naja.

I gave them a lecture and I spoke with a lot of emotion, because I felt so strongly about this. Then they asked me, “What can we do to show our love for Baba?”

I said, “When we collect Baba’s hand-washing water, we shouldn’t just throw it out. We should drink it as Baba’s prasad instead.”

They all thought this was a good idea, and said, “Yes, Khorshed, we should do as you suggest. We also love Baba very much, so we have to show our love one hundred percent by not wasting the water. We must drink it instead.”

So the next time Baba washed after His meal, I saved all the water that had touched Baba’s hands, as well as little bits of food and soap. Then, when Baba had left, I gave the bowl of water to Daulatmai and asked her to give it to each of us as prasad. Everyone drank it, and we were very happy. We didn’t care how the water tasted, because we all felt that we were now demonstrating that we loved Baba completely. And we never had a problem from drinking that water—no nausea or diarrhea or illness—nothing. We drank it happily and never questioned our decision, because we all felt that we were proving that we loved Baba one hundred percent, which is what mattered to us most.

We continued to drink Baba’s water for almost a month without Baba noticing. Usually He left after He finished His lunch and did not come back until much later. But one day, Baba came back to the Post Office unexpectedly, and He saw that each of us was drinking something in a small glass. Baba was surprised, because He knew there was nothing special to drink. So He asked, “What are you drinking?”

No one said anything. We all kept quiet.

“What are you drinking?” He asked again, because Baba was speaking at this time.

Still no one said anything. So Baba implored, "Tell Me what you are drinking."

This made me suddenly think that maybe what we were doing was wrong. Maybe Baba wouldn't like it. So I didn't say anything. I just kept quiet.

Mehera finally spoke up and said, "Baba, Khorshed told us how Your Muslim followers love You one hundred percent. She told us how they collected the food particles in a sheet as You washed Your hands, and then ate them as prasad. But we had just been throwing out your hand-washing water. So we felt we were not loving you as much as they were. Khorshed said this to us, and we all agreed. So we decided that in order to show that we also love you completely, we should drink the water that You have touched."

Baba looked very surprised! He asked each of us, "You did not throw up or have any ill effects to your health?"

We said, "No, Baba. We are all healthy. Nothing bad happened at all. No throwing up, no diarrhea, nothing."

So Baba asked, "And how long have you been doing this?"

"For almost one month," we said.

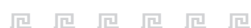
When Baba heard this, perhaps He was laughing in His mind at how silly we were, but He didn't show it. He simply said, "From now on, don't drink the water. I know you all love Me one hundred percent. And I love all of you one hundred percent, as well. So there is no need for this. And don't do anything like this ever again."

"But what should we do with the water You have washed your hands in?" we asked.

Baba said, "Save that water; don't just throw it away. Put it in the

garden to water the plants. Place it somewhere that no one will walk on it. That will show that you love Me completely.”

So we all felt very happy. And I was especially happy, because Baba had not scolded me or told me that I had done something wrong. It has always been my nature to tell others, “Oh, we can do this or we can do that to show our love for Baba.” I’ve always done that. It’s just the way I am.



In November 1924, we didn’t see Baba for a week, because He was in seclusion, observing silence. Baba stayed inside the small room He had built across the road from the Post Office, which we call the Jhopdi.

After Baba’s seclusion, He decided to go to Bombay for two months, and He wanted us women to go with Him. So Mehera, Daulatmai, and Naja stayed with Baba and three of the mandali in the Bharucha Building, and Baba told me to stay with my parents in their home. But I would often go to the Bharucha Building and visit with them. During those days, Baba would sometimes test us. You have no idea how He tested us at times. Baba worked in a different way with each person. He even tested Mehera. Perhaps He wanted to make sure that she could stand whatever happened. If her love was true, then she would not mind anything.

One day, Baba gave us permission to go to a movie and said that He would come with us. Mehera wore a plain cotton sari, because she felt that was what would be appropriate to wear with a spiritual master. But Baba didn’t like it, and He got angry. He wanted her to

dress up when she was going out with Him. So Baba told Mehera, "You must leave." And He turned to me and said, "Take her to your home. Mehera can stay with you from now on."

I felt so bad for Mehera, because Baba was very angry with her. I could feel it, and I didn't like it. But I told Baba, "All right, I will take her." So Baba left with the others to go to the movie.

Mehera and I began to cry. But I didn't take her back to my house. I said, "Mehera let's not go. We should try to persuade Baba to let you stay with Him again." So we sat outside on the staircase and waited for Baba to return. We were so upset that we didn't care how it looked to anyone else for us to be sitting there.

Baba came back after about a half an hour. He had left in the middle of the movie. When Baba saw us sitting there, He asked, "What are you doing here? Didn't you hear what I said?"

I pleaded, "Please, Baba, forgive Mehera. Whatever she did, forgive her. I don't mind taking her to my house. I love Mehera, but it would be better if she stayed with you."

But Baba said, "No. You have to listen to what I said and obey Me."

So Mehera and I went to my house, which was not far away. We had only been there for a few minutes, wondering what to do, when someone came to the door and said, "Baba wants you to come back."

When we returned to the Bharucha Building, Baba embraced both of us and forgave us. Then we changed into nicer saris and went with Baba to the movie He had just been watching. But we learned that if we obey His order, then He will call us back.



Baba, Mehera, and the mandali returned to Meherabad from their visit to Bombay on January 25, 1925. This was the beginning of Baba's "first great stay" at Meherabad, which lasted until November 25, 1926. He began to refer to Meherabad at this time as His permanent headquarters and started to hold public darshans there.

Khorshed remained with her parents in Bombay until Baba called her back to Meherabad in March 1925 to live again in the Post Office building with Mehera and the other women.



When Baba and Mehera returned to Meherabad, I continued to stay with my parents at our home in Irani Mansion in Dadar. Although I wasn't with Baba, I still had to follow the orders He had given me. Sometimes this was very difficult. But because these orders were His wish, I did my best, and His grace made it possible. For example, Baba told me not to speak with any man except my maternal uncle. This was quite awkward, because I couldn't answer when any of my other male relatives asked me questions. And most of our family was against Baba to begin with. So when I wouldn't talk to them, they became even more suspicious about Baba. Still I carried out His orders and didn't speak to them.

Sometimes Baba would send word to us that one of the mandali, such as Padri or Pendu, would be coming to Bombay and needed a place to stay. So we would keep everything ready for them at our house. But I wasn't allowed to talk to the men mandali, either, when they visited.

I liked living with my parents very much. In earlier years, one of my wealthy aunties used to come to our place during the holidays, and

she would try to entice me to come and stay in her home, where I could have lived a life of leisure. But I never went with her because I loved living with my mother and father so much. In fact, I don't know how I ever left them to stay with Baba. It just shows I loved Baba even more than my own parents! And I am very, very happy that I took advantage of the precious opportunity to be with Baba. I have never regretted leaving home to be with Baba, even though I loved my parents dearly.

In the early months of 1925, Baba declared that He would soon observe silence for His spiritual work. He sent a letter to my mother telling her to come to Meherabad for a few days. In the letter He said, "I have to keep silence soon. So come before that, because I have something to tell you." Later, when I asked my mother what Baba had told her, she could not recollect. We did not keep diaries in those days or write everything down that Baba told us. We were so in love with Baba that we only thought of Him; we didn't think about the future or anything else. We were intoxicated like *masts* by His love. And even if we had felt like keeping a diary, we would not have had the time to do it.

This was not the first time while I was staying at my parents' home that Baba had called my mother to Meherabad alone. I thought to myself, "Baba always calls my mother and I have to stay and look after the house. I am missing the chance to see Baba." So I told my mother, "I won't let you go. It's my turn now."

But my mother replied, "Baba has called me, so I have to go. Next time, you can go." When she met with Baba, she told Him that I was longing to see Him. So Baba called me soon after this to come to Meherabad. I received His letter on Guruwara (Master's Day, Thursday) saying, "Come to Me on Master's Day, because I want you to be with the master."

Baba told me to come alone with the young man who lived with our family. My father always liked to look after someone, so Baba had given him this boy named Keki to look after. Keki was thirteen or fourteen years old. He stayed at our home in Bombay and attended school there. Baba wanted me to come with him by train to Ahmednagar and then to Meherabad—the place of the master.

As soon as I got to Ahmednagar, I told Gulmai, “Baba has called me for Master’s Day, which is today, so I must go out to Meherabad today.” At that time, getting to Meherabad was not easy. It is six miles from Ahmednagar and there were no buses or rickshaws then.

Gulmai wanted to send me, but she asked me, “How will you go? There is no tonga available. I have to go there tomorrow, so if you can wait, I will take you with me. I have already arranged transportation, so you can stay with me tonight.”

I said, “No, Baba wants me to be there today.”

She responded, “But how can you manage to go by yourself? You are only fourteen years old.”

I didn’t know what to do. I felt I *had* to get to Meherabad, because Baba had told me to come. Yet I had no idea how I could do this. In those days, a young girl was not supposed to make arrangements for herself, especially if it meant disobeying an elder.

So it seemed I had to stay with Gulmai. But after only fifteen minutes, a message came from Baba at Meherabad, “I called you to be with Me today on Master’s Day, but you have not come. Since you have not followed My order, then it is better that you stay where you are. Don’t come here.”

Oh my! That was a big shock for me. When I read the note I started crying. When Gulmai read it, she also became upset. Baba seemed to be angry, and she felt it was her fault.

Somehow she arranged for a tonga to be pulled by Mehera's white horse. "If Baba is upset with you," she said, "tell Him, 'Gulmai is very sorry that she kept Khorshed for a while and did not send her straight to You. She asks You to forgive her.' " Gulmai told me that I had to say this to Baba as soon as I reached Meherabad.

So Keki and I rushed to Meherabad. As we approached the Post Office, I saw Baba sitting on the verandah. He was playing with Freni's little son, Mehloo. As soon as I saw Baba sitting there, I stopped the tonga. Just as I put out one leg to get down, Baba's hand flew up to stop me. He said, "Don't get out of the tonga—go back!" Baba was still speaking then.

But I said, "Baba, I have a message to tell you: Gulmai asks that You forgive her, because she delayed me and did not send me immediately to You. She asked me to tell You this. And I also ask that You forgive me, because I wasn't able to find a tonga and arrange to come to Meherabad on my own. But in my mind, I was here all the time."

Gulmai is Baba's spiritual mother. As soon as Baba heard Gulmai's name, He calmed down and let me come to Him. So both Keki and I got down from the tonga and took Baba's darshan. Baba asked me, "Why didn't you follow My order and come when I said? Why did you listen to Gulmai?" Baba asked me so many things. But then He let me stay. Baba told Keki to go back to Bombay. He told me to stay in the Post Office with Mehera, Naja, and Daulatmai. Being allowed to stay with Baba made me very happy. It was all I ever wanted.

This story shows how important it is for us to take every word of Baba's order seriously—not just casually. Baba was very particular even about little things—such as having me arrive on Master's Day. He taught us by His own example. I remember how respectfully

Baba would fold His hands and kneel down before Upasni Maharaj. There was nothing casual in the way He did it. He was always very deliberate and respectful.



We, on the other hand, were young and energetic and didn't know how to serve Baba properly. I remember one time when I disobeyed Baba. He had told us that we should meditate at a certain time every day. Yet for some reason, on one particular day, I was told not to meditate. But I forgot, and I sat down to meditate anyway. We would sit with our legs crossed and close our eyes and visualize Baba at our forehead. As I was sitting there, Baba came in and saw me meditating. He said, "What are you doing? You aren't supposed to meditate today. So now I must punish you." He told me to stand in a certain place in the room and He put a *bhagula*, a cooking pot, on my head. Baba told me, "Stand there for as long as I tell you."



Mani S. Irani,
early 1920s

So I was standing there with that *bhagula* on my head when Mani came in. She was only about six years old at the time, and very fun-loving and mischievous. She was not living at Meherabad then, but had come to visit during her school holidays. When Mani saw me with the *bhagula* on my head, she started laughing and teasing me and dancing around. She kept going on and on about how silly I looked, and I got annoyed with her for teasing me like that.

Then Mani noticed Mehera's mother, Daulatmai, meditating very silently. Mani started running all round her, trying to distract her. Baba happened to come back while Mani was doing this and He was not happy. He said to Mani, "Come here," and He put a pot on her head and told her, "Now, go and stand next to Khorshed." This pleased me, and I told Mani, "You were teasing me, so see, Baba has punished you also."

Mani said, "Yes. Now I have a bhagula on my head, too." We were like sisters. It was good to receive something pleasant like that from Baba. We weren't thinking, "This is a punishment," or anything like that. We were laughing and having fun.

We stood like that for ten or fifteen minutes. Then Baba came and said, "Okay. Now your punishment is finished." So He took the vessels off our heads and let us go free. But as soon as Mani was free and Baba had left the room, she started joking and dancing 'round and 'round Daulatmai again. Then Mani started speaking in "pretend" Persian to distract Daulatmai from her meditation. Mani was such a good mimic that she made Daulatmai think she could actually speak Persian. Just at that moment, Baba walked back into the room and saw what Mani was doing. He scolded Mani again and asked, "Why do you interfere all the time?"

In this way, Baba trained us. He made allowances for us because we were young and didn't know better. Looking back at it now, I see in how many ways we came up short, even though we tried our best. And I regret having displeased Baba at times. How loving Baba was to put up with us all.

Baba Begins His Silence

With the return of Baba and His women and men mandali in January 1925, Meherabad became a flourishing community. On March 21st, Baba opened the Meher Charitable Dispensary and Hospital, which treated almost 7,500 patients over the next fifteen months. A few days later, on March 25th, Hazrat Babajan School was opened. Soon the school grew to serve two hundred boys from Arangaon village, and a separate girls' school was also opened. Several other temporary structures were also built at Meherabad.

During this time, Baba would sometimes observe short periods of seclusion and silence. Then, on July 10, 1925, He started observing a period of silence that He said would last for one year. None of His followers had any idea that Baba would remain silent for the rest of His life. Even in the midst of His silence, Baba remained very active, supervising the numerous activities at Meherabad.

After I returned to Meherabad in March 1925, I resumed living in the Post Office building with Mehera, Naja, and Daulatmai. I was almost fifteen years old.

At that time, Baba was staying in His little hut called the Jhopdi, which was across the road from the Post Office. A large enclosure of bamboo matting had been built around the Post Office, so that we could do our cooking and other work without anyone seeing inside. But we could not look out either, except through the door where the food vessels came in and out. We lived a simple, secluded life there, sleeping on the floor and drinking tea without milk in tin cups. We did not even have toothbrushes. Since we never asked Baba for anything, I wrote to my mother and asked her to send me a toothbrush and a sari.

Now that I was older, Baba gave me permission to cook. He said to me, “Khorshed, if you learn how to cook, then you can stay with Me.” So even though I didn’t actually like to cook, I tried my best to learn. I wanted to stay with Baba under any conditions—anywhere, anyhow. And whatever someone asked me to do for Baba, I never minded. I just did it, because I loved Baba with all my heart.

Our main job was cooking for all the hundreds of children and workers at Meherabad. We had to work very hard. Every day we had

Baba's Jhopdi, the hut where He was living when He started His Silence, circa 1925



Model of the Post Office compound with the outdoor kitchen shed where the women cooked food for hundreds of children and workers at Meherabad

to cook one whole kerosene tin full of raw dal and two kerosene tins of raw rice, which expanded to make a lot of food. And we had to clean so much spinach every morning. When the food was ready, one of the women would place the large vessels just outside the gate of our compound, and then one of the men would come and take them away. In this way, no man came inside our compound, and we did not go outside. Even Baba would not come into our room at that time. Once the food was ready, Baba would examine it to make sure it was prepared properly before serving it.

One day, Baba noticed something in the rice, and He harshly criticized Naja, who was helping with the cooking. We tried to be very careful and not make any mistakes, because Baba would not scold us if something was wrong. He would only scold Naja. She was getting scolded for all of us.

Dal and rice were our main diet. In the afternoon, we would have simple dal and rice with a little pinch of dry chickpea chutney. And in the evening, we had rice and dal with a little *masala* (mixture of spices), but not even any chutney. Everything was simple, only dal and rice.

Sometimes when Gulmai came, she would bring a little *ghee* (clarified butter) and dry toast from Ahmednagar. She would keep aside whatever she had and bring it for Baba's use. Otherwise, it was difficult to get buttermilk or ghee or even toast at Meherabad. So Gulmai would bring toast or ghee for Baba and give it to Naja for Him.

Every morning, Baba would come very early from His Jhopdi to the verandah of the Post Office. There was a large wooden box with a mattress and sheet over it, called a *khoka*, which Baba would sit on. He would not come inside our room, but would sit on the verandah and ask, "Is there anything to eat?"

Once Baba came before we had prepared anything. All we had for Him was the toast that Gulmai had brought. So we started getting up even earlier and preparing very quickly to make sure that everything would be ready whenever Baba came.

Baba was very sensitive to smells. When He was doing seclusion in the Jhopdi, He would get upset with me if I burned the milk while heating it. He also didn't like the smell of kerosene. We were always very careful to wash our hands when cooking for Baba, so smells on our hands would not disturb Him.

Mehera had orders to cook food only for Baba over a stove and not to go near the wood fire. She took care of Baba's personal items, like the utensils she used to make His tea, which she kept aside just for Him.

I helped Mehera when I had the time, but mostly she was busy doing her own duties. When we were both free, we would try to do something special for Baba. So any little extra time we had, we would use to make something for Baba.

Baba was so busy with the schools and dispensary and all the activities at Meherabad that He did not have much time to spend with us. So sometimes when I had finished my cooking, I would look out from the opening in the bamboo matting where we passed the big cooking pots. Baba was always going somewhere—to the boys' school, the girls' school, the hospital, or the *Sai Darbar* (a hall where He gave darshan). I liked to see what Baba was doing and all the activities that were going on.

Although Baba would come and take His lunch every day on the Post Office verandah, He stopped coming just to visit us. We wondered if we had done something wrong, and was that why Baba was

not coming to see us. Several days went by and none of us had any idea about it. So I decided to ask Baba, "Why are You not coming to our room? Did we do anything wrong? Tell us what we can do so that You will come to see us."

Baba said, "Get a paper and pencil so that you can write this down." Then He dictated twelve orders for us to follow. I kept that paper for such a long time, but now I only remember a few things:

"When you get up in the morning, you have to brush your teeth.

Take a bath every day.

Make tea ready.

Eat well.

Sleep well.

Wash your own clothes.

Whenever you come outside, put on warm clothes and a long coat.

When you are near the fire, you should not drink water.

When the sun goes down, you have to dress warmly.

You have to go to bed at nine o'clock."

That last order was especially for me. Because I had only recently come from Bombay, I would talk and talk to Mehera, all the time, catching up. I liked Mehera and Mehera liked me, so we would chit-chat together in the evenings, when our work was done, and not go to bed.

One day Baba asked me, "What time did you go to bed?"

"Ten o'clock," I replied.

Baba said, "No, you should go to bed by nine o'clock. Otherwise, I will make you go back to Bombay again." So Baba put an end to our late night talks by ordering us to go to bed at nine. See how Baba is so particular about every little thing.

One day, as Baba was coming to the Post Office building, He started calling, “Ida, Ida, Ida.” We didn’t know who He was calling. It turned out that He was calling me. Baba had given me a new name, “Ida.” In Yoga there are three channels. The one on the left is *Ida*. The one on the right is *Pingala*, which Baba named Naja. And in the center, where these two come together, is *Sushumna*. That’s the name Baba gave to Mehera. He would call us by these names, and we had to remember whose name was whose. It was fun. Right was Naja, left was me, and in the center was Mehera.



Before Baba started His silence, He stayed in seclusion in the Jhopdi from time to time. During those seclusions, Baba would drink only weak tea without milk each day. Mehera prepared the tea for Baba, and Naja and I helped by cleaning the vessels. Then someone took the tea to Baba.

One day, I looked out from the Post Office and I saw Baba sweeping the verandah of the Jhopdi. It hurt me to see Him doing such lowly work. I wanted to go there and take the broom from Baba’s hand to sweep it myself. But I wasn’t allowed to leave our compound.

Mani happened to be visiting us at that time, so I told her, “Mani, go and take the broom from Baba and sweep the area for Him. You can do it, but I’m not allowed to go there.” Because Mani was Baba’s sister, I thought she would be allowed to suggest that she sweep instead. I urged Mani to go because it made me feel so sad to see Baba sweeping.

So Mani went and suggested that she sweep instead of Baba, but He said, “No. For My own reasons, I have to do this work.” Mani

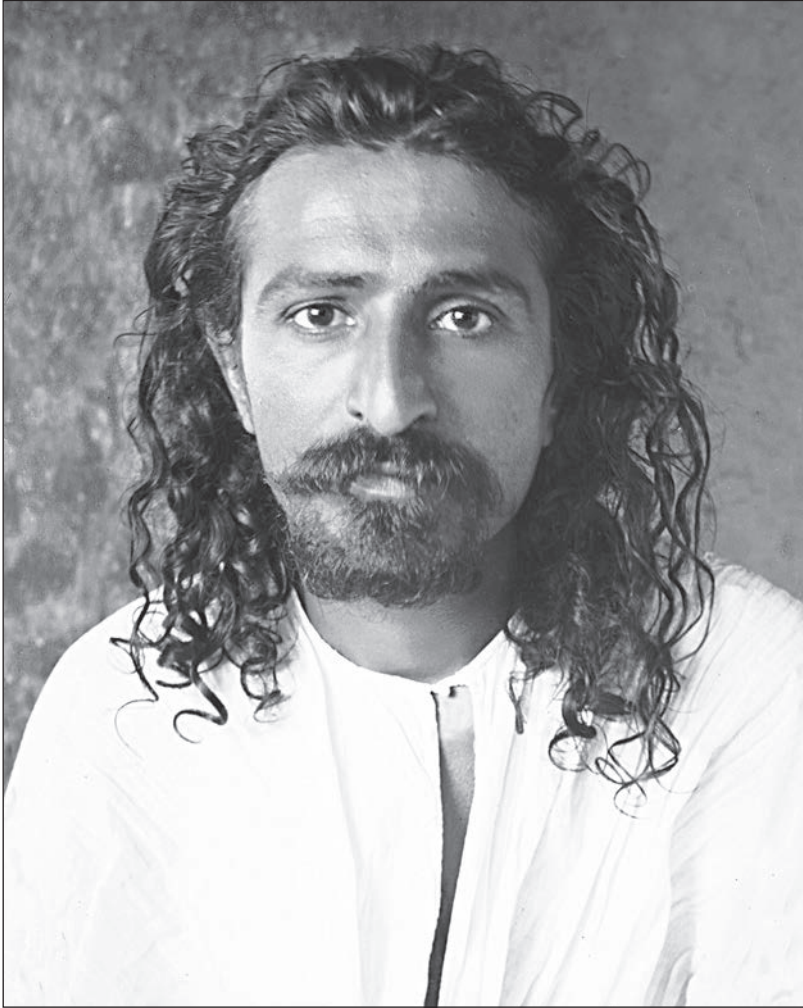
came back to the Post Office and told me His reply. There was a small feeling within me that I wanted Baba to know that I was thinking about Him. But of course, Mani had not said to Baba, “Khorshed told me to come.” Still, I wished that Baba knew that it had been my idea for Him to not have to do the sweeping. But then I thought, “Let it be. Mani did it her own way and is happy.”



Baba told us in June 1925 that soon He would begin to observe silence for one year. But Baba was so talkative that when He first told us that He would be observing silence for a whole year, we could not believe that He would be able to remain silent so long. He had observed silence for short periods before this, but never for such a long time.

I first heard Baba speak when He was still with Upasni Maharaj at Sakori. For more than three years, from 1922 until 1925, I heard Baba speak. During those years, I felt the pleasure, the happiness, and the joy of listening to His lovely voice. It was a deep and strong voice, yet gentle. Baba's voice would draw us to Him. And Baba sang so beautifully. One song I remember Baba singing quite often during our Post Office days was “Deva Maja Mi Deva Cha.” It means “God is mine, I am His.” Baba's voice was so loving and beautiful. I have never heard anyone else with a voice like His. Really, it is impossible to describe the beauty of Baba's voice.

As the days passed, the time of Baba's silence was approaching. One day, Gulmai happened to be visiting from Ahmednagar. As she was standing on a table in the Post Office cleaning the ceiling with a



*Meher Baba,
the Ancient One*

broom, she fell and sprained her ankle very badly. So Baba said He would postpone starting His silence until Gulmai could walk again.

So on July 10, 1925, Baba began observing silence. Until then, we had not needed any interpreter or medium to talk with Baba. The words were spoken through His lips and pierced directly into our hearts.

*The Table House,
where Baba
wrote much of
His book*



At first, Baba would write what He wanted to tell us on a slate board with chalk. A few days after He began His silence, Baba started to write a book for several hours every morning inside His Jhopdi. Later He moved to the Table House and other places in Meherabad to write the book. Baba said this book was very important. When He finished writing it, Baba kept the book inside my metal jewelry box that my father had offered to Baba when he first came to Him. It had been filled with all the jewelry my father had made for me. The box had a special key and could be locked. So Baba kept the key Himself, and He had one of the mandali chain the locked box to his wrist, even when he slept at night.

Baba would continue to come for His meals on the verandah of the Post Office, so we had the pleasure of His company. Many times I would ask Baba, “When will You speak again? When will You speak?”

Baba would write on His slate, “After a month.” That was His standard reply. I was very young then and I would ask Him again and again. I was always pestering Him that way. I was very familiar with Baba. But then someone told me that when Baba speaks, He will drop His body. So I told Mehera, “It is better that we have Baba with us, even if He doesn’t speak. If Baba were not with us, it would be terrible.” So I stopped asking Baba to speak.

But we missed the sound of Baba’s beautiful voice, especially His singing. Before He had begun His silence, Baba had assured us that He would be breaking His silence. But months passed—and even years—and we never had the joy of hearing His lovely voice again.



So our life with Baba at Meherabad continued. Before Baba’s birthday in February 1926, I said to Mehera, “We should give Baba something very special for His birthday.” But we wondered what we could give Him. We didn’t have any money and we couldn’t ask for something from town. So what could we do? Suddenly I remembered that we each had a ring, so I said, “Mehera, I know what we can do. I can give Baba my emerald ring, and you also have your ruby ring that you could give to Him.”

My father had had a special ring made for me for my thread ceremony. It was an oval-shaped emerald ring, with diamonds all around it. I still had it with me, so I decided I would give this to Baba.

On Baba's birthday, we went to where Baba was sitting near the Post Office, and I took His hand. Mehera was always too shy to do something like that, but I wasn't shy at all. I took off my ring and placed it on the index finger of Baba's right hand. Then I encouraged Mehera to offer her ring. So Mehera took the ring from her finger and put it on Baba's little finger. Then we bowed down at Baba's feet. Baba looked at the rings and then embraced both of us. We were so happy that we had been able to give Baba something. The only reason we ever wanted to have anything was so that we would have something we could give to Baba. So we felt great joy that we had been able to give Him such special rings.

*Baba giving
darshan on the
second day of His
birthday celebration,
February 19, 1926*

The celebration for Baba's birthday was quite festive. For seven days anyone could come to Meherabad and have Baba's darshan. On the actual day, Rustom gave Baba a special bath and carried Him like a baby. A large crowd gathered near the Post Office

compound, and everyone was coming and going happily. Baba was passing out generous helpings of hot rava from an enormous pot, and people were sitting around Him joyfully eating their prasad. Many bhajans were being sung, and everyone was very, very happy.

When it was our turn to be served, Mehera and I approached Baba. He was putting the prasad directly into each person's hand. When I held out my hand, Baba put a lot of prasad into my hand, but He put just a tiny bit in Mehera's. She opened her hand and showed me, "Look, Khorshed, how little Baba gave me!"



Then Baba asked Mehera, “Don’t you have a cold? That’s why you can’t eat very much of this rich food.”

Mehera said that she did not have a cold or sore throat. Baba was only teasing her. Then He gave her a large serving. So Mehera and I happily ate our delicious prasad from Baba, and we talked about how much we appreciated the love behind all of Baba’s actions.

Then the large crowd placed Baba on a palanquin, and they were all dancing and playing and singing bhajans. It was such a festive occasion. People started pouring *gulal* (red powder) over Baba. They treated Him like a deity. But the powder went into Baba’s eyes and caused a terrible burning sensation. Halfway through the procession, Baba had to get off the palanquin and wash His eyes. Mehera and I were asked to help. So we took Baba to the Post Office, where we put water in His eyes. They were all swollen, and His face looked very different. The powder caused Baba so much pain that it took two months for His eyes to heal. And it was very painful for all of us to see Baba suffer like that. After that, Baba never used that red powder, even to put a dot on His forehead, and He also told us not to use it.



On February 27, 1926, a telegram came from Poona saying that Baba’s older brother Jamshed had died suddenly of a heart attack while staying at Dowla Masi’s home. After Jamshed’s funeral, Dowla Masi returned to Meherabad for a short time. But when she left again, Baba told us, “Now I will have to close the ashram. All of you will have to go back to your homes, because Daulatmai cannot organize all the cooking without an assistant.”



Baba's brother, Jamshed, standing between his wife, known as "Big Khorshed," on his left and his cousin, Naja, on his right. His aunt and uncle, Dowla Masi and Faredoon, who adopted him, are seated in front.

I was very, very upset. Now Baba was sending us back to our homes! I tried to figure out what to do. We had to do the cooking work; only then could we stay. Daulatmai could not do it alone. I was still just learning how to cook, and Baba had told Mehera to cook only for Him.

So I asked Mehera what she thought we could do. We decided to ask Naja if she would be willing to cook more. We went and begged her, "Naja, please, will you do the cooking now? We will help you however we can. You're Baba's cousin, so you can talk to Him. Tell Him that you're willing to do the cooking and help Daulatmai, so that perhaps He'll let us stay. We don't want Baba to close the ashram."

Naja agreed to offer to help cook, so we went to Baba and I said, "Naja has something to tell you." When Baba heard our plan, He asked if we were sure that we could do all the cooking.

We said, "Yes, yes, Baba." So He agreed not to close the ashram, and we were allowed to stay on after all, much to my great relief! There were just the four of us women at Meherabad at that point—Daulatmai, Mehera, Naja, and me. Mehera's mother was the oldest, then Mehera, then Naja, then me. I was the youngest—about three years younger than Mehera.



Later that year, on May 2nd, my 16th birthday was coming. During those early years, Baba was often away, traveling for His work. But that year, Mehera said, "Baba will be here for your birthday, so we should celebrate it with Him in a special way."

Of course, we didn't have anything special in our compound. And we couldn't order *anything* from outside. But there was one door open. Mehera told me, "Khorshed, write to your father and have him send a large silver *thali* (plate) and five small silver serving bowls that we can use to serve lunch to Baba on your birthday." So I wrote as Mehera suggested, and my father sent a beautiful silver serving set that was fit for a king. We cleaned and polished it to make it shine even more for Baba.

Then we wondered, "What should we prepare for lunch?" Mehera decided on simple dal, rice, sweet curd, bhajia, and rava, all of which we could prepare from what we already had. Naja cooked everything and it was all ready by eleven o'clock, which was the time that Baba used to come for His lunch. Mehera served Baba the food in the silver bowls on the thali, and placed a slice of lemon on the side. Baba looked surprised and said, "What is all this today? Is something special happening?"

Mehera replied, "Baba, we are celebrating Khorshed's birthday."

Baba looked at me and asked, "It's your birthday today?"

I replied, "Yes, Baba."

"How old are you?" He asked.

"Sixteen," I said.

Then Baba gestured, "Good," and began eating His lunch. As He was eating, Baba squeezed the lemon slice on His dal and rice. After He finished the food, Baba called me to Him and put a

little curd on my forehead. He wouldn't use red powder, because it might get in my eyes. So Baba applied another powder to my forehead, making a little *tilak* (vertical mark worn on the forehead by Hindus). Then He gave me a little bit of the sweet rava to eat and some bhajia. Afterwards, Baba gave me the squeezed lemon rind from His plate and told me, "Keep this and do *puja* (ritual prayers) every day."

So I took it and asked, "What kind of *puja*?"

Baba wrote, "Bless the food and take My name five times. In this way, you will be doing *puja*. Keep this lemon rind with care." So I began doing this every day.

Some time after this, when we had to go from Bombay to Lonavala, I asked Him, "Baba, what shall I do with the lemon rind?"

Baba replied, "Wrap the peel and keep it nicely. Keep it always." So I did as Baba instructed. For many years, I would take it out from time to time and look at it. And you know, the lemon rind stayed fresh and unspoiled! It did not dry up or go bad! It did not turn blue or become rotten and have to be thrown out. I just put it in plastic and kept it with me all the time.

Many years later, after Baba dropped His body, some Baba lovers came to me and wanted something of Baba's that they could share with His lovers in the West. They used to ask for Baba's *sadra*, or His coat, or anything of Baba's. So we would carefully pack something of Baba's and give it to them. I didn't mind giving His things away. It made me happy to think that so many people would have a chance to see them. I felt Baba was giving these things to everyone in that way, so it was good. The Westerners would hold *sahavas* programs and everyone would have a chance then to see

these things of Baba's. So one time when someone asked me for something of Baba's, I gave him the lemon rind.

Later, when Mehera found out, she scolded me, "Khorshed, why did you give that away? Baba gave it to you to keep. Why did you give it away?"

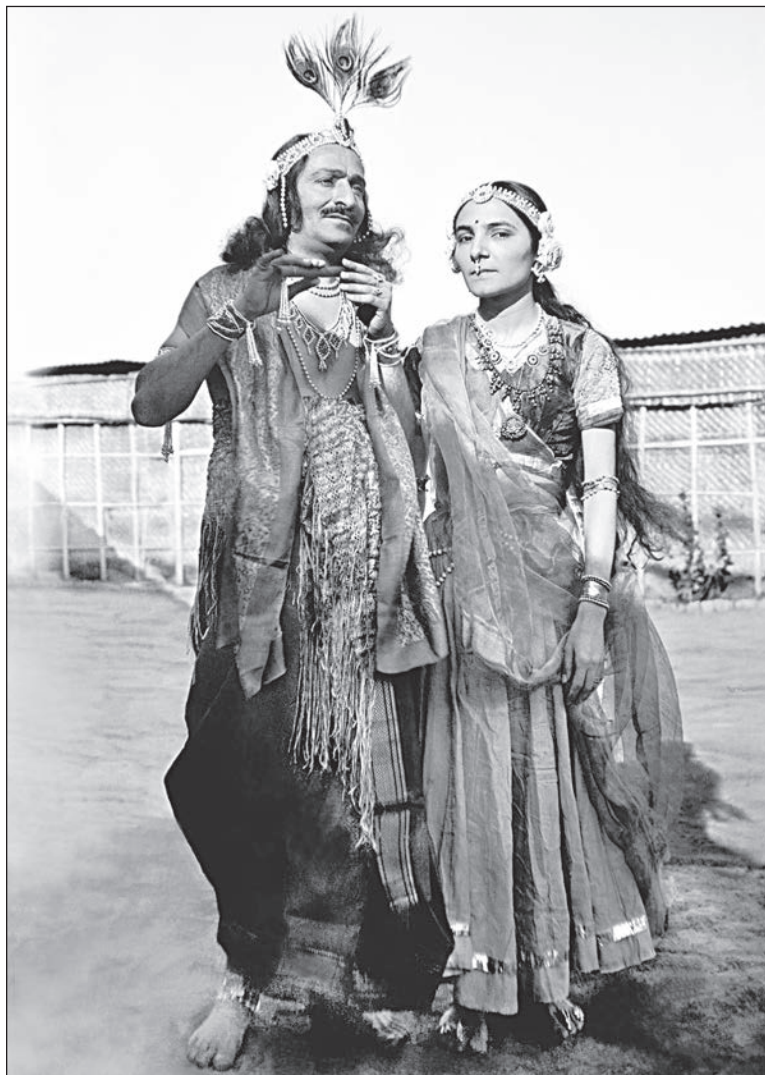
I said, "I don't know." And I felt ashamed, because I had done something wrong. Baba gave it to me to keep, so I should have kept it. But at that time I was afraid that if I were to die, no one would look after all these precious things from Baba, and people would not even know what they were or their significance. I was afraid they would be scattered here and there, and no one would know they were Baba's, and they would get lost. So it made me happy to think that the Westerners would take good care of Baba's precious things that I gave away.



After Baba had finished His meal on my birthday in 1926, He asked us, "Who is Radha?"

Some said, "Gulmai." Another said, "Babajan." I said, "Gustadji." But Baba said, "No," to all of these. So I said, "Baba, why make us guess? Please, just tell us."

Baba pointed to Mehera, and He wrote, "She is Radha." I was looking at Baba wondering, "Who am I?" But I did not ask. So Baba wrote, "You are Radha's best friend, Chandrika, who was with her all the time. And your nickname was Chandula." Then, gesturing with His hand to the other women, Baba wrote, "You were all My gopis. It's not just in this birth that you are with Me.



*Baba and Mehera
dressed as Krishna
and Radha,
Meherabad, 1937*

You were all together with Me a long, long time ago, and now you all are coming together to be with Me again.” But not many people knew this, because only a few of us girls were there when Baba said this.

C H A P T E R T E N

Making Something Special for Baba

At the end of October 1926, Baba ordered that the schools and dispensary be closed and all the temporary buildings at Meherabad be dismantled. Then, in late November, Baba left Meherabad with more than twenty of His men and women mandali, including Mehera and Khorshed. After spending a month in Lonavala and Bombay, Baba returned to Meherabad on December 25th. He again sent Khorshed to stay with her parents in Bombay, because her father was ill. But about two months later, Baba called Khorshed and her parents to live at Meherabad with Mehera, Daulatmai, Naja, and Big Khorshed.

At first, the women stayed in the Post Office building, but on May 1, 1927, they shifted to the Bathing Rooms so that the Hazrat Babajan Girls School could be in the Post Office. Soona and Kaikhushru stayed in a bamboo hut next to the Bathing Rooms, and Kaikhushru kept watch.

At this same time, Baba opened a boarding school for boys called Meher Ashram. At the end of June 1927, Baba

moved the Meher Ashram up the Hill to the old water tank building, where Baba worked intensely with the boys. He had a small room built nearby out of bamboo matting and tin sheets, and He had a pit dug in the room. In August that year, Baba began spending the night there.

At the end of 1926, Mehera, Naja, and I spent about a month with Baba in Lonavala and Bombay. Then they all returned to Meherabad, but Baba sent me to stay with my parents at our home in Irani Mansion in Bombay. He said that, since my father was ill, I should take care of him. Baba sent Daulatmai to accompany me on the train back to Bombay. But I felt so sad about being separated from Baba that I cried all the way home. I cried so much that people on the train asked Daulatmai if she was taking me by force. She said that she was my mother and that I was a little upset and that was why I was crying.

When Daulatmai returned to Meherabad, she told Baba that I had been crying all the way home. Baba wrote a letter to me saying, "Don't worry. When your father is better, I will call you and your parents to come and live here at Meherabad with me." That made me very happy. Baba said, "Don't break any of My orders and keep healthy. We will be together soon. It's very cold here at Meherabad now, and your father is in delicate health, so stay on in Bombay a little longer. Then, after February, I will call you all to come to Meherabad together."

The cold weather at Meherabad would have been too much for my father. So we continued living in our flat in Dadar, but we were ready, at any moment, to leave everything and go to Baba. After a short time, Baba did call us all to stay with Him at Meherabad. My

father and mother accompanied me, but Baba told them to return to Bombay and close up our Dadar home. After that, they came back to live at Meherabad.

By this time, Baba had stopped writing and was using an alphabet board to communicate. So He spelled out to my parents, “What did you do with your flat?” They replied, “Baba, we just left it.” Baba said, “Now you can’t get it back again.” This was because as soon as we left, an old man’s family came and started living in the flat. My parents did not really care, because all of us just wanted to be with Baba. We had come to stay in Meherabad with Baba, and that is all that mattered to us. Baba loved my father very much, and my father also loved Baba so much. Both of them were very loving to each other.

At Meherabad, Baba had a small bamboo hut built for my parents adjacent to a much larger building that had been used by the British military as bathing rooms. Baba told the five of us—Daulatmai, Mehera, me, Naja, and Jamshed’s wife—to stay there. The building had two large rooms with nothing inside. And it didn’t have windows, except for a small one, high on the wall, for ventilation. Even so, it was airy and quite roomy. Although these rooms had been used by the British for bathing, we used them like regular rooms. Mehera and I slept on one side, and the others slept and cooked on the other. When we had to take a bath, our room was so large that we could just pull a curtain in the corner of our room and bathe. Baba ate His meals in our room, and He even bathed in the corner sometimes, while we would wait outside.

A very big compound of *tatta* (bamboo straw matting) had been built all around the Bathing Rooms, so we could go outside to wash

our clothes or do our other work in private. One of my jobs was sewing for Baba. I liked embroidering, stitching, and knitting. When Baba had been at Manzil-e-Meem, He used to wear a *perin* (shirt) and long trousers. But when He moved to Meherabad, He started wearing a *sadra*. Baba would explain to Gulmai how He wanted His *sadras* made, and then I would sew them for Him. In those years, Baba used to wear a coat made from rough wool (*kamli*) by a disciple

Baba wearing
His Kamli Coat,
Lower Meherabad,
1927



of Upasni Maharaj. Baba wore the Kamli Coat so much that it became tattered. He would often bring the coat to me and ask me to patch it for Him. Baba wore the coat continually throughout the 1920s, and I patched it over and over again for Him. After Baba stopped wearing His Kamli Coat, we kept it in a large sandalwood trunk that had been made by my grandfather, who was a carpenter.

Another of my main jobs continued to be cooking for all the schoolchildren and workers at Meherabad. Every day we would make chapattis in the temporary kitchen that had been built in our compound. We had to prepare the dough each

morning. But these were not like the chapattis you eat now that are made with oil or butter. We used yeast. We would mix the flour with water and yeast and then put it aside to rise. We had to work quickly and carefully, because if you leave the dough too long, it dries up and becomes sour. So we would wait just until the yeast made the dough rise and become light. Our risen chapattis were a very delicious treat.

We had to make a thousand chapattis every day. So I would cook five hundred and Jamshed's wife would cook another five hundred. We would sit outside in the large tatta compound, under a low tin roof. There was plenty of room to walk around in the compound, but the spot under the roof where we cooked was small and very hot, with just enough space for us to make chapattis. We had two wood fires burning. I would use one and Jamshed's wife would sit opposite me and use the other. We would make the chapattis for three hours every day, from two in the afternoon until five. We did this for more than a year, until Baba moved everyone to Toka.

Baba had given us the order to always wear a warm jacket early in the morning and in the evening. So, often we had to wear a warm coat while cooking over the fire. This made us perspire all the time. We felt like taking off our coats because we were so hot, but we did not want to break Baba's order. Baba's other orders were easy, but having to wear a coat while working over a hot fire drove us mad. Still, we followed Baba's order anyway. We just kept making all the chapattis over the hot fires. And in that way, we got to be with Baba.

After two or three months of following Baba's order in this way, I said to Baba, "We have done what you asked. Now, when will You come and visit us?" So Baba gave us the date, which was on a Sunday. We made rava and other little things that Baba especially liked to eat.

Then we decorated our room with flowers and put Baba's thin mattress on the floor. We were so happy that He came and spent time with us. After that, Baba would come for a special visit once in a while.

Sometimes during that period, Baba would grind grain Himself. Next to the cooking fires near the Bathing Rooms was a grinding wheel that Baba used. After He would grind the grain, Baba would give us the flour. Then we would make *rotis* (flatbread), which Baba would eat.

At night, we all slept in the Bathing Rooms, and sometimes it would be so cold that Mehera and I would sleep close together to get warm. One time I felt something like a ghost trying to choke me. I couldn't move. It was very frightening. The next night it happened again. So I told Baba about it and He said, "Yes, such things happen often. I will see about it." After that, it never happened again.

In those days, there were many scorpions at Meherabad. One night Mehera was stung on her back by a tiny scorpion, but the pain was not much and she was able to go back to sleep. In the morning her pain was all gone. But if a large scorpion had stung one of us in our sleep, we might have died without even having a chance to say our prayers. Fortunately, none of us was ever stung badly.

When we first stayed in the Bathing Rooms, Baba used to come and eat lunch in our room every day. We made a place for Baba in a corner of the front room. Naja and Mehera would cook for Him and for the rest of us. They cooked simple dishes, like rice and dal, which Baba liked very much. We were very happy living this way, with Baba coming for lunch every day before going back to be with the mandali.



On November 10, 1927, Baba started a five-and-a-half-month liquid fast. In the midst of His fast, on December 20th, Baba began a prolonged seclusion in the crypt room, which later became His Tomb-Shrine. Baba came out of seclusion on February 26, 1928, and the Prem Ashram boys pulled Him in the rickshaw down Meherabad Hill, where He visited with the women.

Baba continued His fast for two more months. He finally agreed to break His fast on April 25, 1928, after two hundred people had fasted for twenty-four hours at Baba's request.



One day, Baba began a long fast and He no longer came to see us. He spent more and more time up the Hill, working with the boys in what He called the Prem (Love) Ashram. About a month later, Baba declared He would remain in seclusion in a small hut where He had asked that a pit be dug. We called this Baba's "crypt room" because the pit later became Baba's tomb. On one side of the hut was a window with a large platform outside. Baba said that no one except my father should come near Him. Only my father had Baba's order to see Him. So every morning at seven o'clock, my father would go up the Hill and take Baba's darshan outside the window of the crypt room and then leave.



Baba sitting in the east window of the crypt room, Upper Meherabad, 1927-28

I missed Baba coming to have His meals with us and letting us see Him every day. I thought, “Oh, why has Baba done this? He is sitting in seclusion up the Hill and won’t be coming out for months. Maybe Baba will forget us.” So I said to Mehera, “Baba won’t be coming to see us, and we aren’t allowed to go and see Him. What if He forgets us? What can we do to make sure that Baba remembers us?”

This worried me very much. We were not allowed to see Baba, and we could not talk to Him or send a message, so how could we remind Him that we were down the Hill thinking of Him all the time? What could we do? What could we do? I was thinking and thinking; then finally I had an idea. We could send flowers to Baba, and in this way, we could show Him our love.

But how could we get flowers? We could not go to the bazaar, and we had no money to buy flowers anyway. And we could not even leave our compound to go pick wildflowers. So I kept trying to figure out what to do. I felt it was up to me, since Mehera and Naja had told me, “Khorshed, you think of something and let us know what we can do.” So I came up with a plan. I talked with Valu, a woman from Arangaon village who helped us in the ashram. She told me that in a dry stream bed about a mile from the village there were many pink oleander flowers in blossom. They look like small roses. So I asked Valu to take our bag when she finished her duties at Meherabad in the evening and bring those flowers back to us. Valu had been devoted to Baba from the very first, so she happily agreed to pluck the flowers and bring them to us.

That evening, Valu brought us the flowers, and we put them carefully aside on a nice clean cloth in the corner of our room. About eight or nine o’clock in the evening, after we had finished our day’s work and had eaten dinner, we cleaned our room and began to make



*Naja, Mehera,
and Khorshed,
Meherabad*

something special for Baba. We placed the flowers in the middle of the room and just looked at them. There were so many flowers that we had enough to make not only a large garland for Baba, but also bracelets and anklets, as well as a crown.

The three of us—Mehera, Naja, and I—decided who would make which garlands. We found that it was very difficult to put the thread through the sewing needle because the room was so dark. We had no electricity and only one lantern, but we managed to thread our needles and began to string the flowers together.

We worked for several hours making all the garlands, thinking about Baba all the time. After we finished them, Mehera drew a design for Baba's crown, and we made that as well. They all looked beautiful. Then we carefully wrapped the garlands in a damp cloth and placed them inside a basket so that they would stay fresh and not get crushed. It took us so long to make the garlands and crown that we didn't finish until 2:00 a.m.! But we were all so excited and happy to be making something for Baba that we didn't feel sleepy or exhausted at all. It was such a joy to be making a special surprise for Baba that it never occurred to us to stop until we were done.

When we got up the next morning we had a new problem. Now that we had finished all the garlands, how could we send them to Baba? We couldn't go ourselves. So how could we get them to Him? Then I remembered that my father had been ordered to see Baba

every morning at seven. So I decided to arrange with my father to take the basket up to Baba.

We didn't know if Baba would like what we had done or not—if He would be annoyed or happy. But we didn't worry about it. We had just gone ahead without thinking about it. We felt we had to take this chance so Baba would remember us, even though we didn't know how Baba would react. So I took the basket in my hand, and went to my father's door, and asked him, "Are you going up the Hill?"

"Yes," he replied, "I'm going up right now."

"Please take this," I said. I didn't tell him what was in the basket. I just said, "Take this basket and put it aside where Baba can see it from where He is sitting near the window. Then, go and take darshan. But you have to keep *quiet*; don't say anything to Baba about the basket—not a single word. Just leave it there."

You see, I knew Baba's nature. I knew that if we kept quiet about something, Baba would ask about it. But if we said anything, we would spoil it, and Baba might not look inside.

So I emphasized to my father, "Don't say a single word when you put the basket down. Don't mention that you brought it or that Khorshed sent it—nothing, say nothing at all! Just keep quiet. Only if Baba asks, then take the basket and show it to Him and tell Him who it is from. But don't say a single word before He asks."

I was very emphatic in telling my father this, and he listened to me because he knew that I understood Baba's ways. He said, "Khorshed, I understand completely."

When my father took the basket up the Hill, Baba looked at him and saw that he had something in his hands. But my father did not say anything or show it to Baba or give it to Him. Exactly according to

my advice, my father put the basket aside at a little distance and took Baba's darshan. Then he turned to come down the Hill, still without saying anything. As soon as my father turned around, Baba clapped and asked through gestures, "What is this you brought?"

Father answered, "I don't know. Khorshed gave it to me and told me not to say anything, but to put it here." So Baba said, "Bring it to Me." My father handed the basket to Baba, who opened the cloth and saw all the beautiful flowers, like pink roses, nestled inside.

Baba's face lit up, He looked so happy. This is what my father told me. Baba gestured, "What is this?"

My father replied, "I don't know. Khorshed asked me to bring it. Maybe it's something the girls made." Then Baba gently lifted the flowers and held them up. Because no one was allowed to touch Baba at that time, Baba Himself placed the garlands around His neck and wrists and ankles. Then He put the crown of flowers on His head. He told my father to tell us that He was happy with our flowers and had garlanded Himself with them.

Then Baba gestured, "But how did they make these?"

"I don't know," my father repeated. "Khorshed just gave me the basket and I brought it to You."

Then Baba asked, "But when did they do all this? And how did the girls get the flowers?" Baba asked many other questions. That's why I had told my father, "Don't speak even a word before Baba asks," because I knew that if my father didn't say anything, Baba would want to find out everything on His own. "When you go back down the Hill, ask them how they made all of these garlands and where they got the flowers and at what time they went to bed. Ask everything in detail. When you come tomorrow, tell Me everything."

So when my father came down the Hill he told us, “Baba wants to know how you made the garlands and crown, and where you got all the flowers. Tell me all the details, because Baba wants to know.”

This made us feel very happy and connected with Baba. He was asking about us and remembering us. So we told my father everything—how we got the flowers from the bushes in the creek bed; how we made the garlands with a thread and needle in the dim kerosene light without even getting a headache; how it took us until two in the morning; and how happy we were to do it—we told him everything in great detail, because Baba had said He wanted to know.

When my father went back to see Baba the next day, he narrated all of this to Him. Baba listened with a very happy expression, until He heard that we had stayed up until two in the morning. At that point Baba said, “No, no, that is not good. Tell them not to stay up that late. Twelve or half past twelve—no later. Tell them, ‘Do as much you can up until midnight, but don’t stay up any later. Keep good health and be happy. I am very happy with you and I know how much you love Me, and I love you also. So don’t be afraid; I will not forget you all.’”

Baba added these last words because I had told Mehera, “Maybe Baba will forget us.” But I was young at that time and didn’t understand that Baba never forgets anyone.

So that is how we learned that Baba likes flowers. From then on, we would send garlands every day to Baba, along with a message. My father would come and get the flowers and our message before going up the Hill to see Baba each morning. It made us so happy to be able to communicate with Baba in this way.

At that time, my father was in good health, so it wasn’t a problem for him to go up the Hill every day. After taking Baba’s darshan, he would

give the package to Baba, and sometimes he would help Baba put on the flowers. Then Baba would ask, "How are the girls? Are they in good health?" And He would ask other questions as well. Then my father would bring Baba's message back to us, and we would feel happy that Baba did not forget us.

Every day we would receive some message from Baba, and in that way, His seclusion did not seem so long. Then, at the end of February 1928, Baba finally came to see us, and we were very, very happy to be with Him again!



But it was only then that we realized how much Baba must have suffered on His fast. Before He had gone into His long seclusion and fast up the Hill, Baba had asked us to prepare a flask of two cups of coffee with milk for Him every day. Mehera would take great care that the coffee was just the way Baba liked it, and we all helped. Then my mother gave the coffee to a young boy from the village named Lahu to take up the Hill to Baba. He would carry the coffee to Baba every day, because no man was allowed to enter our compound.

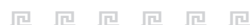
Lahu was Baba's favorite among the untouchable boys. But he was also a rascal. On the way up the Hill each day, he would stop near the top and sit down and drink half of Baba's coffee. He was very clever. He didn't drink it all; he just had half, so Baba would still get some. But because Baba was on a liquid fast, that flask of coffee was all that Baba had to drink all day long.

Baba must have been wondering what had happened to His second cup of coffee. He must have thought, "I told them to make

two cups; so why are they sending only one?" But Baba didn't say anything until He came out of seclusion. Then He asked us, "Why did you send only one cup?" That's how we all found out that Baba had been receiving only one cup of coffee. We said, "No, no, Baba. Every time we sent You two cups of coffee." Then someone said, "Baba, Lahu must have been drinking half the coffee." Someone had seen him from afar, sitting down on the way up the Hill.

But Baba didn't mind. He just laughed and said, "I was taking his prasad"—because the boy would drink half the coffee first and then give the rest to Baba. Baba didn't even scold him.

*Baba sitting with
some of the Prem
Ashram boys
in front of His
crypt room,
Upper Meherabad,
1927-28*



During this period while Baba was in seclusion up the Hill, He spent much of His time with the boys in the Prem Ashram. They came from all castes and creeds and were taught about the spirit of all religions and the lives of great masters. Baba gave them discourses on divinity and spirituality, planting the spark of love in their hearts.

One night during this period, I had a dream. I was in a dark jungle. Then Baba appeared. I saw Him coming toward me carrying a hurricane lamp. He gave it to me and asked me to walk ahead of Him as He followed me. I reached a cave and, when I entered, I saw Baba in the cave with ten boys seated around Him, listening intently. Baba called one boy to come near and He embraced him. Then He asked



the boy to sit in front of Him. In the dream, I saw Baba telling me that He had a great love for this boy and that He had chosen him from all



*Chota Baba sitting
inside Meher Baba's
crypt room, Upper
Meherabad, 1927-28*

the others. Then my dream ended. Two or three days later, I learned about Chhota Baba, one of the boys in the Prem Ashram who would constantly gaze at Baba with tears rolling from his eyes. My mother told me that the boys were asking Baba to show them God. He would reply to them with gestures, saying that He would show them God the next day. In that way, Baba was quenching the thirst of those in the Prem Ashram burning to see God.



One day after Baba finished His long seclusion work, I said to Him, “Baba, you are seeing the school boys up the Hill, and meeting with the mandali and everyone else, but why are you not coming to see us?”

Baba said, “If you keep My orders very carefully all the time, then I will come.” So Baba put orders on the door, and we did our best to follow all of them. After some time, I said to Baba, “We have kept Your orders all this time, so now You should come to see us.” Baba said, “Yes. I will come.”

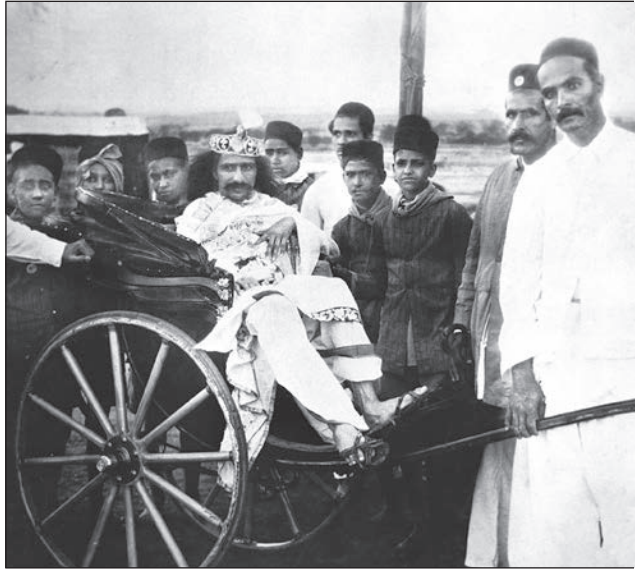
In those days, Baba had a rickshaw, and He would let the Prem Ashram boys take turns pulling Him up and down Meherabad Hill.

Every time the boys would pull Baba, they would sing “The Seven Names of God,” which Baba composed. It was so lovely and joyful to see all the boys bringing Him down the Hill in the rickshaw and singing. They were all so happy to be with Baba.

One day, just after Baba finished His long seclusion, they brought Baba to the Bathing Rooms where we were staying. Baba asked us if we had a sari that He could wear as a dhoti, because the boys wanted Him to dress as Krishna. We said, “Yes, of course.”

Then Baba asked us which sari He should use. We said, “Not a blue one or a white one. And it needs to be very special. It should be a little longer than a regular sari.” We looked in our trunks and I found a beautiful pink sari that was longer than usual. I gave it to Baba. Vishnu’s mother, Kakubai, wrapped the sari around Baba’s waist as a lower garment. Baba also wore something very nice around His shoulders.

My mother was allowed to talk with the Prem Ashram boys, though we girls were not. So Baba and the boys went into my mother’s room, which was attached to our Bathing Rooms. She served them all tea while they were there. I had embroidered about twenty lockets with Baba’s photo, and I had offered them to Baba so that He



Baba in the rickshaw pulled by some of the Prem Ashram boys who had dressed Him as Krishna in Khorshed's pink sari, Meherabad, February 28, 1928

could give them to the boys as He liked. So Baba gave the lockets to some of the boys, which made them very happy. Then they all took Baba back up the Hill again, singing with joy. They would pull the rickshaw by hand, two on each side. All of the boys wanted the chance to be near Baba. It is natural. Everyone would want to be near Baba.

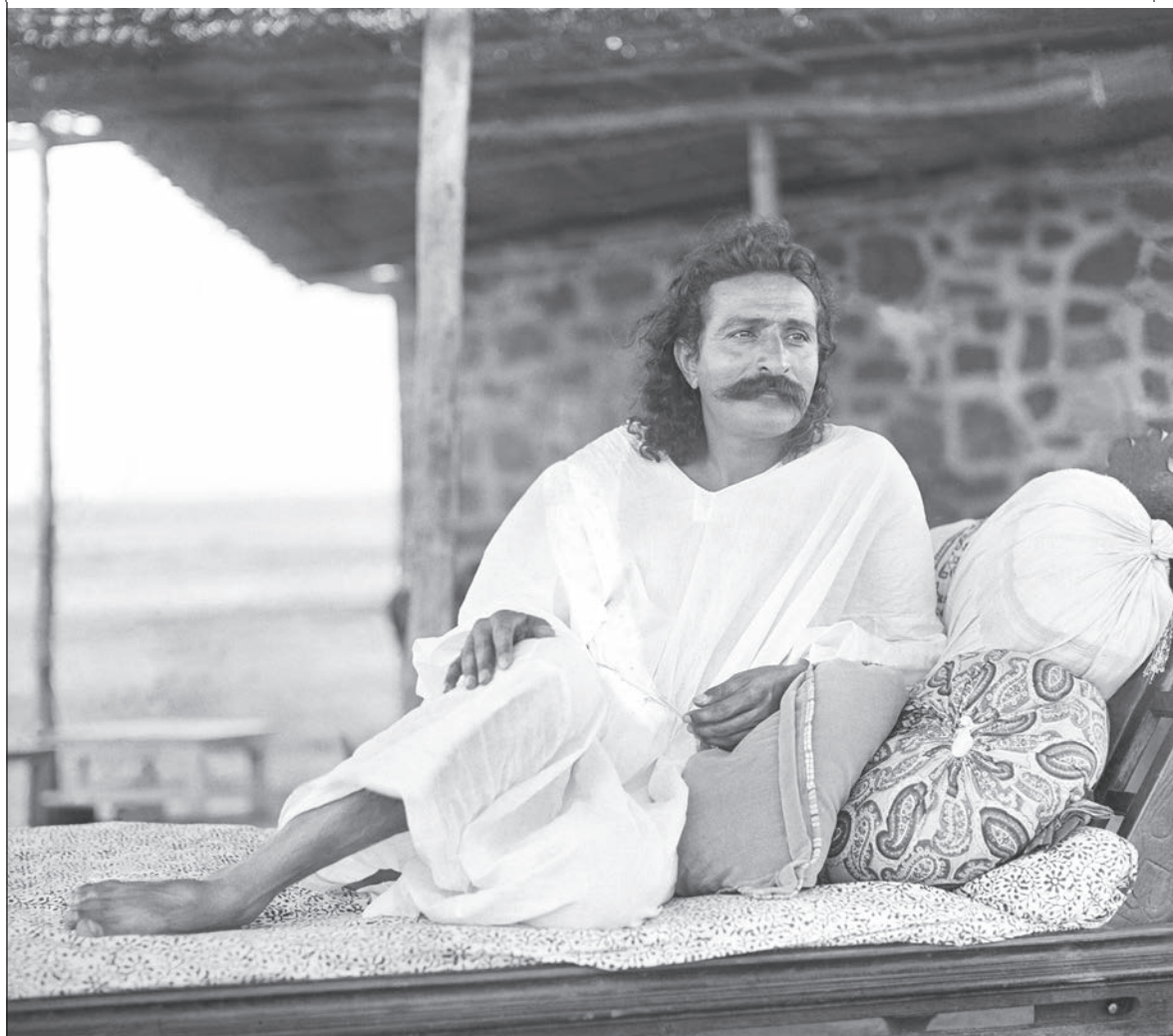


Ever since Baba began His silence, we longed to hear Him speak again. I would look at Baba's lips and remember how they had once relayed His sweet voice. And even though Baba had come out of seclusion, He had intensified His fast. Finally, He said that if two hundred people would fast for twenty-four hours, He would take food. So two hundred of us fasted at Meherabad, and the next day I wrote Baba this letter expressing my feelings:

April 25, 1928

Dearest Baba,

It has been an awfully long time since we have heard the soft sound of Your sweet voice. I can't help it: I beseech You to have mercy on us and once more let Your precious lips move. They must be tired enough of the rest taken. Will they not move again with Your melodious voice? It is natural that I am anxious, and You are the all-merciful one, so I hope to hear You speak very soon.



*Baba sitting
outside His crypt
room, 1927*

*As You have given us great happiness by keeping Your
promise to take food today, we deeply thank You, dearest Baba.*

Asking You to accept me as Your slave, Khorshed

*P.S. And please never mention fasting again, if You are
the image of love!*

And yet Baba's silent lips did not move.

Being with Baba in Toka

In April and May 1928, Babajan, who had not left Poona in years, made two visits to Meherabad. Baba stated that because of these visits, it was imperative that He move His ashram. So the temporary structures at Meherabad were moved to a plot of land Baba purchased at Toka, about fifty miles away. On June 3, 1928, almost five hundred people, including all the women and men mandali and the students and teachers of the Meher Ashram and Prem Ashram, moved from Meherabad to Toka. The women were given the duty of cooking and preparing a thousand chapattis a day for all the ashram residents.

Khorshed and her parents moved to Toka with Baba, but because of Kaikhushru's fragile health, he moved back to Bombay on September 2nd. Soona and Khorshed accompanied him to Bombay, but they returned to Toka a few days later. After a short stay, Baba asked Soona, and then Khorshed, to go back to Bombay to care for Kaikhushru. They remained there for the next

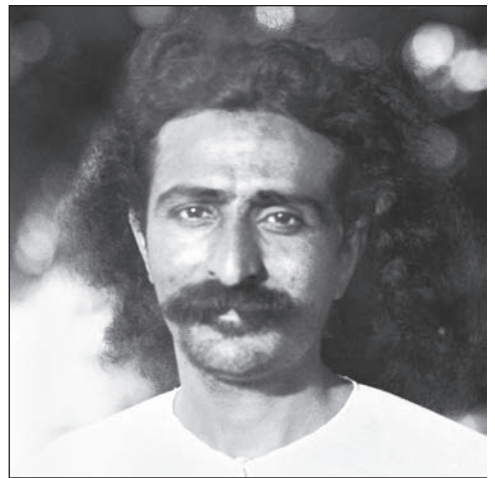
two months, returning to Toka on November 17th, just as Baba was disbanding the ashram and moving it back to Meherabad. On November 29, 1928, Baba, Mehera, Khorshed, and a few other women left Toka by car and returned to Meherabad, where they took up residence again in the Post Office building.

When we prepared to go to Toka, everything was sent there beforehand—all the cooking vessels and other equipment. So, during the last days before we left Meherabad, we had nothing to cook with but our *chatti*, our clay water pot. One day, when we were cooking rice in the *chatti* over the fire, it broke apart and all the rice was wasted. We didn't know what to do. Baba wanted the food to be ready at a certain time very early in the morning. So we used one of the empty kerosene tins that we had for water and cooked the rice in that. In this way, we were able to have the food ready when Baba had asked for it.

During our life with Baba, difficulties were there, but we didn't mind it. We didn't feel these were hardships. They were fun and filled with love, but trouble also—all these things together we had. And we enjoyed every bit of it, because we were living with Baba.

We didn't even mind leaving Meherabad and going to Toka, because Baba was with us. So we didn't care where we went or how we got there, just that we were with Baba. At Toka, there were more than thirty of us women. But there was no house for us, at

*Meher Baba,
Toka, 1928*



least not a proper house of stone or cement. There was just a row of empty rooms made out of tatta matting in the middle of a large field. We had only this temporary structure because Baba knew that our stay in Toka would not be permanent.

The room we girls stayed in had four tatta walls and a thatched roof, but no door. We had no furniture, so we rolled out our bedding every night and slept on the floor. In those early years, we had only very thin mattresses or no mattresses at all. In the morning, we would roll up our bedding and place it on our trunks.

Our entire compound was surrounded by a ten-foot-high bamboo matting fence. At times I would peek through the fencing to try to catch a glimpse of Baba. When Baba was in seclusion, sometimes we would stand on vegetable crates to look over the bamboo fence and see Him. Once we were able to watch the Prem Ashram boys place a crown on Baba's head.

My mother and father slept in a little place next to our large tin-roofed kitchen. My father was the only man allowed to stay inside our compound. Baba said that my father had a very good soul, like a child.

Baba's ashram in Toka was quite large—almost five hundred people—with many, many people living there besides us women. Several families, like Pilamai's, Baidul's, and Freni and Rustom's families, all had separate quarters. And the whole Prem Ashram was also there, but they slept outside, not inside. Meredith Starr came to Toka from England with his wife and her sister. They stayed in specially furnished rooms, until Baba sent them back to England six months later.

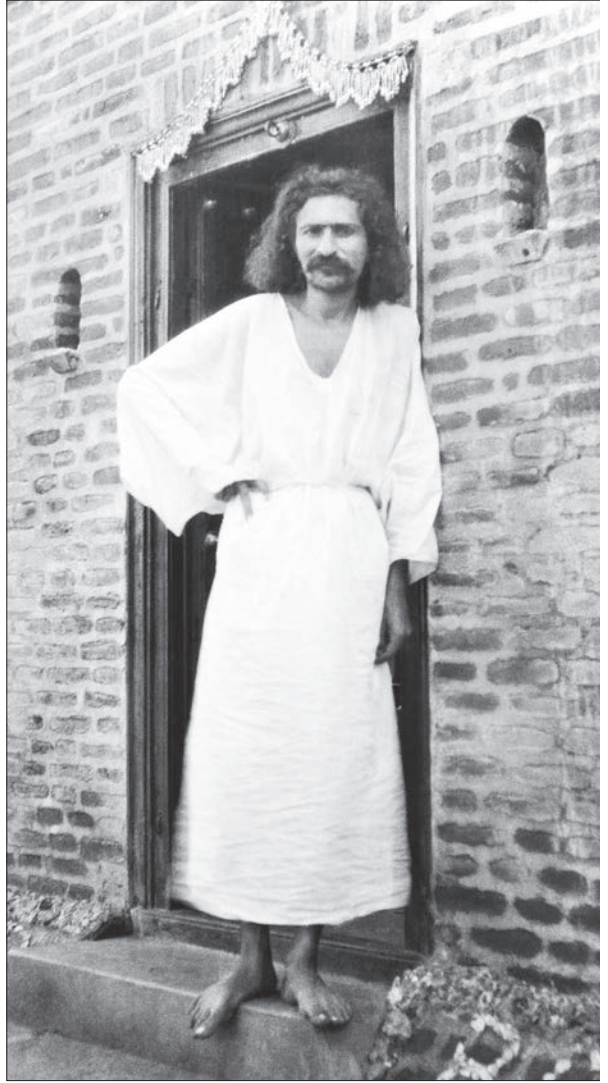
We women had to cook for all the mandali and all the Prem Ashram boys, morning and night. So we had very big cooking vessels.

Mehera was taking care of Baba's things. He was often fasting, but when we had to make tea or coffee or anything for Baba, Mehera would arrange it and I would help. At that time, I didn't have the job of making chapattis or cooking; the other women were doing that.

All of us women in Toka wanted to comb Baba's hair. So we decided to hold a lottery: Every day we would write our name on a piece of paper and then draw a name to see who would get the opportunity. I was the one who drew the names. I was tricky. I would fold my paper in a special way, so that I could draw my own name. I had to be very attentive to get the right one. And many times I got it.

But then I also felt for the others, because I had had so many chances. So I let them all have the opportunity. One day someone asked, "Khorshed, how is it you are getting to comb Baba's hair so often?"

I just replied, "I don't know."



Baba in Toka during a fast in 1928. The pebbles spelling out His name were arranged by Margaret Starr and her sister, Ester Ross.



Baba would come to see us every day in Toka. He would sit with us, and sometimes we would press His legs. One day, a scorpion crawled on my back under my blouse. I knew something was there, so I moved my shoulders a little, but I didn't want to make a disturbance. Still it kept on scratching and poking me with its legs, and then it started burrowing under my skin. I couldn't bear it so finally I called out.

Naja looked under my blouse and saw that it was a scorpion. But it had already gotten under my skin. Naja exclaimed that we had to take it out, but we didn't know how. So while Baba was sitting there, someone else heated a *sansi* (a pliers-like utensil) that we use to take cooking pots off the fire, and pulled the scorpion right out, just like that.

After an hour or so my pain went away. The other girls asked me, "How were you able you bear it for so long? You must have felt it immediately. You shouldn't have let it go into the skin." But even though the scorpion bite had been very painful, I tried my best not to say or do anything, because I didn't want to disturb Baba.



The Toka ashram was far from any town, but, as I said, there were many people staying there. So Baba had a little room built away from everyone, where He could sit in seclusion. A small sign above the door said, "Meher Baba's Room." From time to time, Baba would go into seclusion there. Usually He would tell us beforehand, "I'll be in

seclusion for some days. Continue to do your work while I am away.” But this time, He didn’t tell us. We just noticed that Baba wasn’t coming to visit us anymore. And this upset us. We thought that maybe we had done something wrong; maybe Baba wasn’t happy with us. Perhaps we hadn’t listened to Him, or maybe Baba just wanted to know what we would do if He stopped coming to see us. We didn’t know and He didn’t tell us.

At that time, Gulmai was staying in the ashram in Toka also. One day as she was walking through our compound, we asked her why Baba wasn’t visiting us anymore. She said, “Oh, Baba is in seclusion now.” He had given her the order to sit near Him. So she had been sitting outside Baba’s seclusion room, but now she was on a break from her duty. She told us, “Baba says He won’t come out of seclusion for twelve years.” We all got such a shock!

I felt we had to do something. So I told the others, “You know, we must do something! Let’s stop speaking—and eating, also! We’ll all fast and observe silence until Baba comes out of seclusion. We won’t break our silence until then.” It was my idea, but we all agreed—us few girls—and Mehera also. But if everyone kept silence, how would we get the work done? So, one person had to talk—I don’t remember who, maybe Mehera’s sister, Freni. And the rest of us fasted and kept silence—Mehera, Naja, and I.

We didn’t tell Baba what we were doing. But He knew, because He is God. So right after we started keeping silence, Baba said to Gulmai, “Go and see what is happening inside the women’s compound.” When Gulmai came, we wouldn’t talk with her. We just did our work. She would ask us questions, but we wouldn’t answer. She asked, “Khorshed, what are you doing?” But I didn’t reply. Then

she went to the other girls, but they also kept silent. Finally she asked, “What is going on? Baba told me to find out what is going on inside here.” But still, no one said a word.

Gulmai came back another day, and still no one would talk to her. But she figured out what was going on and reported it to Baba. So He wrote us a message: “Now and forever, you should not fast or keep silence unless I give you the order. If I give you an order not to talk or not to eat, that is one thing. But if you do it on your own, that is not right. You were not called to love like that. If you love Me properly, then you will do as I ask. When I say to do something, only then should you do it.” Baba’s note to us was very beautiful, and He signed it in His own hand. So we kept it all these years. In the note, Baba told us, “I have to do My work, and that is why I did not let you know that I was entering seclusion. I will be in seclusion for four days more, and then I will come to see you. Until then, you should remain happy. Eat well, sleep well, and do your work well.”

When Baba finished His seclusion work, He came to us and asked, “Why were you observing silence?”

We said, “Baba, Baba, we were really feeling bad. We wondered what we had done wrong. You had always told us beforehand when you were going into seclusion, but this time You didn’t tell us. So we thought that we must have done something wrong.”

“No, no,” Baba said. “My seclusion was necessary for My work. Now it is done.” But I think that Baba was testing us to see what we would do if He suddenly left us.



In the evenings at Toka, I would play the harmonium and sing. As I mentioned earlier, my uncle Tawas Kaka had bought me a very expensive harmonium when he was in Paris. The harmonium had an especially beautiful sound. The weather at Toka was damp and humid, which isn't good for wood. But my harmonium never went out of tune. It stayed in fine condition for the entire monsoon season.

So every evening I would play the harmonium and sing devotional songs. Many of these songs Baba had written while He was at Manzil-e-Meem. Every day, Baba's songs were on my lips. And Mehera would sit and listen as I sang. Baba was often in seclusion in those days in a room on the men's side. It was only about twenty yards away from our compound, but it was secluded. So we hoped that Baba would be able to hear the songs from His room.

One day Baba asked, "Who is singing?" He knew, but He asked anyway. Someone told Him, "Khorshed is singing."

So Baba sent us the message, "I am listening to your singing and I am happy." You can imagine how delighted I was to hear that. And after Baba finished His seclusion, He told me that He liked my singing very much. Baba said that I should continue to sing His songs every evening.



My father became ill again while we were in Toka. So, in early September 1928, my mother and I returned with him to Bombay so he could receive better medical care. We left him in the care of my auntie and uncle, and then we returned to Toka to be with Baba.

On September 8th, we celebrated Krishna's birthday. Baba had photographs taken with all the Prem Ashram boys. They asked



Baba sitting in His rickshaw with His mandali and the Prem Ashram boys, Toka, September 8, 1928

Baba to dress up like Krishna. So we were happy to help. I had brought a jeweled crown from Bombay, especially for Baba to wear. And we wrapped my pink sari around His waist like a dhoti. Then we placed a long garland that we had made around His neck. Baba looked so beautiful dressed as Krishna.

But we girls wanted to do something even more special for Baba. So we made a cradle for Him out of a sheet. We wanted to swing Baba like Krishna. That is the tradition with Krishna—to swing His photo in a small cradle, but we wanted to swing Baba



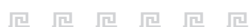
Baba dressed as Krishna, wearing Khorshed's sari and the crown she had brought from Bombay, Toka, September 9, 1928

in a big cradle. And He agreed to our request. Oh, Baba looked so lovely as I and some of the other girls sang a lullaby to Him. But before we could finish the song, we heard a noise. The sheet began to tear and Baba had to jump out. We all laughed, and even Baba enjoyed the fun. Then He gave each of us prasad.

The next day, Baba dressed up again as Krishna, and more photographs were taken of Him. He also went out on the Pravara River in a boat with some of the mandali, and a photo was taken there too.



*Baba with His
mandali in a boat
on the Pravara
River, Toka,
September 9, 1928*



As I said earlier, our room in Toka didn't have a door. And there were no beds or other furniture in the room. Dogs and cats would wander in. They would be running around barking as we would be trying to sleep right on the floor. Then, a few days after Krishna's birthday, the monsoons intensified with a very hard rain. We were already in bed when it began to pour. It rained so hard that the water began to come in the doorway, because there was nothing to stop it. The water started to go everywhere, and we didn't know what to do.

We quickly jumped up and put our bedding rolls on our trunks, but they could still get wet. And then how would we be able to sleep? We started bailing out the water with our mugs and buckets. But the water kept flowing in. So we all picked up our bedding rolls and put them on top of our heads. In those days, we had no electricity. So we did all this in the dark of night, which made everything more difficult. And we were also feeling afraid.

Someone must have told Baba about our difficulties, because He came to see us. Baba scooped up some mud from outside in His hands and made a mound about a foot high across the whole threshold of the doorway to block the water. After that, the water got deeper outside, but

it didn't come into our room. It stopped at the doorway. The important thing is that Baba had made that barrier with His own hands. Because of that, the water stopped coming in. Otherwise, I don't know what we would have done. Everything would have been ruined. But Baba saved us.



Baba had the habit of suddenly asking one of us what we were thinking. One day, this happened to me. Baba turned to me and asked, "What are you thinking?"

I didn't want to say what I was actually thinking, in front of everyone else who was there. So I just said, "Baba, You are God. You know everything. So why do You even ask?"

Baba told me, "Whatever I am, that is My business. But you have to tell Me when I ask, because if you say it in words, then I can remember you." Baba must have known my hesitation, because He said, "Come, tell Me in My ear." I don't remember what I actually told Him at the time. But because of what Baba had said, even now, when I stand in front of Baba's picture, I talk to Him. I tell Him what I am thinking and feeling out loud.

Another time, I was feeling unhappy and depressed. So I sat in the corner and cried. I just had to get it out of my system, so I cried and cried. I just kept on crying. Then I felt someone taking hold of my hand, and I opened my eyes. It was Baba. He asked, "Why are you crying?" Baba was not talking at that time, but He gestured this.

I had stopped crying as soon as I saw Baba, but I said, "Baba, I feel very bad. I don't know why. I just want to die."

Baba said, “You feel that way, but dying is not Real Dying. You have to die the Real Death. That means the death of the ego and desires—lust, greed, and selfishness. You have to be free from that. So, die in life. Have a living death: live, but have no attachments. Be dead to the world. Why do you want to die? What will you accomplish by that? The body goes, but that is nothing. You have to come back again. But to die forever means that you have to be dead to everything.” Then He embraced me and took His sadra and put it on me, over my head. Mehera saw Him do that, because Mehera was there too.



In September 1928, a week or two after celebrating Krishna’s birthday, Baba turned to me and said, “Khorshed, you have to return to Bombay now.” He had already sent my mother back to take care of my father. Hearing this, I was very, very upset and sad—actually, I was in shock! “Now I have to leave again!” I thought.

I said, “Baba, I don’t want to go.” I thought I would be staying with Baba from then on.

But Baba insisted, “No, no, you have to. When you surrender your life to a master, then you should not think of yourself. You have to think of what He tells you to do. Remember, ‘Mine is not to question why. Mine it is but to do or die.’ So you have to go!”

When Baba told me that, I accepted the fact that I would have to leave. But when I took darshan and embraced Baba, suddenly these words popped out of my mouth, “But when shall I come back?”

Baba said, “Come back whenever you like.” That made me happy and I said, “Baba, I like now! I would like to stay *now*!”

But Baba said, “No, not now. You have to go, and then come back whenever you like.”

I knew I couldn’t argue any more. But, oh, it was so difficult to leave. I knew I had to go, and I did leave, but all the time I kept remembering that Baba had said, “Come back whenever you like.”

So I went to Bombay, but we didn’t have our home there anymore. We had sold or given away everything when we came to join Baba. My auntie and uncle had a house with a terrace on the roof. It was near Victoria Gardens in the Byculla district. My father was already staying there with my mother because his health was not good. So that is where I went.

My body was there, but my mind was not. I just kept thinking, “Baba said, ‘Come back whenever you like.’” I wanted to go back immediately, and Baba had given me permission. But I didn’t know how to do this. I was a young woman and it wouldn’t have been right for me to leave my family and travel alone. So I wondered what could I do.

I couldn’t focus my mind on anything in Bombay. I just felt that this separation from Baba wasn’t right. It felt unbearable. I kept thinking “What to do? What to do, Baba? How can I manage to get back to You?” Baba had said that I could return whenever I liked, so that was all I thought about. It was on my mind all the time.

I kept myself very aloof from my auntie and uncle, because they did not believe in Baba, and they were very much against Him. Seeing my restlessness, they would try to take me out for walks, but I refused to go. I would spend all my time thinking of how to return to Baba, and how, if I got a chance, I would go alone. I couldn’t sleep at night. I just kept

thinking of escaping from the house and going to Baba. But at the same time, I knew that Baba wouldn't like that, so I dropped the idea of running away.

I didn't feel like eating anything. And when my auntie and uncle were eating, I didn't even like to see the food. When it was time for a meal, my auntie and uncle would call to me, "Khorshed, come on now."

But I would say, "I'm not hungry. I'll eat later." Even when food was put in front of me, I refused to eat. I wouldn't touch a thing. Sometimes they would keep the food for me, and I would take it up to the terrace on the fourth floor. Then I would look down to the street below and throw my food to a poor little fellow who looked hungry. He would always eat it happily.

Things went on like that for a few weeks. I would take Baba's photo and sit with it, crying and telling Him, "Give me the opportunity to leave here. What can I do? I want to come back to You. I don't want to stay here." Finally I decided, "I must go. I must return to Baba." So I told my father, "Now I must go."

Even though my father was ill, because of how he had been treated by the rest of the family, he said, "Yes, if you would like to go to Baba, you can go. But who will you go with?"

I knew my father was too ill to go himself, and I also knew that if I said, "I will go by myself," the rest of the family wouldn't let me do that. So I came up with a plan.

There was a very friendly woman I knew, who had loved Baba for a long time. She used to visit Baba and then return to Bombay. So I thought, "I can say I'm going with her, because she often goes back and forth to Baba's place." I told my father and mother that I

wanted to go with her, and they agreed to my plan. The woman wasn't actually going. I just made up the story so that my parents would give me permission to go. My father and mother knew how much I loved Baba and how much pain I felt being separated from Him, so they gave their permission.

I had no idea how difficult the journey would be, and I didn't think about it, because I was young and very determined to go back to Baba. That's all I could think of.

My mother and father said, "Yes, you can go with her. We don't mind. But come back very soon. That way you can be here to help take care of everything." So I said, "Yes," because I was so anxious to be with Baba.

In the meantime, I was becoming very ill. I wasn't able to eat anything. All I could do was drink tea. So after a few days my stomach became terribly upset. It was aching so much that I didn't know what to do. And I became scared. At first I just drank water and didn't try to take care of myself. But then I thought, "Oh no, if I get really ill, I won't be able to go back to Baba." So I agreed to eat some tapioca and porridge and take whatever medication the family suggested. Soon I got better.

I was still trying to find someone to travel with me when my uncle Tawas Kaka found out about my plan to leave. Tawas Kaka was very much against Baba, but he loved me dearly. I was the first child among my father and his brothers. That's why they loved me so much. But Baba didn't let me talk to my uncle, and that is what made him so angry toward Baba.

So he said to me, "Stay with me and don't go to Baba. You can be my daughter. I will give you anything you like and buy you all

the best things. I will take you with me all over the world—to Europe and America. Just don't go to be with Meher Baba.”

But I told him, “No, I don't want any of your things. All I want is to be with Baba.”

Now, see how Baba arranges things. My uncle could see my determination, and he knew how sad I looked all the time. So Baba put it in his mind to declare, “Since Khorshed is determined to return to Meher Baba, she should not go alone or with a stranger. She has to go with her mother.”

See, Baba made it possible for me! My uncle said, “She can go with her mother, but not with anyone else!” And that way, it was easy for me to leave. See how Baba helps! So my uncle told my mother, “Go to Baba and take Khorshed with you. I will look after Kaikhushru. Take her to Baba's place again.” That made me very happy!

So, after two long months in Bombay, my mother and I began our journey back to Toka. We traveled by train to the Ahmednagar station, and then we took a bus to Toka.

At Toka, we had all been staying with Baba on one side of a big river, the Pravara. Baba was still there, and we had to cross the river to get to Him. But that day the river was flooded. It was very wide and the water was as high as one's chest and moving very swiftly. When I saw that, I thought, “Oh my, if I had come alone, I never would have been able to get to the other side.” Not only would it have been difficult, but I wouldn't have been able to get any help, because I had an order from Baba to not touch any man. I wasn't even allowed to speak to a man. It was a very strict order. But I hadn't thought of that when I had planned to come. My only thought had been that Baba had told me, “Come back whenever you like.”

That had been in my mind ever since I returned home. Now that I had reached the Pravara, I realized that if I had come alone, I would not have been able to cross. So I was very thankful that Baba had prompted my uncle to make my mother come with me.

Even though my mother was with me, we weren't sure how we could cross. The river seemed too wide and too swift. At first, there was no one around to help us, but then someone did approach from the other side. It was Vishnu Master, one of Baba's mandali who used to do the shopping in the bazaar for the ashram. When I saw him, I told my mother, "Call him, call him, that's Baba's bazaar man."

So my mother called him and he helped us cross the river. He held one of my mother's hands while I held her other one. If I had let go of my mother's hand, or if she had not been able to hold on to Vishnu's hand, we would have drowned, because my mother was not that strong. But Vishnu was strong and he held on to my mother with both hands, and I held on to her with both hands. So, very slowly we made it across.

Baba had given us a test, but our wish to be with Baba was so strong that we passed it. We all managed to cross the surging river. But it was very hard, and we nearly fell into the rushing water. I was wearing a sari and had my hair covered, because Baba had given me that order also. Soon my sari was drenched, but I wasn't thinking about that. I was only thinking about getting across the river and seeing Baba. And with Vishnu's help, we finally made it across.

When we arrived, Baba was almost alone in Toka. Baba had sent everyone away except Mehera, Naja, and a few others. Baba had been in Toka for almost six months by then, but He had suddenly decided to finish everything there. So He had told everyone, "Now you all have

to go back from where you came.” Since Baba was dismantling the ashram, everyone left one by one. The Prem Ashram boys had left, and Meredith Star and his wife and her sister had also gone. Everyone had to go—Freni and Rustom’s family had been sent to Sarosh Motor Works in Nasik, and Baidul’s family had been sent to Poona—everyone had been sent away.

Immediately when we got across the river, we went to Baba. I stood in front of Him with my sari completely soaked. Baba seemed surprised, and said, “Oh? You came back? Why have you come?”

I said, “Yes, Baba. You told me that I could come back whenever I liked, so I came back.”

Baba looked very happy. He didn’t scold me or anything. He told me, “All right, you can stay.” So, I stayed with Baba and He sent my mother back to Bombay to be with my father.

Baba let me stay with Him in Toka until He and Mehera and the last few women finally left. While leaving, our car got stuck in the mud before we could even cross the river. But with Baba’s help, two oxen were finally able to pull our car out. So we women came back from Toka to Meherabad together at the end of November 1928, and started living in the Post Office building again.

That’s how I got to be with Baba. It was difficult, but they say, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way.” And I was so in love with Baba I couldn’t think of anything else but getting back to Him. And because He had said, “Come back, whenever you like,” I was determined to return as soon as I could. I couldn’t think of anything else. That was the only thought in my head. I had even decided to go alone, but that would have been a mistake. So Baba helped me. He is always there. But if I hadn’t been so determined to rejoin him, I don’t think

I would have been able to. I was so much in love then, when I was young. Now, too, my love for Baba is very strong. But back then, that's all I could think of—how to be with Him and how to serve Him. And in that way, I got Baba.

My Father's Kidnapping

In early 1929, Baba was preparing to travel extensively both in and outside of India for His work. So, after staying only a few weeks in the Post Office at Meherabad, on January 13th, Mehera, Daulatmai, and Naja were sent to live in Nasik, and Baba sent Khorshed and Soona back to Bombay to be with Kaikhushru. A few months later, Kaikhushru, Soona, and Khorshed spent the hot summer months in Mahabaleshwar with Mehera, Freni, and her family. Then Khorshed and her parents returned to Nasik with the other women.

Baba made several journeys during the early months of 1929, stopping only briefly in Nasik between His trips. Baba met with Khorshed and her parents on May 9th, before leaving on a journey to Rishikesh and Quetta. On August 2, 1929, Kaikhushru was kidnapped by his own family while Baba was on an extended tour of Northern India. Kaikhushru was forced to sign over all his wealth to his family and was held isolated for one year until his will became legally binding.

When he was set free, he joined Khorshed and Soona in Nasik, but as a result of this cruel treatment by his family, his health had deteriorated further. Kaikhushru died in Baba's arms in Nasik on January 18, 1931.

Baba had taken up residence in Nasik in November 1929, following His second trip to Persia. Nasik remained Baba's main ashram until November 1933.

Not long after arriving in Meherabad from Toka in early 1929, Baba said to me, "I have to go to Bombay now, and Khorshed, you have to come to Bombay with Me." Of course, I said, "All right." I was always happy to be with Baba.

At that same time, He sent Mehera, Daulatmai, and Naja to live with Freni and Rustom in Nasik. They stayed next door to the Sarosh Motor Works in a small bungalow called the Pigeon House.

I was delighted to go to Bombay with Baba, but once we were there, Baba told me that He had to travel to many places in India for His work. "I will come back to Bombay," He said. "So don't worry; be happy, and stay here." But it was some months before Baba came back. In that way, I ended up living with my parents again, at my auntie's place in Byculla.

Before Baba left on His travels, He had told me that He didn't have any money left and that I should see what money I could get for His work. He told me that this was my duty. So while I was in Bombay, I was thinking about how I could raise money for Baba. I knew my relatives wouldn't give me any. They wouldn't even give me the money that belonged to my parents. You see, when we had first

come to Baba in the early 1920s, my mother and father had placed all our jewelry at Baba's feet as an offering. Baba then asked my father to take back the jewelry and sell it and give Him the money, so He could then use it for His work.

My father had done as Baba asked. He had received 300,000 rupees for all the jewelry, which was a great deal of money, especially back then! My father gave this money to Baba, who used it for the school and dispensary and His other work. But the jewelry he made was very distinctive, with a particular design. This meant that my father's family recognized it in the bazaar as having been made by my father. They realized he was selling off all his jewelry to raise money for Baba, and they didn't like this, not at all. They were so much against this that they took all the rest of my family's valuables and put them into a safety deposit box in the bank. And they kept the key. In this way, they reasoned, my father wouldn't be able to sell our other valuables or give them away to Baba.

Because Baba had asked me to raise money for His work, I now started scheming about how I could get back my parents' wealth for Baba. I also began to worry about how I would be able to go back to Baba when He returned. My aunt and uncle didn't want any of us to go to Baba, so they were very controlling. I wasn't even allowed out of the house, except under strict supervision. They were afraid I would run away to be with Baba. I didn't like being restricted like that. I wanted to be free to go to Baba whenever I liked.

My auntie and uncle gave us food and whatever we needed, but we had very little money of our own. It was my father's money that my auntie and uncle used, but hardly any of it was in our hands. All the time I kept thinking, "How am I going to get back to Baba? How

can I get back?" I knew that as long as we stayed with my auntie and uncle, it would be impossible. So I told my parents we had to find a separate house. "If we live by ourselves," I said, "we will be free to do whatever we like."

My parents both loved Baba very much, so they were open to this idea. But finding a house in Bombay would not be easy, because it had become such a crowded city. So every day I looked in the newspaper for a vacant house somewhere. Then one day I noticed an ad for an empty flat that someone wanted to rent out. My father and I secretly went to look at it, without my uncle and auntie knowing. Otherwise, they wouldn't have let us leave their house. They did not want us to go back to Baba. They were adamant about that. And I was just as adamant that I had to go to Baba!

The flat we found was on Grant Road. It was a four-room flat on the first floor. It seemed very nice and it was cheap, so we leased it. The landlady was very happy to rent the flat. We didn't know until we'd stayed there for a few days that there was a ghost in one of the rooms. That is why the flat had been vacant for so long. Nobody wanted to live in a haunted house. People would stay only for a few days before running away.

When we told my uncle that we had found our own flat and wanted to move out of his house, he was very angry. He knew I had arranged it. So he said, "This is all that girl's fault. My brother doesn't do all of these tricks. Khorshed did it!"

There was a lot of arguing and fighting. My uncle told my father, "Your daughter is very bad! She is responsible for all this mischief. You both are very good, but she is a schemer!" He said this to my father, but we didn't mind.

I admitted, “Yes, I did it! I don’t want to stay with any of you. We want to have a separate place to live—my father, my mother, and me.”

My father tried to placate his brother, saying, “What can I do? My daughter is not happy, so we have to go.” This went on for five days before we were able to leave and move into our new place.

That was how we escaped from my uncle’s house. We hadn’t yet escaped to be with Baba, but we were planning that.

So we didn’t take very much furniture with us. But we did buy a few cheap pieces—a small table, a bed, a cupboard, and a chair—so that my auntie and uncle would think that we were planning to stay there permanently. My auntie used to come and see us. I thought if she saw that we didn’t have any furniture in the flat, she would think that we were planning to run away, and she would make trouble for us and try to force us to move back in with her and my uncle.

Even so, when my uncle came to visit, he became suspicious. “You have only these few things,” he observed. “Isn’t it necessary for you to have more furnishings?” But we ignored his comments.

My parents stayed in the front bedroom. There was also a nice verandah and a kitchen. In the back there was a little room attached to the bathroom. I told my mother and father I wanted to sleep in that room. So I put all of Baba’s photos there and kept a small oil lamp burning day and night in front of Baba’s photo.

There was a little window in the room. I didn’t have a bed. I used a bedding roll for sleeping. I placed a *chattai*—a thin straw mat—on the floor and unrolled a small mattress on it.

Each night I would sit in front of Baba’s picture and pray to Him before lying on my mattress to go to sleep. One night, as I lay there,

it felt as if someone was taking a corner of my mattress and spinning it around and around and around!

I didn't understand what was happening. I woke up, but there was no one there. This scared me a little, and I didn't know what to do. So I sat up and looked at Baba's pictures again and prayed to Baba, "Now what am I to do?" I thought, "I can change the place of my bed." So I turned my bedding roll and put it in a new spot. But you know, again it was spun 'round and 'round and 'round. My mattress went around so much it made me dizzy, as if I was about to faint. Then I knew that it wasn't just my imagination; something ghostlike was there and was doing this.

I sat up and thought, "No, I should not sleep now." So I sat there and took Baba's name.

My father and mother didn't know what was going on, because they were in a different room. Through the little window in my room was coming a little noise, "Peep, peep, peep." "Ah," I thought, "so that's where the ghost comes from." But I tried not to let it bother me. I just stayed in that room.

During that period, Padri used to come to our flat when Baba would send him for some work in Bombay. He would come and eat with us. One time, Padri stayed overnight with my father. When my mother was there, she could talk with Padri. But I could not talk with him because of Baba's order not to talk with any man except for my relatives. Baba had given me this order during my first stay at Meherabad.

I also had an order to wear a kerchief on my head. I continued to wear the kerchief even though it was so hot in Bombay that it made me quite uncomfortable. I would wear it just below my hairline. My

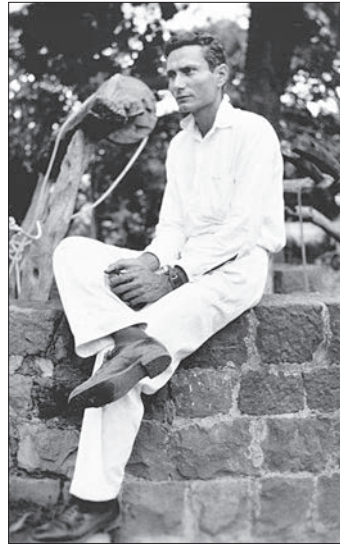
auntie would tell me to wear the kerchief a little bit back, so more of my face could be seen. She said, "It looks so funny. People think that I am forcing you to wear it like that. Don't do that, please."

But I said, "No, I will keep it like this." It was a way to remember Baba, because Baba had asked me to wear it like that.

Sometimes when Padri came, he would wear my father's clothes, because Padri was tall like my father. Other mandali would also come and visit us when they had work in Bombay. Sometimes they would also borrow my father's clothes for their appointments. I would silently make food for them and put it on the table. They would eat and then go. So our days passed in this way.

Then, one day a telegram came. My mother's sister Gulmai was very sick and needed her help. My mother said, "Gulmai is seriously ill, and I have to go and look after her." So she returned to Ahmednagar with one of the mandali, perhaps Padri. After she left, only my father and I were left in the house. The ghost kept bothering me at night. So, when my mother left, I slept in my father's room and was able to forget about the ghost.

With just the two of us in our flat, I thought it would be easy to slip away and go back to Baba. So every day I tried to figure out how to get away. As I said earlier, my father's brother and his wife were adamantly against Baba. They did not care about anything spiritual. And they had no connection with Baba. As Baba said, "Without the



Padri (Fareedoon N. Driver), one of Meher Baba's earliest mandali

connection, it happens like that.” So I stopped talking to my uncle, because he was so mean. Whenever he came to our house, he would try to talk to me. But I refused to talk with him. I just excused myself whenever he arrived.

My mother’s brother, Minochershaw, was also against Baba, but he was more reasonable, so I would talk to him. His son, who Baba gave the nickname “Asthma,” was one of Baba’s earliest mandali. But after our first trip to Quetta with Baba in 1923, he returned to his parent’s home and lived a worldly life, according to their wishes. And he never saw Baba again.

I definitely did not want this to happen to me! All I could think about was getting back to Baba. But I couldn’t figure out how. And I didn’t think we could just abandon the flat. Finally, I decided, “Never mind. We’ll just stay here for a while, and then we will see what happens later on.”

I knew from Padri that Baba was at Meherabad at that time. My cousin Rustom, Adi’s brother, also used to come and stay with us. On one of his visits he told us that he would be leaving the following day. Since I was not allowed to speak to Rustom, I told my father in a way that Rustom could hear me, “Oh, we also want to go. What should we do?”

So Rustom said to my father, “Pack your bedding rolls and be ready, and I can take you with me when I go.” And just like that, we ran away. We didn’t even tell our landlady that we were going. It is because of Baba’s nazar that we were able to be with Him. My parents and I had a connection with Baba, and we had already experienced that Baba knows everything.

My father and I took the night train to Ahmednagar with Rustom. When we arrived at Meherabad, Baba was sitting on His

gaadi (a chaise-style divan) near the crypt room on the Hill. He was looking out in the distance and saw that someone had arrived. So He sent one of the mandali down the Hill to see who had come. When Baba found out it was us, He was happy. As we came up the Hill, Baba gestured, "Come here, sit down." When I went to Baba, He said, "Oh, you've come again!"

I said, "Yes, Baba. I can't stay away from you for long; so we came. I don't want to stay in Bombay anymore. Mother is not there anymore, and now it is just my father and me."

Baba said, "Never mind. You came, and it is the right time." He had us sit down and we told Him all about the new flat and how we were doing. There were no mandali around at that time, just us.

Then Baba spelled out to my father on His alphabet board, "Will you do what I tell you to do?"

My father said, "Yes."

Baba told him, "First, you and Khorshed should go to Mahabaleshwar. Freni and Naja will also be going and staying there. Spend some days sightseeing. Keep well and rest. When the rains come, then you will all have to move to Nasik."

Because Freni, Rustom's wife, was pregnant, she needed to go somewhere with a good climate that would offer a change from Nasik. Daulatmai had three bungalows in Mahabaleshwar. Baba told us to go to one of the bungalows with Daulatmai, Freni, and her children—Meheru, Mehloo, and Falu. Baba said, "Go and stay in Mahabaleshwar for a little while. When the others return to Nasik, you should also go with them and stay there."

So my father and I went to Mahabaleshwar with Freni and her family, and we all had a very good time. The bungalow we stayed

in was very nice and convenient with a splendid view. Kasim, the Muslim caretaker, looked after the three bungalows and kept them very well. He was also our cook and prepared delicious food for us. He became a long-time friend.

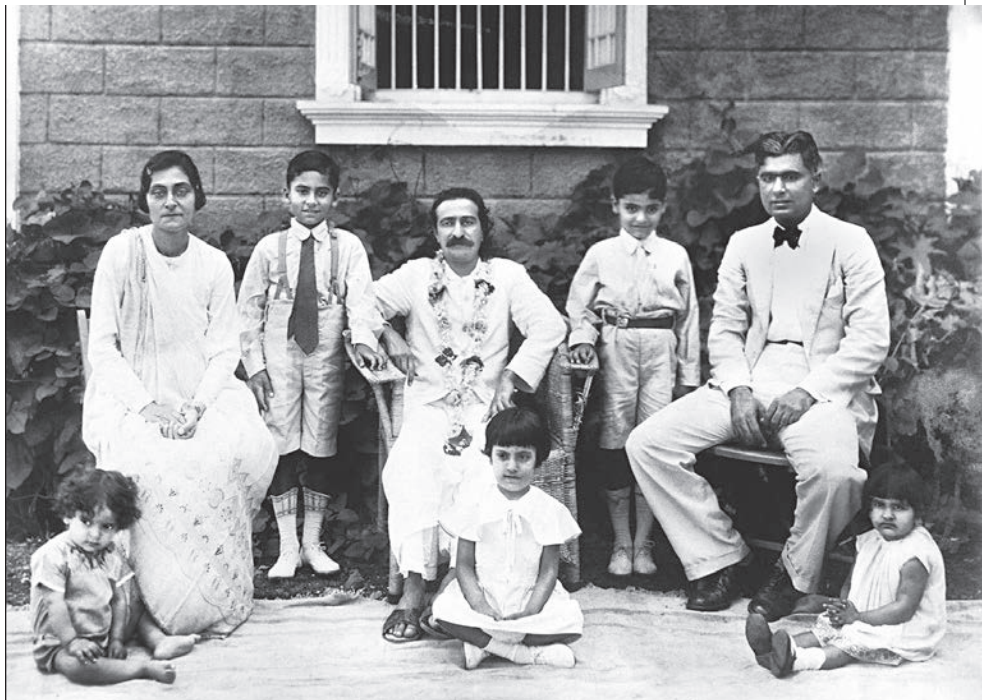
Freni would go for walks in Mahabaleshwar and we would accompany her. Mehera was also there, and after a few days, Baba sent my mother to join us. We all stayed in Mahabaleshwar together for a while and had a very nice time. We went sightseeing almost every day to different famous spots and saw lovely mountain vistas.

Meheru's brothers, Mehloo and Falu, were young at that time. There was a mango tree in the yard that had a lot of fruit. Freni put a type of cage around the tree to keep the boys from picking the fruit. But they were very mischievous. One afternoon, when we were all napping, the boys raided the tree. They ate mango after mango until they were completely covered in mango juice.

When we got up and saw what they had done, we asked them if they had been eating mangos and, very seriously, they said, "No," even though their clothes were completely stained with mango juice. We had a good laugh over that.



We all really enjoyed our days in Mahabaleshwar, but when the monsoon rains came, we couldn't stay any longer. So we went to Nasik as Baba had instructed us to do. Freni had her baby there, a little girl named Naggu, and we all stayed in the same compound as her family.



Baba came to Nasik from Meherabad in early May 1929, but He stayed for only one day before journeying to Rishikesh and Quetta for His work. He looked very happy and very beautiful, and He was in quite a good mood. At that time, Baba told my mother to look after Naggu, and He gave an order to my father to go for a half-mile walk every morning. Baba instructed my father, "Never go out alone on these walks." Baba then told my mother, "Be with Kaikhushru all the time. Don't leave him alone. Always stay with him. And even if the sky falls, none of you should leave Nasik." So my mother went on these walks with my father, but she never suspected that something might happen to my father.

Then one day, my auntie, my father's sister, came. She asked my mother and me lots of questions, such as, "Where is Kaikhushru? How is he eating? Is he well?" Then she visited with my father and asked him about all the places he went and what routes he traveled to get there. She was trying to find out all of these things. But it never occurred to us that she might be planning something, so we told her, "Yes, he is going out to walk for a while."

Baba with Rustom and Freni Irani's family: Beheram, Freni, Mehloo, Baba, Meheru, Falu, Rustom, and Naggu, Nasik, early 1930s

She asked, "For how long?"

"For a half an hour," we replied. My mother did not suspect anything, so she said, "Yes, he is going up the way a little, up to Sarosh Motor Works. Then he comes back. He goes for a walk every day for half an hour."

"At what time?" my auntie asked.

"Ten o'clock," my mother said.

Then my auntie left. We didn't think anything of it at the time. It all seemed very innocent to us. My mother just answered my auntie's questions.

Shortly after this, in July 1929, Baba left Nasik and traveled to Kashmir in northern India. Before leaving, Baba again told my mother, "Don't leave Kaikhushru alone. You have to be with him all the time." So my mother was always with him.

For eight or ten days my father went for his daily walk as usual and then came back. We had forgotten all about my auntie's visit. My mother would walk each day with my father. Then, on August 2, 1929, she became very ill while she was walking. After going some distance, she got diarrhea and had to come back. When she got home she said, "Oh, I couldn't finish the walk today." She didn't think it was important at the time, but she made a mistake. She should have told me to go with my father or asked him to return with her. But we didn't even think of it. We felt so free that it never occurred to us to worry.

My father continued his walk to Sarosh Motor Works as usual that day, but when he got there, my two uncles and my father's jewelry partner were all waiting for him in a taxi. When my father went to greet them, they said, "Come on, Kaikhushru, we will take you to Bombay."

My father protested, "No, no, my wife and daughter are here. I don't want to come with you." When he refused to go, they took him by force, pushing him into the car like a child. My father was all alone and he did not have the strength to fight back. The men held him and pushed him into the car and took him all the way to Bombay. Someone at Sarosh Motor Works saw my father being put into the car, but he thought my father had gotten ill and these people were helping to bring him home, or something innocent like that. The worker never imagined that my father was being kidnapped.

When my father didn't come home, my mother and I went to look for him. After a while, Rustom took charge and sent some of the servants out to look as well, thinking that my father may have gotten sick or fallen and hurt himself. But nobody could find him.

Then the person from the garage told us, "Don't bother looking for him. I saw three people put him in a car and drive away. I thought they were taking him home."

The next evening a telegram came saying, "I am in Bombay. Don't worry about me. I am safe here." That was all it said, because my father's family had sent it.

We were very worried about what had happened to my father. But before Baba had left Nasik to go to Kashmir, He had told my mother, "While I am gone on My tour, you should not leave Nasik. None of you—Soonamasi, Khorshed, or Kaikhushru—should leave Nasik at all, even if the sky falls." But everyone else encouraged us to leave and find my father. Rustom's father told us, "Go to Bombay. The jewelry shop is worth a lot of money, and your family will try to take it from you. You should go back and stop that from happening." And Rustom told us, "You both should go to your auntie's house

to see your father, because your family may be trying to get all his money away from him.”

Although we were incredibly concerned about my father, we remembered Baba's order not to leave Nasik. But we did not tell anyone about His order. We just refused to go to Bombay. We said, “Let them take all the money; we don't care. We have to stay with God.”

Nobody understood why we wouldn't go. And our family wondered why we didn't return. But Baba had told us, “Do not put your foot outside of Nasik.” We remembered this order; so we didn't go to Bombay.

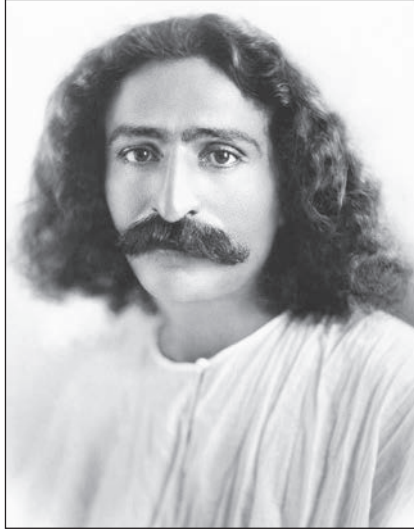
Rustom was furious with us. He kept asking, “Why don't you go? Why don't you go?” Now, we were staying in Rustom's house, and if you are a guest in a person's house and he tells you, “Go,” you should go. Even so, we stayed, but we didn't tell Rustom about Baba's order. At that time, Baba's orders were not something we would talk about easily with others. We kept them to ourselves. So we didn't go to Bombay, but no one could understand why.

After more than one month's journey to Kashmir, Baba returned to Nasik on August 26, 1929. Perhaps Rustom had sent Baba a telegram telling Him about my father, because Baba called us and asked what had happened. When we told Him, Baba asked, “Why didn't you go to Bombay?”

I wasn't sure if I should tell Baba or not, so I didn't say anything. I decided to wait before speaking. Then Baba asked again, “But you didn't go to Bombay. Why didn't you go?”

This time I said, “Baba, don't You remember? You said not to go anywhere. ‘Don't put your foot outside of Nasik, even if the sky falls.’”

Baba said, "Yes, yes, I remember." He seemed very happy that we had remembered, even in that critical time, to keep His orders no matter what. Baba embraced us and said, "Don't worry. From now on, I will look after you. Don't worry at all and stay well." So we continued to stay in Nasik and did not go to Bombay.



*Baba, Bombay,
September 5, 1929*



Meanwhile, my father had been taken to my auntie's house. They kept my father captive in a room there, and they tried to get him to sign a new will that they had drawn up for him. They were trying to force him to sign over all his possessions to them. They put in the will that only if I got married could I inherit anything, otherwise I would get nothing—only about a hundred rupees a month. My father told them every day, "I will jump from this fourth floor and die. Why did you bring me here? Release me immediately!" But they wouldn't listen. They would just show him the new will and say, "Sign here, sign here." My father kept refusing to sign. He would tell them, "No, no, no." Still they kept at it. Every day they harassed him. This went on for a long time.

Finally my father gave in. But he was clever and he told them, "If you put two lines in the will, then I will sign it; otherwise I won't."

They asked, "What do you want us to add?"

My father said, "Write that whenever my wife or daughter need go to the hospital or see a doctor that they can have whatever money they need for doctor's fees, medicines, and other expenses. You must specify this for both of them. If you do that, then I will sign the will." My father had them add these lines because he knew from our horoscopes that I would have to have two operations in the future and that my mother would have health problems as well. So he was clever and he made them add this to the will, and then he signed it.

The will provided that all of my father's money from his jewelry store was given over to his brothers and his business partner. So much for this one, so much for that one. It was a lot of money at the time. My mother and I could not touch any of it, except in the case of illness, because my father had made them put that in the will. But even after they had made my father sign the new will, the rest of the family were worried. The law stated that after a trust is redone, it is only valid if it remains unchanged for one year. Then it is permanent. You can't change the will after that. So to prevent my father from revoking the new will, his family kept him as a prisoner for an entire year!

When the time was up, they told him he could go back to Nasik.

They forced my father to write us a letter that said, "If you believe in God, then come and take me from here as soon as you can." It was signed by my father, but they dictated what to write. When we received the letter, naturally, we told Baba. He read the letter and said, "Now go and bring your father back."

So my mother and I went to my auntie's house in Bombay, but we didn't even stay long enough to drink a cup of tea. I just told them, "I've come to take my father."

We saw the room where he had been kept for a whole year—it was like a beggar's quarters. He had been forced to pass his life for a whole year like that. My father was treated worse than a prisoner in jail by his own relatives. It had affected his heart, and he looked very frail.

My auntie and the others said, "Stay here for a few days."

But I said, "No, we have to go immediately." I was very rude to them. I had come to take my father, and that is what I did.

They said, "Your father is very weak." I said, "Never mind. We have to go now." So my mother and I took my father to the station, and the three of us returned to Nasik. We had no help. At that time, I was very strong and active. I did whatever was needed. My father had become very feeble. For one year he had been sitting in one room worrying every day. The stress of being held captive and having to sign away all his wealth had made him so weak, and it had affected his mind.

Baba was very caring toward my father when he returned to Nasik. Baba arranged what my father should eat and what should be done for him. Baba had a meeting with my father, and when He left the room, my father was crying, "Oh, what have I done?" he lamented. My mother and I didn't know what my father had been forced to go through for that year or how he had managed to endure it. He just kept weeping all the time and asking for forgiveness from my mother. My father would cry and say that his relatives had forced him to make the will in their favor. This made him very unhappy and he looked so depressed. My mother tried to console him and told him to forget everything that had happened and be happy.

But every day my father cried. He kept saying, “Forgive me, Khorshed and Soona. I have signed away all the money to take care of you. And now we can only have a hundred rupees every month—that is all. We can’t touch anything else. They made that new will and forced me to sign it. What could I have done? I refused as long as I could, but they demanded that I sign it. Now, I want to change that will. But I can’t do anything. It’s too late to change it!”

Baba would visit my father every day when He was in Nasik, but Baba was also traveling a lot at that time. One of the ways we passed the time when Baba wasn’t with us was by reading the *Mahabharata*. We had a version in Gujarati, but it was still difficult to understand. The language was formal and it was a very long book. We would all sit together in the evenings and I would read the book and try to explain it to the others.

Once when Baba went to North India for His work and did not come back for several days, we started taking turns repeating His name in front of His picture day and night. After about seven days, Baba returned to Nasik. When He heard that we had been repeating His name nonstop, Baba told us that we should not repeat His name like that unless He tells us to do it.

After a few months in Nasik, my father came down with pneumonia. He had been well cared for since he had returned, but the shock of having been held in Bombay was too great and he was still so weak that he caught pneumonia. Because Baba was away a lot during that time, He told Pilamai, Goher’s auntie, to look after my father. Baba ordered my mother and me not to nurse or look after my father, because it made him feel so bad whenever he saw us. He would start to cry, and this made his health worse. Also, Baba didn’t want us

to become too attached to my father. Baba wants us to be attached only to Him. So we were not the ones taking care of my father then.

One day, my father's condition became serious. That very night, Baba returned to Nasik at two in the morning from His travels. He went straight to my father's room and sat with him until late in the night. Baba spread His bedding on the verandah outside my father's room and looked in on him several times during the night. No one else was allowed to enter the room. My father loved Baba very much and Baba loved him also. Baba com-



*Kaikhushru B. Irani,
Khorshed's father,
Bombay, circa 1917*

forted him, saying, "Don't worry. Just remember Me."

On January 18, 1931, Baba sat in the room next to my father's room and told my mother and me to press His feet. Baba asked me to sing all of the songs I knew that had been composed by Him. So I was singing to Baba in the room next to where my father was lying, and the door was open in between so my father could hear.

About one o'clock, Pilamai called out, "Baba, Baba, now he is going." Baba went into the other room to be with my father, which was unusual. Baba normally would not go near someone who was dying. When Baba had been in Quetta and Nervous was dying, Baba had left the house and gone away. But Baba touched my father and caressed him, saying, "Masaji, I am here with you." Pilamai was

interpreting because Baba was not talking at that time. “Don’t worry,” Baba told him.

I was singing, and my father was with Baba as he took his final breath. He died in Baba’s arms. Baba was holding him like a child.

After my father’s last breath, Baba came to me and said, “Khorshed, your father died in my arms, so don’t worry. He is in a very good place and is doing fine. Don’t worry about him at all. And don’t cry.” But I felt the loss very much. I loved Baba, yes, more than anyone. But I loved my father even more than my mother. So I felt his passing very deeply.

But Baba said not to cry. “Don’t cry—not even one drop,” He said. “Don’t shed tears, because it’s not good for your father.” He told this to my mother also. Baba sat down and put my head on His lap and said, “Don’t cry. Don’t cry.” But I felt it, because I loved my father. Of course—not like Baba—but still I loved him very much. So, I controlled myself and tried not to shed a tear. I told Baba, “If You are here, then I don’t mind. I won’t shed any tears.”

But I loved my father so much that even though Baba had asked me not to weep, I could not keep the tears from my eyes. Nevertheless, Baba was always with me. He took care of everything. He saw to it all. My father was taken to the Tower of Silence, which is the Zoroastrian tradition of burial. Baba told us, “Don’t worry,” and we were not worried for my father. But my mother and I felt his passing very much.

My uncle and auntie came from Bombay when my father died. My uncle told me, “Come along, I’ll take you back to Bombay. If you wish, you can stay with us. Or if you want, I can find you a separate house, and you can live there. Now, why are you staying here? Your

father has died.” He said to my mother, “Your husband has died. So why remain here? Come along with us.”

But my mother said, “No, we won’t come.”

And I said, “We don’t care about you. Go away!” I was so cross. I abused them loudly and made them leave. After that, I never saw them again.

My mother and I remained with Baba. He had told us, “I will look after you, so don’t worry.” We were very brave at that time. We didn’t care about money or material comfort. So we didn’t go to Bombay. And the relatives made the most of this. They turned everything upside down. They sold the jewelry shop, they took almost all the money, and they gave us only a small portion. We didn’t know what they were doing and we didn’t care, either. We cared so much for Baba that we did not even think about what they were doing in Bombay. So they took advantage of the opportunity. But it doesn’t matter that we lost our wealth, because where Baba is, everything is. And we were with Baba, and that’s all we cared about.

We stayed in Nasik for almost five years. Baba stayed there also, although He would come and go for His work. Sometime earlier, Baba had asked me if it would be difficult for me if my father died. I told Baba I would have no difficulty, because He was with me.

Baba Journeys to the West

From January 13, 1929, to November 30, 1933, Khorshed and the other women continued living in the Nasik ashram, longer than anywhere else except Meherabad and Meherazad. During this time, Baba was traveling extensively for His work, both throughout India and to the West, for the first time in 1931. While He was away, Mehera, Khorshed, and the other women would find creative ways to remember Him and to offer something special to Baba when He returned.

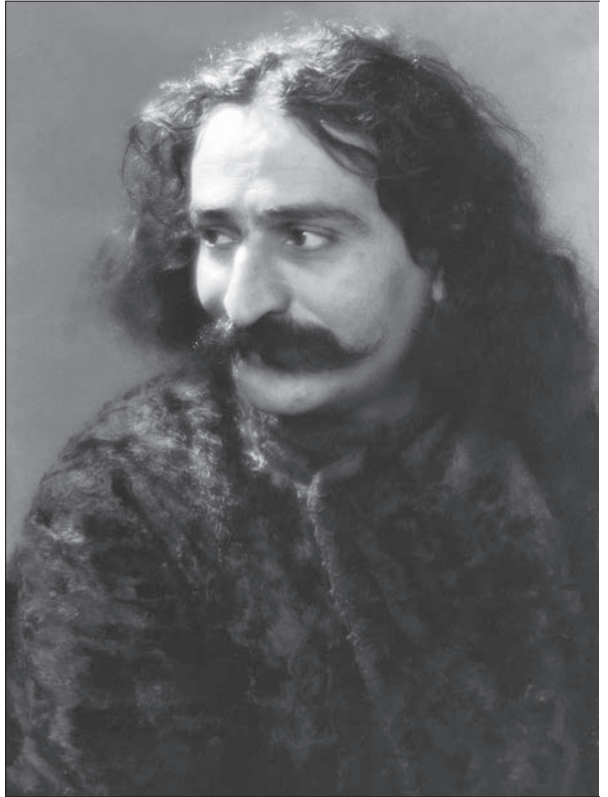
In 1930, Baba's father, Sheriarji, came to stay with us for a few weeks in the Nasik ashram. He had been ill for some time, and Shireenmai thought the change would improve his health. My mother was good at nursing, so her bed was placed in his room so that she could attend to him. Mehera was also ill at that time, and Sheriarji's prayers helped break her fever.



*Sheriarji M.
Irani, Meher
Baba's father*

Then in 1931, Baba decided to go to the West for the first time. Before the trip, Baba asked Freni to make a fur coat for Him. She arranged it all—she bought the brown fur, hired a tailor, and paid him to make the coat. Baba liked the coat very much, and He looked very handsome in it. Several photos were taken of Baba wearing the coat when He was in the West.

Before He wore the coat for the first time, Baba removed His sacred kusti thread and then He took a bath. Baba never wore His kusti thread again. He gave the thread to me, and I kept it for

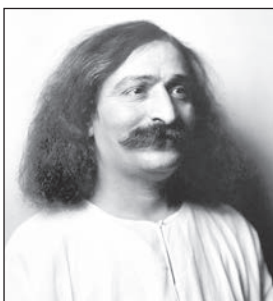


*Baba wearing the brown
fur coat that Freni had
made for Him, London,
September 30, 1931*

many, many years. Later, after Baba dropped His body, I gave the kusti thread to someone who asked for it.

Baba left for Europe and America in August 1931, sailing on the *SS Rajputana*. We women remained in His ashram in Nasik. I was twenty-one years old at that time. We missed Baba very much while He was away. When He returned from the West in January 1932, Baba permitted my mother and others to come to Bombay to greet Him. Many of His Parsi followers also went to the pier to welcome Baba back. There is a nice photo that I had of this. After my mother returned to the ashram, she told us all about Baba's arrival.

Baba,
New York City,
November 28, 1931



Baba returning from
the West to a grand
welcome, Bombay,
January 1, 1932

When Baba returned to Nasik, after having been away for more than four months, we all dressed up in a special way to welcome Him back. Some of us put on our nicest gowns, and others wore special scarves. Someone took cooking vessels and played them like drums to welcome Baba and celebrate His return. From then on, we would dress up in a special way for Baba every time He returned from a trip abroad.



While Baba had been away on His first journey to the West, we prepared a special surprise for Him. We girls decided to put on the play “Layla and Majnun” when He returned. We were not allowed to order anything from the outside, like make-up or costumes. So we had to use whatever materials we already had. In this way, we kept busy preparing everything. In addition to making the costumes and shoes, we also built the sets and gardens for the play.



Khorshed, Mehera, and Mani dressed as Arabian dancing girls for Baba's return from the West, Nasik, 1932

We were still practicing the dances for the play when Baba finally returned from the West. We were so busy preparing the play that one day Baba came and His food was not ready. He asked, “What have you been doing all this time?”

“Baba, we have been practicing our dances,” we replied.

So Baba said, “Now stop it. That is enough.” And that made us happy, because we had been so busy.

The next day we performed the play in front of Baba and the other women in the ashram. Mehera did a lovely dance for Baba, while I sang these words: “How long have I been standing at Your door! Why don't You call me inside? Rain is falling and my sari is wet.” The song went on, “Let the whole world become my enemy, but don't You, Beloved, ever turn from me. Don't ever be cross with me. Always be loving and kind.”

Baba clapped and smiled at the end of the play. We felt very happy, because Baba enjoyed it. We did our best to please Him.

Baba was very impressed. He asked, "Shall I call the mandali to see the play?"

We said, "Oh, Baba, no." We felt very self-conscious.

So Baba said, "Never mind. I'll invite just one or two—Rustom or Padri." But then He asked all the mandali to come and see our performance the next day. Mani, who was staying with us during her school holiday, played Layla. And Mehera played the part of Majnun, where she was disguised as a man. But she asked someone else to play the part of the dancer when we did the play in front of the mandali. After that performance, our lives became even more secluded from men, and Baba never allowed the mandali to see our plays again.

Another time, Baba told us we had to prepare a dance, just for us women. I sang and Mehera danced. It was short, but we all enjoyed watching each other. Unfortunately, we had no movie camera in those days, so we were not able to record any of our performances. If we had recorded them, we could see them today. We even did a waltz together once. We would put a record on and dress up—one of us dressed up like a man and the other like a woman. Usually Mehera and I were girls and Mani was dressed up like the boy.

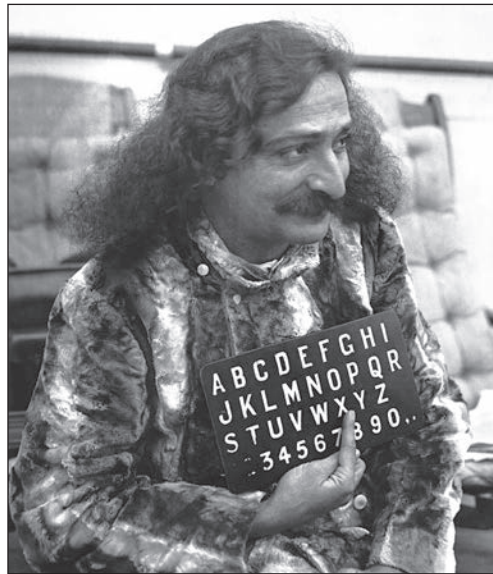
When we did the Radha-Krishna dance, Mani was Krishna and I was Radha. It was just for fun, and Baba liked it very much.

Baba started taking even more of an interest in our productions. He said, "Do a drama with a real saint and a bogus saint." If Baba wanted it, then we had to do it. Baba arranged the parts. For the real saint, He selected Gulmai. Each of the saints also had four disciples. Baba selected Mehera, me, Mani, and Adi's sister, Dolly, as the disciples of the real saint. Pilamai, who was visiting from Karachi, was the bogus saint. Freni, Naja, and Jamshed's wife, Khorshed, were among the disciples of the bogus saint.

Baba also gave us the plot to follow. The real saint was good, and everyone who went to him would think about God. The people who would visit the bogus saint would always be thinking about money and their possessions. It was a fun play—and it turned out very well. Baba liked it very much—so it was a success—and the other women in the audience also enjoyed it.



After less than three months in India, Baba left again in March 1932 on His second world tour. Before He left on this trip, Baba asked Freni to make Him another fur coat. This time He wanted one that was not brown. Baba returned briefly to Bombay in July and called us women to meet Him there for two or three days. Then He sailed off again for Italy.



Baba wearing the striped fur coat that Freni made for His second journey to the West. Baba is aboard the SS Bremen, May 19, 1932.

While Baba was on one of His long journeys in the West, He sent us pictures of Himself. Each of us received a postcard-sized photo. He also sent three big pictures for Mehera. In Mehera's photos, Baba was wearing the same fur coat, but He had a different pose and facial expression in each photo, either laughing or smiling. I got a picture



*Baba at Villa
Altachiara,
Portofino, Italy,
June-July 1933*

of Baba in Italy. He was standing on some steps in His sadra, looking like the Christ.

As I said, whenever Baba was gone on one of His journeys, we wanted to do something special for His return. But we couldn't ever buy anything from outside. And because my father had died, we couldn't ask him to send us anything. So we had to use what we already had.

I remembered that I still had the nice sari embroidered with gold thread from my Navjote ceremony when I was eight years old. It was with my auntie and uncle in Bombay. So I wrote and asked them to send it to me, which they did. I didn't say that I wanted the sari to make something for Baba. I just said that I would use it.

I think my auntie was feeling sorry for having kidnapped my father and keeping him prisoner for one year. After he died, they felt sorry it seemed. But while he was living, they had no compassion. They still did not have any feeling for Baba. My auntie had met Baba, but there was no connection. She saw Him and maybe knew in her heart He was special, but she was not convinced. Most Zoroastrians are very orthodox.

But it was good of her to send me the sari so we could make some special things for Baba from it. We made a lovely silk robe for Baba, and we embroidered an intricate border around the neck with the gold thread that we unraveled from the sari. We used an embroidery frame to do this work. Mehera designed the robe and traced the pattern. Then she and I did the needlework and stitched sequins that I had brought from Bombay over the pattern. Naja helped when



Robe made and embroidered by Mehera, Khorshed, and Naja from the silk of Khorshed's kusti dress and one of her saris

*Crown (above) and
garland (below) made
and embroidered by
Mehera, Khorshed,
and Naja from the
silk of Khorshed's kusti
dress and one
of her saris*



she could. We also made a lovely crown for Baba that Mehera designed, as well as a large garland of pink roses and jasmine flowers that we sewed from another white sari of mine. We dyed the silk pink, and every day after we finished cooking and doing our household chores, we made a few buds for the garland. We did this work quietly, so that no one knew what we were making. It took a lot of time, but in this way, we could remember Baba while He was away.

When Baba returned from His second journey to the West, He came straight to Nasik. We were very happy to see Him again, but we found that Baba looked different. His mustache had been trimmed, I think by Margaret Craske, who later lived with us in the ashram. After that trip, Baba always kept His mustache trimmed. Mehera would be the one who cut it.

We took great joy in dressing Baba in the silk robe, crown, and garland that we had made for Him. Baba looked so beautiful in His robe and crown. And the garland we made did not stain His robe like fresh flowers might have. Baba also wore this robe and garland on other occasions, such as His birthday celebration at Meherabad, later in 1938.

Baba made many trips to the West during the 1930s. We kept busy while Baba was away making other garlands or clothing for Him. We also made four or five crowns. Because we could not ask Baba for anything or send someone to the bazaar, we cut up our saris and dresses to make these special things for Him. Sometimes I also wrote to my aunt in Bombay and asked her to send me shiny thread or sequins we could use.



Baba wearing His embroidered silk coat and crown for His birthday, Upper Meherabad, 1938

And whenever we would comb Baba's hair, we would carefully save any hair left in the comb or brush. Then we would sew brooches out of Baba's hair. First, we would draw a shape on cardboard and cut it out. Then we would cover it with silk and use Baba's hair as thread to make the design. Sometimes we would also use His finger-nail clippings in the design. I made many brooches from Baba's hair. Because I was good at sewing, I could make them so well that no one knew they were homemade. We missed Baba very much during His absences. But it made us happy to remember Him in these ways.

Although we had nothing, our ideas were very grand. Mehera and I had very creative ideas about making special things for Baba. But even those ideas, Baba gave to us. He also gave us inner help. Without His help, we would not have been able to make so many beautiful things for Baba. And He was very pleased with the results.

It was a very hard time whenever Baba was away, but it was a very good time, also. Naturally, we loved being with Baba when He would return. Now, I think about what precious years I had with Baba.

Sometimes when Baba would be away, traveling for His work, letters would come now and then from Him. Of course, we were all delighted when we received one. We used to gather all around and Mehera would read it out loud to us. Once when Baba returned from the West, He asked Mehera to write a letter to some of His women disciples in the West. Baba said He would establish a connection between the East and West with that letter.



While in Nasik, Baba would sometimes dictate songs to us. Other times, He would ask us to play gramophone records, and He would explain the meaning of the songs and ghazals. Once He brought a record with a few Indian songs that He liked. Baba asked me to listen to the record and sing the songs to Him. Baba enjoyed it whenever I sang those songs.

Earlier, when Baba was still talking, He had taught me a song that He had written Himself. He told me, "Whenever you want to sing, first sing this song. Then sing the other songs you want to sing." That song was "Ishtiake." The words to the song mean:

*In that instant when your obsession for God goes beyond
all limits,*

You will see His glory right in front of your eyes.

*How can I tell you, heart, what you will become when you
lose the ego?*

You yourself, the lover, will become the Beloved.

*He came and whispered in my ear the secret behind the veil,
"I will become all yours, when you become all mine."*

Baba especially liked that song. I wrote the words down on a piece of paper, and Baba put it in the pocket of one of His coats. Many years later, someone found the song in Baba's pocket when they were putting His coat into the museum at Meherabad.

While we were staying in Baba's ashram in Nasik, He took us into the town and by the river to see some of the famous places there. Since our early days with Baba, we had been ordered to wear a kerchief on our head whenever we were in public. We had to wear it just above our eyes so that not even our foreheads were exposed. But after Baba

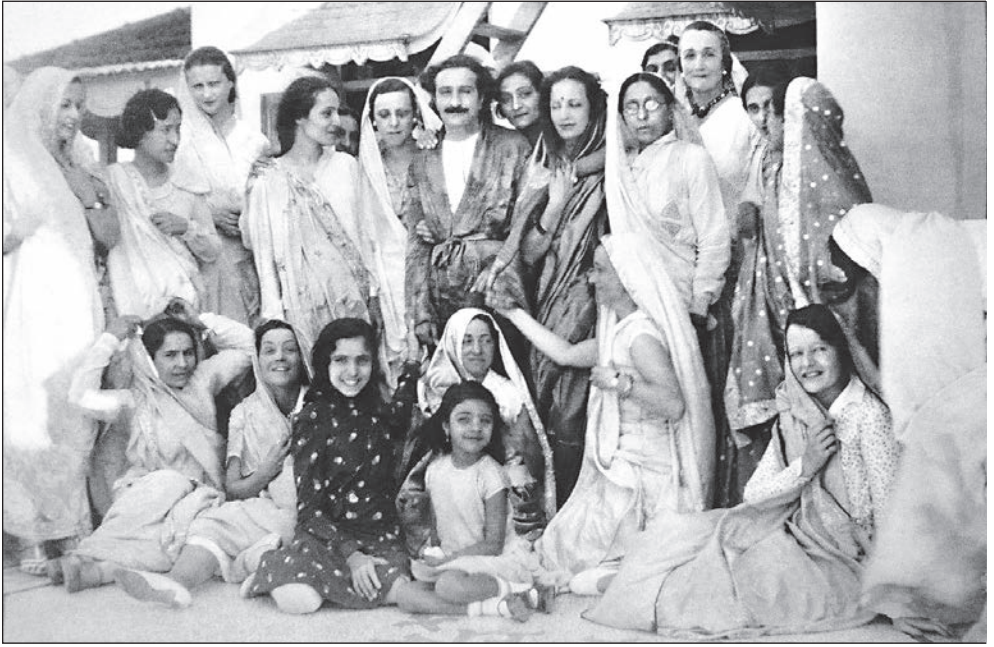


Baba with Mehera,
Khorshed, Freni,
and Gulmai,
Nasik, early 1930s

returned from the West, He released us from that rule. One day, we were sitting on a couch with Baba and He took the kerchiefs that we were wearing and just threw them away. After that we were allowed to wear a sari and simply drape a fold of it over our head.

In April 1933, Baba took us to Kandivali, a suburb of Bombay where He had been staying for some days. It was about this time that Baba's sister, Mani, who was fourteen years old, joined the ashram permanently. Baba brought us to Kandivli so we could meet ten of His Western women disciples, who would be arriving in India in a few days. Baba told us that we would be accompanying the Western ladies on a tour of India. So Baba had us all go shopping, and we bought new saris and many other things we would need for the trip. This was the first chance we had been given to go shopping in a long time, and we really enjoyed it. On the day we met the Western women, Baba wanted us to dress in our finest saris, and we even wore lipstick, rouge, and high-heeled shoes.

Baba had told us the names of the women, along with the Persian names He had given them. Baba had asked me to write down their names: Elizabeth, Kitty, Margaret, Norina, Delia, and others. Elizabeth's Persian name was *Dilruba*, one who steals the heart. Kitty



was given the name *Saroja*, meaning lotus flower, and Norina's was *Noorjehan*, meaning light of the world. Margaret's name was *Zuleka*. There is a famous story of Zuleka's love for Yusuf. Delia's name was *Layla*, the heroine of the play that we had performed for Baba when He first returned from the West. The story of Majnun's love for Layla is also very famous.

On the afternoon of April 7, 1933, the Westerners arrived, anxious to greet Baba. But He had hidden Himself from the ladies in a game of hide-and-seek and Baba asked me to tell them to find Him. But because I did not know English well, I kept saying, "Found Baba! Found Baba!" This made everyone laugh. They all enjoyed this game. Finally, Delia was delighted to discover Baba's hiding place in the bathing room, and she received the first embrace. After Baba had

Baba with the women at Kandivli. Standing: Christine, Jamshed's wife Khorshed, Vivienne, Mehera with Khorshed behind her, Minta, Baba, Freni, Audrey, Gulmai, Dinshaw's wife Soona, Norina, Dina Talati, and Soonamasi. Seated: Naja, Mabel, Mani, Delia, Jeroo Talati, Margaret, Elizabeth, and Kitty bending over. April 1933.

greeted and embraced everyone, we dressed up the Western women in our saris, which was a fun way to get to know one another.

Baba changed His mind about having us accompany the other women on their tour of India. We spent only two days with the Western women before Baba returned with us to Nasik. He then took them to see the Taj Mahal in Agra and the Himalayas in Kashmir, before sending them back to the West after less than three weeks in India. We did not see them again until some of them returned to India more than three years later.

C H A P T E R F O U R T E E N

Living on Meherabad Hill

After the Westerners' visit in April 1933, Meher Baba made two more trips to Europe that year. Khorshed and the other women continued to live in the ashram in Nasik. Then, on November 30, 1933, Baba shifted all seventy of the women and men mandali who had been living in Nasik back to Meherabad. The women stayed in the water tank building at Upper Meherabad, and the men stayed in the old mess hall at Lower Meherabad.

Meher Baba was often away from Meherabad during this period, either continuing His world travels or working with the mad and spiritually intoxicated persons (masts) at the Rahuri ashram that He opened in May 1936. The women led unusually cloistered lives at Upper Meherabad, caring for an array of birds and animals, in addition to their regular duties.



Mehera and Khorshed waving over the jasmine hedge just outside the door to the East Room, Upper Meherabad

The East Room of the water tank building with the bamboo passageway to the kitchen, Upper Meherabad

After living in Nasik for almost five years, Baba moved Mehera, Mani, Naja, Valu, my mother, and me to Meherabad Hill toward the end of 1933. We all stayed in the East Room of the water tank building. We were happy to be able to live at Upper Meherabad, where Baba had spent so much time with the Prem Ashram boys. Meherabad Hill had always been off-limits to the women before this.

In Nasik, we had been sleeping on the floor, which we did not mind. But when we moved to Upper Meherabad, we were so surprised when Baba opened the door and showed us our room. We had metal cots to

sleep on for the first time since living with Baba! They were such a luxury! There was no other furniture, except for our trunks, which we placed one on top of the other.

At night my mother locked the door to our room with three large padlocks, and she kept the keys inside her blouse as she slept. Baba asked me to look in on Mehera now and then during the night to see if she was sleeping.



My mother would use an alarm clock to wake up very early. At five o'clock, she would unlock the padlocks and go out to the gate of our compound near Baba's crypt and escort Baba inside. We girls were slow to get up, as we liked to sleep just a few minutes more.

But we could not stay in bed long, because we needed to prepare tea for Baba. He would come to our kitchen to have His tea. We spread a thin mattress with a nice cover over a wooden table that had a metal top. We put a large cushion against the wall for His back. That way, Baba had a comfortable place to sit in the kitchen. And we would press Baba's feet as He drank His tea.

During that period, Baba slept on the platform next to the underground crypt on Meherabad Hill. We felt happy that Baba was staying so near us. He slept out in the open on the wooden bed that my mother and I had brought from our home in Bombay for Him. This was the same bed that Sheriarji had sat on while telling my father the stories of his search for God. The bed had a mosquito net, but there was so much wind on Meherabad Hill that the mandali had to hold it to keep it down. They had to stay awake all night to keep watch for Baba.

One morning after my mother got up, she started to sit down on the little cane stool that Baba had brought for her. In the night, a snake had curled up on it, and my mother sat on the snake. She

The women's kitchen with the bamboo passageway on the left connecting it to the East Room, Upper Meherabad





*The east side of the
water tank building
with the kitchen
behind it on the right.
The small hut where
Soonamasi would keep
watch is on the far left.
Upper Meherabad,
circa 1934.*

quickly got up, and the snake slithered away. Another time, Naja found a long, thin snake coiled in her sandal; it also slithered away. Baba gave us antivenom serum and taught us how to cut a wound in the bite and put potassium permanganate into it, in case any of us were ever bitten by a snake.

Our life was especially secluded during those years. We were not allowed to go outside the compound, and we didn't even walk around inside the compound. We were too busy with our work. We just went from the East Room to the kitchen and back. And even then, we walked through a tunnel of bamboo matting that was like a cave. We could not see out of it, and there were no windows in our room, since it had originally been built as a water tank. There were only small air vents high up near the ceiling, but we could not see out of these either. We were so “*mast-like*” in those days that we didn't know when a day came and when it went.

Baba had given me and Mehera the order not to read or write. He would bring Mani all sorts of books, but He would not allow us to touch them. There were many different kinds of books. Some explained how to do things—how to make toys or things like that. And Baba asked Mani to write a diary of all of Mehera's activities.

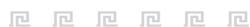
Baba had also given Mehera the order not to see or touch a man, or even hear the sound of a man's voice. Any time there was a workman

on the Hill, Baba said that we should go to our room and not come out until he had gone. So we had to be shut up in the East Room, and we could not even talk while the workman was there. Often Mani would have to play the sitar, sometimes for hours, to cover up the men's voices.

In the early days of 1934, Baba gave Mehera, Mani, and me the order to always remain together. Mehera was never to be alone, except for her bath or personal necessities. This was often difficult, since we each had our own work to do. Suppose one of us forgot to carry something to the kitchen or bathing room—all three of us had to go together to get it. So we would keep our sewing or knitting things in a box and take them with us. Baba never said why He wanted both of us to accompany Mehera everywhere. One time Mani even asked Him, "Why do You need two of us to be with Mehera? Isn't one enough?"

Baba replied, "If one falls asleep, the other will be awake with her." And since we loved to be near Baba, we just did what He asked. It was Baba's love and grace that helped us carry out such orders.

We missed Baba very much when He was away on His travels. Just before He left on a long trip to America in November 1934, Baba asked us to make a large frame and place twelve photos of Him inside it. Perhaps Baba wanted us to have something special to do while He was away. So Naja made the frame, and we were allowed to send someone to the bazaar to get the glass. Then we placed twelve photos of Baba in an oval design inside the frame. We made crêpe-paper flowers as decorations around each photo. Mehera made lilies, Mani made roses, and I made pinkie flowers. We worked on the floor, because there were no tables or chairs in the East Room. This was a nice way to remember Baba when He was not with us. And we were happy to show Baba what we had done when He returned.



In the small room next to our kitchen on Meherabad Hill, we had a ping-pong table that nearly filled the room. Baba gave us the order to play ping-pong for two hours every day. After we finished playing, we would wash our hands over the little *mori* (water drain) in the corner of the room. After some time, we asked Baba if we could play for one hour in the morning and another hour later in the day, because we got tired playing for two straight hours.

Then one day, Baba brought us badminton rackets and shuttle-cocks. And He had a badminton court laid out for us with lines and a net. It was in the open space next to the East Room, because the tin shed had not been built there yet. Every morning after breakfast, Baba would play badminton with us. After about an hour, we would return to our cooking.

Naja had been our main cook for several years, and she was cooking for Baba, as well. But when we were staying on Meherabad Hill, Naja was often sick with a cold, a runny nose, or laryngitis. Padri would treat her with homeopathy. We were not allowed to call a doctor from outside.

So when Naja was sick, I would cook over the wood fire. Mehera would grind spices and help, but she would not cook over the fire. Baba would usually eat kitchiri and cooked greens or dal and rice. Mehera would make chutney for Him with garlic, chilies, coriander, and coconut, which Baba liked. He would only eat a little, but Baba liked His food very hot, with lots of chilies and spices. We would keep any chutney that was left over from Baba's meal, in case He would come and ask for some later. The next day, Naja or I would finish it.



*Mehera grinding
spices, Upper
Meherabad, 1930s*

Mehera and I would often eat in the kitchen before Baba came for His meal. Sometimes we would just eat raw tomatoes or cooked potatoes—whatever was easy. That way we were ready whenever Baba came. We kept our food separate from Baba's and saved all the ghee for Him. We ate only simple dal and rice, with a dry chutney made of garbanzo beans, dry coconut, and chilies. During those early years at

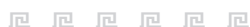
Meherabad, we did not eat chapattis or bhakri. And we would not have special treats or eat any fruit. If someone sent fruit to Baba, He would not give it to us. But if Baba was fasting, Mehera would make orange juice for Him.

Baba usually came at eleven o'clock for His lunch. If Baba came up early, sometimes He would sit on His table with the cushion and we would massage His legs before He ate. Then I would pour the water as Baba washed His hands and give Him a towel to dry them. Mehera would bring His tray of food and serve Baba His lunch.

Mani would often be dancing around the kitchen in toe shoes. As Baba's only sister, He gave her a lot of love. And Mani loved Baba very much, as well. One time I asked Baba, "Who do you love more?"

Baba said, "First Mehera, then you, then Naja, then Mani."

But Mani protested, "Baba, I'm Your sister!" This was Baba's way to tease Mani in an intimate, homey way.



One time when Naja was sick, I was wondering what I should cook. Since I like pumpkin very much, I decided to cook it for Baba. I thought, "If I cut and fry the pumpkin nicely and serve it with chutney, it will taste like fish." Baba had told me previously that I should ask Naja if I did not know how to cook something. But I knew how to cook pumpkin, so I had no need to ask Naja. Still, because Baba had said to ask Naja, I talked with her a little bit and then I cooked the pumpkin.

When Baba tasted the pumpkin He asked, "What is this?"

I said, "Baba, it's pumpkin."

Baba gestured, "Is this how Naja told you to make it?"

I said, "Yes, Baba."

But Baba had the habit of asking the same question many times. So again He asked, "Naja told you to make this dish?" Baba's sign for Naja was jumping like a frog, because that was the way she walked. I'm not sure why, but in that moment I forgot Baba's sign for Naja. I thought Baba was asking me if I was serving Him frog to eat. So I said, "No, Baba, I didn't cook frog."

Baba asked me, "What did you say?"

I replied, "Baba, I didn't cook frog." Again and again I repeated it. Baba kept using that same hand gesture for Naja, and I kept repeating "frog." Baba started to get upset with me. But just then I noticed Mehera trying to hide her laughter by putting her head inside the cupboard. When I pointed to Mehera with her head inside the cupboard door, Baba also started to laugh, and we all laughed together.

I laughed with Baba another time because of His sign for me, which was a big nose. But I told Baba, "No, I am not a big nose. I am a rose, making a nice smell for the nose. A rose is beautiful and good." I was making a little bit of fun with Baba.



Over the years at Meherabad we had quite a few birds while we lived on the Hill. One time there was a pigeon that sang, but only at certain times. Baba would listen very attentively when it sang. I asked Baba whether He liked the pigeon. He said that it reminded Him of some time long ago.

In September 1934, Baba brought us a cage filled with salunkis, which are common birds like sparrows. Baba gave me the duty of

feeding them and changing the sand inside their cage. One day, I had cut my finger with a knife, and it became infected and swollen from the dirty sand. So I applied a poultice of wheat flour on the wound. This is a traditional home remedy. Whenever the bandage was unwrapped and thrown away, Chum the dog would eat the bandage since it had the taste of wheat flour. Someone noticed the bandage in Chum's poop and told Baba about it. Baba joked that Chum was a yogi and was practicing yoga on me. After that, we were careful to throw the bandage far away from Chum's sight.

But the home treatments did not work, and my finger got even worse. I had to be in bed because I was so sick. Still, because Baba had not said anything, I did not go to the doctor. After some time, Baba finally told me to go to the hospital, because my whole hand had swollen and it looked very serious. When the doctor examined me, she said that I should have come to the hospital much earlier. She told me that if I had I delayed one more day it would have been impossible to cure the wound. Soon after going to the doctor, my hand became well. After that, for a long time Baba forbade me from using a knife.

Once on Meherabad Hill we had a baby mynah bird. It had fallen from its nest and couldn't fly, so we were taking care of it. We used to give her chickpea flour to eat, but she didn't eat much. We put her back in the nest and watched what the mother bird did. She brought the bird little bugs, scorpions, and lizards to eat. Again, the bird fell out of its nest, so this time we kept it. But we had to find food that the mynah would eat. So we went looking for bugs and scorpions, and gave them to the baby bird. Naja even cut up a mouse for the bird to eat. We also told the servant to go all around the compound

and turn over every stone and bring all the insects and scorpions she could find. That way, we cleaned up the compound, as well as got food for the bird.

When Baba came, the mynah sat on Baba's lap and on His shoulders. Baba used to give the bird chapattis with cream. She stayed for a while. Then she started flying away at night and returning in the morning. During that period, we would sometimes go on tour with Baba. When we would return, the mynah would come back and sit on Baba's shoulder.

One time, someone brought a large cage from the West that was filled with many kinds of canaries. The cage looked like a house that had several different stories. Two blue lovebirds were painted on the top. We put a little box in the cage as a nest for the birds, and they laid eggs in it. The baby canaries hatched, but the food was not right for them. The mother could not give them the kind of protein she would have found in the wild, so they died. It was very sad.

We also had parrots at Upper Meherabad. One time, Baba came up the Hill after being in Nasik. We were all in the kitchen where we would sit on wooden stools. Baba took something out of His pocket and gestured to Mehera, "Take this," and placed something in her hand. It was a tiny, pink baby parrot—so small that it had no feathers yet. Baba had actually brought three baby parrots in His pocket. Then He gave one to me and one to Mani. Baba also brought along a basket for the baby parrots. Because they had no feathers, they looked like little balls with big red beaks. But Baba said we should take care of them and they would grow into beautiful birds.

Baba told us to feed the baby parrots chickpea powder mixed with butter—no animal protein. They would open their mouths like

big boxes. Whenever we gave them the chickpea powder, they would always want more. When they saw Baba, they would chirp loudly, and Baba would ask, "Aren't you feeding them? Give them more food." So we fed them more. Eventually, they ate so much that they started squawking, probably with stomachaches. Baba said it wasn't good for them that they had eaten so much, and we should exercise them. So we helped them stand up, and then Mani prodded them with a stick and made them walk all the way across the East Room to Baba. Our room was very large, and completely empty except for our beds, so we would walk the birds all the way around the room. Sometimes Baba would walk them also.

Then Baba would ask, "Have they gone to the toilet?" We would say, "No, Baba. Not today." So Baba had us give them laxatives—the same herbs we would give people. Baba showed such concern for the birds' health.

We didn't mind this whole process. It was fun and it kept us busy. But, with Baba's work, we don't know the meaning behind His orders.

As the birds grew bigger, Baba gave them names. And, true to His words, they did turn into beautiful green parrots. Each had its own cage. There were four in all—the three young birds and an older parrot. One day, Baba brought a large brass cage and said, "Now put all four of them in this one cage." So we put them all in the new cage.

There was one swing in the cage and all the birds wanted to sit on it. If one bird climbed up and sat on the swing, the others looked up at her from the floor of the cage and tried to figure out how to get that bird off the swing, so they could take her place. One little bird

would start pecking at the ground and pretend it was eating. Then the bird on the swing would look down and be curious what food was there. The other bird would keep pecking. Then as soon as the one on the swing would start to come down, the bird that had been pretending to eat would run the other way and scramble up onto the swing. It was so funny to watch. When the bird that came down from the swing found that there was no food after all, she would look up and try a trick to get the other one off the swing.

Sometimes we gave the parrots whole chili peppers, because they liked the seeds. They would eat the seeds and leave the empty chilies on the floor of the cage. Then the bird on the floor would take a chili in her mouth and would hop around, enticing the other bird. The one on the swing would think, “Oh, she has something good to eat.” So then that bird would come down to get the chili, and the other bird would run back up onto the swing. It happened like that over and over. Really, it was so much fun to watch those birds. They would do it very cleverly and very quickly, which made it even more fun to watch.

After some time, we had to leave Meherabad to go on a journey with Baba. So He said, “Now we have to set them free.” The birds were all full-grown with their lovely green feathers and strong beaks. So we opened the cage and put it under a tree. The older one flew away, but the young ones would not go. They just sat there all day long. Then in the evening Baba said, “Close the cage again, because they don’t want to fly off.” So we gave them to someone who would take care of them.



*The women in Nasik:
Khorshed, Freni,
Gulmai, Valu,
Naja, Mehera
(standing); Mani,
Soonamasi (sitting).
March–May 1935.*



*Baba at the Dak
Bungalow, Nasik,
March–May 1935*



In 1935 my birthday fell on April 26th, according to the Parsi calendar. We were staying in Nasik for two months at that time. As a special birthday treat, Baba asked for ice cream and distributed it among the mandali, and I got to embrace Baba as a birthday present. Over the years, Baba often distributed ice cream to celebrate my birthday. Everyone especially enjoyed it, because ice cream was a very welcome refreshment during the hot season.

Many years later, in the 1980s, some of the Western residents arranged for an ice cream party in the Trust Compound, where I was living at the time. I was very touched because that day happened to be my birthday, and it reminded me of all the times Baba would remember my birthday by giving out ice cream to everyone.



After our stay in Nasik, we returned to our secluded life on Meherabad Hill. In July 1935, Baba had a cabin built very quickly near His crypt. He wanted to go into seclusion there for His work.

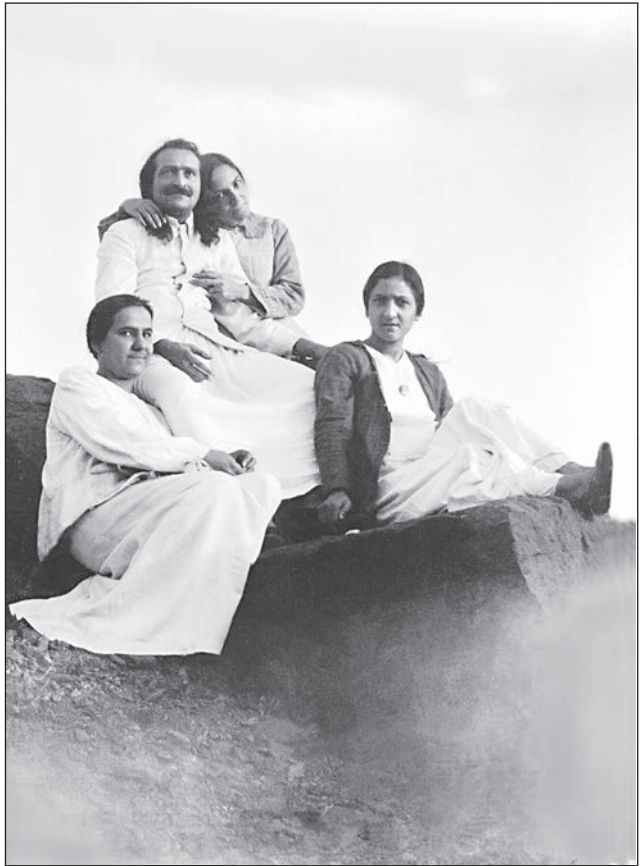
While the men were working on Baba's Cabin, none of us women were allowed to go outside of our room. So we would go outside in the early morning, and then be inside our room during the men's working hours.

After Baba's Cabin was completed, He immediately went into seclusion there. His wooden bed, which my mother and I had brought for Him from our home in Bombay, had been moved into the Cabin. And that is the main place where Baba slept for the next several years, whenever He was at



Baba's Cabin as seen from the women's compound, Upper Meherabad, 1930s

Naja, Baba, Mehera, and Khorshed, Upper Meherabad, July 8, 1936



Meherabad. Valubai would go and clean Baba's Cabin. The rest of us were not allowed to go outside the gate of our compound.

On September 12, 1935, while Baba was still doing seclusion



*Mehera and
Khorshed at the
door of the East
Room, Upper
Meherabad,
1935*

work in His cabin, He came to our kitchen and called for Mehera and me. Baba asked Mehera, "Will you do whatever I ask you?"

"Yes, Baba, with all my heart," she replied.

"Will you keep My orders until the end, for as long as you live?" He asked.

"Yes, Baba," Mehera pledged.

Then Baba said, "I need you to sign your oath in blood."

"All right, Baba, I am ready to do it," Mehera responded.

So Baba asked me to bring a needle. He told me to put alcohol on it and then to burn the tip to sterilize it. I did as He said and then gave Him the needle. Baba pricked Mehera's right middle finger and told her to sign her name on his forearm with her blood. Then Baba gave me the needle and asked me to keep it as something sacred.



At the end of January 1936, we left Meherabad with Baba for Mysore. When we reached there, we only unpacked the few things we needed. Because we were not sure how long we would be staying,

we wanted to save ourselves the trouble of unpacking and repacking our luggage. But when Baba found out, He asked us to unpack all the luggage and keep everything out in the open in the hall. He told us that we would be staying in Mysore for a long time.

While we were in Mysore, we were surprised that Baba asked Mani to go to a certain hospital and make friends with a nurse and present her with some gifts. Mani kept visiting this nurse for some time and became good friends with her. We could not understand the reason Baba asked her to do this. Then a little later, Mani developed some severe pain in



Khorshed, Indu Subnis, and two servants (standing); Mani, Baba, and Mehera, (sitting). Mysore, 1936.

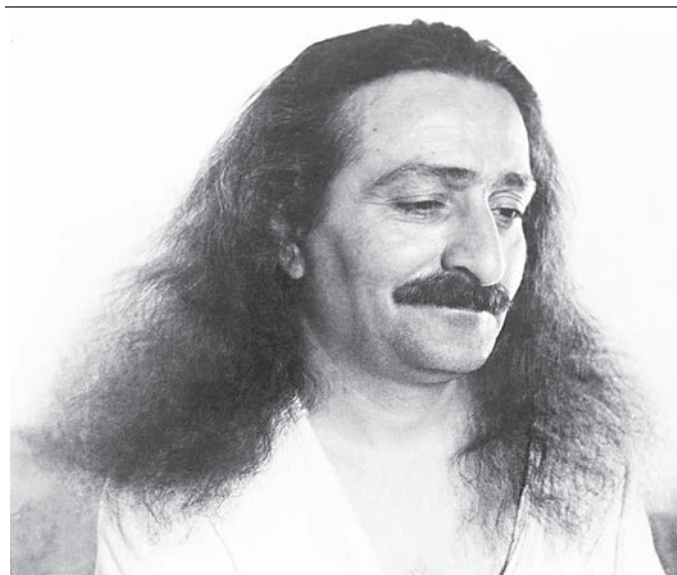
her ear. After a few days she was admitted into the same hospital where she had befriended the nurse. Because of Mani's friendship, all the arrangements for her care in the hospital were made with loving attention. Now we understood why Baba had asked Mani to visit the hospital ahead of time. We felt that Baba had come to Mysore specifically so that Mani would receive the best care for her seriously infected ear.

While Mani was in the hospital, the work of cooking our food was given to me. I remember it had a strange effect on my health. Every day after I prepared the food, I would fall sick, and would stay sick until the next morning.

When Mani recovered, Baba decided to leave Mysore despite His earlier decision to stay longer. But we were enjoying the beauty and pleasant atmosphere, so we asked Baba if we could extend our stay. Baba agreed, but then one day, someone threw a big stone over our compound wall, which scared us. When Baba innocently asked whether we should stay longer, we all agreed to leave.



We returned to Meherabad in May 1936 and resumed living in the



*Meher Baba,
Meherabad,
May 15, 1936*

old water tank building on the Hill. One day, Baba brought us a mynah bird that my cousin Rustom had bought in Bombay and offered to Baba. He was a lovely jet black bird that we named Mynah. He could speak just like a human being, or cry and cough exactly as a person does. Everyone liked Mynah and he was especially clever. He could speak many languages and would imitate the voice of whoever was in the room. Mehera had taught the bird how to say “Baba Darling,” and he would say this frequently. Whenever Baba would walk in the room, the bird would say, “Baba . . . Baba Darling.”

One day, a rain storm came on suddenly while the bird was in its cage by an open air vent high up in the East Room. In our haste to close all the windows in the kitchen where we were working, we all forgot about Mynah. After a while, Baba asked me to bring his cage from the East Room. When I walked into the room, the bird was silent. Because of heavy rains, the weather was cold and the bird had caught a chill. He was so sick, he was shivering. When I lifted the wet cloth covering the cage and said “Mynah?” he weakly repeated “Mynah.” Despite our best efforts to care for the bird, he could not recover. But because Mehera had taught him to say “Baba Darling,” the bird was able to say “Baba,” with its last breath. Just after Mynah died, Baba walked in and held the bird, wrapping him in His own kerchief. Baba loved Mynah very much, and we were all sad that he died. Baba lovingly buried Mynah in front of our kitchen on Meherabad Hill and planted a neem tree there. He told us that the bird was very fortunate and would take a human birth in its next life.



In August 1936, Baba opened an ashram in Rahuri, where He worked with the mad and *masts*. Baba would visit us on Thursdays at Meherabad and then return to His work in Rahuri.

Baba had heard that someone in Rahuri needed a harmonium to sing bhajans. So one time when Baba was visiting us at Meherabad, He asked, “Khorshed, when we have to move again, what will you do with the harmonium that your uncle brought to you from Paris?”

“I can either take it with me or leave it, as You like,” I replied.

So Baba asked, “Shall I give it to a man in Rahuri who needs it, so he can sing bhajans?”

“Yes,” I replied. So Baba took my third harmonium, and it



*Baba and Khorshed
inside the women's
compound, Upper
Meherabad,
circa 1936*

was put to very good use. But when the Rahuri ashram was being closed in May 1937, everyone had to leave. Because the harmonium was very valuable, they organized a lottery to sell it. And you know, it was Mansari's niece who bought the winning ticket. So she got the harmonium. Much later, when I visited her after the New Life, she told me about winning the harmonium in the lottery at Rahuri. She said, “I have

it here. Would you like to have it back? Shall I give it to you?”

“No,” I replied.

“Why not?” she asked.

“Because I gave it to Baba, and it is no longer mine! Once I gave it to Baba, then it was finished. When you give something to Baba, you don't take it back. Let it be His forever.”

C H A P T E R F I F T E E N

Journey to France

In December 1936, Baba called fifteen of His Western followers to come live in an ashram He had specially built for them in Nasik. Each week Baba would travel between His Eastern mandali at Meherabad, the Westerners at Nasik, and the masts and the mad at Rahuri. On Fridays, Baba would bring the Western women to Meherabad so they could get to know the Eastern women.



Baba and some of the Eastern and Western women dressed up as Krishna and his gopis. Standing from left are Nonny, Delia, Ruano, Mehera, Baba, Elizabeth, Nadine, Norina, Soonamasi, and Kakubai. Sitting are Margaret, Kitty, Khorshed, Naja, Mary Backett, and Valu. Upper Meherabad, 1937.

Baba's birthday was celebrated on a grand scale in February 1937 in Nasik, but Mehera, Khorshed, and the other Eastern women did not attend. Their quiet years of seclusion were about to end, however, because Baba decided to take the six women that had been living together in the East Room on Meherabad Hill on a voyage to France. So Mehera, Mani, Khorshed, Naja, Soonamasi, and Valu accompanied Baba, along with some of His Western followers, to Cannes, France, in August 1937. After a two-and-a-half-month stay in France, they returned to Meherabad at the beginning of November 1937.

My father knew something about astrology and could read palms. One time, when I was quite young, I had asked him, "Tell me, what is



*Khorshed
in front of
the bamboo
passageway,
Upper
Meherabad,
1930s*

in my hand?" My father looked and said, "Oh, the lines on your palm are very, very good." Later Naja and Mani also asked my father, "Tell us, Masaji, what do you see in our hands?" We were just curious and wanted to know.

He told us all, "Your hands are very good."

We said, "No, no, no. Tell us something more."

My father said, "You all have to go on a voyage. You will cross the ocean. It will be a good voyage."

But I thought, “What? That can’t be right. Baba is so strict with us that we don’t even leave the compound. We never even go into town, and now my father is saying we will be going on a long voyage and cross the ocean. That can’t be right. He must have made a mistake.” I didn’t say anything to him, but I didn’t think it was possible.

Years later, in April 1937, Baba asked us to prepare to go on a visit to Europe with Him. We did not want to go, because we did not feel we knew how to behave properly in the West. We felt it would be awkward and embarrassing for us, so we said we did not want to go. But Baba said He had some work to do there and He wanted us to accompany Him. So we finally agreed.

As we were preparing to go to France, I remembered what my father had said. I asked Naja, “Do you remember what my father said about us going on a long voyage?”

She replied, “Yes, isn’t it amazing!”

We were very busy preparing everything we would need on our journey. Making clothes for Baba and the six of us women was a big task. We always made all of Baba’s clothes ourselves, and we washed and mended them by hand. So for our trip to France, we did not buy any clothes from the outside. We stitched them all ourselves. We had only one treadle sewing machine, which belonged to me, but it was broken. So I put a nail in the handle of the machine and operated it very slowly. I had to stitch all of the trousers for the six of us women, so I had to work into the night. But there was no electricity at Meherabad, just a small kerosene lamp that gave a very dim light. At that time, Naja was ill. And because I had so many things to do to get ready for the trip, I also got sick. We had no time to even wash our hair, let alone finish all the sewing work. So Baba

finally said, "All right, never mind. We'll just go and take what we have ready."

So, after years of strict seclusion on Meherabad Hill, we left at the end of July 1937, and we stayed one night in Bombay before sailing for France. Baba gave us instructions to observe on our voyage. He kept us very secluded on the ship. We were not allowed out on the deck during the day. We could not look outside, and we had to cover our foreheads, once again, with our kerchiefs. As we boarded the ship, we had to pull our saris down over our eyes and look at the ground. Rano, Norina, or Elizabeth would then lead us by the hand as we walked very quickly onto the boat. When we walked around on the ship itself, we did the same thing. Baba gave us several other orders, as well.

Mani, Mehera, and I were in one cabin, and Naja, Valu, and my mother were in the other. There were six of us Eastern women. Baba came into our cabin before the boat started and told us, "You all have to unpack your things and settle in." So we decided which bed each would take and which glass each of us would use. Everything was done very happily and we began to relax. Then Baba went away and the ship started to sail.

In the beginning, everything was fine. But then, we started to feel giddy as we sat in our cabin, which was over the engine. Mehera was feeling the worst, and I was also feeling ill. But Mani was all right. In the other cabin, my mother and Valu were seasick, but Naja was all right. When Baba came, He asked us, "How are you? Are you all right?" We told Baba how we were feeling. Then, suddenly I saw Mehera climb up onto her bunk bed. She laid face down on her bunk, even though Baba was standing there with us, which was something she ordinarily would never have done.

Baba asked Mehera, "How are you feeling?" and she told Baba she was feeling giddy. Baba said, "Never mind; go to sleep. Don't get down." Then after five or ten minutes, I started feeling seasick as well. I felt like vomiting, so I too went to my bed and lay down. It was a terrible feeling.

All day long we felt seasick. We could open our eyes and see the light in the room, but since there were no windows in our cabin, we didn't know if it was night or day. And we could not go out on the deck during the day. Baba's orders were very strict like that. But around two to four o'clock in the morning, Baba would take us out on the deck to get some fresh air, while all of the other people were sleeping.

All the time we were in the cabin, we felt like vomiting—all the time. That was hell. It was even worse when the smell of food came in. We girls had to be secluded, so Norina was taking care of us. She wasn't sick and she had to eat, so food was brought in for her meals. As soon as we smelled the food, we would throw up.

I must say that Norina was really wonderful. She never grumbled. She just left her food and came to help hold the potty bucket near our mouths. She cleaned all of the vomit away from our mouths. She couldn't even eat because we vomited whenever the food came. But we could not help it. It was not in our hands. I appreciated her manner very much. She didn't complain. She didn't say, "Oh, what are you doing? I'm trying to eat and now you are vomiting." She said nothing. She loved Baba one hundred percent. Because Baba gave her this duty, she did it with her heart. For the entire two-week voyage, until we reached Marseilles, we were sick and throwing up all the time. Once we landed, we were all right, but then Naja got land-sick and started feeling ill.

We reached Marseilles on August 13, 1937, where Delia received us. We took a train to Cannes that same day. Initially, there was a little bit of trouble finding a suitable house. But as soon as we got settled, Baba arranged for two women to come and wash our hair for us. They were very serious. We never knew that someone could wash hair like that. They washed hair for all six of us, and combed it and put perfume on us. They told us, "Oh, you have such lovely hair."

I remember we stayed in a very lovely house with a beautiful



The entrance to the three-story Villa Caldana, where the Eastern women and some of the Western women stayed in Cannes, 1937

view of the water. It had an elaborate marble staircase. Mehera, Mani, Naja, and I shared the large master bedroom. And my mother and Valu stayed next door. Kitty had a room at the end of the hall, and Elizabeth, Norina,

and Rano had bedrooms on the top floor near Baba's room.

Anita de Caro and her friend Andrée Aron came to be with us every day. Irene Billo, who had come down from Switzerland, was



Baba with the women at Villa Caldana: Mani, Naja, Soonamasi, Anita, Mehera, Baba, Kitty, Rano, Irene, Mabel Ryan; in front: Delia, Khorshed, Andree, and Valu. Cannes, 1937.

looking after Baba's things. Baba's room was upstairs and she would clean it and keep everything tidy. We seldom went upstairs because the mandali were often there.

Besides our bungalow, two others had been rented in Cannes, one for the men mandali and the other for the Western men and women who had come. Baba met with many visitors while He was in Cannes.

Mercedes D'Acosta, who had met Baba on one of His previous visits to Hollywood, came and stayed for one week to be with Baba. She was a dear friend of Greta Garbo. Garbo never met Baba, but she wrote and asked Baba to come and spend a holiday with her. Since she was not able to meet Baba in France, Garbo had said to her close friend Mercedes, "You should call and have a picnic with Baba and the others in His party. You have to mix with all of them."

So Mercedes spent time with us, as well as Baba. She was very loving and she would come every day to visit.



Nadine Tolstoy, Norina Matchabelli, and Mercedes d'Acosta with Baba, Los Angeles, January 1, 1935



Baba, Mehera, and Khorshed on a picnic near Cannes, 1937

One day, Baba opened His closet and showed her all His many coats—white, blue, pink, and green. Baba said, “See, how many coats I have!” He liked doing things like that. Baba was so much fun and so full of life. He had a very lively nature, and although He was silent, you never had the feeling that he wasn’t talking.

When Mercedes came, she brought three photographs that Tallulah Bankhead had sent of herself standing with Baba in Hollywood. Tallulah was very beautiful and she liked having her photo taken with other beautiful people. So she had said, “I would like to take a photo with Baba.” They were very large photos and we put one up while we were in Cannes. When Baba returned to India, He gave the photos to Freni and said to put one on the wall, because Tallulah had sent them with love. Later, Mercedes came to Meherabad and stayed there briefly.

Every night in Cannes, we played charades. Anita was lively and full of humor. She was always telling jokes and making us all laugh. Baba enjoyed her company very much, and she loved being with Him.

Andrée, the French girl Anita had brought with her, did not know English. But Anita taught her to say, “I love Baba,” which made Baba and all of us laugh.

The food in Cannes was all right, but bland, without spices. Sometimes a spicy dish was made for us, but meals were still a little awkward for us. We felt very shy. You see we have the habit of eating a large amount of rice or bread with our meals. But the Westerners would just take one small spoonful of rice and not have any bread at all. We did not know how to eat without our bread and rice. So even when the cooks tried to make the food spicy for us, it did not have much appeal. Baba knew we were shy and not taking much

interest in our meals, so He came and encouraged us, saying, “Eat well, eat well.”

Then, one day spaghetti came. We did not know how to eat that at all! My mother took it in her mouth and all the ends dangled down her chin. We all laughed at the sight. But we didn’t know how to eat it. In India, we usually ate with our hands. And we didn’t know how to get the spaghetti into our mouths. Little by little, we learned.

That is why when Baba first mentioned our going to the West with Him, we had said, “Staying here is fine for us. You go and do Your work, and then come back as You’ve done before.” But Baba said, “No, this time you must come with Me, because My work is different and I need you to come with Me.” Baba even had Mohammed the *mast* brought to Cannes for His work during the last weeks of our stay. But we did not know that he had come, because Baba kept the men and women so separate.

We had been in Cannes for more than one month when Baba arranged for a few of us to go to Paris with Him in His car. Some of the others went by train. We got to see the sights with Baba—the



*Picnic en route to Paris:
Baba, Mehera, Naja,
Kitty, Khorshed, and
Mani. France, 1937.*

Eiffel Tower and some of the great churches. We stayed in Consuelo de Sides' house. She was a pretty and delicate woman who had a great love for Baba. She arranged for food for us from a good hotel. We also saw colorful fireworks near the river.

In Paris, we saw an airplane fly in the sky. Baba told us that it was a test flight. In fact, the preparations for World War II were in full swing then.

We visited Anita de Caro's home in Paris one cold day. The house where she was living wasn't very warm, but Baba saw to it that there were enough blankets for all of us. Even though Baba is the Avatar, He sees to every detail. Although He knows all this is illusion, He takes an interest in the world and sees to even little things. If we cut our finger and feel it, Baba also feels that tiny cut. It may not be very painful, but Baba feels it. He feels everything, but He can tolerate the pain because He is the Avatar.

After two nights in Paris, we returned to Cannes with Baba. One day, we were having a special meal with Baba. We were all together upstairs and Baba told us, "Now, everyone sit down and take some food." Irene brought some hot pudding and put it aside. Just then, Naja got up to do something, and as she took her first step, she put her foot into the hot pudding. Naja cried loudly and was shaking her foot. Baba got so angry and upset. He said, "Wait until we go to India, then I'll show you . . .".

Naja said, "I'm sorry, Baba; I didn't look."

He said, "But why did you get up? I told everyone to sit down and take their food. Why did you get up and interfere?"

It seemed serious at the moment, but later, we laughed and laughed remembering her foot in the pudding. It became one of our

favorite memories from our trip to the West. We used to like to tease Naja by asking her, "But why did you get up?"

After we had been in France for almost two months, Baba said we had to go back to India in a few weeks. We protested, "No, Baba. We don't want to go."

But Baba said, "We have to go. What are you saying?"

We replied, "No, Baba. We can't face the long boat trip again. If we have to go, let us just close our eyes and be back in India when we open them." I refused to go, and so did Mehera. The thought of being seasick for thirteen long days was too much for us. So Baba arranged for us to travel on a brand new boat, the *Circassia*, with our rooms on the upper deck of the ship, far away from the engine. We enjoyed that trip coming back very much. The ship was luxurious, and our rooms had portholes, so we had plenty of fresh air. We ate and drank with no sickness. We still could not go out on the deck, except when Baba took us in the middle of the night. But we had a good time, and it wasn't anything like our voyage over to France.

Resuming Our Life at Meherabad

In November 1937, the Eastern women returned to their cloistered life on Meherabad Hill. Rano Gayley, Kitty Davy, and Norina Matchabelli returned with them and stayed in the West Room of the old water tank. They were joined later by Elizabeth Patterson, Nonny Gayley, Margaret Craske, Irene Billo, Hedi Mertens, and Helen Dahm.

We were happy to return from France to our secluded life with Baba at Meherabad. A few of the Western women came to India with us and began living at Upper Meherabad. A problem arose because I didn't know English very well. All I could say were short sentences. I would just say, "Do it," and it sounded very abrupt. Kitty and Rano started complaining about me. They said, "Khorshed is being very bossy and giving us orders to do things all the time." But I didn't know many words, and in Marathi and Gujarati we don't use the word "please." So this caused problems for me with some of the Westerners.

Mehera explained to them that I didn't know how to speak English well. She also told me that I should explain to them that I was telling them to do things only because Baba had ordered me to tell them that. So I tried to explain this all to Kitty and Rano, and I learned to say please when asking someone to do something. Gradually we learned each other's ways.

Some of the Westerners also wondered, "Why is it that only Khorshed and Mani get to stay with Mehera? Why can't we stay with her?" They did not know that these were Baba's orders. So there were little conflicts between the Westerners and the Easterners.

But gradually we learned to get along. Rano and Kitty became very good friends in the ashram and shared their difficulties with each other.

One day, Baba took us on a picnic to Happy Valley, which is outside Ahmednagar. Lord Ram and Sita stayed there during



*Khorshed outside
the door to
the East Room,
Upper Meherabad,
1938*



*Baba and the women
at Happy Valley near
Pimpalgaon: Katie,
Freni, Soonamasi,
Baba, Mehera,
and Khorshed,
December 1937*

their exile. Baba had arranged two cars for us. One car was driven by Mehera's sister, Freni, and the other by Katie. Freni and Katie didn't stay with us at that time, but Baba called them to drive us there. Baba, Mehera, Mani, and myself rode in Freni's car. Kitty, Rano, Valu, Naja, and my mother rode in the other. We spent the day in Happy Valley and Baba showed us a place called *Sita Nahani* (Sita's bathing room). After seeing the sights, we came back that evening. Baba also took us to Happy Valley later on at the end of one of the Blue Bus tours. I went to Happy Valley three times with Baba. They were always happy times when Baba took us there. The atmosphere is very special there, and these were relaxed and carefree times spent in Baba's presence.



Since the Westerners were not used to the summer heat, in March 1938, Baba took all us women to stay in Panchgani. It is a hill station near Mahabaleshwar that has a cooler climate than Meherabad. During that period, sometimes Baba would gather us all together and tell us about the spiritual path. He explained the different planes of consciousness. Baba said that on the fourth plane an aspirant attains spiritual power and can do miracles. But this can be dangerous if the person misuses the powers. So Baba said, "I take my followers up to the sixth plane with a blindfold on their eyes. That way, you are not distracted by what you see or experience on the planes. You just go straight to the sixth plane." Baba said that sometimes we may feel something as we pass through the planes, but we don't know where we actually are.

*Dilkusha Bungalow,
meaning Heart's
Happiness, where
the women stayed in
Panchgani, March 15
–May 15, 1938*



*Nonny, Baba,
and Elizabeth
at Tiger Valley
Cave, Panchgani,
May 6, 1938*

While we were in Panchgani, Elizabeth wanted to spend the night in Baba's cave in Tiger Valley. She asked Baba and He said it would be all right. He set May 6th as the night she should spend there. So we all escorted Elizabeth to the cave. Baba gave her instructions, "Don't come out of the cave until 6:00 a.m. No matter what happens, you should not put your foot out of the cave." Then we returned to Panchgani.

That night, Elizabeth had many experiences while she was in the cave. She felt an electric shock pass through her body and lift her body into space. At about four o'clock in the morning, Elizabeth heard my mother calling to her, saying, "Baba is calling you." Elizabeth got up in a hurry, thinking, "I must go, because Baba is calling me." But then she remembered what Baba had told her. She looked at her watch and realized that it was not time for her to come out of the cave. So, she sat back down. At that moment, Baba appeared to her at the entrance of the cave and light flooded in. After that, she didn't hear my mother again. But if she hadn't remembered what Baba had said, and if she had come out of the cave, it would not have been good. "Baba saved me," she told us the next morning.

Baba explained to Elizabeth that her experiences in the cave had actually been physical ones. He said they were also symbolic and that in the future she would understand their meaning. Elizabeth was very fond of my mother. She felt there was a very strong connection between them, and she always had a lot of respect and love for my mother. That is why it was my mother's voice that tempted her to leave the cave.

Even recently Elizabeth told me, "I loved Masi very much. I miss her." My mother had kept one pillowcase of Baba's that she said she was saving to give to Elizabeth. But my mother never had the opportunity to do that. So, after my mother died, I gave the pillowcase to Elizabeth. It made her very happy.



In June 1938, Khorshed and the other women moved to Ahmednagar and stayed in the Public Works Department bungalow while construction was being done at Meherabad to add a second story to the old water tank building. This was needed to house the additional Eastern and Western women who were joining the ashram. The Tin Shed was also built at that time, next to the water tank building, to provide an area for dining. The women stayed in Ahmednagar for two and a half months, before moving back to Meherabad on August 25, 1938. Mehera, Mani, Khorshed, Naja, Soonamasi, and Valu resumed living in the East Room of the old water tank.





Meher Retreat compound with the upper story newly added to the old water tank building, Upper Meherabad, October 1938

While we had been away, an upper floor had been added to the water tank building where we lived. Baba had several new women come stay in the ashram. He asked Helen Dahm, an artist from Switzerland, to paint



The dome of Meher Baba's Samadhi under construction, Upper Meherabad, August 1938

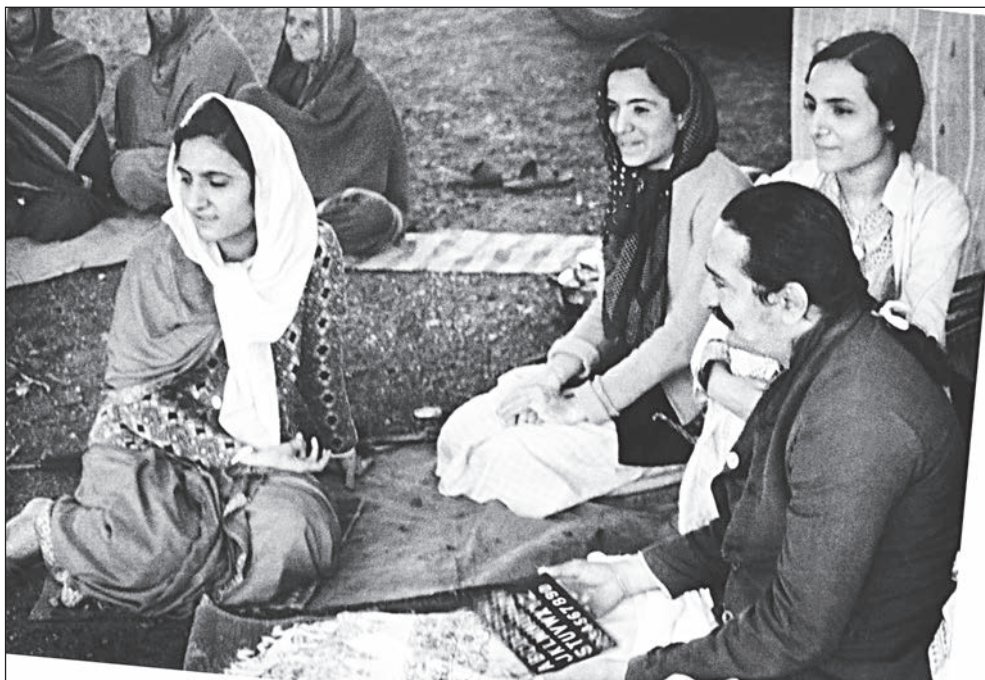
murals inside His Samadhi. It had also been rebuilt at that time, and a high dome had been added. Helen was a very big woman, and we wondered how she would be able to paint the top of the dome. My mother helped her set up the scaffolding.



Helen Dahm's mural at the top of the dome of Meher Baba's Samadhi, Upper Meherabad

Helen did not know English. She spoke only German. So she did not explain much. Still, she was a wonderful person. But she did not eat our Indian food. She just ate plain mashed potatoes without spices.

Baba always enjoyed jokes and funny stories. When the Western women joined the ashram, Baba asked each of us to tell Him a joke every day. After a short time, we ran out of jokes and didn't



know what to say. So one of the women bought a book of jokes, and we all shared it. Each of us would read one joke ahead of time, so we had something to tell Baba when He asked us.

Baba with Mehera, Mani, and Khorshed at the picnic near the Ahmednagar Tower of Silence, August 6, 1938

One time, we all went on a picnic with Baba near Ahmednagar's Tower of Silence. We travelled there by car, but after we ate, we rode for a short distance in the trailer that had carried our food and blankets. It was lots of fun.

Usually at Meherabad, Baba would have us play games after lunch, so we could get good exercise. We played hide-and-seek and a game called "Butanji Baybay." It's like "Drop the Hankie," where you sit down and get up while passing around a handkerchief. We also played charades after the Westerners joined us.

Another kind of entertainment we all enjoyed was watching Moti the peacock. He liked to dance and show off his beautiful tail. Baba would sit outside on His gaadi and the peacock would come and dance before Baba.



Helen Dahm with a pet rabbit, Upper Meherabad, 1938–39

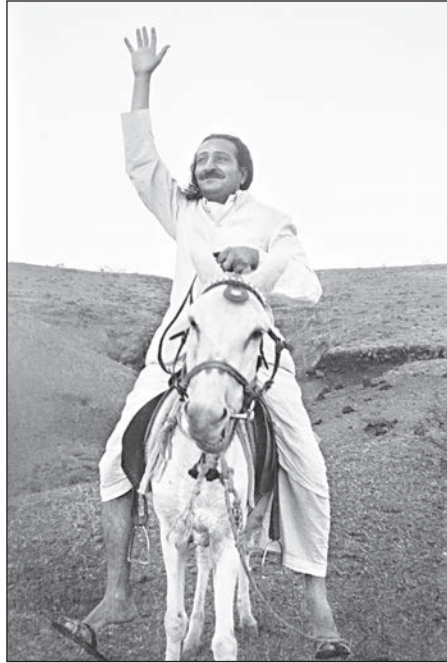
Baba with His head wrapped, sitting with Mehera and Khorshed at the picnic near the Ahmednagar Tower of Silence, August 6, 1938



Riding in the trailer for fun: Kakubai, Baba, Valu, Khorshed, Mehera, Mani, and Norina, Ahmednagar, August 6, 1938



We also kept many other kinds of birds and animals in our compound at Upper Meherabad. We had a white donkey named Champa. She looked like a pony and was very gentle. Baba would sometimes sit on the donkey when He walked with us in the evening. There were open fields all around us then, and deer would often be grazing. One time, Baba told me to go out and find a deer in the fields. I went running and running, but I wasn't able to find one for Baba.



*Baba riding
Champa, Upper
Meherabad,
July 8, 1936*

We also had a lot of hardships when we lived on Meherabad Hill. Because we could not ask for anything to be brought in from the outside, our clothes became very tattered. Sometimes Gulmai would bring us heavy cotton crêpe saris that were strong and would not tear easily. Still, over the years our clothes wore out. So we would have to sew patches on them over and over. But we would not wear our patched clothing when we knew that Baba was coming to see us. One day, Baba came unexpectedly and found all of us wearing patches. After that, Baba brought us some clothes from Nasik that had been donated for the poor. I sewed these so they would fit everyone.

Sometimes, if Baba noticed me sewing, He would tell me, "Don't do too much. Your eyes are not good, and it might hurt them." Baba took an interest in everything.

My mother's main job while we lived at Upper Meherabad was to keep watch outside the compound gate. She would sit in a small room underneath a high water tank and watch for anyone coming up the Hill. Baba kept all of us women in strict seclusion at that time. If my mother had to go to the toilet or take a bath, someone had to relieve her, so there was always someone on watch.

The small room under the water tank where Soonamasi would keep watch, Upper Meherabad, 1938



One of my mother's duties was to watch for Baba crossing the railroad track and to walk down and escort Him up the Hill. The men mandali would walk with Baba from lower Meherabad as far as the tracks, and then my mother would walk with Him up the Hill. In those days, there were hardly any trees on the path up the Hill. So she could see Baba cross the railroad track. After Baba had eaten His meal with us, she would accompany Him back down the Hill.

Panoramic view of Meherbad Hill, 1938

My mother always watched very carefully for Baba to come toward the railroad track. That way she would not miss Him and make Baba



annoyed. But one day, suddenly she could not see. As she sat there, all she could see was a bright glare of light. So my mother didn't see Baba come up the Hill. Baba walked over to her and asked why she had forgotten Him. My mother replied that she had not forgotten Him, but that she could not see. As soon as she said this, Baba put His hand on her eyes. Then He took my mother by the hand and walked her to her room. Baba said, "Don't open your eyes. Keep them closed and sleep through the night. Don't get up at all."

My mother said to Baba, "Please don't let me become blind. I don't want to become blind."

Baba assured her, "Don't worry. You won't become blind."

My mother did as Baba had said. The next morning when she got up, she wondered whether she would be able to see or not? So she opened her eyes just a little. She was so relieved to discover that she could see clearly again. Baba had healed her. So she went out and resumed her duty of watching for Baba.

But because my mother sat out in the bright sun every day on watch duty, she later developed cataracts. When she had a cataract operation during the New Life, the doctor told her that if she had come one day later, she would have lost her sight. So again Baba saved her. Baba promised my mother that she would not go blind, and He kept His promise.

When we were on Meherabad Hill, Baba asked my mother to recite one English poem each day. Baba told Mani to teach my mother



*Soonamasi,
Khorshed's
mother, 1935*

the poems. So Mani would tell my mother the poem in English, and my mother would write down the English pronunciation using Gujarati script. Every day, when Baba asked, my mother would recite a poem for Him. But, for fun, to make Baba laugh, Mani taught my mother to say something that sounded funny. And then Baba would make some joke. For example, she taught my mother to say the poem, "Polly Put the Kettle On."

Another poem that she taught was especially good: "Jesu, lover of my soul, mine is not to question why, mine is but to do and die." When Baba heard it, He said, "See, that is the true thing to do."

Baba used to tease my mother all the time about being short. She only came up to Baba's shoulder. He would ask her, "Why are you so short?"

She would say, "I don't know, Baba."

One time He asked, "Why did Masaji ask you to marry him? He was a very good catch—handsome, tall, and good looking. You are so short and not so good looking."

My mother was good looking, but Baba said this to tease her. Baba said, "How did it happen? What did you do to him to bewitch him?"

Mother replied, "I didn't do anything. I don't know. It's all Your fault. You did it all."

Baba then asked, "But why didn't you grow a little bit taller?"

My mother said, "You made me like this. So, what can I do?"

Baba replied, "Next time, I'll make you taller."

Baba would also tease my mother about her sneezing. After we had all seen the film, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Baba started calling her Sneezy. Baba's sign for my mother was a kangaroo, because her walk reminded Baba of one.

When we stayed at Upper Meherabad, Baba would come up the Hill, escorted by my mother for each of His meals. Baba would walk up the Hill with His arm around my mother's shoulders. She would not come into the kitchen, but would return to her watch duty outside our compound.

Once in a while, after lunch Baba would stay and take a nap and then go down the Hill. In the evening, He would come back up and eat His dinner with us. Sometimes He would come early, so we put His gaadi outside and He would sit there and have His meal. At those times, we would gather around Baba in the eastern shade of the kitchen or under the tin shed. We enjoyed those intimate times of being with Baba. Then at about seven o'clock, my mother would escort Baba to His cabin. Because we had only lantern light in those days, we all went to bed early.

I remember that one time many baby scorpions were crawling all around Baba's gaadi. A scorpion only gives birth once—to many, many babies. As soon as the scorpion's stomach tears open, all of the babies come out. And they eat up their mommy. God made them like that. At first, when we saw the baby scorpions, we thought they were big black ants. But when Naja looked closely, she said, "Oh no, they are scorpions." So we killed them. That way they would not sting Baba or any of us.



Baba sitting on His gaadi in the eastern shade of the kitchen with the women pressing His legs: Gulmai (upper left), Mehera, Khorshed, Valu, Bhagu (servant), Naja, and Soonamasi, Upper Meherabad, 1930s

Blue Bus Tours

Beginning on December 8, 1938, Baba took Mehera, Mani, Khorshed, and the other women on a series of journeys throughout India in a small blue bus that He had specially made for them. These were known as the Blue Bus Tours.

*Baba with the women,
Upper Meherabad,
1938, before leaving
on the Blue Bus Tours:
Standing: Rano, Mani,
Mehera, Norina,
Nadine, Helen, Irene,
Hedi, servant. Seated:
Kitty, Gaimai, Shireen-
mai, Baba, Gulmai,
Soonamasi, Valu.
Front: Manu,
Meheru Jessawala,
Khorshed, and
Mansari.*

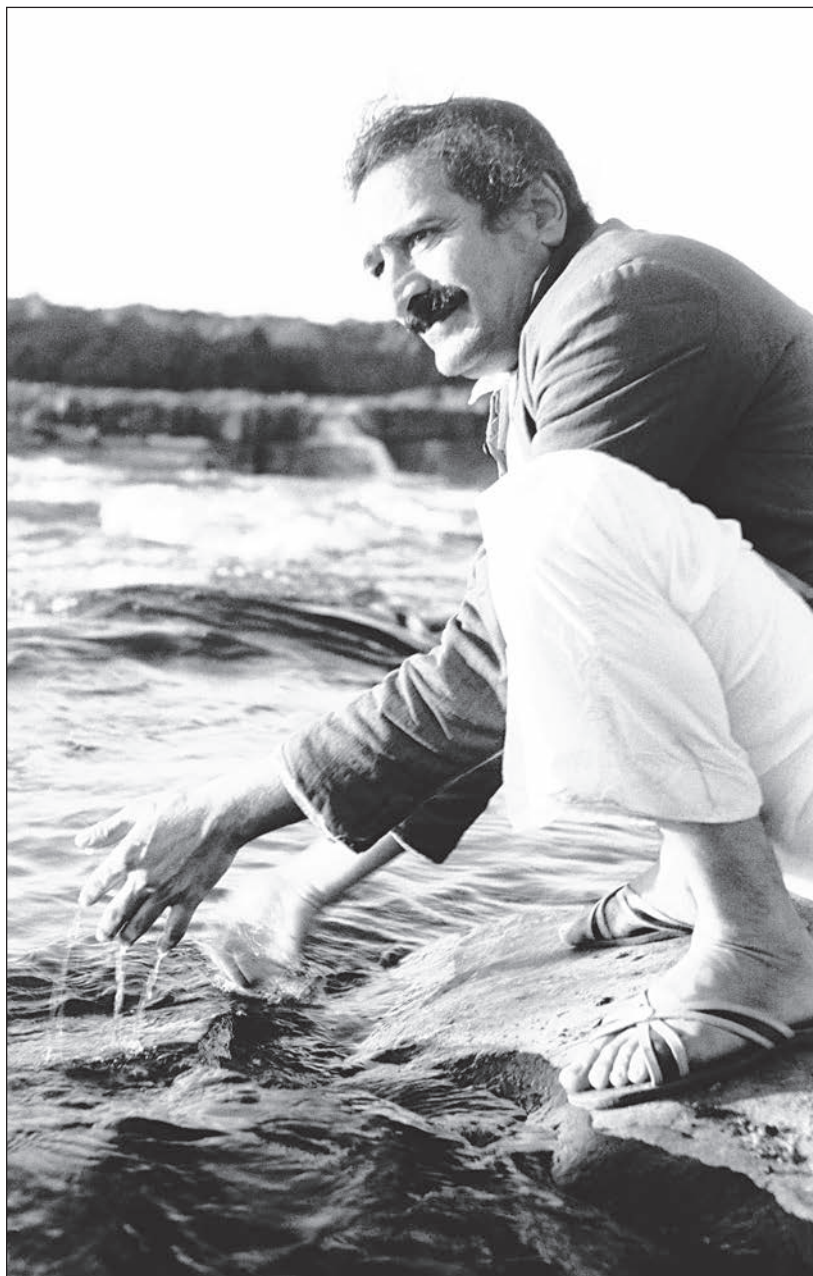


Up to thirty women, with all their luggage piled precariously on top, crowded into the bus that had been built to seat about half that number. Throughout these tours, Baba worked intensely contacting spiritually intoxicated masts across India and Ceylon. Baba continued to travel around India with some of the women, even after the Blue Bus completed its final journey to Karwar in South India on November 28, 1941.



The Blue Bus piled high with luggage, December 1938

On our first Blue Bus Tour with Baba, we visited Jabalpur and stayed for two days in a traveler's bungalow there. We saw the Marble Rocks twice with Baba—once in the daytime on this first visit, and once in the moonlight on a later visit. It was very beautiful there, with a river flowing through steep marble rocks on both sides that glowed in the moonlight. We took a boat ride with Baba in between the cliffs. Rano took a photo of Baba dipping His hands in the water of the Narmada River. Baba said it is very rare for a Master to put His hands or feet in water.



*Baba dipping
His hands into
the Narmada
River near
Jabalpur,
December 25,
1938*

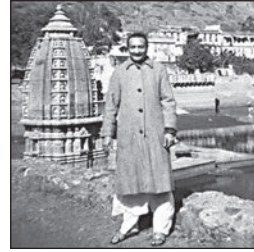
Near Marble Rocks many souvenirs were being sold, and Baba gave each of us something. Baba gave me a white heart-shaped stone. He gave my mother a gray square stone.



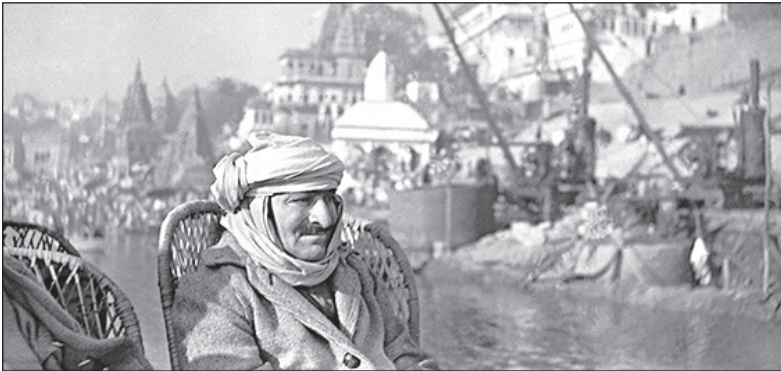
Khorshed, Mehera, and Baba boating on the Narmada River near Mandla, December 29, 1938



We headed north in the Blue Bus from Jabalpur to Benares in January 1939. It was biting cold there, so Baba wore Elizabeth's overcoat to keep warm. We went out boating on the Ganges with Baba. We saw thousands of *sadhus* (ascetics) gathering nearby, but Baba said almost none of them were advanced spiritual seekers. We had to cook all our own food while we were in Benares. Baba also took us to Sarnath, where the Buddha first taught His disciples.



Baba wearing Elizabeth's coat, Benares, January 17, 1939



Baba rafting on the Ganges River, Benares, January 18, 1939



(Top) Baba with the women in Agra: Nadine, Norina, Irene, Mehera, Helen, Khorshed (carrying Baba's special briefcase), Baba, Mrs. Brown (a neighbor in Agra, acting as their guide that day), Kitty, and Naja, January 27, 1939.

A few days later we all went to Agra, and Baba took us with Him to see the Taj Mahal in the moonlight. We stayed in Agra for about one week and then went to Brindavan, one of Krishna's homes. A *mast* saw us with Baba and said that Krishna had come with His gopis.

We spent the first week of February in Delhi. We saw many sights there, but Baba especially liked the Lakshmi Narayan temple. From there we went to the village of Alwar, where we stayed in a *dak bungalow* (government-sponsored rest house). A newborn goat was running loose, and Baba and Elizabeth played with the goat. When

(Bottom) Baba with Soonamasi and Gulmai, Agra, January 1939

Baba lifted the baby goat into His arms, Elizabeth rushed to click her camera to take photos.

We journeyed next to Ajmer, where we stayed for three weeks. Baba spent most of His time working with *masts* while we were there. But He also took us to visit several places of interest, especially the tomb of the great Sufi master, Chisti, who Baba said was a Perfect Master.

Baba's birthday in Ajmer was very unusual. It was observed on February 15th, but Baba asked that it not be celebrated. Instead, Baba got up at 3:00 a.m., took a bath, and then went out with Kaka Baria and contacted *masts*. No one knew where Baba went, and Baba didn't tell anyone. We all thought He must have gone to visit a *mast* or one of His spiritual agents. We didn't know, but Baba returned at 5:00 a.m. and had twenty *masts* and mad men brought to the bungalow, and He bathed and clothed

each of them. Baba fasted all morning and didn't even drink water. He didn't come until two in the afternoon for His meal. But Baba was very happy that He had been able to serve those men.

In Sanchi, we saw the Great Stupa surrounded by carvings from the life of Gautama, the Buddha. Helen Dahm, who painted the murals inside Baba's Samadhi, fell sick there and had to be hospitalized. Baba would visit her in the hospital in Bhopal where we were staying.

In March 1939, we all returned to Jabalpur for a two-month stay. Helen rejoined us there for a few week before Baba sent her



*Baba holding a
baby goat, Alwar,
February 7, 1939*



Baba showing the women the Great Stupa at Sanchi, the oldest stone structure in India, March 6, 1939

and Hedi Mertens back to Switzerland. We had been cold on our previous visit to Jabalpur, but now it was summer and we were so hot there. Baba took us to visit the golden fish at Gwarighat, which Baba liked very much. We also went back to Marble Rocks with Baba. He asked us if we had any idea how fortunate we were to be with Him there.

While we were staying in Jabalpur, Baba received a letter from Adi Sr. that his brother Rustom's wife, Freni, was not well and there was no one to take

care of her young son, Jangoo. Baba had named him Jehangir, so we called him Jangoo for short. His grandmother, Daulatmai, had gone to Persia, and there was no one in Nasik to look after him. So Adi sent his nephew to Baba in the care of a servant. At first, Baba gave the boy to my mother to look after. Baba didn't allow me to take care of the boy or even play with him. Baba said that I should not take any interest in him. So I didn't.

Afterwards, my mother was very busy with her duties, both inside and outside the compound—purchasing vegetables, milk, and other things—so she could not give enough attention to the child. Baba then told Naja and me to look after the boy, which we did. At that time, I was assisting Mehera with Baba's work, so it was a struggle to do Baba's work properly and still take care of the child. But I did my best.

Later on, Naja was not well, so Jangoo's care was left all to me. It was very difficult to juggle caring for him along with the other work Baba had given me. So sometimes Mehera would do whatever Baba needed, and I would take care of Jangoo. When we were on the Blue Bus Tours, we had to get up very early—sometimes 2:00 or 3:00 a.m.—and we had to pack many things. At times, I couldn't do all of the preparations and still attend



*Mani and
Jangoo,
Meherabad,
1939*

to the child. So Baba would take care of Jangoo—holding his hand and walking with him. Then I was able to do the packing and other work that was needed.

Jangoo was always a very good child. He never cried when he was with me. He was very calm and well behaved on the bus tour. He would ride on the bus, while I would be in the smaller car with Baba. I think my mother and Naja looked after him on the bus. Actually, everyone on the bus looked after him, because Baba had asked me to ride with Him.

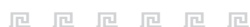
Baba loved Jangoo very much. Later, as Jangoo grew older, Baba wanted him to attend the convent school in Poona. So he was sent to live with Eruch's mother, Gaimai, and her family at Bindra House in Poona. Each day he would go to school and then return to Bindra House. After some years, Baba sent Jangoo to live at His family's home in Poona. Jangoo stayed in Beheram's room while he attended college. Baba always looked after Jangoo very lovingly.



*Meher Baba standing
at the door of the
Kailash Temple in
the Ellora Caves*

Baba decided to return to Meherabad in the middle of May. On the way, we visited the Ellora Caves near Aurangabad. In Cave 10, which has a beautiful statue of the Buddha, we chanted Baba's name loudly. The echo of "Baba" filled the entire cave. Mani read Baba's alphabet board as He spelled out, "I am Buddha." She later said that it felt as if time and space stood still as she read Baba's words.

We made a short visit to Toka so Baba could show us where He had stayed with the Prem Ashram boys. In Lonavala, He showed us where He had played marbles and flown kites with His friends when He was on holiday as a boy. We finally returned to Meherabad on May 25th, after almost six months of traveling.



We stayed in Meherabad for only two months before setting out in the Blue Bus again in August 1939. We traveled to Bangalore, where the Western women stayed in a separate hotel for a couple of nights, until we could all be accommodated in the large bungalow called "The Links." Baba was offered land on which to build a new spiritual center, and Norina Matchabelli became involved in planning it.

During our stay in Bangalore, Nonny Gayley, Rano's mother, became seriously ill. She had suffered with a heart condition for some time. On October 14th, she died from a heart attack with Baba's name on her lips. Just before this, with a smile on her face, Nonny uttered, "What beauty! What beauty!" Later, Baba told Rano that He had given her liberation.



A few days after Nonny's death, Baba took us on an outing to Mysore. We visited the zoo there. Instead of cages, it looked so natural, with open spaces, like in the forest. The animals were in a kind of a pit so they could not jump out. Noticing a monkey jumping about, Baba commented about its past birth.

I'll never in my life forget what happened at that zoo. I was very fond of wearing high heels. We had especially asked for high heel shoes to be brought from Bombay. So Freni had bought a pair for Mehera and a pair for me in Bombay, and she brought them for us when she came to Bangalore. We wore them when we were dancing the waltz during the plays we put on there for Baba. Those shoes were only five rupees, but they were such good ones. That day we went to the zoo, I must have been mad—I put them on for our outing with Baba. This made no sense at all. Because we were going to do a lot of walking that day, I should have worn low heels or sandals. But for some reason I wanted to wear the high heels.

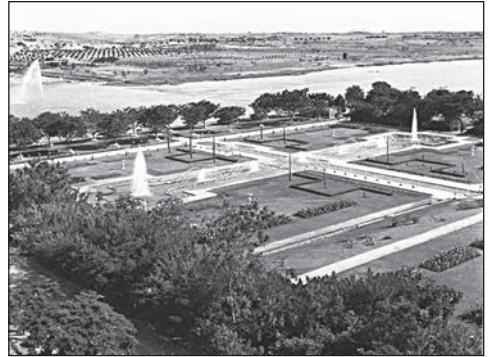
Anyway, I put them on and was walking at the zoo. Suddenly, one heel broke off. So one foot had a high heel and the other did not. It must have been very funny to watch the crooked way I was walking, but I did not want to let Baba know I had broken my heel. I was afraid that He might get upset and scold me. So I tried to hide by being the last person in the group.

This went on for what seemed like a long time. I couldn't enjoy the zoo. All the time, my mind was on my heel and on the way I was walking. Finally, Baba said to me, "Why are you staying last in line? Come up here with us. Why are you lagging behind?"

At last I had to tell Baba, "My heel has come off and I can't walk properly."

I had made a mistake by wearing those shoes, but Baba didn't scold me. He just asked, "Why did you wear those shoes?" That was all. But I had to suffer the whole time. I will never forget that day. Every time I see a zoo, I remember how difficult that day had been.

That evening, we went to Brindavan Gardens to see the fountains lit at night. The following evening we visited the Chamundi Hill Temple. It was a beautiful place with a lovely view of the valley and city below. We stayed in Mysore a few days and Baba did some work there. We then returned to Bangalore, where Mehera's birthday was celebrated later in December 1939. Over several evenings we presented a concert, a play, and a "fancy-dress" competition to celebrate the occasion and to entertain Baba and Mehera.

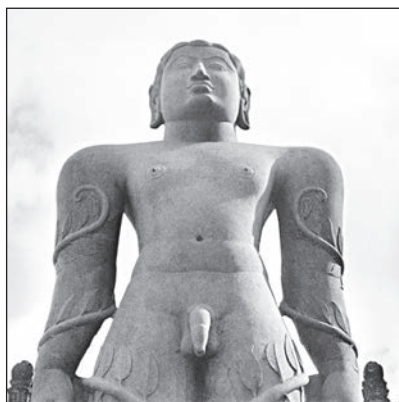


*Brindavan Gardens,
Mysore, 1939*

After Baba returned from a week-long trip working with *masts*, He took all us women to Hassan in January 1940. Baba asked me to ride in the small car with Him and Mehera and Mani. On this trip, I sat in the middle of the back seat between Mehera and Mani. Baba, as usual, wanted all of the windows closed very tightly. Usually this wasn't a problem for me, but this time, it was so hot and the smell of petrol made me nauseous. I felt like I had to vomit. I put my hand to my mouth to signal that I was about to throw up, so they would stop the car. But I couldn't control it. Baba handed me a napkin and Mani handed me a paper bag, just at the moment that I threw up. I felt terrible that I had vomited while in the car with Baba. But He said He didn't mind—that we could just throw the napkin and bag away.

Still, I felt bad. So even though I got to ride with Baba, I could take no pleasure from it, because my mind was disgusted that I had thrown up in Baba's presence. From then on, I sat next to the window rather than in the middle, so that I would be less nauseous. And Baba also agreed that this was a good idea.

Near Hassan is a famous 57-foot stone statue of the Jain saint Gomateshwara. We hiked around a large lake and then climbed the



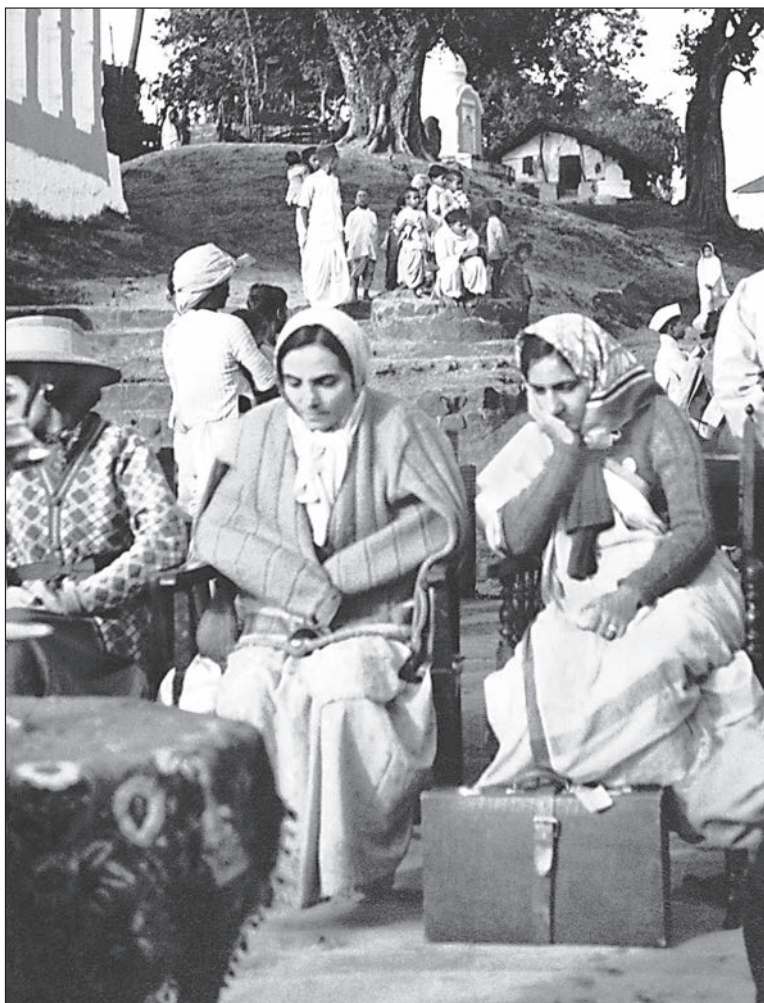
*The 57-foot statue
of the Jain saint
Gomateshwara,
Hassan,
January 15, 1940*

mountain to see it. The climb was especially hard for me, because Baba had given me orders to carry with me a metal briefcase containing His important documents. Baba told me to keep it with me all the time, even when I slept. So I would use it like a pillow or keep it by my

side. I had no idea what was in the case. I never asked Baba. Whatever He told me to do, I did it. So I didn't mind carrying the metal briefcase all the way up the mountain, because Baba had asked me. And the statue at the top was so spectacular that it was worth the effort.

Baba had me carry that briefcase with His important papers throughout our Blue Bus tours. I had to take it with me wherever we went. Later, Mehera would talk with me about all the sights we had visited, but I hardly remembered any of them, because my mind was focused on Baba's briefcase all the time.





Khorshed sitting with Mehera and Mani, guarding the briefcase with Baba's important papers, Mandla, December 29, 1938

After an eight-month stay in Bangalore with “The Links” as our base, all thirty-five of us women and a few men mandali left with Baba on April 1, 1940. We travelled in the Blue Bus and three cars. Elizabeth drove our car with Baba, Mehera, Mani, and me. We arrived the next day in Shimoga, where two brothers received Baba with great respect and honor. Baba gave darshan to the townspeople there. He also did seclusion work there every day. We were all supposed to be totally silent while Baba was working, but no matter how hard we tried, someone always made a sound that disturbed Baba.

On April 3rd, we traveled to Gersoppa. On the way there, a tiger passed by our vehicles without doing any harm to us. It was

midnight when we finally arrived at our travelers' bungalow, and we were all very tired. But Baba wanted to show us Jog Falls, the highest waterfall in India. Chairs had been arranged for us. So we all watched as bales of hay were lit and tossed over the cliff. Seeing the flaming bales reflected in the waterfall was a lovely sight.

Early the next morning, we left for Karwar, which was a twelve-hour journey. We had to take the Blue Bus and cars across the river by ferry. We stayed for a few days in a hotel that overlooked the Arabian Sea. Baba was in a happy mood at Karwar. We went for walks with Baba, and He would play in the sand while some of us swam. We visited an old Christian church on a small island nearby. The atmosphere there was sweet and charming.

From there, we went to Goa, where we celebrated Jango's birthday on April 11th. We visited the St. Francis Xavier Church with Baba. An elderly man with a long grey beard talked with Elizabeth while we were there. Later that evening, Baba told us that the old man was one of His agents. We also visited a Hindu temple and watched "Gopal Krishna," a film about Lord Krishna's childhood.

*The entire group at
the beach in Goa:
Meherwan Jessawala
and Sarwar in topees;
Manu, [unknown],
Arnavaz, Meheru
Jessawala, Soonamasi,
Valu, Soltoon, Gaimai
(back to camera),
Mansari, Nargis
Dadachanji, Baba,
Mehera, Irene, Kitty,
Khorshed, Nadine,
Norina, and Margaret.
Panjim, Goa,
April 1940.*





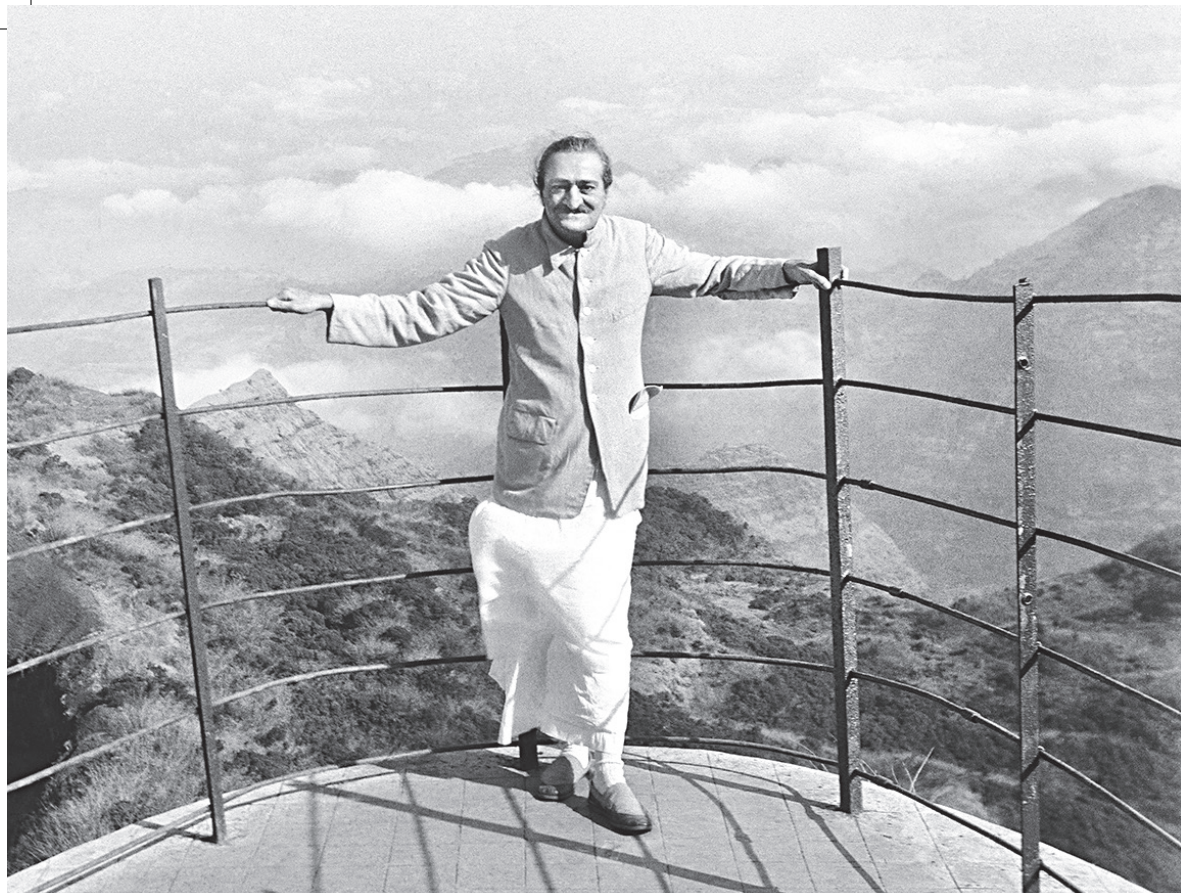
Baba had a *mast* brought to our hotel and He gave him a bath. But the most important *mast* Baba contacted in Goa was a Christian woman that Baba asked Norina to find and bring back to the hotel. Baba called her Mastani Mai. He said, “She holds the key to the spiritual affairs of Goa.”

The Blue Bus in front of Hotel Republica, Panjim, Goa, April 1940

In mid-April, we left Goa for Amboli, a resort in the mountains. We went sightseeing with Baba to a nearby temple and a fort. The Maharani of Savantwadi came there to see Baba. Her husband had given Baba the Panchgani Cave in Tiger Valley. Baba’s arti was performed and the Maharani also participated. She was touched by Baba’s kindness to her daughter who was ill. The Maharani invited Baba and all of us to come to her home outside of Belgaum. A few days later, she gave us a tea party in her beautiful palace, where we spent the night.

April 24th was my birthday by the Zoroastrian calendar in 1940. We had all moved on to Sakharpa by then. So that’s where Baba served mango ice cream to all of us as a celebration.

Two days later, we went to Mahabaleshwar, where Baba showed us Arthur’s Seat. Baba indicated that He liked the place very much. It has a beautiful view to the valley below. On April 28th, we drove

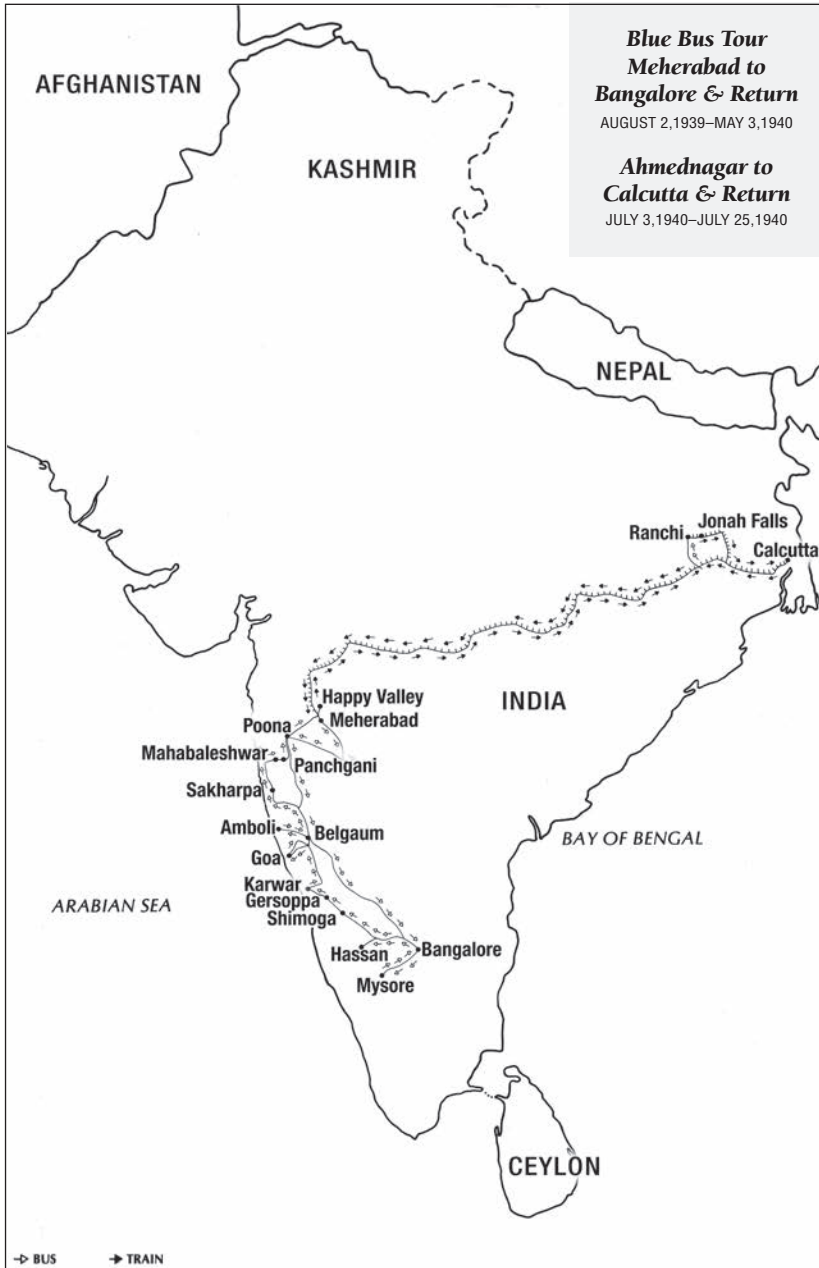


*Baba at Arthur's Seat,
Mahabaleshwar*

to Panchgani, which is nearby. We walked from our hotel with Baba to see His cave in Tiger Valley. We sat inside the cave with Baba for five minutes.

The next day, we packed up and left for Ahmednagar, halting briefly at Bund Gardens in Poona. After bathing and having lunch at Akbar Press with Eruch's family, Baba took us to Happy Valley for four days. It is a very beautiful place a short distance from Ahmednagar. When Ram was the Avatar, He and Sita stayed there in the jungle during their period of exile. Baba gave some discourses while we were there, but I missed them because I was busy taking care of the briefcase with Baba's important papers. I always paid more attention to Baba's instructions and His wish than to His explanations.

We returned home to Meherabad on May 3, 1940, after traveling more than a thousand miles with Baba in one month.



On June 1, 1940, Baba started a two-month period of seclusion working with the masts. He spent the first ten days in seclusion in the mast ashram on Meherabad Hill. When Baba came down the Hill, He went to see the women and indicated that His work was connected with the Second World War. Then, on June 13th, Baba journeyed by train with a few of the men mandali to Calcutta, where He contacted some important masts.



After Baba returned to Meherabad from Calcutta, He told us that there was a seventy-five percent chance that He would be staying at Meherabad and a twenty-five percent chance He would go to Burma. But in early July 1940, Baba took twenty-one of us women by train all the way across India to Ranchi, a hill resort in Bihar. We stayed in a place called Golkothi, and Baba took us to a circus and to see Jonah Falls. But most of the time we were in seclusion, while Baba was working with the *masts*.

From Ranchi we went to Calcutta. We saw a banyan tree that was so big that 15,000 soldiers were staying underneath it. Baba took us to see the Kali Mandir, where Ramakrishna Paramahansa had stayed. We celebrated Elizabeth's birthday on July 21st by seeing the film "My Son, My Son." Our whole group left Calcutta by train on July 23rd for Meherabad.

After we returned to ashram life at Upper Meherabad, Baba gave each of us new orders to be observed from August 1, 1940, to July 31, 1941. Baba said these orders were very important and would help Him with His work. We were to eat only one meal a day. At

5:00 every morning we were to sing the “Seven Names of God.” We all gathered in the kitchen and Mani played the harmonium. Baba asked us to try to be cheerful for the whole year. And He said it was most important not to backbite. Baba also put four of the women on silence for the year.

Baba said to us, “This one year you will see Me very little. Let this one year of your life be just for obeying orders.” Among my specific orders, Baba asked me not to read or write anything. Baba asked me to carry out His orders wholeheartedly, which I tried my best to do.



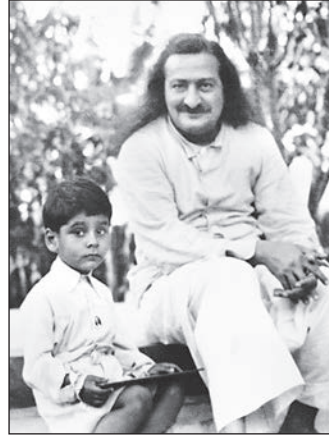
While the women were observing Baba's special orders, He took them on an extended Blue Bus Tour from Ceylon in the south to Lahore and Quetta in the north. This journey lasted from November 1, 1940, until July 18, 1941. Baba and the women took one final tour to Karwar in September in the Blue Bus, returning to Meherabad on November 28, 1941. Stating that this would be its last journey, Baba said, “This Blue Bus is like the chariot of Krishna, and after My manifestation, people will consider it sacred.”

On February 2, 1942, Baba took the men and women mandali by train to Dehra Dun, where they spent the next seven months. They all shifted to Lonavala on September 10th, returning to Meherabad on December 22, 1942. Baba continued to work with masts throughout this period.





We went to Dehra Dun with Baba two or three times, but we stayed in different places. In one place, we stayed on the floor above, and Baba stayed on the floor below. The building had a wooden floor, so we had to be very careful all the time, because Baba was working below in His room or having a rest. We didn't want to disturb Him by making a sound. But that was a bit difficult, because it meant that we couldn't walk around. And yet we had to make lunch for Baba.



*Baba with Jangoo,
Dehra Dun,
April 1941*

Mostly we just sat still, so as not to make any noise. Some of us lay down, some read, but all of us did our best to be absolutely quiet. I was very fond of sewing and embroidering. So I thought, "Fine. I can sew very quietly and there won't be a sound." I did a little bit of sewing and it went well for a while. Then the needle came off the thread and fell on the floor. That small needle made such a noise! I was surprised and wondered how it was possible for a needle to make that much noise.

At that time, Baba was in our room, lying on a bed. When the needle fell on the floor, Baba was startled by the noise and wanted to know what had happened. I didn't say anything at first, but then I had to say, "Baba, I was sewing and my needle fell on the floor."

Baba said to me, "Don't sew so much, because you will spoil your eyes."

At that time, I was embroidering at night. The light was not good, but I did it anyway because my eyes were very good. Baba used to tell me all the time, "Don't sew. Don't do too much."

Now I remember that time clearly, because I can't do those things since my eyes have gotten so bad. I can't even read, and I used to stay up and read all the time until 12:30 or even two o'clock in the morning.



Later, in August 1943, Baba took Mehera, Mani, Meheru, and Rano with Him to Kashmir and other places in the Himalayas. I stayed at Meherabad during that journey. After several months away, Baba and the others returned to Meherabad at the end of November. He had brought us some small gifts from Kashmir—earrings, necklaces, and other things—and gave one to each of us.

Two months later, Baba moved to Aurangabad with just a few of the other women. Baba called the rest of us to Aurangabad in early April 1944. So we all went from Meherabad to stay there for a few days. Baba had arranged for us to learn swimming. There was a private place with a dry pool that had not been used since Moghul times. Baba asked someone to clean it up and to fill it with fresh water. Many water trucks were needed to fill the pool. Margaret and Irene were with us at that time. They gave us swimming lessons. We had gone swimming in Karwar, and also in Lahore. In Karwar, we had swum in the sea. And in Lahore, we had swum in a big swimming pool. But in Aurangabad, Margaret and Irene taught us to swim properly. Still, I was able to swim for only a few strokes before sinking to the bottom of the pool and having to be helped to the surface.

C H A P T E R E I G H T E E N

The New Life

In April 1944, Baba took Mehera, Mani, Meheru, Margaret, and Valu to Meherazad for their first stay. Khorshed and the other women remained living at Meherabad. This was a major separation for them. During the next four years, Baba traveled extensively, often taking just a few of the women with Him, but seldom Khorshed. In 1948, a new bungalow was completed at Meherazad for Baba, Mehera, and a few others. Khorshed and most of the other women continued living at Upper Meherabad.



*Baba walking
with Mehera
and Khorshed
near Meherazad
during a birthday
lunch celebration
for Mehera,
December 22, 1948*

In early 1949, some of us who had been living at Meherabad visited Meherazad with Baba. We climbed the hill near Meherazad that has the shrine of a famous saint, Gorakhnath, on the top. I remember that in February 1949 we had seen a movie called “Gorakhnath.” As we came down the hill, Baba was walking with Mehera at His side. Baba said to me, “Now, I have some special work to give you.”

I asked, “What work, Baba?”

Baba told me that He wanted me to look after a baby. It was the child of a man who worked in the garden at Meherazad. His first wife had not been able to have children, so he took a second wife. She gave birth to a boy, but she died in the delivery. The baby was premature. He had been born after only seven months. He was only six inches long at birth. You can imagine what he looked like.

After he was born, the gardener brought the child and laid him at Baba's feet and said, "Baba, you are God. Now You take care of the child, because we cannot take care of him. He is too much for us and he will die. I just give him to You; so You look after him."

Dr. Goher was told to take care of the baby. But Baba was about to leave with her for Mt. Abu, so He wanted me to look after the child. Because we had just climbed Gorakhnath Hill, we named him Gorakh. Baba asked me if I liked the child. When I first saw him, I couldn't even dare to take him in my hands because he was so small. So I told Baba I didn't like the child. I said, "Baba, how can I manage to look after a child that is so small? I'm afraid that he may die."

Baba said, "No, no. You have to do it."

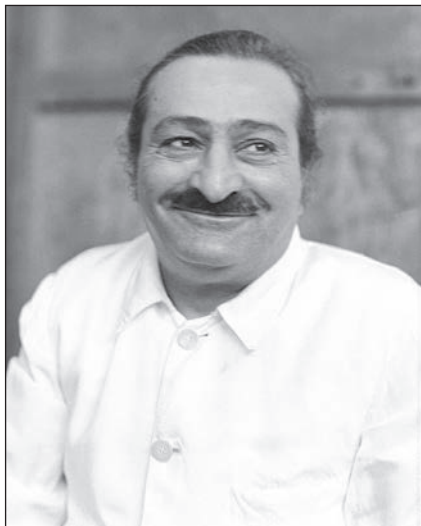
I protested, "No. I don't want to look after him. Looking after Jan-goo was very difficult. Now that's finished. I didn't like doing it, and I don't want to look after another child."

Baba looked at me and said, "No, you have to do it. You have to listen to what I say."

I knew that Baba wanted me to take care of the child and that I would have to do it, but I put up a little struggle anyway. I said, "No, no. I don't want to. Please give him to someone else."

But Baba said, "No, no. You have to take care of him. This is your job." So I had to give in and agree, but Baba let me express my feelings.

Before Baba left for Mt. Abu, we celebrated His birthday. We made a small cradle and put Baba's photo in it and swung the cradle as we sang arti. Baba told us to make the cradle snug and to put the boy in it—then to swing the cradle as we sang arti. Baba made so much fuss over the child, because He wanted to impress upon me that Gorakh was a very great soul and I had to look after him properly.



*Meher Baba
during the 1940s,
Ahmednagar*

Then Baba said, “You should never let the child be alone in the room. Either you or Masi should be in the room with him. Someone must stay with him. Never leave him alone.” Baba also told me that I should take better care of him than a mother would of her own child.

Because it was Baba’s order, even though I didn’t like looking after such a small child, I took Gorakh under my care. Baba had told me to look after him wholeheartedly, but that I should not kiss him.

There were so many things to do to take care of the child. Dr. Nilu had to come every day to look after the baby’s health. He was so small he slept in a shoebox, and we put cotton wool around the sides to keep him warm at night. I kept him on my bed, but I couldn’t sleep much because I kept looking at him to see if he was still breathing.

The baby was not difficult. He liked a bath, so I bathed him twice each day—in the morning and at night. I had milk powder brought from Bombay to feed him. And sometimes I sent a note requesting that something be brought from the bazaar for him. Dr. Nilu told me much later that when the mandali would tell Baba that something was not available, Baba would tell them, “But you must bring it. Khorshed needs it.” So the men would think to themselves, “Who is Khorshed?”

One day, I was applying oil to Gorakh's body and a napkin was tied around him like a *langoti* (cloth used as a men's undergarment). I suddenly had the thought that if a stick were put in his hand and spectacles put on his face, he would look like Gandhiji. When I told Baba this, He said that Gorakh was a great soul and that I should take special care of him.

I did my best, and the child not only survived, he even grew plump.



Khorshed holding
Gorakh, 1949



From August 15 to 20, 1949, Baba held a series of meetings at Meherabad to discuss His plans to leave the ashram and begin a new phase of His work that He called the New Life. Baba met separately with His men mandali and gave them the choice of whether or not to go with Him. But the women did not have that choice. Baba Himself decided which women would accompany Him.

During the first two days of meetings, Baba told the women that He would be closing the ashram and sending most of them away. It was not until the third day that Baba revealed which four women He would be taking with Him on the New Life.



On August 16, 1949, Baba called all of us women together in the East Room at Upper Meherabad for the second time to discuss His plans to

leave on the New Life. This time Baba asked us, "Who will listen to Me and do what I say? Raise your hands. You should obey Me, and then I will be very pleased." Everyone put up their hands except me. Baba had told us the day before that He would send most of us away from Him, and I didn't want to be separated from Baba. So I didn't want to raise my hand. I was afraid that if I raised my hand, Baba would tell me that I had to go away from Him. So I just sat there. The past years of separation since Baba had moved to Meherazad had been hard enough.

Mehera, Mani, Katie, Rano, and all the others raised their hands that they would obey Baba. Even my mother put up her hand. All except Valu, who was outside on watch. But I knew that something had been arranged, that Baba would be taking Mehera and leaving the rest of us. Baba hadn't told us this, but I knew that was why Mehera had put up her hand so quickly—because she knew that she would be going with Baba. But I felt that Baba might not be taking me.

Again Baba asked us, "Who will obey Me? All you who want to obey Me, come one by one and kiss My hand." But I didn't fall for this. I knew Baba was just tempting us. I knew that He was up to something—that He was tricking us. Of course, I wanted to go and kiss Baba's hand, especially because we were not allowed to touch or embrace Him during that period. But I knew He wanted to send us away, or something like that. After all, Baba had told us about the New Life, and what does a New Life mean? It means something new. So I thought, "I can miss the chance to kiss Baba's hand."

After everyone else had kissed His hand, Baba's eyes turned toward me. "You don't want to obey Me? You don't love Me?" He asked.

"Baba, I love You very much," I replied. "But I don't want to be apart from You. I wouldn't like it if You sent me away!"

So Baba tried to persuade me. He said, "Look at Masi. See how good she is. She raised her hand to show she would obey Me. You should be good like your mother."

"Yes, Baba," I agreed. "But I am not good like her." And I refused to go up and kiss His hand. I told myself that I wouldn't listen to Baba. I knew that in the end, I would have to do what He asked, but I wanted to show my feelings first. Still, I stayed very calm and didn't show how upset I felt.

Baba tried so hard to convince me to obey Him. He said, "If you really love Me, then you have to listen to Me, and not just do what you want. Whoever truly loves the Beloved must obey Him and be happy to do what the Beloved wants." Baba said so many things to me like this. But I was not really taking them in, because I did not want to be separated from Him. Round and round we went, in front of everyone. The situation was very tense.

Then Baba said to me, "Maybe I will call you later on, and we can be together again. But first, you must agree to do what I say." At that point, I began to feel ashamed. I felt that I really should not be making so much trouble for Baba. So when Baba asked again, "Will you do what I say?" I replied, "Yes, Baba, I will obey You."

So Baba called me to Him. I got up and Baba embraced me. Everyone else just had His hand to kiss, but I got an embrace. Baba said, "Now, I am very happy."

Baba had explained that He would be leaving on the New Life and taking only four women with Him. Even though I could not bear separation from Baba, I promised to obey Him. I felt so bad at that time that I cried. But Baba said to me, "No, don't cry. Laugh." So I laughed. But despite laughing on the outside, I was crying in my heart. Baba

knew that, and dictated four lines of poetry to Mani for me, which meant: “Even when your throat is being cut in love, at the same time, you must have a smile on your face. In love, this is true bravery.”

The following day, Baba told us that Mehera, Mani, Meheru, and Goher would be the only four women accompanying Him on the New Life. Baba explained details about how the ashram would be closed, and He assigned everyone different places to live. Baba told Kitty, Rano, my mother, and me to go to Meherjee’s home in Bombay. Katie and Naja were to stay with Arnavaz in Bombay. Valu and Baidul’s wife and daughter were sent to stay with Eruch’s family at Bindra House in Poona.

Then Baba said, “I am leaving soon. I will never come back and will never see you all again.” Then everything was over. . . .

It was a terrible blow to hear Baba say all these things. I got very upset and became sick with a high fever. Kitty had to look after me for the next two months at Meherabad until Baba left on the New Life.

I was so upset that somehow I thought smoking might help. Some of the women at Meherabad had started to smoke. So I asked Baba, “Can I smoke sometimes?”

Baba said, “What? What is this that you want? Why?”

I said, “Because sometimes I feel depressed, and I think that smoking a little might help.”

Baba said, “No. Never.”

So, even today, I do not smoke. If people ask me if I would like to take a little puff, I say, “No.” What can we do? Baba is in control.



*Before Baba left on the New Life on October 16, 1949,
He disbanded the women's ashram at Upper Meherabad and
sent each of the women who were not accompanying Him to
stay with various of His lovers.*



Two months later, when it was time for us to leave Meherabad, I was still ill. I couldn't even get up, but Baba said, "You have to go now." I cannot express the pain of separation I felt at the time of leaving our sweet home—the golden land of Baba—after living there with Him from my childhood. Right from age twelve, I had spent every moment possible in Baba's company. Yes, He would be away for His work many times. We always missed Baba when He wasn't with us, but that pain was muted by the blissful feeling of Baba's presence, and by the knowledge that before too long He would be back with us once again. This was a different situation. We couldn't eagerly look forward to when we would see Him again, because Baba had said, "We will never meet again. This is the last time I will see you."

We believed him. We trusted Baba's word. We thought that He would never come back and that we would never see Him again. It was terrible. I felt so lost! I couldn't bear that pain! The only comfort I had was the thought that if the suffering became any worse, I would go mad and then it wouldn't be so bad—because if I were mad, I wouldn't be as aware of Baba's absence.

But Baba had told us, "You have to be brave and keep My name in your heart. You have to do what I say to please Me."

Baba had previously asked me to take care of Gorakh. When I had expressed my unhappiness, Baba had said He liked Gorakh and the

child was very dear to Him. So I had taken care of him. But now, Baba was about to send Gorakh along with me to Bombay. I told Baba bluntly that I didn't want him. I said I would take him if Baba wanted me to, but that it was not something I wanted. At last, Baba, the knower of all things, showed pity on me by putting Gorakh in the care of his father, and that is the last I saw of him. Had the child come along with me, he would have added more difficulties to my situation.

So my mother and I went off to Bombay. I don't even know how we got there. I was so devastated by having to leave Baba. I wasn't aware of anything. Although Baba had originally wanted us to live with my Aunt Gulmai in Ahmednagar, He sent us to live with Meherjee and his family. Baba had told us, "Even if you feel your throat is being cut, you must just swallow it. You should not put your foot outside of Meherjee's house," meaning we were not allowed to stay with anyone else. "This is My order. But you must keep this order to yourself." Baba had also said that I should have breakfast with Meherjee and the rest of the family, and that I should go out sometimes when Meherjee went out. Baba had told me specifically, "Don't sit in the house and knit."

Shortly after we moved in, Meherjee started making fun of me. Baba had lifted many of my earlier restrictions, and now I was free to talk with men. Meherjee would recall how I would send telegrams ordering milk powder for Gorakh. He thought I had asked for special favors for the child. I was grateful that Baba did not make me bring Gorakh with me.

Meherjee had a large house, and Baba had also sent Kitty and Rano to live there. The four of us had our own floor. Kitty and Rano had one room and my mother and I had the other. We had our own bathing room and toilet. The only time we came together with Meherjee's

family was at meals. Baba asked Kitty and Rano to get jobs. So they became teachers and would be away at school all day. At first, Kitty and Rano thought Baba would call them to join Him soon. But after some months passed and Baba had not called them, they wondered what had happened. Kitty would say to me, "Now we are all in the same boat." But at least they got to go to their jobs. I had to stay at home and help Meherjee's wife, Homai. I would sew things for her and look after their daughter, Mehera. But Homai would say many cruel things to me, because she was not really a Baba lover and did not want us in her home.

When my mother and I came to Bombay to begin our stay at Meherjee's bungalow, a new chapter of suffering opened for us. I was missing Baba so much that I wanted to commit suicide. At Meherjee's I was so unhappy that I once almost jumped out of the window to end my life. But then I had a vision of Baba. He came and caught me. I could feel Him. And He told me that He didn't want me to do that. So I stopped, and my mind also changed. After that, I knew that Baba didn't want me to commit suicide. I still felt like it, but I didn't do it.

Those first few months were really terrible, after all my years of living with Baba. I felt awful, but somehow we passed our days. Although Kitty and Rano were with us, we didn't talk among ourselves about how much we missed Baba.

After almost nine months in Bombay, Kitty and Rano were called back by Baba to Satara, and later to Mahabaleshwar. They said, "Now you also come with us."

But I said, "No. When Baba says to go, I will go." Even though I desperately wanted to go to Baba, I wouldn't follow their suggestion, because Baba had told me not to leave. This was the third time that Baba had given me a firm order not to leave a place. The first time,

Baba had told my mother and me to stay in Ahmednagar, and then we got those telegrams saying that my father was ill and we should come see him. The second time, Baba told my mother and me to stay in Nasik, and that's when my father was kidnapped. Because of these experiences, I felt I had to obey Baba's orders and couldn't leave simply on their say-so, no matter how much I wanted to be with Baba.

After Rano and Kitty departed, my mother and I were left to face the friction that was increasing day by day at Meherjee's bungalow. From day one, I noticed that Meherjee's wife, Homai, was not happy to have us at her place. Because she didn't want us there, she didn't treat us very well. I didn't have a father or a brother to stand up for me. The only relatives we had would also abuse us, because they were against Baba.

Despite all this, despite the bitter words that Homai sometimes used towards us, I stayed there. Even when I wanted to commit suicide, I remained at Meherjee's, because Baba had told me that I should not leave.

One day, Meherjee himself asked us to go and stay elsewhere. I told him very clearly that we had been told by Baba to stay at his place and that we would leave his home only when Baba instructed us to do so. We stayed there for one year and nine months, but it was extremely difficult.

Baba had told me to help in their household. So I taught Gujarati to Meherjee's young daughter, Mehera. Our lessons were outside in the garden for one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening. We sometimes went to the Hanging Gardens near the house. I taught her the basic sounds and words of Gujarati, which she learned very well. She also attended school. Her teacher would ask, "Who teaches you at home? How clever you have become. Your lessons are done very well."

During the New Life, because of my emotional state, I used to eat all the time. I would have a small portion of anise seeds set in one place. When they were finished, I would get a little more. It was like a compulsion. After a whole year of eating like that, I thought, "What is this? Why can't I control this?" So I stopped it. I could control it, because my mind is very strong. Now I just take one small handful of the seeds and that is it. But back then I was eating them nonstop.

Usually it was against Baba's orders to write to Him or have any contact during the New Life. But exactly one year after Baba left on the New Life, He called a meeting to be held at Mahabaleshwar on October 16, 1950. Baba said that He would step out of the New Life and be in the Old Life for that one day. So I took that opportunity to write to Baba. It wasn't against His orders for me to write Him in the Old Life. So I wrote a letter for Baba to read on that day. In the letter I said, "Baba, I am very fed up staying here. I don't know why You are making these arrangements. I beg You. Please let me out of here as soon as You can."

Baba wrote back through Mani and said, "I know how much you love Me and I appreciate your love for Me. But still, you have to listen to Me and stay as long as I say." Baba told me that He was aware of my difficulties and that they were a great help to Him and that I should boldly face all of them. This letter gave me courage.

But in those very early days, I was so distraught that when Shri Ramnath, a saint from Hardwar, came and visited Dina Talati's house, I went there to see him. I was seeking some comfort, as I couldn't get over the fact that I wasn't allowed to be with Baba.

I asked the saint, "When will Baba come?" even though Baba had told us that He wouldn't be coming. And I wanted to know why Baba hadn't let me go with Him. After talking with me a little, the saint

explained, "When the tree is small, we have to tend to it very carefully. A fence of thorns is put around it so that no animal can eat it, and it is watered regularly. But once the tree grows up, it doesn't need that much protection. So it is with you. You are no longer a seedling. Baba knows that you do not need His personal presence now. He knows that you are strong. That is why He leaves you like this. Don't worry. He will come and see you."

During the same conversation, the saint said, "If you see Baba, and if you want to come to my place, then ask for His permission and come. You can stay there in Rishikesh and live the spiritual life." He again reminded me that I should ask for Baba's permission before deciding to come, but he added that I would see Baba soon. I did not have any hope of seeing Baba before that, but these words gave me a little hope.

Another thing that helped me during the New Life was that Baba used to stop over at Meherjee's house sometimes, before going on a long journey. Baba would stay on the top floor of the house and would come and go for His work. My mother and I were not allowed to see Him, but just knowing He was near was comforting.

Still, I became more and more desperate to see Baba. During one of His visits, I heard Meherjee telling Homai that Baba would be going to the circus that evening with the mandali. Since I knew Bombay very well, I realized that Baba's car would be driving along Marine Drive. I decided that even though it was against Baba's orders, I had to see Him. So I came up with a plan.

I didn't tell Meherjee, but my plan was to wait on the road at a corner where the traffic had to slow down, and then, when Baba's car went by, I would be able to get a glimpse of Him. Since seeing Him was

against His orders, I had to wear a disguise. I found some sunglasses and a large shawl to cover my head. The part of Marine Drive where the traffic had to slow down was several miles away. But I didn't have any money to take a bus, so I had to walk. At that time, we had an order not to keep any money with us. Whenever we needed money, we had to ask Meherjee's wife for it. We would do this if we had to go on the bus to the dentist or some place like that. Any money that was left over, we had to give back to her. So, I had no money at all. That is why I had to walk the whole way.

I got to the corner early and waited for an hour or so. Then I saw Baba's car approaching in the distance. As the car was getting near, I put the shawl over my head and put on the sunglasses. I had planned everything out carefully. But I had never worn sunglasses before in my life, and I couldn't see very well with them. So when the car passed, I couldn't even see Baba! I was in utter despair.

I went mad. I ran after His car like a crazy woman for a couple of miles until I was exhausted. Then I walked and walked and walked. The circus was so far. Sometimes I would go a little bit faster. Looking back at it now, I don't know how I managed to walk so far. But I knew where the circus was and I just kept following the road until I finally got there.

I found the car, but no one was there. They were all inside. So I decided I had to go inside. But how could I? If I had had money, I could have bought a ticket and gone inside, but I didn't have any. So I waited outside for a while. Eventually, I went home. I felt so disappointed.

Meherjee did not know that I had done any of this. The next day at breakfast, Meherjee was telling us about Baba's visit and he said, "After we went into the circus and settled down, Baba asked me to go out and see if someone was there." At that time, I must not have been there

yet—I was probably still walking. But Meherjee continued, “Baba kept sending me, twice, no, thrice, to go out and see if anyone was there.”

When Meherjee said this I was convinced that Baba had known of my attempt to see Him. I felt much better because I knew I had gotten Baba’s attention. I knew that He hadn’t forgotten all about me. That much was enough for me. So I felt happy. Although I didn’t get to see Him, He knew I was there. He knew, and I knew. Nothing else mattered.



Although Baba had told us that He would not see us after entering the New Life, ever since I had met Shri Ramnath, I had harbored the hope that I would see Baba again. And to my surprise and delight, in May 1951, Baba came to Bombay, and my mother and I were allowed to see Him at Meherjee’s! Baba asked about our living

situation. I told Him how difficult Homai had made it for us. Baba told us that it was His wish that my mother and I leave Meherjee’s and live somewhere else in Bombay, but not with Him.

So I said to Him, “No, Baba, I want to go to Rishikesh.”

Baba said, “What?”

I said, “Baba, I met a saint and he told me to ask Your permission and then come to Rishikesh. So, I must go there.”

Baba was so surprised. He said, “Are you mad?”

*Khorshed,
circa 1950*



*Soonamasi,
circa 1950*



I replied, “No, Baba, really. Since You won’t let me be with You, it is better that I go there. I like Rishikesh—I mean, it will be a quiet place.”

Baba said, “No. That should not happen. You should not go there. You don’t know what danger there would be in a place like that.”

But I was obstinate. I told Baba that I had decided to go and that I would leave unless Baba allowed me to be with Him.

Baba said many other things to convince me, and then He told Vishnu and Dr. Nilu to persuade me to drop the idea of going to Rishikesh.

Like a small child, I pouted, “No. I’m not listening.” I was exaggerating how much I wanted to go to the saint. Really, I was just hoping that Baba would ask me to come back and stay with Him. At least this let me express some of my frustration at the separation. Finally, it was arranged that I would rent a flat in Bombay somewhere other than Meherjee’s, and I agreed to stay on.

Baba asked Meherjee to be on the lookout for a flat for my mother and me. But Meherjee was reluctant to get us a new flat. Then Nariman Dadachanji took an interest and said he would check on a certain flat in Chowpatty, but he was not able to get it for us. So Baba told me to find something. But after trying, I said, “Baba, nothing is available.”

Finally, Nariman found a flat for us on Warden Road in the Cumballa Hill area of Bombay. There was just one room. It was on the second floor. We moved there in 1951 and rented that flat for the next eleven years.

A few months after we moved in, Baba began to let us see Him again. The first time Baba came to our flat, He didn’t come up. He called me and my mother to come down to His car and visit with Him. After that, He gave His clothes to Dr. Nilu to bring to me so that I could wash them.

Then one day, Baba came and visited us in our flat. I was so delighted and relieved to get to see Baba again. He sat on the swing. Then He sat on my bed and looked around the room and said, "Very good. You should stay here."

I told Baba, "There is a ghost here that chokes my neck every night." It had been giving me trouble for some time.

Baba said, "Now, it won't bother you anymore." And it never did.

After that, whenever Baba came to Bombay, He often visited us in our flat. Baba came and took an interest in our lives again. And He lifted the strict orders that He had given us to follow during all those years in the ashram.

The people in the house where we stayed were not Baba lovers, and they were of a different caste. But after some time, they also came to love Baba. The woman who owned the house made tea for Baba, and also for Mehera, Mani, and the other women who later came to visit.

Baba's Two Accidents

After Baba's extensive travels during the New Life, He returned to Meherazad, where He completed the Manonash (annihilation of the mind) phase of His work in February 1952. Two months later, Baba left on His first journey to the West in fifteen years. Khorshed remained living with her mother in Bombay. While driving across America, Baba and Mehera were badly injured in an automobile accident on May 24, 1952.

When Baba returned to India, He set up His headquarters first in Dehra Dun and then in Mahabaleshwar, before settling in Satara in June 1954 with several of His women and men mandali. On December 2, 1956, Baba was even more seriously injured in a second car accident near Satara. His close disciple, Dr. Nilu, was killed in the accident.

Khorshed and Soonamasi continued to live in Bombay throughout the 1950s, but Khorshed was often called to stay with Baba and the other women wherever they were living.

After my mother and I moved from Meherjee's home in 1951, we lived in our flat in Bombay for the next eleven years. During that time, Baba would call me to be with Him at Meherazad or Mahabaleshwar or Poona. So once again my life was a lot of coming and going.

One time when Baba came to Bombay after the New Life, I went to Him and asked, "Baba, why should I stay in Bombay? Why? Now there is nothing for me here. There is no work left to do."

Baba replied, "You don't know. You are blind. You don't know what work you are doing for Me here. You can't see this with your eyes, but I know."

So I didn't say anything more. But I still longed to be with Him. Many years later, when all the Western Baba lovers started coming to India and staying with me in Bombay, I realized that maybe Baba had been preparing everything for that.



In early 1952, Baba came to Bombay to see us for a few days after completing His Manonash work. He told us about His plans to visit America. About that time, I had a dream. I saw Baba seated on a cot between Mehera and me. Baba asked me what would I do if He left His body. I replied that I would also die. Then He gestured to me so that Mehera would not know what He was saying to me. He asked, "What would Mehera do?" I replied that she too would die. Then the dream disappeared and I got up.

In April 1952, before His flight to America, Baba came to Bombay again and stayed in the suburbs for a few days—in an apartment in

Bandra and also in a cottage on the beach in Marve (*marve* in Gujarati means “to die”).

While He was there, Baba asked me, “Do you read the *Times*?”

I said, “No, Baba, but other people in my building get that paper.”

Baba said, “Read it every day. Look for it every day and read it.”

Not long after that, Baba left for America, and I continued to read the newspaper

every day while He was gone. Then early one morning—May 26, 1952—I had a terrible dream. Baba was there and suddenly I heard a terrible noise. I shouted, “Oh, Baba, what has happened to you?” Then I saw a lot of blood everywhere. It was horrible. I couldn’t bear to see it, so I opened my eyes and got up immediately. My heart was beating very fast. I felt something serious had happened.

As I looked at the *Times of India* that day, I read about Baba’s accident in America that had happened on May 24th. It said that Baba and the women were in the car and that one woman, Mehera, was in



Baba seated by the Blue Bus at Meherazad, having completed Manonash work, February 1952

Bombay Visitors Injured

CAR ACCIDENT IN OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA, May 25.

Three citizens of Bombay were injured, one critically, in an automobile accident near here on Saturday.

Mrs. Mehera Irani, 42, suffered brain concussion and is in a critical condition in Prague Hospital. Her uncle, Mr. Mer-nan Irani, 58, suffered a broken shoulder and his wife, 44, head and face cuts.

Mrs. Irani's two daughters, Manie, 33, and Mehru 25, were not hurt. They were passengers in a car driven by Mrs. Elizabeth Patterson, 35, of Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, who is believed to have suffered a broken arm.

The Oklahoma highway patrol said that the Indian citizens are on a religious mission to the U. S. and are the guests of Mrs. Patterson.—U.P.A.

Article about
Baba's first car
accident in the
Times of India,
May 26, 1952

very bad condition. I didn't know what to do. I was very restless. What could we do in India? America was so far away. So I went to Arnavaz and told her what had happened. Then I realized why Baba had ordered me to read the newspaper—so I would find out about His accident.

Arnavaz and Nariman and every-one else were also wondering what to do. They thought that we should send a telegram to the mandali to find out what had happened. I didn't like that idea, because I knew that the mandali would all be totally preoccupied with Baba. They wouldn't have any time for anything else and wouldn't be likely to answer a telegram. So I thought the thing to do would be to telegram directly

to the doctor in the hospital. But I did not tell the others that I was going to do this.

I went to the post office myself and I asked a boy there for help with the address. With his help I sent off a telegram for thirteen rupees. I remember the amount, because at that time I didn't have much money, and thirteen rupees was a lot for me. But there was no question of not sending the telegram.

On the second day, I heard the man from the telegraph office calling my name from the street. I was on the balcony so I heard him. I told him, "Come up." And this is the cable I received:

May 29, 1952

Irani family all doing well. None will die. None will be permanently disabled. We shall send them home to you ultimately as well as when they left, except for their unhappy experience.

Ned Burleson, M.D.

Prague, Oklahoma

I phoned Nariman and asked if he had received a telegram yet. He said, "Nothing has come. We've had no reply yet." So I took my telegram and went to their flat to show them.

Nariman was very surprised. He said, "Khorshed, you are very clever. We sent the telegram to the mandali, but you sent one straight to the doctor and got an answer."

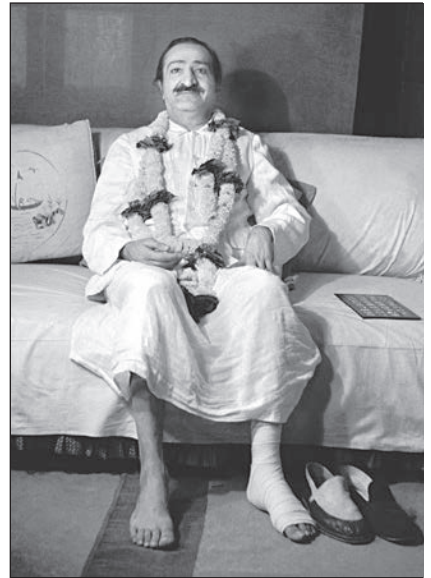
I said, "Yes. That is common sense. They are all occupied with Baba. Who would have time to go and send a telegram?"

Later, Adi Sr. and Dr. Nilu, who were both in Oklahoma with Baba, told me, "When your telegram came, the doctor was very surprised and asked us, 'Who is she? She was very bold in sending a telegram to inquire about Baba's health. Who is she?'"

They told him, "She is a member of the family and she loves Baba very much." So the doctor sent the response right away. Later, Mani asked for the telegram for her records, so I gave it to her.

I felt very anxious to see Baba again after such a terrible accident. I had waited so long. Finally, after more than four months away, Baba returned to India from the West in August 1952. I was very

Baba at Khushru Quarters after He returned to India following the accident in America, Ahmednagar, August–September 1952



relieved to see that when He got down from the plane in Bombay, He looked quite good, even though His leg had been badly broken, as well as His arm and nose. But the doctor in Oklahoma was quite good, and he had taken great care of Baba.

Mehera also had been severely injured. She could have died in that accident from her head wound, but by Baba's grace she recovered. Baba told us to never ask Mehera about the accident. So we didn't. But once she told me all about it. I just listened. I didn't ask her any questions. She told me how terrible it had been. I cried when I heard her story. Mehera said that she had been in great pain and that Baba had been in a very bad condition. At first, she wasn't able to be with Baba. Then, after a few days, they took her to see Him. It was heart-breaking for Mehera to realize how badly Baba had been injured. And it was terrible for her to be separated from Baba during their hospital stay. Mehera also told me that she lost her sense of smell due to her injuries.

Kitty told us that when Mehera was in the hospital, Baba had told her to carefully watch over Mehera and not leave her side. But at one point, Elizabeth, who had also been injured in the accident, called out to Kitty from the next room. So Kitty went to find out what Elizabeth needed. Just at that moment, Mehera reached for a glass of water. But she was weak and her eyes were swollen shut, so she slipped and hit her forehead on the table next to the bed. Mehera already had a very serious head injury, so Baba was quite upset with Kitty. And that is why Mehera had two scars on her forehead.

Many years before this, when we were living on Meherabad Hill, Baba told me that He would be in an accident and that Mehera would

have a scar on her forehead. I asked Baba, "Does that really have to happen?"

Baba said, "Yes, for My work, it has to be that way." Then I forgot all about it, until Baba and Mehera returned from America. But I never told Mehera what Baba had said long ago. How could I? It would have just made Mehera feel worse. She would have wondered why Baba had not told her. It would not have been good. So I didn't say anything. But Baba needed the accident to happen for His work.

After the accident, Mehera was quite changed. She got irritable more quickly, and she sometimes got agitated. Before the accident, we would tell each other almost everything. But afterwards, I had to be a little bit careful not to say more than was necessary. Baba would tell me not to talk about certain things with Mehera, because it would upset her. When I came from Bombay, Baba would tell me, "Just let Mehera be pleased to see you and spend time with you." Because we loved one another very much, we enjoyed being together.



My mother and I continued to live in Bombay after Baba's accident in America. I would go back and forth to be with Baba and Mehera. In 1954, when Baba was in Bombay, He asked Nilu to give me Baba's circular called the Final Declaration, and to explain it to me in detail.

In January 1955, I was not well. I had a tumor and my condition became serious. Dr. Nilu asked Baba, and He gave permission for me to have abdominal surgery. When I was admitted to the hospital, Baba sent me the message, "Tell Khorshed I am with her twenty-four hours a day." So all the people in Bombay who knew Baba came and sat in my room,

because Baba's presence was there. Even Kharmen Masi came. She was very old and frail by then. She said, "Oh, Khorshed, Baba is here. He said He would be with you, so I want to be in His presence."

I lost a lot of blood during the surgery, so I looked like a ghost. And I had very bad pain for two or three days after the operation. So I said to Baba, "You told me that You will be with me twenty-four hours a day. If that is true, then please help me with this pain. I can't bear it anymore." Immediately the pain stopped. Really, it's true! So Baba was there with me.

Baba sent Mehera, Mani, and all the girls to visit me in the hospital in Bombay after the operation. Naja said, "Oh, Khorshed, see how Baba loves you. He sent all of us to see you." They stayed for one day and then they left.

After I recovered, Baba called me to Satara, where He was staying at the time. I got the opportunity to be with Him there after many months. Baba told me that He would call me to be with Him every four to six months. So my heart became full of joy. Baba also wanted me to come to Sakori when He visited there. But Adi Sr. wrote a letter to me saying that since I had been with Baba at Satara, I need not come to Sakori. So I wrote to Baba and received a reply from Him that I should go to Sakori during His visit there, which made me very happy.

Baba also sent me a note through Dr. Nilu that said I must not forget that He knew and appreciated my deep love for Him and my restlessness and the suffering I went through during the operation. Baba said that all those difficulties would end soon. He told me that I must still remain brave and courageous and bold, as I had always been all those days—and that, in the end, I would find peace and happiness. Baba said that I did not have to wait long, that it was only a question of a few months,

because the time was near. Baba said that I especially should not worry about anything and that His love for me would never change.

After returning to Poona in late 1956, Dr. Nilu wrote a letter to me, asking me to write a letter to Baba on January 14, 1957. He said I should remind Baba when I would be going to Satara. This was the last letter I received from Dr. Nilu. Just as his letter reached my hands, I also received the news of Baba's second auto accident. It happened on December 2, 1956, near Satara. Nilu had been thrown from the car and had died without regaining consciousness. At first, I could not believe the news, because the letter he had written had just arrived into my hands.

I couldn't bear that Baba was so badly injured in another car accident. I cried so much that blood got under my eyes and I could not see. I thought I was going blind. I tried putting mint oil on my eyes, but it burned them. So I let the tears run for quite a while. After that, I opened my eyes and could see again. When both my eyes got better, I used some powder to soothe them.

It was good that Dr. Donkin was there to take care of Baba. I wanted to go to Satara because Baba was there, but everyone said, "Don't go because Baba is in a very bad condition and you should not disturb Him. Go later on."

So my mother and I went to Arnavaz's apartment in Bombay, but everyone there was just talking. I thought, "I can't waste time like this," and I started making arrangements myself to go to Poona, which is near Satara. I couldn't leave my mother alone, so the two of us went as soon as we could.

We also wanted to go to Poona to attend the last rites for Dr. Nilu, because Nilu meant so much to us. Following Baba's instructions, Dr. Nilu had given great help and service to us. Because of this, we



*Baba meeting with His
lovers after His second
accident. Note His
canes in the corner.
Ganeshkhind, Poona,
June 1957.*

especially respected and appreciated him. So even though my mother was sick at the time, we went to Poona alone. Unfortunately, when we reached Poona, we learned that Nilu's body had just been taken to Meherabad for cremation. So we went to Meherabad, with offerings for his cremation. Then we returned to Bombay.

I wrote a letter to Baba asking His permission to come to see Him. After Baba had shifted from Satara to Poona for better medical treatment, He called my mother and me to visit Him. So we went again to Poona. Someone told us not to go, but I refused to listen. So we got to spend a few precious days there with Baba. Baba was always smiling, even with the terrible injury to His hip. His beautiful nose, which had been broken in the first accident, had been changed even more by this one. And even His tongue had been cut, so He could not eat His regular diet.

Baba suffered so much! But Baba is God. He controls everything. And He never showed a worrying face. Baba was always smiling, no matter what He went through. Baba put into practice: "Don't worry. Be happy." Then He told us to do that. Baba used to say that before a person can tell someone else do to something, he has to do it himself first. So Baba actually lived His motto: "Don't worry, be happy."



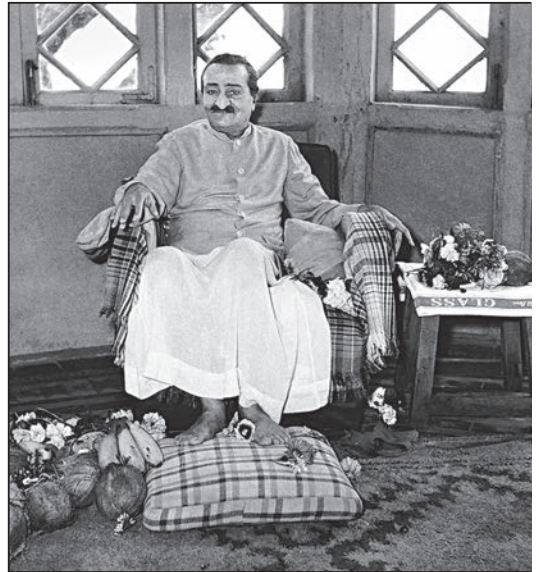
In early April 1958, when Baba was staying at Mahabaleshwar, I dreamt that Baba developed a pustule on His ear. He was telling me in the dream that He was suffering because I did not believe in what He said. Baba also told me that I didn't have even a little love for Him. When I heard this from Baba in the dream, I wept. I asked Baba how He could even think that I didn't believe in Him, since I have such great love for Him. As I was saying this to Baba, my eyes opened and the dream disappeared.

A short time after this dream, Baba called me to Mahabaleshwar. When I got to Poona, I found that the bus to Mahabaleshwar was full. So I told the conductor that I had been called by Meher Baba and that I had to reach there as soon as possible. Simply hearing Baba's name, the conductor kindly put me on a luxury bus.

Baba had mentioned in His letter that I should telegram Him before reaching Mahabaleshwar. But because I got the luxury bus, I reached Mahabaleshwar before my telegram. I kept this thought in my mind and sent a sort of mental telegram to Baba that I was arriving.

Although I did not know which bungalow Baba was staying in, a man on the bus told me he would show me the place. But, to my surprise, Baba's car was at the bus stop! When I inquired, I learned that Baba had sent the car to drop someone off at the bus stop, and that the driver had waited there for no reason. So I got into the car and reached Baba earlier than expected, and everyone was surprised to see me.

*Baba at Shapoor
Hall, Mahabaleshwar,
April 29, 1958*



As always, my time with Baba was wonderful. But Baba taught several of us a lesson about obedience on our return journey to Poona at the end of April 1958. Baba was going by car and had arranged for luxury bus reservations for Meherjee, his daughters, myself, and the others. Meherjee and Sadashiv Patil thought they could save Baba money and reach Poona sooner if they hired a taxi. But the taxi they hired was very old. Dr. Deshmukh and his friend, as well as Meherjee and his two daughters, got in the taxi. Meherjee pressed me to join them; so I did.

The taxi was making good time and Meherjee was happy that he would reach Poona much earlier than Baba. But when we were a few miles outside the city, the taxi broke down. It would not move at all. Meherjee and all the others tried to push the car in the severe heat. But all efforts to move it failed. The luxury bus passed us and then the ordinary bus passed us by as well! At last, the taxi had to be towed. It was tied with a thick rope to a large truck. But the rope broke before we reached Poona. So we were the last to arrive in Poona, with tremendous difficulties all the way.

Baba was anxiously waiting for us. Dr. Deshmukh narrated the whole story to Him. Baba was not happy to hear what we had done, because He had reserved our seats on the luxury bus out of concern for us, and still we had not followed His instructions.



Before He left on the New Life, Baba had given a lot of His things to Meherjee to sell to raise money for His journeys. So, many Baba lovers would come to his house to purchase Baba's things. Sorabji

Siganporia collected some of Baba's things, and he had the idea to make a Baba center in Bombay. The first center began in one room of his house. Every Sunday, everyone would come and perform Baba's arti there. A little later, he got a larger flat with another Baba lover. I would sometimes visit with Sorabji when I lived in Bombay.



After the New Life, one of my friends in Bombay who was also named Khorshed, asked me, "Khorshed, why don't you dye your hair?"

I replied, "No, I don't want to do that. Afterwards it would be very troublesome and it might look bad and I wouldn't like it. I don't want to bother."

She said, "No, no, no. You should do it once and go show Baba."

I asked, "But how can I?"

She said, "I can dye it black for you—the same color your hair had been when you were younger. Then you can go and meet Baba. It will remind Him of how you looked before, when your hair was dark. You can remind Him once again of those early days together. It will be fun."

Still, I said no. But she would ask me again and again every time we met.

So one day I agreed, "Yes, it will be fun." She dyed my hair just before I went to Poona to see Baba. Since I wanted Baba to be the first to see my new hair, I put on a scarf that covered my hair completely. I didn't want anyone else to see it. I went to a great deal of trouble for this. At that time, Baba was at Bindra House, the Jessawala family's home in Poona. He visited there from time to time because of his close connection with all of Eruch's family. So I went to Bindra

House with my hair all wrapped up. Gaimai, Eruch's mother, said to me, "Khorshed, don't you feel hot? Why did you wrap your head like that? Take off your scarf."

I said, "No, no. I feel cool," and I wrapped it even tighter. Then I rushed in to meet Baba, who was sitting with Mehera on the divan in the main room. All the women were there.

Baba said, "Sit down, sit down." Then He asked, "At what time did you come? How was your train?" He asked me some other questions, and we talked. But I kept my wrap on. I did not take it off. Suddenly Baba looked at me and said, "Don't you feel hot?"

I said, "Not much, just a little."

He said, "Then take off your scarf." As soon as He said that, I unwrapped the whole scarf. Baba said, "Ah, what's this?" He looked so surprised.

I said, "Baba . . ." But He didn't like it at all.

He asked sharply, "Why did you do it?"

I said, "Baba, I wanted to surprise You, and my friend told me that we would just have some fun. So I dyed my hair. I didn't want anyone to see it before You. That's why I had it wrapped until I came to You. But I had so much trouble along the way."

Baba said, "Never do it again; never do it again. Now wash it off."

I responded, "But Baba, it won't wash off like that; it takes time. It has to grow out."

Once more Baba repeated, "You should never do it again; never do it again."

I replied, "Yes, Baba."

It was a lot of trouble to get that color off. It lasted so long. I thought that I would have to cut my hair off. That was the first and

last time I dyed my hair. I was glad that He told me not to do it again. Baba told me, "Your hair is very good. Why did you put that color on it? The color you have looks so nice." This made me very happy. Baba always liked my eyes, as well. He would say, "Her eyes are very, very good."

With Baba at Guruprasad

After Baba's second car accident, He moved back to Meherazad, which remained His home for the rest of His life. Starting in 1959, Baba would go to Poona each summer and stay for three months in Guruprasad, the palace of the Maharani of Baroda. The women and men mandali who resided at Meherazad would accompany Baba to Guruprasad. Baba would also call Khorshed each summer to stay with Him there.



The Maharani of Baroda—from the very first—loved Baba so much. As soon as she entered the gate of Guruprasad, she would take off her chappals and come barefooted all the way up the long driveway to be with Baba. She then sat down near Baba's feet, on the floor.

Baba standing in front of Guruprasad, the palace of the Maharani of Baroda, Poona, 1960s

The mandali would offer her a chair, but she refused. She was very loving. She offered Guruprasad to Baba for His use whenever He wanted it. She wouldn't even allow her own family to stay there when it was vacant, in case Baba might need it.



Baba at Guruprasad with Maharani Shantadevi of Baroda, Poona, May 1965

Whenever Baba went to Guruprasad—even that first time—I was allowed to stay with Him there for the entire three months. Baba asked me to go to Poona early, before He and the others arrived, to get everything ready. Then I would stay after Baba left, to clean up and put things back the way they were before Baba's party had come. This meant that I had to spend time alone in that big bungalow—it was a palace, really. But I was never afraid, because Baba's presence was there.

As soon as Baba would arrive at Guruprasad, I would go to see Him first. Baba would give me instructions and then send me in to join the other women. Usually He would tell me, "Don't say anything that will upset Mehera. It's important not to worry her. And if you tell Mehera your troubles, she will worry, because she cares about you."

One day when Baba told me this, I asked Him, "Then who will I tell all of my problems to? If I can't talk to her about them, then who can I talk to?" So Baba Himself would listen.

Another time Baba said to me, "When you and Mehera are together, you will talk with one another the whole day. Then she won't be able to look after Me."

But I said, "No, Baba. We will both look after you."

Whenever I stayed at Guruprasad, I would wash Baba's clothes. We did not have to cook much when we were there, because food was delivered from Dorabjee's Café for all of us every morning. But I would make kitchiri for Baba in the evening. Baba liked kitchiri very much. I also made a little bhaji to go with it.

Baba usually stayed at Guruprasad during April, May, and June, so my birthday on May 2nd would be celebrated while we were there.

We would bathe earlier than usual that morning and Baba would embrace us. That day, we would also order a special treat like *falooda* (a sweet drink) or mango ice cream.

One year, I was hurrying to take my bath so that I would be ready when Baba arrived. The bathing room was very big and beautiful, because it was in a palace. It had a bathtub, but I was taking my bath Indian style, sitting on a stool in a tiled area, not in the tub. I had soap all over me. I also had washed the soles of my feet, so they were soapy too. That soap made everything so slippery! As I was sitting on a stool, I slipped. I closed my eyes as I started to fall. I didn't know how far I had to fall, but I closed my eyes until I could touch my feet. When I could touch my feet, I knew that my fall was all over.

The fall didn't hurt me, but I was quite scared. Then I got up, rinsed off, and got dressed. By that time, Baba had come. Baba said, "Where have you been?" because I hadn't been there to greet Him at the door as I usually did.

I said, "Baba, I was taking a bath."

Baba said, "Why didn't you bathe earlier?"

I said, "Baba, I did bathe earlier, but I slipped. Then it took extra time to get ready." After that, Baba used to tease me all the time about being clumsy. He would periodically remind me about the time I slipped in the bathing room.



Another time, when we were in Guruprasad in May 1961, one of Baba's twin nephews, Sohrab, played a joke on all of us. An American woman named Ann Conlon was expected to arrive any day, but she

*Baba at Guruprasad
with one of His twin
nephews, Sohrab or
Rustom Irani, Poona,
September 1961*



hadn't come yet and no one knew what she looked like. So as a joke, Sohrab dressed up like a woman and came in a taxi to Guruprasad, pretending to be Ann. When Sohrab arrived, everyone assumed this was Ann. We were saying, "Oh, Ann has come. Ann has come." We all hurried to change into our good clothes, while Rano was sent out to chat with "Ann." Rano talked with "her" very seriously and took "her" on a tour around Guruprasad. Rano told "her," "This is the Darshan Hall, where many people come and Baba meets with them. But now it is empty."

When Rano finished giving "Ann" the tour, we all went to greet "her." None of us recognized that "she" was Baba's nephew, Sohrab. But Mani started to catch on. She observed some little clues, like recognizing that "Ann's" handbag was the same one she had given to her niece Gulnar, Sohrab's sister. So Mani figured it out, but none of the rest of us did. We all thought "she" was this new Baba lover from America. But when she turned, we could see that "Ann's" legs looked like a man's legs, with lots of hair. Still, we didn't realize it was Sohrab. We thought that maybe this was just the American style.

After the rest of us had all greeted “Ann,” then Mehera came to meet “her.” We all knew that Mehera had a standing order from Baba not to touch any man. Sohrab knew this too, so he was afraid that his prank would cause Mehera to break Baba’s order. But just at the last minute, as Mehera was about to embrace “Ann,” Mani stopped her. She told Mehera that “Ann” might have a bad cold, so she should not embrace “her” or even shake hands with “her.” So Mehera folded her hands and just said, “Jai Baba.” Then Mani said to “Ann,” “Now, you go and see Baba.”

Mehera knew that because of the heat of the summer, Baba had taken off His sadra and was sitting with His chest bare. Baba often did His work dressed like that. But Mehera felt upset that Baba was not dressed properly to meet someone new.

So Mehera told me, “Khorshed, go and tell Baba that Ann is coming now. Have Him put on His sadra.” I felt uncomfortable interrupting Baba, but Mehera pushed me through the door. She said, “Go quickly and tell Him.”

I think that Baba also knew it was Sohrab, because when I told Him that “Ann” was coming, Baba said, “Never mind. Never mind. Have her come.”

So I told Mehera, “It’s okay. Baba doesn’t mind.” But Mehera must have wondered at this.

When they brought “Ann” in, Baba also played along. Meherjee and Nariman gave such a serious talk to this “Ann.” Everyone thought that this was really Ann Conlon, except for Mani. When she told us it was Sohrab, we all laughed so hard. Baba laughed, too. It was fun.



Once I had a dream of Baba in Guruprasad. I was standing in the hall and Mehera was there, too, standing near the door. I asked her, “Where is Baba?” Then I noticed from the hall that Baba was sitting on the ground with one leg crossed and one leg out a little. He appeared very peaceful. Baba was looking down and doing something very intently. I said to Mehera, “Look! See what Baba is doing.” So Mehera came over also. Just at that moment, Baba looked up and asked me, “What are you doing?”

I said, “We are watching what you are doing.” Baba was making little packets out of chickpeas and peanuts. They were very colorful—some were red and some were yellow. You know, they do that here. They make packages out of channa and peanuts. Baba said, “I have to give everyone a share. So I am preparing everyone’s share—how much to give each one.”

That was my dream. The next morning, as usual, I poured water for Baba to wash His hands and brush His teeth. I would do half, and Mehera would do half. So when I was alone with Baba, I told Him about my dream. Baba said, “Yes, that is My work now—preparing each one their share—making portions for the mandali and all others. What you saw was right.” And Baba had been very deliberate in deciding how much to give each person.



On July 12, 1961, there was a great flood in Poona while we were staying with Baba at Guruprasad. It scared everyone. So many people drowned, including many children. We heard people talking about the flood everywhere. “Now the flood is coming this way. Now

the flood is going that way.” We thought, “Oh, Guruprasad will be flooded also.” We all quickly moved to the top floor. And the flood waters did come in.

By around two or three o’clock, the worst flooding seemed to have passed. We were worried about Baba’s book, the one He wrote at Meherabad right after He began His silence. It was locked up in my jewelry box inside a cupboard on the ground floor of Guruprasad. Everything there was wet, but Baba’s book stayed safe and dry. The water rose up to just below the shelf where it was kept.

We asked Baba’s permission to go out of Guruprasad and see the damage in the city. Three or four of us went to the *sangam* (the confluence of two rivers) at Bund Gardens. The water was pouring over the bridge with all kinds of debris, like chairs and tables, flowing along in the water. In the evening, the flood again started flowing toward Guruprasad.

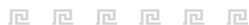
Baba had been to Bund Gardens in the morning and had dipped His feet in the Mutha River. Now Baba thought that He should go back and see what was happening. So He went to the river with the mandali and saw that the water was rising again. As soon as Baba arrived, the water stopped flowing toward Guruprasad. It went in the other direction.

Adi heard about the flood in Ahmednagar. He was scared that we might have been stuck there at Guruprasad with nothing to eat or drink. So he put some bread and dried fruit and a very big tank of water in his car and drove quickly to Poona to help us. Baba was very pleased that Adi had thought of that. When Adi saw that we were all right, he returned to Ahmednagar that night.



Whenever we stayed in Guruprasad with Baba, He would send us shopping a few days before we were to leave. Poona had many more nice shops than Ahmednagar. It also had good movie theatres. Sometimes Baba would select an Indian movie and send us out to see it. On those days, we would prepare Baba's food ahead of time and keep it ready for Him, so that He could have it while we were gone. Otherwise, we would have to go to the movie and then come back to make and serve Baba's meal. Baba knew that we would prefer not to do that.

Sometimes Baba would tell us, "Now, you select your movie and go." But we would always say, "No, no, we don't want to pick it. You select it for us." We didn't want to just go see a movie. We went because Baba had selected a movie for us to see. Baba knew everything that was in our minds.



When I would go to stay with Baba in Poona, my mother remained in Bombay. Baba had told me to look after her just as I would look after Him. So I did this lovingly because of Baba's order. Sometimes when I was staying at Guruprasad, Baba would send me to Bombay on the morning train to check on my mother. I would leave Poona at seven o'clock in the morning and reach Bombay at ten thirty. I would see her and then catch the one o'clock train back to Poona. Baba told me that I must return by seven or eight o'clock in the evening on the same day. So, I had a hurried journey.



At Guruprasad, Baba would sometimes hold darshan or sahavas programs. During those times, large groups of people would come. Baba was very active then, seeing so many people. This was His gift to everyone.

People came from all over India. There was one man who wanted to come and attend a sahavas program, but he had to get permission from his boss to miss work. He was hesitant about asking his boss. Then, one day, he had the thought, “Who cares if I lose my job. I can’t let it keep me from seeing Baba. I will find another job when I get back.”

So he did not ask his boss or tell anyone that he would be away. He just left quietly and came to Poona. He stayed for maybe five to eight days, attending the sahavas with all the other Baba lovers. The Baba atmosphere was so intense and he was so absorbed in being there with Baba that he didn’t even think about his job or anything else.

When the program was over, he returned to his family. And what did he find? He was so surprised! His boss didn’t say, “Where were you?” or “Why weren’t you here?” or anything like that. This wasn’t like his boss at all. The man couldn’t figure out why his boss wasn’t mad at him. He asked someone else about what had happened during the last week while he had been gone.

The person said, “No, no, you weren’t gone. You came to work every day.”

This puzzled the man even more. How could this be? Everyone at work agreed that he hadn’t missed a day. Not only that, but his boss said he had done a good job!

It’s unbelievable, but such things happened around Baba. The man told us this story himself when he came back to Guruprasad on

another occasion. And he wasn't the only one. Other amazing things happened around Baba as well.



Baba gave many darshan programs when He went to Poona. When He gave darshan, He wouldn't take any food beforehand, just tea. We had to get it ready early. Baba looked quite different when he gave darshan. He was even more beautiful, more radiant. Before the program would start, He would go and sit on His chair. He looked so beautiful—His whole face glowed with love. But after the darshan was finished, it changed. Baba was exhausted, because He hadn't eaten at all.

*Baba giving darshan
at Guruprasad,
Poona, 1960s*



Mehera would say, “Baba, You have to take something in the middle of the program.” So, maybe He would take some juice or a little water to please her. After the darshan was finished, people would go for lunch. They would bring food with them and would sit and eat in the Guruprasad compound, which was very large. But even then, Baba would not have lunch.



The East-West Gathering in November 1962 was a very great darshan. Baba sat in His chair on the dais, and the Maharani of Baroda sat at His feet on Baba's left side. She was a Maharani, which meant that ordinarily she would have had a special chair to sit on.

Baba at the East-West Gathering, Guruprasad, Poona, November 1962



But her love for Baba was so great that she sat on the floor like an ordinary person. When she would go up to Baba, she would walk barefooted for a long way, out of respect for Baba.

Even though there were thousands of people at the gathering, Baba was aware of each one. For instance, there was one woman, sitting way in the back, where it would seem that Baba couldn't even see her. Because she had a headache, she had tied a scarf around her head, which Baba noticed. From His chair on the dais Baba gestured, "Why do you have that tied around your head? What's the matter?" The woman said she had a headache, but she was very happy because Baba's question showed that He had noticed her and was thinking about her. She felt His love for her.

Another man was thinking that he wouldn't be able to have Baba's darshan because he was so poor. Yet Baba specially called him forward. The man knew, then, that Baba had heard his inner cry and had responded to it.

We women were inside in the bungalow that was next to the pandal where the darshan was being held. We could watch Baba through the window, and any time He wanted something, we got it for Him. At that time, the men and women were separate, not like we are now.

In the afternoon of the first day of the East-West Gathering, suddenly rain came. It started as a little shower. Then such a big down-pour came! At first the people thought that they should move. But when Baba didn't move, they thought, "Why should we move?" So they all sat where they were and got soaked as the rain poured down. They were all bathed by God's water in the presence of God.

After the rain stopped, Baba said to the Western women, "Go and change your clothes." So they all came into our room and we offered them

our dry clothes, because their clothes were back at their hotels. Mehera gave some of her dresses and I gave mine. We all opened our trunks and gave whatever we had. Then we helped them get dressed. It was really fun. Most of the Western women could wear our dresses and saris. But our clothes didn't fit Ivy Duce or Elizabeth, so we found something else for them. Elizabeth wore one of her own silk dressing gowns that she had left with Rano when Elizabeth had returned to America. The Westerners had all worn fancy dresses at first, but then they had to change. They looked so funny. But I said they were very lucky to bathe with Baba in God's water. Nobody poured it, but God sent it from the heavens.

Before the East-West Gathering, Baba had sent me to Bombay to bring five beautiful saris for Mehera. They came in handy when the rain came.



For us, and for everyone who attended, the darshans were very special times. But for Baba, the darshans were exhausting. He gave so much of Himself during those times. So many people came that they would even be lined up on the road outside, waiting to take darshan. But Baba was very kind and compassionate. He would give His love to all. Remembering those times now, it all seems like a dream, just a dream. All this is not really happening—this life, the doing, and what has been done. They are all dreams.



Baba reaching out to give darshan to a child, Poona Meher Baba Center, May 1, 1965



Throughout the 1960s, Baba went to Guruprasad every March for three months. Because Baba had asked me, I would always go there a few days before He would arrive. That way, I could get things ready for Baba, Mehera, and the girls. Everything needed to be cleaned up and handy. So I would wash all the things and get the beds, napkins, drinking water, and everything ready. Because we had no refrigerator, we would keep our container of milk in a bowl of water on the dining table, so the milk would not go bad. Every day we did this. One morning in 1963, I got up and saw that there were a few drops of milk on the table, and that the cover of the milk was a little bit loose. Then I found a cat under the table. He was a very good-looking Siamese cat. But as soon as the cat saw me, he ran away. So I told Mehera and Mani about it.

Then the cat came back, and as soon as he saw Baba, he put his head on Baba's feet, like he was taking darshan. Baba named him Pegu, and he would come and stay with us whenever Baba came to Guruprasad. Baba liked to feed him from His own hand. And Meheru was put in charge of giving him milk.

Usually Pegu was well behaved. But one time when the cat came near Baba, he meowed and meowed. Baba said, "Call Meheru." Then He asked her, "Why didn't you give milk to this cat? Look how hungry he is." And Pegu continued to meow and meow.

Meheru replied, "No, Baba, I gave the cat milk two or three times since this morning. I don't know what he has in his stomach—maybe there's a hole so the milk won't stay in it, and that is why he is behaving like this."



*Mehera holding
Pegu the cat,
Guruprasad,
Poona, 1960s*

Baba said, “No, bring it milk.” So Meheru brought more milk and gave it to the cat.

When Baba would take His lunch or dinner, Pegu would come and sit silently under His chair. Baba knew he was there, so He took little bits of food from His own plate and gave them to the cat. Pegu especially liked fish.

Mehera and the others said, “Baba, why do You feed the cat that way? It’s a bad habit. Baba, please don’t do it.” But Baba continued

feeding Pegu from His own plate. So Meheru would take the cat into the bathroom while Baba ate His meals. But Baba missed the cat and asked, "Where is Pegu? He has not come today?"

We would reply, "Baba, the cat is sitting somewhere," as if we didn't know where he was. Then after Baba finished eating, Meheru would go and let Pegu out of the bathroom, where he had been sitting silently. As soon as he was let free, he went straight to Baba.

Pegu was very clever. He knew the sound of Baba's bell and came running whenever it sounded, calling everyone together. He was so focused on Baba. Pegu would be the first to greet Baba in the mornings. He would push through the crack in the door with his head and run straight to Baba, putting his head at Baba's feet.

Pegu appeared every time Baba stayed at Guruprasad. Actually, he belonged to a neighbor, a Parsi woman who was married to a Punjabi. At first, when the cat started coming to Guruprasad to be with Baba, the woman found out where her cat was going. So she came to get her cat back. Baba told her to take him. So she tried to catch the cat to take it back, but Pegu didn't want to come with her. She gave the cat food, but he still it didn't want to go with her. Pegu just ate the food and then jumped down from her hands and ran from her.

Baba told me, "Take the cat in our car over to their house so they can have him." So when the cat came near Baba, I reached down and caught him. Pegu knew me, so he was not afraid of me. Then I went quickly and sat in the car. I kept petting the cat. But as soon as we got in the car, he became restless, because he did not want to leave Guruprasad. We drove to the neighbor's house and gave the cat to them, and then we returned. The neighbors tied him up on an iron leash, but still this did not hold the cat. He somehow

escaped and returned to Baba. After that, the family let the cat stay at Guruprasad.

When Baba left in June, He asked me to stay four or five days more to give Pegu milk and look after him. One day, a letter from Eruch came, asking me to get some things he had left behind in his cupboard. So I went and opened the cupboard. The room was dark and there was no one else around. I had only a flashlight to see by. Pegu must have been behind me, and when I opened the cupboard, he must have climbed inside and hid there. But I didn't see him go in the cupboard. I thought he was outside. So I locked the cupboard door and prepared to go to Bombay in the morning.

The next day, I still had not seen the cat. So I asked Ramarao, who was looking after the grounds, "Have you seen the cat? I haven't seen him, and I have to give him milk and then go to Bombay."

He replied, "No, the cat has gone out. When he comes back in, I will give him the milk. Don't worry. You can go."

From what he said, I thought that he had actually seen Pegu go outside. So I returned to Bombay, but I had a funny feeling that something was not right. Then a letter came from Baba, asking, "How is Pegu? Did you take good care of him? Did you pet him and do everything that I asked? Write to Me soon and tell Me." When Baba's letter came, I had been thinking that something was wrong. But I had no idea why.

Later I heard that the manager had written to Baba and told Him what had happened. Pegu had snuck into the cabinet. He was meowing and meowing, but he couldn't get out, and he didn't have any food! Luckily, the manager of the property had heard him meow. He was very clever and knew how fond Baba was of that cat. So he broke the lock on the cabinet and got the cat out. As soon as the cupboard

door opened, Pegu quickly ran out. He looked so scared! I was very relieved that the cat hadn't died.

For many years, whenever Baba came to Guruprasad, Pegu would run to be with Him. But right after Baba returned to Meherazad in 1966, Pegu died. He had been crossing the road and was hit by a car. Pegu was buried in the Guruprasad compound.

The Last Years with Baba

Meher Baba's seclusion had deepened throughout the 1960s as He worked intensely to complete His Universal Work. He seldom left His home at Meherazad, except for the three months every summer that He spent at Guruprasad in Poona. Baba would call Khorshed to come from her home in Bombay and join Him there each summer. He would also call her to come and stay at Meherazad from time to time during these final years.

Sometime around 1960, Baba asked me to stay at Meherazad for one or two months. So I happily came to be with Him. That first afternoon, Baba asked me, “Where will you sleep while you are here?”

I had not given any thought to it. I had just come, as He had asked. So I replied, “Baba, wherever You arrange, I will stay.”

But Baba said, “No. Tell Me, what is your desire?”

Then the thought came to my mind, and I said, “Baba, since you are asking me, I would like to stay in the big house with You.”

Baba responded, “But there is no room in the house.”

I said, “Baba, I don’t need a room or a bed. I can sleep on the floor in the sitting room. I don’t mind. I would actually like it.”

Baba asked, “Really? Are you sure?”

I said, “Yes, Baba.”

And He said, “That is good.” So Baba gave the order to everyone

that I was to sleep in the sitting room of His house. Baba had asked me what I preferred, so I told Him. I never asked. If I had asked to stay in the big house, some others might not have liked it. But Baba gave the order, and no one could change it.

I had thought, “There are very comfortable beds in the other bungalow, but it is separate from Baba. I would rather be near Him.”

*Baba in the garden
at Meherazad,
circa 1960*



In the early 1960s, Baba said to me, “Now you leave your flat and go and stay with your auntie and serve her, because she is getting old and is ill.” My Auntie Motibai, who was my father’s sister, lived in flat number six in Irani Mansions in the Dadar District of Bombay. After we left Bombay to be with Baba in the 1920s, the family kept the flat and my auntie was living there at that time. So, at Baba’s request, I went and took care of her. Later she helped me to transfer the flat into my name. The other auntie did not want me to have it, so there was a big struggle to get the flat. The rest of the family gave me so much trouble. My mother and I were all alone except for Baba’s help. I got the flat because it was Baba’s wish.

About a year and a half before Baba dropped His body, my old auntie left some money to me and my mother. Baba was staying at Meherazad at that time, so I went to Baba right away when I received the money. I told Him, “Baba, the money is here. I’ve brought it. What would you like me to do with it?”

Baba asked me, “What would you like to do with the money?”

I thought, “My father promised that he would give everything to Baba, but He couldn’t because he had been kidnapped and forced to write a new will.” So I decided that I would fulfill his promise myself. I said to Baba, “We can put it at Your feet.”

Baba said, “Yes. All right, but for now, you keep it. When I ask for it,

*Baba sitting in
Mandali Hall,
Meherazad,
circa 1967*



then give it to Me.” It was about 4,000 rupees—not much. Baba said, “Keep that money aside. You can use the interest, but whenever I ask for the money, then you can bring it for Me.” So I kept that money aside. In those days you could get a little interest.

My father had set up a trust to provide minimally for medical bills for my mother and me. Baba asked me, “What about your father’s trust? So much is left.” I said, “We can take money from the trust on only one condition—to cover a doctor’s bill or an operation.” Later, when we were at Guruprasad, Pendu had to have surgery. Baba asked me, “Khorshed, could you pay for Pendu’s operation?”

I replied, “Yes, I can do that easily.” So I took money from my father’s trust to cover his bill and gave it to Baba. It was about 7,000 rupees, which was a lot of money in those days. I rode on the train alone from Bombay with all of that money. Yet I was never afraid. Some people are afraid even if they are carrying just a little money. But I knew that Baba was with me.

Now all of my father’s trust is finished. There is nothing left. It took care of my mother’s cataract surgery and my two operations. But Baba provided for me as one of the beneficiaries in His Trust. It is enough to live on, and I can get money if I need another operation. But my uncle Tawas Kaka cheated us out of most of the money in my father’s trust. We had a lot of money in the trust, but he gave us only a third of it. The rest of the money, the family kept for themselves. Still, Baba took care of us, because He promised He would, if we listened to Him and followed what He said.



One time when Baba called me to Meherazad, He asked in front of all the women, “Do you know why I like Khorshed? It is because she is not jealous of Mehera, and she is helpful in every way. That is the reason I love her.” I would always, with all my heart, give most importance to what Mehera liked. I would not just do things in my own way. So when Mehera and I were together, sometimes it was more difficult for some of the women. And they thought it was better if I was not there. But Baba told me, “First I love Mehera, then you, then Naja, then the others.”

Living apart from Baba, after so many years of being with Him, was very painful for me. I missed being with Baba so much. One day, after a long time away, Baba said to me, “You know, I made you be separate because it was good for you. For so long you were near, near, near Me. Being separate has been good for you. Don’t worry, I love you. My nazar is always on you.”



In 1967, I was having trouble finding someone to take care of my mother while I would be with Baba in Guruprasad. A few months before I was to leave for Guruprasad, a man and a woman showed up. They were from Andhra and were newly married. The woman, Lakshmi, was pregnant and she was crying. She didn’t want to return to her village right after the baby was born. She was worried because her village was very dirty and did not have good doctors. Lakshmi was afraid that her newborn baby might die if they returned to her village. So she wanted to stay in Bombay for a while. But they didn’t have a house in Bombay. I thought, “They need a home, and I need someone

to look after my mother.” So I asked her, “Would you like to stay in our flat for three months, and then you can return to your home?” They were happy about this arrangement. Of course, I wrote to Baba to ask His permission, since He had never told me to have anyone else stay in the house. I asked Baba, “Shall I allow them to stay?”

Baba replied, “Yes. That is very good. If you give some poor people shelter, I am very happy. You can do it.” So they stayed in our flat, and I went to Guruprasad to be with Baba.

That year, Baba said that we should stay for an extra month at Guruprasad. During our last month there, a telegram came saying that Lakshmi had given birth to a baby girl. The couple asked what they should name the child. Baba asked me for some suggestions. I replied, “*Meher Ratna* (Jewel).” Baba liked the name and said, “Yes, that is very good.” So we sent them a telegram giving that name.

Then Baba suddenly changed His mind about staying at Guruprasad. He said, “We shouldn’t stay any longer in Poona. We should return to Meherazad now.”

So Baba left, and I stayed a couple extra days as usual. As soon as I returned to Bombay, the husband said, “Today is the sixth day since the birth. The hospital won’t keep my wife any longer. So come with me, and we can get her discharged and bring them home.”

I didn’t know what to do. So I decided to give them one room in our flat. I prepared the room for the mother and child as best I could. Then I went with the husband, Janardhan, to the hospital. Their baby was so small—like a doll. She was so sweet looking. She was quite different from other children. She was very delicate and very lovely. We brought them back in a taxi. At first, everything was all right. But that night, the father had to go to work. His shift started at midnight.

When he left for work, the baby began to cry loudly. My mother and I were in one room and the mother and child were in the other. The crying was so loud that I felt scared and wondered, "What has happened now?" I thought that I must go and see what was wrong. I felt a responsibility, because they were staying in my home. So I went to Lakshmi and asked what had happened. She said, "I have no milk, but the baby is hungry and needs milk."

"What to do?" I wondered. There was no milk in the mother's breast. I was scared. Where could we get milk in the middle of the night to give to the baby? You have to be very careful to give enough milk to a six-day-old baby. What could we do? So I took Baba's name and said, "Now Baba, help me."

I told her, "Give the baby to me." So I took the baby and held her. I said Baba's name and walked around the room. The baby stopped crying.

The mother said, "Now you take the baby with you and put her in your bed." I agreed, "Yes, all right." I put her on my bed and both the baby and I slept. This was the first good sleep that the mother had had since giving birth.

At six o'clock the next morning, I got up and took the baby to her mother. By that time, the mother had gotten milk. So the baby drank the milk and then went back to sleep. After that, the mother told me, "Every night, you take the baby with you, because otherwise she cries and I can't stop her."

So every night I would keep the baby with me, and make milk from formula. Lakshmi was very happy to not have to get up in the middle of the night and to do those things. This went on for four months.

Then a letter came from Baba saying that I must come to see Him at Meherazad. So, I thought that I should take the baby with me so she could meet Baba. But Baba was in seclusion at that time and He did not want to see anyone. He wrote to me, "You should come alone and not bring anyone with you," because He knew that I would usually bring someone with me to take His darshan. So Baba specifically gave me that order. Still, I wondered if I could find a way to take the baby with me.

Then I got an idea. I wrote to Baba and said, "Baba, as You say, I will come all alone by myself. But I will bring a surprise for You." I thought that I would show Him the baby and say, "This is the surprise."

I took the baby and the mother also. Before we left Bombay, I told Lakshmi, "Baba may not see you, because He is in seclusion. So you will have to sit outside the gate of Meherazad and wait. If Baba wants to see you, then I can call you. But if I say that you must go back to Ahmednagar, then you must take the bus there alone." I asked her, "Will this be okay with you? Do you still want to come?"

*Khorshed holding
Meher Ratna*



She said, "Yes, yes. I want to come." So she and Meher Ratna came with me to Ahmednagar. Baba had sent a car to pick me up at the Ahmednagar station. So the three of us went in Baba's car to Meherazad. Just before we entered the gate, I had the mother get out of the car and wait outside. I wrapped the tiny baby very nicely in a cloth I had brought. Then we drove into the compound.

I was holding the sleeping baby in the car as Goher walked up. She asked, "Khorshed, what did you bring?"

I said, "Shhh. Don't say anything."

Then Baba called me to take darshan in Mandali Hall. I got out of the car and gave the baby to Goher to hold while I went to Baba. He asked me how I was and how my mother was doing. Baba wanted to know all of the Bombay news. Then He told me, "Now go to Mehera."

I replied, "Yes, Baba. I will go now."

Baba said, "I am coming there, but first you go to see Mehera." Then Baba asked me, "You came alone?"

I said, "Baba, I am here alone, but I have a surprise for You. You can see it when You come in the house."

Baba didn't mind. He said, "Yes. All right."

So I went with the baby to Mehera, who was standing on the porch. She said, "Hello, Khorshed. How are you?"

As soon as I went up to Mehera, I put the baby in her hands.

She said, "What's this?"

"It's a surprise," I replied.

Mehera was very surprised and very happy also, because the baby looked so appealing that it made our hearts go out to her.

She asked, "Does Baba know?"

"No," I replied, "Baba does not know. I told Him that I brought a surprise and that when He comes in, then He will see what it is."

Mehera agreed, "When Baba comes Himself, then He can see her. We can put the baby on Goher's bed." Then Mehera asked, "Is her mother here?"

"Yes," I replied, "she is waiting outside the gate. I told her Baba is in seclusion. So it will not be a problem if Baba cannot see her."

Baba came in after a few minutes and sat on the chair. Then He took Mehera's hand and walked over toward Goher's bed. That's when Baba saw the baby. He asked, "What's this? Who brought her?"

Mehera said, “Baba, Khorshed brought us the baby for a surprise.”

Baba saw the child and liked her very much. Baba said, “Bring her into My room.” So Baba went and sat on His bed and called for the child. Mehera took her and sat her on Baba’s lap. Then Baba played with her, bending down with His mustache to tickle her and kiss her. She liked it very much and didn’t cry at all. Some babies are not like that. Sometimes they cry when touched by new hands. This happens for many people, and even with Baba, sometimes babies would cry. But she was very happy. Baba liked her very much and played with her for some time. Then we let her lie on Baba’s bed for a while. Finally, we put her on Goher’s bed while Baba ate lunch.

After that, Baba told Mehera to bring the little “*Bolbol*,” which means “nightingale” in Persian. Baba called the baby that name because she made sweet little noises. Then Baba said, “She is one who was connected with Me in her previous life, and once more I had to contact her. She was very close to one of you. That is why Khorshed brought her and that is why I have touched her. Now My work with her is done. Khorshed, you must look after her very nicely and keep her well. If she needs medical help, spare no expenses. Get her the best doctor.” Baba did not say who else had been close to the baby.

Baba then told me, “Stay today, and tomorrow you should go.” Baba also asked about her mother.

I said, “She is waiting outside the gate.”

Baba asked, “She won’t mind if I don’t give her darshan?”

I told Him, “She won’t mind. I already told her beforehand that you are in seclusion.”

So we gave her a message to go to Ahmednagar and spend the night in Khushru Quarters. Then the baby and I stayed for the whole

day, and Baba played with her so many times. We spent the night in the cottage where Naja lived. But the baby cried in the night, so I got up and made her milk. Fortunately, Baba wasn't disturbed. In the morning, He got up and asked how our sleep had been. We left soon after that. I felt relieved that Baba had not been upset that I had brought the baby, even though He was in seclusion and had told me to come alone.

Baba said I had a strong connection with Meher Ratna. She stayed in my house with me until she was two and a half years old. Baba wrote to me that I should not bring the child with me during Dara and Amrit's wedding in December 1968. Baba said that His work with her had already been done. Later, in 1969, Meher Ratna and her parents moved out of our flat. Her parents had two other daughters after they returned to their village. Meher Ratna was very intelligent, and when she got a little older, she took excellent care of their house in the village. She and her family would come to visit me in Bombay. But, as Baba had indicated to me earlier, Meher Ratna died quite young from cancer, when she was only twelve years old. When her father came to tell me the news, I got such a shock!

So Baba made me a mother three times. First with Jangoo, then with Gorakh, and finally with Meher Ratna. My nature is very much like that—to care for others. I don't care for my own sleep or anything else, if I can help others.





Baba inside Guruprasad Palace, Poona, 1960s Bombay could come either—not Meherjee, Jimmy, Nariman, Arnavaz, Nargis, or Katie.

During Baba's stay at Guruprasad in 1968, He gave strict orders that no one was allowed to come or go for the entire summer. Only the close ones who regularly lived with Baba were allowed to stay—like Mehera, Mani, and Rano—and the men mandali, like Eruch and Pendu. Naja, who had always stayed at Bindra House during the summer, was also ordered to stay with Baba and the women at Guruprasad. No one from outside could come there—not even Baba's brothers, Jal and Beheram, or Eruch's brother, Meherwan. And no one from

Despite these restrictions, Baba had Goher write me a letter saying that I could come, once again, to Guruprasad to be with Him for three months. During this time, I would not be allowed to leave the compound for the entire time. Baba's letter said, "For three months you will have to stay in Guruprasad, and you and Naja will have to keep My order to observe silence. Make arrangements for Masi's care, because you will not be able to see her for three months. If you leave this compound, you will not be allowed to enter it again. So think carefully and decide whether you can do this. Then come."

Usually when I spent the summer with Baba at Guruprasad, He would send me back to Bombay to see about my mother, because she

was old and in poor health. But this time Baba was very clear that I would not be able to see her. Baba said in His letter:

This time, I won't see anyone, but you and Naja both come and keep silence. As soon as I arrive, you should keep silence and not talk with Me or anyone else. Keep silence from the first day. If you agree to this arrangement, then come alone. You must come and I will be pleased.

P.S.: Mehera says that if you can come, it would be good. You should not miss this chance.

So I took courage and decided to go to be with Baba, even though I did not like to be silent. I heard that Naja was excited that I would be coming. I made arrangements with some other Baba lovers in Bombay to look after my mother. Then I went early to Guruprasad, as usual, to make all the preparations for Baba's stay. When Baba arrived, I did not say anything. But after a few minutes, He called me and said, "Talk with Me now for five minutes and after that, stop. What arrangements did you make for your mother? Can you stay here perfectly for three months and keep silence?" Baba wanted to know all the details, so I told Him. Then He stopped me and said, "Now, don't talk any more."

So Naja and I stayed at Guruprasad, and Baba gave us duties to do, like washing the clothes and cooking. Naja and I communicated in silence using gestures like Baba. We understood each other very well, but Meheru could not easily understand Naja's signs. Sometimes Baba asked



Naja,
Meherazad,
1974

Naja, "What food are you cooking?" Once she held up her finger, meaning ladyfingers, which are okra. Another time, Naja pointed to her hair to show spinach. But Baba couldn't understand. It was very funny. So He said we could write, if it was necessary. Naja would write what she needed to say to others on a sheet of paper. But I thought, "Why write? Let it go. If we are to keep silence perfectly, why write and communicate the easy way?"

This was how we passed our time. Every day we had fun, and often Baba would tease us. Meheru noticed, "Oh, Khorshed and Naja understand each other very well using signs. They are very good friends."

Keeping silence for those three months was difficult, but I knew that it would only be for three months, not forever. So I could get by. But Baba had to keep silence forever. It is very, very difficult to keep silence. It was especially difficult to explain things to other people, because often they could not understand what we meant. When we talk, we can use a certain word, but when we use signs, other people can't get the right word. They say a different word back. From that time on, I knew that Baba could not tell others what He really wanted. Sometimes I saw Him gesture, but the people would not read His gestures correctly. They would guess several words, and after trying for some time to get the right word, Baba would say, "Yes, all right. Let it go." Now I know this from my own experience. I realize how much Baba suffered by keeping silence.

A few times during the three months, if it was something important, Baba would ask me a question and told me to answer Him. But then He would have me keep silence again immediately.

A few days before the three months finished, Baba said, "From tomorrow, you can speak, and all you women have to go shopping."

Then Baba said privately to me, “Urge Mehera to buy something that she likes. Never mind about the cost. I want to give her something that she would like, that she really wants. Encourage her to have it. If she says, ‘I like it,’ then remember what she likes, and urge her to take it.” So I did that, and Mehera bought a few things.

At an earlier time, Baba had said, “I would like to give Mehera a big gift.” So Baba bought her a sewing machine. We had one in Meherazad, but we didn’t bring it to Guruprasad. Baba had given me the order to sew things especially for Mehera whenever I came. So we needed a sewing machine, and Baba got a very good one for Mehera. I didn’t know about it. They arranged it through Goher, I think. Then Baba told me.

During our last visit to Guruprasad with Baba in 1968, I got the feeling in my heart that Baba was giving these gifts to Mehera because He was going to drop His body soon. I knew Baba was getting very weak, and I had the thought that we wouldn’t be coming back to Poona with Baba again. But I couldn’t say anything to Mehera, because this would upset her. And Baba would also be troubled. Still, I felt it.

At that time Baba was doing very important Universal Work in His room. He would sit in seclusion on a special yellow chair that is now in the museum at Meherabad. For an hour or more every morning, Baba would work in that chair. No one else was allowed in the room. All the mandali had to wait outside. They could not go in until Baba clapped. And we had to maintain pin-drop silence the whole time.

Even when Baba wasn’t working, no one was allowed to touch His chair. Whenever we walked by it, we had to be careful that even

our saris didn't swing out and touch it. We had to be very alert, because Baba watched us whenever we came into the room. He was very serious about this. He would ask us if we had touched the chair even slightly. It was a difficult time.

For His work, Baba would pound on His thighs with His fists and they became black and blue. Baba was doing His Universal Work and He was somewhere between this world and the planes. He told us that this work was so difficult that He could have dropped His body while doing it. But He had to do His work, so He would sit and pound on His thighs, and they became very bruised. It was terrible for us to see His suffering.

During this time, I had a dream about Baba. He called me and gave me some papers and letters and said, "Do an account of all this and bring it to Me." Baba wanted me to show it to the mandali and bring back their reply. They wrote something on one of the papers and I brought the papers back to Baba. But Baba was asleep. And Mehera, Mani, and Naja were also asleep on the floor. So I didn't know what to do. I said, "Baba, Baba, get up. I have brought You what You wanted, just as You asked."

Baba said, "I don't have the strength to get up now. You give Me your strength, and help Me get up." So I opened my hands, and Baba took both my hands and I pulled Him up. Then the dream finished.

One day during this stay at Guruprasad, I got the opportunity to talk with Baba while He was sitting alone after His meal. I felt that I must tell Him what I was thinking, so I said, "Baba, do You plan to drop Your body soon? I have the feeling that You will. What is going to happen? If it's true that You are going to drop your body, then tell

Goher to give Mehera and me an injection so that we can die with you. We do not want to live after You go.”

Baba looked into my eyes for one second; then after a moment He said, “You are mad. What makes you think like that?”

I said, “No, Baba. I feel like this because of all of the little things I can see, and this is what I really feel. This is what I am telling You.”

Baba said, “No. You think I will drop My body now? That’s not the case. I have to live several more years. I still have much work to do. I have to see so many people. And when I break my Silence, everyone will be together. No. Not now. Not now.”

Then He changed the subject. And I forgot about it, because of the way Baba had assured me. Later, after Baba dropped His body, I told Mehera about our conversation. She complained to me, “Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t you give me some hint that Baba was going to drop His body?”

I said, “How could I? I didn’t know myself. I was just asking.” And it would not have been good for her to know ahead of time. I remember the look in Baba’s eyes when we were sitting together.



December 1968 was the last time Baba called me to Meherazad. We celebrated Mehera’s birthday and Dara and Amrit’s wedding. At that time, Baba was giving little clues all the time that He would be dropping His body soon. But we were so dumb, we did not realize it. We just did not want to accept it—even if we felt in our hearts that it might happen. We said, “No, no. Why would Baba go now? Why?” We didn’t want to believe it.

Baba would say things and give little hints, like before the 1969 Darshan He said, “I am very weak now.” Goher pleaded, “Baba, Your health is not good. Why don’t You cancel the darshan program?”

But Baba said, “No, I will not cancel it. Anyhow, I will give the darshan even if I give it sleeping.” We thought that maybe He meant that He would give the darshan even if He were lying down. Now we know what sleeping darshan meant.

Then Baba said, “Maybe we can have the first darshan program at Meherabad, and then I will go to Poona.” And that is what happened.

At Dara and Amrit’s wedding, while we were all sitting in front of Him, He said, “Look at Me now, because you won’t see Me like this in Poona.” We thought that we would not be able to see Him because there would be too big a crowd. Baba said, “You won’t see Me like this. So, look at Me now. You are very fortunate that you are looking at Me now.” We were still thinking that there would be a very big crowd, so we would not be able to see Him then. We thought that Baba must have meant that, but it all came true. We realized it after He dropped His body. Even if we thought that He might have meant that He was leaving, we didn’t want to believe it. We all thought that we would go before Baba.

Baba had written a letter to me in 1961.* He said that if He dropped His body, I should go and stay wherever Mehera was staying, either in Meherabad or Meherazad. Baba added in a postscript, “Don’t think useless thoughts. You all will expire at the proper time before [Me].” He made us forget all of those things until that time. Baba said to all of us who had stayed with Mehera—Mani, Meheru, Naja, Rano,

* See Appendix, Letters 11, 12, and 13.

and Goher—to keep close to Mehera after He dropped His body. But He made us forget all such things until the appropriate time.

Then Baba said that if my mother was still there and did not have anybody to look after her, I could bring her with me. Baba asked me to write him an “acknowledgement to this letter.”

So I wrote to Him, saying, “I will wish myself to die soon after You. I prefer to die in Your hand; what a good fortune if I do. I do not like the very idea that You would drop Your body before [me].”

Baba was very pleased. He sent a letter back to me while He was in seclusion saying that my letter “made Him very happy.” And I felt very happy to have pleased Baba. That is why I tried my best. I always asked myself, “How can I serve Him? What can I do to please Baba?”

Baba's Last Caress

After months of intense seclusion work, on December 22, 1968, Baba invited two hundred of His closest followers to Meherazad to celebrate Mehera's birthday and to have His darshan. That day also marked the engagement of Baba's nephew, Dara Irani, to Shatrugna Kumar's daughter, Amrit. The following day, all the guests were invited back for their wedding. For almost all who attended, this would be their last opportunity to be in Baba's physical presence. Khorshed attended these events, and Baba invited her to stay two extra days at Meherazad. This was the last time she was with Baba physically.

Having completed His Universal Work, Meher Baba dropped His body on January 31, 1969. His body was interred in His Tomb-Shrine on Meherabad Hill on February 7th. During the summer months of April–June 1969, a sahavas program that Baba Himself had planned was held at Guruprasad in Poona. After attending this Last Darshan, Khorshed returned to Bombay and continued to care for her mother, until Soonamasi passed away in 1973.

The last time I saw Baba was a day or two after Mehera's birthday in late December 1968. Dara and Amrit's engagement and wedding had been celebrated at that same occasion. After the ceremony was finished, everyone else left. But Baba had invited me to remain at Meherazad for a couple more days. The day after the wedding, Baba was lying down on the bed in His room. Usually Baba didn't rest on His bed. But even at the wedding, Baba had come out for a short time and then had gone back in to lie down. So when Naosherwan Anzar, who had not attended the wedding, arrived at 3:00 from Bombay, Baba had already retired to His room.

Mehera had known his family since Baba's New Life, so she told me, "Go into Baba's room and tell Him that I would like it if He could see Naosherwan today. Tell Baba that Naosherwan had not been able to take part in the wedding and arrived too late today to see Him."

So I went into Baba's room. I never was afraid of doing anything Mehera requested, even disturbing Baba. If Mehera said to do it, I always did it.

Baba asked, "Why did you come? What do you want?" Of course, Eruch was there with Baba reading His gestures.

I replied, "Baba, Mehera wants to tell You that Naosherwan has come to see You. He has just arrived from Bombay, but now You have stopped seeing anyone. But please call him inside and see him. She would like it if You did that."

Baba looked very tired. I had never before seen Him like that. Then Baba caressed my face and said, "Don't think of anything. Yes, now go and call him." So I called him and then went back again inside Baba's room. Baba talked with Naosherwan for more than an

hour and He also caressed Naosherwan. Then we left Baba's room. That was the last time I saw Baba. It was December 24, 1968.

I returned to Bombay, and shortly after that I attended a wedding there. Baba had sent Adi Sr. to that wedding as His representative. So I asked Adi about Baba's health. Adi said, "Baba's health is very serious. He is becoming very weak."

I thought that I must go back to Meherazad and see Baba, because He was getting weaker. I wanted to make sure He was all right. I had no idea that Baba would drop His body. But I thought that if I went back so soon, the others would all ask, "Why did you come? You were just here. Why did you come back so soon?" It was only because of that and because Baba had promised me that He would not drop His body that I did not go back to Meherazad. It would have been easier to go back had I not cared what others would think. I might have seen Baba one more time.

But maybe Baba didn't wish me to be there, because I show my feelings, and that would have made it more difficult for Mehera. She later told me that Baba was telling her all the time, "Don't lose your courage. Just be brave and go on. I have given My orders. Follow them and be brave. Be brave." But Mehera also had no idea that Baba was about to drop His body. It was so hard to imagine. Baba was so active. Even until the last moments, He was making jokes. No one thought that the time had come.

Still, Baba told us all the time: "My work is done one hundred percent. The time is coming nearer and nearer." We thought that Baba meant that He would break His silence and reveal Himself to the public. He put a veil over our eyes.



I was in Bombay on January 31, 1969, when Baba dropped His body. He passed at 12:15 p.m. Arnavaz, Nargis, and some of the others in Bombay heard soon after about Baba, and they left quickly by car for Meherabad. But I wasn't told until the evening. As soon as I got the news, I knew I had to go immediately. And I had to take my mother, because we would have to stay there and look after Mehera. Baba had given me this order earlier in His letter.

I didn't care about anything else. I just left everything, and my mother and I went by train that very night to Meherabad. We left at nine o'clock in the evening and arrived the next morning. The trip was really too strenuous for my mother, who was not actually well enough to make the journey. But she said, "If I die on the train, it is all right. I must come." So many people helped her get on the train at the station. But really, the trip was too much for her.

They had already put Baba's body in the Samadhi when we arrived. But it was still uncovered. When Eruch saw us he told me, "Don't cry too much, for Mehera's sake. If you cry, then she will hurt even more and she won't stop crying. So keep as calm and quiet as you can. Then she will be all right."

The women mandali in Baba's Samadhi. On the left: Goher, Rano, and Roda Mistry. On the right: Mani, Khorshed, Arnavaz, Nargis, Mehera, and Katie. Upper Meherabad, February 1-7, 1969.



We tried our best, but still, we felt Baba's passing intensely. Really, it was overwhelming for us. It was such a shock for me, because I had asked Baba and He had promised me that He would not drop His body. When I first heard the news, I didn't believe it at all.

We stayed for the next seven days on Meherabad Hill with Mehera and the other women. Then, on February 7th, we had our last glimpse of Baba's face before it was covered forever.



Before Baba dropped His body, He had planned to give sahas in



Poona from April to June 1969. So, at the end of March, we went to Guruprasad to make all of the arrangements for His lovers to take Baba's darshan. As always, I went to Poona before everyone else to prepare for their coming. Two days before the other women arrived, I had a dream that Baba came from the hall in Guruprasad

Mehera, unknown person, Naja, Khorshed, Mani, and Meheru sitting among the women at the 1969 Darshan, Guruprasad, Poona, April-June 1969

and sat down on the couch near Mehera's bed. This is where He had always sat. As we gathered around Him, Baba asked me, "Why are you all crying for Me? I am with you all. Look, I am here. I am with you. My presence is always with you. So, don't cry. Tell Mehera not to cry or worry about Me. I will always be with you." I told Mehera this, and she was pleased and felt a bit comforted.

A few days later, I had another dream while we were all staying at Guruprasad. My bed was near the door to Baba's bedroom, which was kept open at that time. Of course, when Baba was there, we had kept it closed. But in 1969, after Baba dropped His body, we kept it open.

We all slept with mosquito nets at Guruprasad. So I had tucked in my mosquito net and was sleeping. Suddenly, I felt that someone was coming toward me very fast. I could feel a wind from the quick movement of the person in the room. Even my mosquito net moved. I said to myself, "Who is moving so fast and going into Baba's room?" So I got up and looked. It was Baba. He was wearing a long sadra and walking very fast into His room. This was in the early evening shortly after I had gone to bed. Then the dream finished.

In September 1969, I had a dream that I was with Mehera and the other women up the Hill at Meherabad. We were near Baba's Cabin, where the stretcher that carried His body is kept. Suddenly, I collapsed and fell to the ground. Everyone was worried. When Baba came through the gate that used to be there, He saw me and said "Ah, Khorshed is dead." So Baba took my feet, Mehera took my head, and some others took my arms, and they laid me in the Samadhi.

In the dream, I was dead, but I could see and hear all this. When they laid me in the Samadhi, my feet stuck outside. So I thought, "Now they won't be able to close the door!" Then the dream ended.

Somehow, that dream comforted me. After Baba had dropped His body, we had all been wondering, "What will happen to us now?" But after the dream, I was no longer worried because Baba had laid me in His own Samadhi. Now I think that dream is a bit funny, but at the time I took it seriously, and it helped me.



In addition to these dreams, I had some visions of Baba after He dropped His body. The first one happened when I was at Meherazad. A man came with his wife and child to see Goher and to take darshan in Baba's room. While his wife was seeing Goher, we offered the man a sweet sherbet drink. When he finished it, he walked away. But Mehera remembered something and said, "Khorshed, run and call him back. I have to tell him something about his wife and child. Tell him I want to see all three of them."

So I ran as quickly as I could to find him. I wanted to catch him before he went back home. I looked in Mandali Hall and started to go in. But I suddenly stopped when I saw that Baba was there. Really, Baba was there. While Baba had been in the body, sometimes He would sit in Mandali Hall alone. We were not to disturb Him, because He would be very deep in thought working. So I immediately stopped at the door and thought, "Oh, Baba is here." Then He turned His face to see me, and I said to myself, "Ah, Baba is not in the body. What is this?" Then my vision was over, but for that moment, it was very, very clear.

That was the first time I saw Baba after He dropped His body. The second time, I was sleeping on the floor—on the carpet in the sitting room of Baba's house at Meherazad. There was a mosquito net over me. Someone walked by me quickly, and I thought that perhaps it was Mehera. Maybe she was doing something with the curtains on the window and had passed by me and then left. But I felt more coming and going. So I opened my eyes and got up to see what was happening. That's when I saw that it was Baba going into His room from the sitting room. This was just like my experience at Guruprasad

that happened right after I went to sleep. But this time I saw Baba in the early hours of the morning.

Another time, I was sitting in Mandali Hall at Meherazad behind Mehera and Mani while a very good program was going on. Suddenly, I saw Baba sitting on His chair, and His expression showed how much He liked the program. So I touched Mehera's shoulder and said, "Mehera, Mehera, look there. I just saw Baba."

She asked, "Where? Where?" But I had seen Him only for one second, and then He disappeared.

Still another time, Mehera and I were standing inside Baba's house at Meherazad. Mehera was standing sideways to Baba's room, and as we were talking, I suddenly noticed something moving. I wondered,

"Who is in Baba's room?" Then I saw that it was Baba. He was sitting there in the heavy canvas chair, and He turned His head toward me. So I went in to be with Baba. I told Mehera, and she came in too, but she couldn't see Him. My vision lasted only for a second. But I saw Baba turn and look at me while Mehera and I were talking.



(above) Khorshed, Katie, Goher, Rano, Mehera, Arnavaz, and Mani in the garden at Meherazad



(left) Mehera and Khorshed standing on the porch of Baba's house at Meherazad, 1980s

One day Mehera said, “Khorshed, tell me the truth. Are you really seeing Baba or not? Why is it that I do not see Him and you do?”

I replied, “I don’t know. I have had visions before. I used to have visions of Baba in the early days, even when He was talking. When Baba would come to Bombay and visit our house, I would see Him one day before He would come to visit—every time.” In those early years, our family would not be told that Baba was coming to visit. He would just show up, and we rarely knew ahead of time. But I would see Him in a vision the day before. He would be sitting in a chair in our house. The vision would last for a little while and then be gone. The first time it happened, I didn’t pay any attention to it. But the second time, I realized, “Oh, I saw Baba in the vision, and then He came.” After that, whenever I saw Baba in a vision, I would know that He was coming to visit us.



Khorshed Irani



After the Last Darshan finished at Guruprasad in June 1969, I returned to our flat in Tafti Mansion (previously called Irani Mansion) in Bombay to take care of my mother. Her health kept getting worse for the next few years. Baba had told my mother, "Remember, when your dying hour comes, you should take My name, and then you will come to Me. You should not think of Khorshed or call out her name. You should think of Me, and I can help you. But if you think of Khorshed and call her name, you won't remember Me. So try from now on to take My name always, so that at the time you breathe your last, you won't forget Me."

After that, my mother took Baba's name continually. All the time, her lips moved: "Baba, Baba, Baba." I was always near my mother



*Khorshed and
Soonamasi, Poona,
late 1960s*

in her final days, so I know she was taking Baba's name. She did not think of me; she thought of Baba. She always took Baba's name. Then, just one day before she died, my mother became unable to talk at all. Her voice stopped. I wondered if she would be able to say Baba's name with her last breath, as Baba had told her. Then, just at midnight, she suddenly called out loudly, "MEHER BABA!" She shouted Baba's name so loudly that I thought she would start speaking again. But she died on the spot—at that very moment. My mother died on her birthday in the bedroom of our flat in Bombay on April 3, 1973. She was seventy-nine years old.

Epilogue

Following Soona's death, Khorshed continued to live in her flat in Bombay, where she often hosted Baba lovers who had recently arrived on pilgrimage to Meherabad. During these years, Khorshed travelled on numerous occasions to Meherabad to take darshan at Meher Baba's Samadhi, to attend special celebrations, and to visit Mehera and the other women at Meherazad. Then, in 1981, Khorshed moved to Khushru Quarters, the family home of her cousin Adi K. Irani, in Ahmednagar. This compound, now known as Meher Nazar, houses the offices of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust. Khorshed lived in two small rooms with her adopted family of Sudam and Asha Wagh and their two daughters. There, she continued to spend time with Mehera and the other women at Meherazad during the remaining years of her life. She would also meet with Mani and Eruch each day that they came to work in the Trust Office.



Outside Khorshed's room at the Avatar Meher Baba Trust Office, now known as Meher Nazar, Ahmednagar, mid-1970s

After my mother died and I was living at the Trust Office, I had a dream of Baba. I was fast asleep in my room. In my dream, many people had come and they said to me, “Khorshed, we have all come to sing Meher Baba’s arti with you. So, please, would you sing with us?”

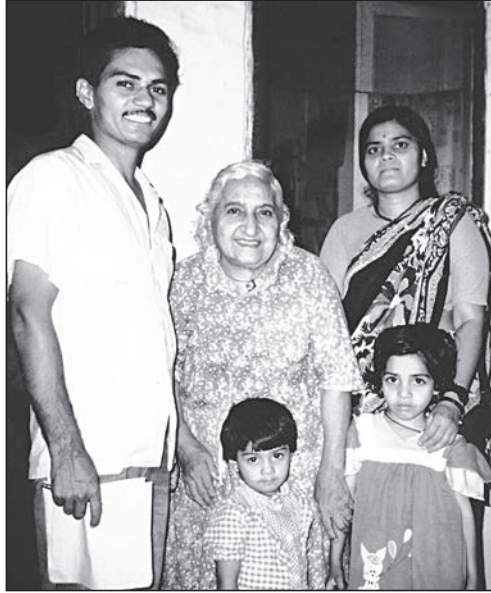
All kinds of people were there—Hindus and Muslims and many others. They all had come with their photos of different faces of God. And they all wanted to sing arti, and have me sing with them. So I felt very happy. I thought, “Oh, they are all coming for Baba’s arti—all kinds of people.” I was very, very happy and replied, “Yes. I will sing with you and we will all sing Baba’s arti together.”

And, you know, Baba was sitting there, to the side. He didn’t say anything. He was just watching. All the people were there, so I began singing Baba’s Gujarati Arti, and everyone else sang along. But I was asleep. I mean, I dreamt I was awake, but I was really sleeping.

So I began to sing very loudly even though I was asleep. In my dream, all the people were singing with me. When we finished the arti, we said seven times, “Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!” All the people were standing there and saying it with me, so loudly. Asha, who was living with me and sleeping nearby, actually heard me singing.

But she didn't interfere. After I finished, I told the people in my dream, "Oh, Baba is here, so come and bring garlands." So they all came and offered their garlands to Baba. Then they told me, "We are so happy that you did Baba's arti with us." And again they said, "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai, Jai, Jai!" so loudly! Then they all left.

In the morning, Asha asked me, "Khorshed, what were you doing last night? I replied, "I had a dream. I don't know what I did," because I didn't wake up or anything. Then Asha told me that I had been singing Baba's arti out very loudly while I was asleep. We all laughed.

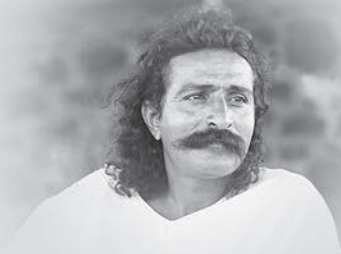


Khorshed with her adopted family: Sudam and Asha Wagh and their two daughters, Mira and Darshana, Meher Baba Trust Office, Ahmednagar



Khorshed in the 1970s

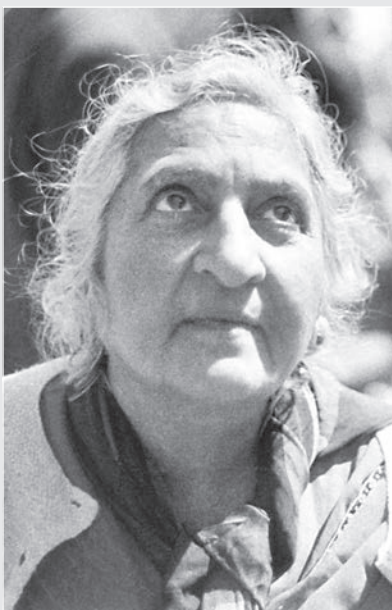




For the next two decades, in her small room in the Trust Office, Khorshed would greet the many pilgrims who came for Meher Baba's darshan. She would regale them with stories of her life with Meher Baba and would encourage each of them to love and remember Him. Although her mobility and eyesight gradually became more limited, every day she would teach the young children who lived in the Trust Compound to sing Baba's arti and recite the prayers that He had given. Khorshed continued to share her joyful love of Meher Baba with all who came, until she passed away in her room at Meher Nazar at the age of 89 on August 4, 1999. Khorshed's ashes were interred at Upper Meherabad on the right side of Meher Baba's Samadhi, as He had instructed years before in His Trust Deed.



Photos of Khorshed in her later years



(top) Khorshed in Meherabad, 1975. (bottom left) Khorshed at Baba's Amartithi, Upper Meherabad, January 1976.
(bottom right) Khorshed sitting in front of Baba's house at Meherazad in the 1970s.

*Mehera and
Khorshed at a
Baba celebration
at Meherazad*



*Khorshed with Mehera,
Mani, Naja, and Goher
enjoying a performance
at Meherazad*



*Khorshed with
Mehera on the porch
of Baba's house at
Meherazad*





*Naja and Khorshed
in the Meherazad
garden*



*Mani and Khorshed
in Khorshed's room
at the Trust Office,
Ahmednagar*



*Goher, Meheru, Mani, Khorshed, Katie, and Arnavaz in front of Khorshed's room
at the Meher Baba Trust Office in Ahmednagar, late 1980s*

Appendix

CORRESPONDENCE WITH BELOVED BABA

This appendix contains a few of the letters sent to Khorshed and her parents by Beloved Baba. The correspondence spans from the early 1920s through 1962.

- 1. The following are two undated letters, signed “Merwan,” and written in Gujarati in Baba’s own handwriting.**

Dear Masaji Kaikhushroo and Masi Soonamai,

Received your letter. Read its contents. My Nazar is eternally on you. Masaji, do not be worried in the least about any matter. Know that I am there only with you and keeping faith in God every moment do live in His remembrance.

Merwan

Dear Soona Masi,

Please be advised that until Kaikhushroo Masa's health improves, you should keep Khorshed there in Bombay and when Masaji improves, please come and meet Me so that I will clarify everything. Until Masa gets well, keep Khorshed there only. Do not worry at all about any matter.

Merwan

2. Letter from Chanji to Kaikhushru

Meherabad

July 8, 1927

Pious, long-lived, compassionate Masaji Kaikhushru Saheeb, Shri Baba Saheeb has received your letter. In reply, Shri Baba has given me permission to write and inform you that you should not worry about anything. You should remain happy, keeping your mind quiet. Shri Baba Saheeb's compassionate sight and blessings are on you.

When you were here [in Meherabad] last Sunday, on that day only, fourteen boys from Iran had come under the charge of Agha Baidul: 2 Moguls and 12 Zoroastrians. Thereafter, on the next day 6 moguls had come from Bombay. Among these, there were two teachers—but they know the Persian subject well and the rest were boys. For all these boys, the Persian class of Hazrat Baba Jan High School had already started yesterday, auspicious Thursday, 7th July—Please make a note of this. . . .

Please convey Shriji's blessings to Soonamai Masiji and the household along with the good wishes of the mandali and you yourself also please do accept the same.

We had received two snuff boxes sent by you.

*Written with the permission of Shri Baba Saheb,
Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji's salutations.*

3. Letter from Chanji to Soonamasi

Meherabad

July 8, 1927

Pious Long-lived Masiji Soonamai,

Received your letter to Shri Baba Saheb. Have read it and have noted all its contents.

Padri will be coming over to your place in two to three days. Till then, please do not worry about anything. As in the past keeping your mind quiet, remain happy and contented. Baba Saheb's nazar and blessings are on you.

Please convey Shri Baba Saheb's blessings to Kaikhushroo Masaji along with the salutations of the entire Mandali.

That's all.

Written with the permission of Shri Baba Saheb

Framroze H. Dadachanji's good wishes.

**4. Letter from Chanji to Kaikhushru and Soonamasi
Meherabad
September 14, 1927**

*Pious Long-Lived Dear Masiji Soonamai and Masiji
Kaikhushroo,*

*Shri Baba Saheb has received your letter and has read its
contents.*

*In reply, I have been permitted to write to advise you that
Hormuzd [the husband of Pilamai Irani of Karachi] should be
sent here, accompanied by anyone coming over this side [to
Meherabad]. Similarly, the photos and other things sent by
Pillamai from Karachi should also be sent along with that
person.*

*Please do not worry about Masaji's health and also inform
him not to worry. Shri Baba Saheb's full blessings are on you
all. There is absolutely no cause or reason for worrying.*

*We also, on today's auspicious day, wish you "Khordaad-
saal Mubarrak" [a form of greeting on the birthday of Lord
Zoroaster] and from this sacred place earnestly pray to Lord
Ahuramazda to keep you, husband and wife, most happy
physically, mentally and materially and shower the gift of
the priceless benefit of Satsang [company of saints]. Amen!*

*Our good wishes and salutations to you and Masaji Saheb
from the circle of devotees! Amen.*

May Baba Saheb's blessings descend on you!

Written with the permission of Baba Saheb,

Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji's good wishes.

5. Letter from Chanji to Kaikhushru

Meherabad

September 25, 1927

Pious Long-Lived Dear Masaji Kaikhushroo,

Received your letter written to Shri Baba Saheb. Noted its contents.

In reply, Baba Saheb has given permission to write and advise you that you should eat one fresh rose every day [meaning, its petals] and apply the ashes sent along with this letter. Further, you should not worry at all about any other matter. Please know that Baba Saheb's compassionate grace [Mehernazar] and blessings are always on you all in the family.

Please convey to Soonamasi ours and the mandali's good wishes and salutations.

Shriji's blessings for you (personally).

Written with the permission of Shri Baba Saheb,

Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji's good wishes and salutations

6. Letter from Chanji to Soonamasi

Meherabad

October 8, 1927

Pious Long-Lived Dear Masiji Soonamai,

Received your letter to Shri Baba Saheb and thereafter also received the parcel [sent by you].

Please do not worry about Masaji's health or about any other matter. Baba Saheb's compassionate nazar and blessings are eternally on you all. Everything will turn out fine.

Shriji's blessings for you!

Please keep us informed of any newsworthy matter. That's all.

Written with the permission of Shriji,

Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji's good wishes.

7. Letter from Chanji to Kaikhushru and Soonamasi

Meherabad

November 13, 1927

Pious Long-Lived Dear Masaji Kaikhushroo and Masiji Soonamai,

Shri Baba Saheb has received from your side the letter written by Masaji. Baba Saheb is extremely happy that you, Masaji, are coming over here. Definitely do come.

Do not worry. Shriji's compassionate nazar and blessings are on you.

Further, when you come, please bring definitely the following things for Gustadji:

- 1. 6 dozen jam puffs*
- 2. 1 box of salted biscuits*
- 3. ½ box of ghanthia*
- 4. 5 ¼ box of sev*
- 5. 5 ¼ box of bhajian and patrell*
- 6. 1 roll (taako) of fine “cend” cloth for stitching
Gustadji’s clothes as sent previously—English*
- 7. 1 roll (taako) of fine sarbati muslin cloth.*

In addition, please bring as always, using your discretion, prasad for the Ashram boys here and the mandali.

That’s all.

Written with the permission of Shri Baba Saheb,

Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji’s good wishes.

8. Letter from Chanji to Kaikhushru

Meherabad

November 18, 1927

Pious Long-Lived Masaji Kaikhushroo,

Received both the letters of you to Saheb.

With respect to the house-matter, please be advised that I have just written to you through Mother Gulmai; accordingly, you should either give it [unspecified] to Rustom Dinyaar, or

to Rustom of your shop. Baba Saheb has given permission to make arrangements as you deem fit; as per that please do the needful.

Please do not worry about your health. It will get well and please do come here soon. Baba Saheb's compassionate nazar and blessings are there. Your health will get well—do know this.

That's all. Good wishes and salutations to everyone in the household.

*Written with the permission of Shri Baba Saheb,
Brother Framroze H. Dadachanji's good wishes.*

9. Letter from Meher Baba to Soonamasi, Khorshed, and other close ones

Ahmednagar

June 15, 1948

This letter was written specifically at the behest of Shri Baba Himself. Copy sent to Soona Masi, Khorshed's mother.

I, whom you all believe to be the Avatar, in this birth, have never gotten trapped under such difficult and helpless circumstances as I have experienced in Gujarat during the mast-work from 7th to 15th, June 1948.

In my search for my masts the experience of sleepless nights and exhausting journeys is not new to Me and the mandali, but the experience of being put under such helpless situations

was entirely new to all. Once, some incited Hindus had launched an attack on Gustadji after misunderstanding him to be involved in a plot to murder a Hindu boy. At the time of the attack, I and Gustadji [both silent] were all alone and Gustadji was saved from injury in a critical manner.

Another time, some Bania [caste] passenger falsely accused Baidul and Eruch although they were innocent; laughed at them, jibed at them and insulted them and presented them before the police. The police came to their rescue and prevented injustice from being done to them.

As if all these were half the difficulties, the full measure came in the Bulsar district where the nearby railway bridge had collapsed due to torrential rains and our train was held up at the station. We were trapped inside the crowded bogie and could neither get out to take a breath of fresh air due to the heavy rains, nor could we stretch our legs inside our third class compartment. All around it was a sea of water. We sat huddled together continuously for 12 hours amidst the typically crowded train's-crush in India.

Now in the month of June 1948 all these specific incidents on this mast trip which had not occurred on any other previous mast-trips and the difficulties that befell the Avatar Himself, and so on, will find their reflection (re-echo) in the whole world and in the future, will result in my being placed in some kind of a unique difficulty. All this had happened before the 21st of June, 1948. All the present obvious incidents relating to the breaking of the truce between India and

(Pakistan) Hyderabad plus other world incidents that have occurred—all these will be reflected after 21st June, 1948 in certain definite results occurring in the world.

That is why, I am telling you all to stick close to me, faithfully, and pass over this critical point in time.

**10. Letters to Meher Baba from Khorshed, Soonamasi, and
Bahadur Harkan
Bombay
December 11, 1956**

[Bahadur Harkan had been helping Baba with His mast-ashram work and had been sent by Baba to assist Khorshed's family.]

December 11, 1956

Cumballa Hill, Warden Road

My Most Dearest King of Hearts Meher Baba,

With affection, with my heart's deepest, truest love, I offer everything at your feet.

Closing this letter with love, I am,

*Yours only,
Khorshed*

My Most Loving Baba,

With my heart's truest love, I offer absolutely everything at your feet.

With your love filled memory, I am dispatching this letter.

Yours,

Masi Soona

In worshipful, pure, Avatar Meher Baba's service, servant Bahadur Harkhan offers salutations with love.

I am present in your service.

Your slave at your feet,

Servant Bahadur Harkhan

11. Letter from Eruch to Khorshed

Meherabad

January 10, 1961

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

My dear Khorshed,

Yesterday, "New Life" Baba inquired as to what were His wishes during the "New Life" in case He dropped His body and Mehera survived Him?

I replied that at the time of the "New Life" He had wished that Mani, Goher, and Meheroo should continue to live with Mehera as long as Mehera survived.

Hearing this, Baba informed me that He had already told the women now living at Mehrazad that in case Mehera survived after He dropped His body—which may not at all happen—then Mani, Goher, Meheroo, Naja and Rano should continue as far as possible to live together with Mehera, whether Mehera stayed in Meherazad or on Meherabad Hill.

Baba wants me to let you know this, and hence this letter to you.

Baba further wants me to let you know that with the rest of the women then living with Mehera, Baba also wishes you to stay as far as possible with Mehera as long as she lives and wherever she prefers to live—Meherazad or Meherabad Hill.

Baba wants you to keep this strictly confidential and you are asked not to mention anything of this to Mehera if you happen to visit Meherazad or Guruprasad in near future.

Baba also wants that you do NOT inform even Soonamasi about this at this stage. When the time comes, what Baba wants you to do before you join Mehera, is that you should first try to settle your mother in Bombay at some of your relatives' and then come to stay with Mehera—of course, only IF and when such occasion arises. If at that time no arrangement can be made for Soonamasi at your relatives' place in Bombay, then Baba permits you to also bring Soonamasi with you to stay near Mehera.

Baba wants you to write an acknowledgement to this letter addressed to Mani or to Goher, but NOT to Mehera.

Baba does not want you to feel in the least worried over anything untoward happening, for nothing is going to happen that is beyond the knowledge of your Beloved Baba. Baba's health is steadily improving and He sends His LOVE to you.

Yours lovingly,

Eruch

P.S. Baba expressly wants me to add in this letter that Baba says: [translated from Gujarati] "Don't think useless thoughts. You all will expire at the proper time before Baba. This is Baba's wish, expressed by him after some topic came up."

12. Letter from Khorshed to Baba

Umrigar Mansion, Warden Road, Bombay

January 16, 1961

My most Beloved Baba,

I received your loving letter by dear Eruch, on the 14th evening.

My dear Baba, your Khorshed will fulfill your wish by her loving heart. Khorshed will do her best what you want her to do by any cost.

Khorshed will stay with Mehera as long as she lives and wherever she prefers to live. Khorshed will do her best to please Mehera. Only she felt sorry because there was written in your letter—of course, "If and when such occasion

arises." Khorshed is sorry that it is not certain to stay with you and be in your loving company in the present time. Long before, I had decided whenever anything happens to my loved one, I will wish myself to die soon after you. I prefer to die in your hand; what a good fortune if I do. I do not like the very idea that you would drop your body before mine.

Masi is eager to drop her body at your beloved feet. She told me once that a bird died and Beloved Baba buried it. That time, Masi said to Baba, "I also want to be buried by your beloved's hands." And Baba said, "Yes." So she always thinks about it.

She is very fond of Meherabad and often says to me that she wants to die there. I do not think to keep her with any of my relatives because she hates Bombay. But if you want me to do that I will do but it will be hard on her. I am not feeling good to hear you talking about you dropping the body so soon.

I feel deep down in my heart for you even though I have to go to Navsari. I will attend the marriage to give the present. I have arranged to go.

My loving kisses to you, my King of Hearts. Please, don't misunderstand with this letter. And, please don't keep me in the dark. I haven't said a word to Masi about your letter. I will keep all that to myself. Please send me an answer to this letter so I know you got it safely.

Yours ever loving,
Khorshed

13. Letter from Eruch to Khorshed

Meherazad

January 18, 1961

My dear Khorshed,

Your very loving letter to Beloved Baba was read by me to Him.

Beloved Baba wants me to convey to you that all what you wrote has made Him very happy in Seclusion. He wants you NOT to feel worried.

Baba wants me to convey you His love,

Yours lovingly,

Eruch

Beloved Baba sends His love to His dear Soonamasi

P.S.—My Dear Khorshed,

This is just for your information that the letter you wrote to Baba was addressed to dear Mani and Baba has made me give it back to her for safe keeping after He asked me to read it out to Him.

Baba's health is getting better day after day and there is no cause for any worry.

Eruch

LIST OF CREDITS

Images (photos and maps) on the following pages are reproduced with permission.

MEHER NAZAR PUBLICATIONS: cover, title page, pages 2, 8, 9, 19, 23 (top), 23 (bottom), 26, 29, 37, 38, 40, 41, 49 (five detail portraits), 53, 60, 64, 64–65, 68 (top), 68 (bottom), 76 (top), 76 (bottom), 87, 88, 92, 109, 117, 121, 129 (top), 129 (bottom), 131, 153, 154, 156, 158, 169, 171, 176–77, 178, 179, 181, 183, 190 (top), 190 (bottom), 191, 207, 211, 215, 219, 223 (top), 223 (bottom), 224 (top), 224 (bottom), 225, 227, 228, 231, 235, 251 (top), 252, 254, 262 (top), 262 (bottom), 263 (top), 263 (bottom), 265, 271, 274 (top), 274 (bottom), 275 (top), 275 (bottom), 276 (bottom), 278 (top), 278 (bottom), 284, 285 (top), 286 (top), 286 (bottom), 287, 288 (top), 289, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 303, 308, 320 (top), 320 (bottom), 326, 327, 332, 333, 339 (top), 339 (bottom), 342, 348, 349, 351, 358, 359, 368, 369, 379, 380, 383 (top), 388, 389 (top), 390, 391 (top), 391 (bottom).

MSI COLLECTION: back cover, pages 39, 77 (top), 77 (bottom), 147 (top), 162, 166, 185, 234, 238 (top), 238 (bottom), 239, 240, 243, 250 (top), 250 (bottom), 251 (bottom), 253, 256, 257, 258, 269, 270, 274 (middle), 276 (top), 277, 279, 281, 282, 283, 285 (middle), 285 (bottom), 290, 306, 325, 353.

FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF DAVID RAFFO AND SUDAM WAGH (photographers unknown): pages 309, 364, 383 (bottom), 385, 393 (top), 393 (bottom), 394.

SUSAN WHITE: pages 384, 389 (bottom), 391 (bottom right), 392 (top), 392 (middle), 392 (bottom).

ELIZABETH CHAPIN PATTERSON PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVES (ECPA): page 272.

AMBPPCT ARCHIVES: pages 144, 229, 230 (top), 230 (bottom).

WILLIAM THOMAS FEE, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC: page 10.

SHERIAR FOUNDATION: maps on pages 291, 299, 302.

TED JUDSON: pages 124, 147 (bottom).