

From Baily's Memoirs

by Baily Jamshed Irani

An Avatar Meher Baba Trust eBook

Copyright © 1967 Avatar Meher Baba Trust

Source: From Baily's Memoirs

Published in 1967 by the Society in West Bengal for Avatar Meher Baba

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.

FROM BAILY'S MEMOIRS



CONTENT

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. SELF-INTRODUCTION BY BAILY	4
3. EXPOUNDING MEHER'S GREATNESS	5
4. THE PICKLE, THAT WAS NOT	8
5. MERWAN TESTED	10
6. WHEN MERWAN ALMOST JOINED THE SERVICES	13
7. STRANGE PRACTICE	16
8. FIRST PHOTOGRAPH AFTER GOD-REALIZATION	17
9. LIFE AT THE <i>JHOPDI</i>	18
10. FIRST BIRTHDAY AT THE <i>JHOPDI</i>	22
11. AN OBSTINATE IRANI MERCHANT	25
12. RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE?	29
13. THEIR DREAMS SHATTERED	31
14. "NOW LEAVE FROM HERE"	33
15. A VERY PIOUS TASK	36
16. PECULIAR ORDER	39
17. FIRST PHOTOGRAPH WITH A SINGLE PERSON	40
18. BABA'S DARK SECRETS	41
19. SOMA HAS COME TO ME	46

INTRODUCTION

Baily Jamshed Irani was amongst the early followers of Avatar Meher Baba. He was Baba's childhood friend, born in the same hospital and ward a few days after Baba's birth. He resided in the near-by vicinity to Baba and studied in the same school. He was very intimately associated with Baba in the early days prior to Baba's unveiling as the Avatar by Hazrat Babajan, and also a few years thereafter.

By nature Baily was arrogant, headstrong and argumentative. He was slothful and savored a lifestyle that was not in conformity with Baba's pure character and His teachings. Hence, time and again, Baily was in and out of Baba's circle of disciples, of his own volition. He had a jagged personal life which saw many sharp ups and downs both socially and financially. Towards the end of his life, having apparently severed all external associations and connections with Baba, he stayed in an old-age home in Hyderabad. In 1965, at the ripe age of 71, he wrote his memoirs in a unique stylized Gujarati contained in six handwritten notebooks in which was included his reminiscences of the early days spent with Baba.

Late Dr. Hoshang Bharucha of Navsari had been in touch with Baily to whom he seems to have handed over his original manuscripts. Dr. Bharucha, in turn, gave them to Eruch Buhariwala, also of Navsari. Purely out of curiosity and interest to know its contents, Eruch thumbed through the manuscripts and was enthused to translate it into English. He approached Cyrus Khambata of Mumbai for assistance in translating these handwritten notebooks into English. Both sat studiously for hours together and days on end during Eruch's visits to Mumbai. For health reasons, when Eruch could not visit Mumbai for a considerably long period of time, Cyrus enrolled Late Kishore Mistry's assistance in the project. After Kishore's demise, assistance was sought from his younger brother Rajnikant Mistry of Surat to complete the work. The whole process of rough unedited translation took more than a decade. The Avatar Meher Baba Bombay Centre is thankful to all of them.

It may be pertinent to inform the reader that the translation was far from easy – the handwriting was illegible and undecipherable at places. It included phrases and idioms which are not in usage in this day and time. A single sentence would run into pages without punctuations or paragraphs, portraying minute details of the event. There were repetitions in the sense that a single thought would be repeated and rephrased with the use of different words, there were inconsistencies, obvious overstatements and apparent factual errors. The flow of thoughts was incoherent at times, shifting from one subject matter to another and from one period of time to another. All these required editorial incorporations and corrections, at places. However, Baily's writing style has been retained to a certain extent during translation, even at the cost of grammar. Editor's additional inputs are in brackets.

Since these diaries were written several decades after the occurrence of the actual incidents, the possibility of errors and inaccuracies creeping in cannot be ruled out. Hence the authenticity of facts contained in the document is not verified. Also, since some of the episodes have already appeared in earlier publications such as *Lord Meher* and *Glow International* etc., it is likely that Baily may have written his memoirs twice. We have included some of them in this brochure, where supplementary material is available, which at places differ from the already published material.

A question may therefore arise as to why this publication when Baily, by his own admission, was not an exemplary disciple, and the authenticity of these writings is also unconfirmed. Our answer would be - for the sheer beauty with which Baily highlights his childhood Companion's purity of character right from His younger days; and it also makes interesting reading unearthing some of the hitherto unknown episodes in Beloved Baba's early life.

Only selective episodes having a bearing on Baba have been included.

Copyrights of the photographs used in this brochure lie with the respective copyright holders.

This brochure is published in commemoration of Beloved Baba's 124th Birth Anniversary on 25th February 2018.

Avatar Meher Baba Perpetual Public Charitable Trust, Ahmednagar, India are the copyright owners of the material published herein.

Hoshang M. Dadachanji
President
Avatar Meher Baba Bombay Centre

SELF-INTRODUCTION BY BAILY



I am not only the sole living childhood companion of God-Realized and today's world-famous and renowned *Zarathosti* Avatar Meher Baba, but also His companion from birth. Having undergone the sting of separation and now in the sunset years of my life at the old age of 71 years I place before you my reminiscences. I know and I believe in my heart and I have faith and my every moment's experience proves that Baba is not away from me, He is not separate from me, but He is near me and with me day and night and whatever help I need, He provides me in unseen ways and I know this will continue in the future too. Amin.

To write a Gujarati life-sketch of my *Param Pujya Guru* and to publish the same was at my heart for years together. However, it was not in my destiny to offer this service to Him and that is my bad luck. Owing to various circumstances and reasons, I have not been able to fulfill this desire in spite of a lapse of several years.

By my declaration and confession nobody should misunderstand my motive that I am trying to present myself as a great writer, because my education was only up to Class 4 in both English and Gujarati. Hence my inspiration to write the life sketch is not for any name or fame. However, I have been fortunate to have been given the opportunity to write two books on Baba's *Param Pujya* late *Guru* Shri Upasani Maharaj's life in Gujarati. This was possible only because of the blessings of my *Pujya Guru* Meher Baba and I am thankful to Him for that. It was only because of Baba's assistance, His grace, His encouragement, His persuasion that I could complete this great work and I consider myself fortunate for that.

Let there be no doubt or two opinions about the fact that the state I am in today is only because of Baba. At this point I am not writing my life story. What I am and who I am, my arrogant nature etc. have already been informed to my readers in the preface of my Gujarati book, *Sakorina Sadguru*. If I were to write my life sketch, it would be a huge and unusual volume.

In the beginning of this passage I had declared myself as Baba's companion from birth. That is because I was born in the same ward, on the same fortunate bed, under the same surgeon and the same loving and caring nurse in the famous Sassoon Hospital in the city of Poona. We were born a few days apart. I was born on the auspicious early hours of *Jamshed-E-Navroz* [Zoroastrian New Year] on 21st March [1894] and have thus seen the first light of the universe in the early hours of that auspicious day. And everyone knows that Baba was a few days elder to me.

EXPOUNDING MEHER'S GREATNESS

We were poles apart in all respects, *aasmaan jameen no farak* [as varied as the sky and the earth]. There are two aspects of *Paramatma* – *Spentamenu* and *Angremenu* [good and evil spirits]. Baba is a *Farishta* [Angel] and I am Satan. That is, good and evil spirits were both born on this earth. To declare this is no exaggeration.

A saying goes, “A man’s greatness is known from the cradle.” It holds true for Baba. Since childhood His actions and thoughts were so *pavitra ane paak* [holy and pure] that it would radiate and everyone around Him would continuously feel so, in His presence. Young children, howsoever disrespectful and misbehaved they may be otherwise, would naturally behave well and respectfully in His presence, and I being one of them, would always give full respect and never dare to utter a single bad word in His presence although I was known to be *badmaash ane buraa* [scoundrel and nasty].

A cheerful and lively atmosphere prevailed around His presence with laughter, fun, *gappa-sappa* [banter and gossip], jokes etc. of innocent nature. If mistakenly or unconsciously any of us were to utter bad words or use foul language in His presence, He would sternly warn the concerned person in a manner that he would never dare to repeat such a behavior. If compelled by habit, one were to disobey Baba’s instruction, that person would be kept away from Him and others would be instructed not to mix with him.

In this connection it would be pertinent to narrate an incident: After achieving God-Realization, Baba once came to Bombay and stayed for a few days in the bungalow of a high ranking Muslim official of Bombay Reclamation Scheme [Munshi Rahim]. This staunch disciple of Baba had won our hearts as well as that of Baba’s. One morning Baba was busy with His lovers who had come to visit Him. We, a few of His mandali and other elders, were a furlong away from Baba and talking aimlessly drifting to the indecent. Before the talk could gather heat, one of Baba’s mandali-disciples came running towards us with a message from Baba, “Stop this nonsensical talk at once and feel ashamed for talking thus. If you have nothing else to talk other than such nonsense, you all leave this place at once and never show your faces to Me again.” We were startled, for that was the best example of Baba’s omnipresence and omniscience we experienced, less said of the mental state we were in at that point.

From childhood Baba was addressed as “Meher” by all and He was known and became famous by this auspicious name. Mirth and joy shone on His beautiful and attractive face. It is impossible to express in words the magical charm of His *madhbhari mastaan* [rapturous and intoxicating] eyes. His strong, short-statured body, broad shoulders and loving melodious voice stole the hearts and minds of all at their very first sight of Him.

One noteworthy aspect of Meher is that He never favoured any religion, caste or creed from His childhood. He would write poems and *shairees* on the theme that all are from one God. He would always advise others to stay away from criticizing other religions and respect all religions as one’s own.

He was as much fond of writing poems, as He was of reading. He mostly read English novels – not the romantic or love stories. He loved and enjoyed reading detective novels. In those days a monthly detective magazine of Sexton Blake with interesting stories was being published. Meher was a regular subscriber and reader of the magazine and would coax others to read them too. He would retain the old issues of the magazine and willingly lend them to others, thereby inculcating in them the habit of reading. The little English that I know today is because of Meher's constant encouragement and coaxing. I am thankful to Him for that and I state this without hesitation.

I remember one day during lunch break He handed me a magazine of Sexton Blake and said, "Baily, you must read this. It is one of the best detective stories. You will surely like it." At that time I was studying class 4 English. Let alone reading, I could not converse well in English. Hearing Meher's request made me feel that He was having fun at my cost so I laughed and told Him, "Who else would joke with me, but You?" But Meher was not the one to keep shut. He continued to pressurize and coerce me and kept telling me to read the entire magazine. He insisted that I continue to read the magazine whether I understood or not and assured that in the end I will understand it all. All my efforts to make Him understand my plight went in vain. I was helpless and promised to do His bidding. After I gave Him my word He was very happy and patted my back lovingly.

During that period I was very fond of reading Gujarati books which I would read till late in the night. At times I would not lay the book aside until early morning. I started reading this detective magazine during the daytime as and when time permitted, but I could not understand anything nor was I interested in it at all. But since I had given my word to Meher I had no alternative but to read it. Finally, with a lot of boredom, I completed the reading and returned the magazine to Him.

Meher asked for my opinion enquiring if I liked His favourite magazine and whether I got the essence of the story. I truthfully replied that it was a waste of my time and that I could not grasp anything out of it. He laughed at me gleefully and said that one day I would surely understand everything, and assured that after that I would never read Gujarati magazines. Today, His words ring true. All my close ones can also vouch for that. I have given up reading Gujarati books from youth and except for English books, I have no inclination or desire to read any other books. Regular reading of Sexton Blake's detective novels really developed my interest in reading English.

Greatly appreciating the author of Sexton Blake, Meher once wrote a beautiful long letter to him appreciating his work and blessing him with success throughout his life and career. This letter was posted at the London address. In a subsequent issue, this entire letter got published. This was the first time that Meher's writing got published. Thereafter, a few of Meher's articles written under the pen name of "Huma" in English and Gujarati languages on various subjects got published in various newspapers. These articles were well appreciated. Similarly, His poems, *shairees*, and *ghazals* written in English, Gujarati, Persian, Urdu and Hindi under the pen name Huma were also greatly appreciated.

A favourite Gujarati daily newspaper published from Bombay, *Saanj Vartamaan*, unfailingly carried His article in their Saturday issue and I was the one to write it out and deliver it on time to the newspaper's office. If for any reason there was a delay, we would promptly receive the publisher's caring letter of enquiry. Meher's *Farsi* poems were written in Gujarati script. Once in a way, I would also write poems in 'bhaageloo' [unpolished] Gujarati and pass it on to the publishers for being published under the name "Baily." Owing to shortage of space, the publisher could publish only one poem and hence when my poem was published, Huma's would be left out.

Meher encouraged me to write *ghazals* and poetry in the same manner in which He created my interest for reading English. When He tried to initiate me into this art form of writing, initially I resisted by telling Him off in a rough tone that He should not do *magaj maari* [chew my brains]. But Merwan was not the one to take my rebuff lying down. He cleverly caught my interest by saying something very pleasing and agreeable to my ears; "Baily," He said, "My desire is that we both should write Gujarati poetry and have them published in *Saanj Vartamaan* in our joint names. What do you think of the idea?" Surprised and taken aback by His proposal, I enquired how that would be possible. He explained, "I will write the first line of the poem and you have to complete the second line with proper sense. Then I'll write the third and you the fourth. In this manner, we should complete the entire poem in twelve lines. You must make an attempt with concentration and enthusiasm and gradually you will be able to start writing on different subjects. I will help you in the beginning so that you may be able to grasp it and will not find it difficult. That much I can give *khaatri* [assurance] to you."

He stood by His assurance and our first poem got published in *Saanj Vartamaan*. Of course, He did make corrections in each of my lines and also gave me proper explanation about the same. After that experience, I wrote a poem entitled *Mohabat* [Love], and placed it before Merwan. He made several corrections after which it was submitted and got published in *Saanj Vartamaan* I was overjoyed to see my poem published and after that I independently began composing many *ghazals* and poems. However, I must admit my *ghazals* and poems were nowhere in comparison to those of Meher, which were heart-stirring, enlightening and attractive, touching the minds and hearts of the readers, such that they would sway in ecstasy. I have only Merwan to thank for the little that I could write.

All such published and unpublished works in large quantity were in the possession of Meher's elder brother Jamshed, who was popularly known as "Jam" in his childhood. After Jamshed, it passed onto his wife's custody and thereafter it came into my possession. Later on, during my extensive traveling or my final separation from Baba in Meherabad through displeasure, I left behind all my belongings there and I do not know till date who has taken custody of it or where they have gone. Baba Himself expressed ignorance about its whereabouts to me. And so the treasure of Meher's best works of His youth remains a mystery and I am still shocked about it. As He wishes. All that has happened is as per His wish and His wish is fulfilled. That is the only solace and there is no other alternative.

THE PICKLE, THAT WAS NOT



Jamshed S. Irani

Merwan's elder brother, late Jamshed Irani, at one time served as a clerk in the Municipal Office in Bombay and was residing alone in a rented *chawl* [rows of small cheap houses] in Byculla area. He was not comfortable living alone and would often complain about it. As a solution, Merwan suggested that every week the two of us should go to Bombay and give him company, spend a day with him and return to Poona the next day. Sunday was selected for this program. Every Saturday we would board the afternoon train from Poona reaching Bombay at 7:00 in the evening. Jamshed would be present at Byculla Railway Station and together in his company, we would reach his room, freshen ourselves up, relax awhile from the journey's exhaustion and then go to a hotel to have some food where each one would order whatever one liked. At times, we would visit plays or watch silent cinema shows. Sometimes we would travel, visiting various places by tram or train spending our time sightseeing and return late in the night. Next day being a Sunday, the three of us would enjoy the whole day till late in the evening. Catching the night train the same day [Sunday] we would reach home early next morning. This program continued for several months, and eventually Jamshed stopped complaining and paid full attention to his work.

During one such meeting at Bombay, we planned to have lunch at an Irani restaurant in Byculla. On the way, Jamshed's gaze fell upon one of the jars stored in a shop where pickles were sold. Jamshed was tempted to eat the pickle with his food and he expressed his desire to Merwan. Merwan did not like the idea, the main reason being Jamshed's ill-health. He was constantly complaining of burning in the chest and hence sour and spicy items were harmful for him. Also, the shop where the jars of pickles were stocked came across as a small, dilapidated, ill-kept store. Not only that, but the shop also looked unhygienic and filthy. The owner of the shop was also ill clad and looked untidy. Merwan drew the attention of his elder brother to all these points and asked him to give up the idea of buying pickles. Jamshed was adamant and started arguing. Merwan continued explaining his point and said that if Jamshed desired to have pickles, he should buy a known and established brand from a decent shop. Merwan then suggested that instead of having food at Byculla, they could purchase pickles from Dhobi Talao and have food there. But it was not acceptable to Jamshed.

At last Merwan reluctantly bought the pickles and they went to a cafe, ordered food and asked for a plate to empty the packet of pickle. Several dishes were ordered and served on the table. Before starting to eat, Jamshed hurriedly placed a slice of his favourite lime pickle in his own plate. He impatiently started slicing it with the help of a knife and fork but was not successful in doing so. Disappointed, he turned towards Merwan and said, "This pickle does not seem to be lime. Instead of being cut with a knife,

the knife itself is slipping. Why don't You try?" Saying this, he pushed the plate towards Merwan, who instead of slicing the pickle, lifted it with His two fingers and exclaimed, "Chee, chee" [dirty, filthy] and getting up from His seat said, "Instead of lime pickle, we have purchased rat pickle. Don't touch it." Saying this, He went to wash His hands. It is likely that a rat may have fallen in the open jar at the shop or it may have happened while preparing the pickles. One thing was certain that it was a rat and it was our good fortune that before any of us took a taste of this awful pickle, we could recognize what it really was.

None of us were in a mood to eat the served food and without eating anything we walked away after paying the full bill. Merwan informed the cashier sitting at the counter that the 'pickle' be thrown away. Not only that, but He asked the waiter not to touch the pickle but to throw it away in the garbage along with the plate. Merwan also paid for the plate. We then went to Charni Road and had our food in another cafe there. After this episode, Jamshed never ever brought the word 'pickle' on his tongue. Not only that, but from that day onwards, he never attempted to eat any such outside food item without Merwan's consent. Similarly Merwan and I also firmly resolved never to eat loose pickles available in the market and we follow that to this day.

MERWAN TESTED

Merwan always looked upon women with great respect and considered them as His mother or sister and would never tolerate any loose language concerning them. From a very young age we companions knew well about this trait. Even those who came into His casual contact realized this. That is why, one day a middle-aged Irani was determined to test Merwan and if possible force Him to have a physical relationship with a woman. This Irani was popularly known as “Kabuli.” He was one of the prominent *dadas* [ruffians] in the locality of Poona Cantonment. To have illicit relations with women seemed to be his birthright. Foul language was his main language. Apart from the few hours that he spent sleeping, he would remain intoxicated with liquor or toddy during his waking hours. Fighting and hooliganism seemed to be the sole purpose of his life. The Police Department was also fed up of him.

One morning around 11 o’ clock, engrossed in chatting and walking leisurely, Merwan and I were passing through a known area in Poona populated by Parsis. As luck would have it, just as we passed by the house of this Kabuli and were proceeding onwards, he saw us from his home and quickly coming to the door called out Merwan’s name. We stopped. He invited Merwan into his home, but Merwan excused Himself saying He was very busy and assured that He would visit him some time later. The man, however, insisted that Merwan come inside just for five minutes and listen to what he had to say.

Kabuli was completely drunk at that time. Merwan felt helpless and walked towards the door and standing outside, asked Kabuli to quickly convey what he had to say. But Kabuli insisted that Merwan came inside his home. Although sensing that all His efforts to convince Kabuli in this drunken state would be futile, Merwan repeated, “I will return and meet you in just about half an hour, wait till then, right now I have to leave.” Saying this He started walking away briskly. I too ran after Merwan and assumed that we had escaped this evil man. Just as we turned, we saw Kabuli running and staggering very close to us. Merwan tried to run, but before He could do so, He was caught between two one-horse driven tongas [carriage] coming from opposite directions. Avoiding being caught up between them, He tried to return quickly on to the road, but was caught by Kabuli who was standing right in front of Him. As the lane was very narrow and the tongas were very close, Merwan did not get a chance to run and got trapped.

Kabuli caught Him by the hand and took Him home. Merwan did not make any attempt to escape for He knew that it would be foolish knowing the type of bully Kabuli was. So instead, He now tried to tempt Kabuli by telling him that if he lets Him go, He would offer him a gift of 6 bottles of toddy and over and above that give him 8 *annas*. [A unit of currency formally used in India]. But this proved futile. Kabuli was heavily drunk and was not in proper state of mind and was irritated with Merwan’s behaviour. In that state of mind, staggering here and there, he at last dragged Merwan inside his home and ordered me not to enter his home but to go away from there.

As per Kabuli's orders I left from there but waited for Merwan a little distance away in the neighbourhood. I was deep in thoughts as to what step I should now take. If I were to run to Sheriarji's toddy shop and inform him about the whole incident, and if Sheriarji were to immediately rush to Merwan's assistance, I was sure Kabuli would not spare me. He would never allow me to go scot free and therefore that course was not safe for me. Ultimately I came to the conclusion that I should wait there for some more time. It was likely that Kabuli may have taken Merwan home for some confidential financial help and after the discussion Merwan would be allowed to go. Whatever it is, I must exercise patience, and so I waited.

Five, ten, fifteen minutes went by and I was beginning to lose my patience and started feeling uneasy and restless. Another five minutes and I stood up. I could not be patient any longer, but inform Sheriarji. I took a few steps and gave one last glance at Kabuli's home when I was overjoyed to see Merwan walking briskly towards me. When He came very close to me, He said, "Baily, hasten your steps, *Parvardigar* has saved Me today." I quietly followed Him and we reached the toddy shop.

On the way when I glanced at Merwan's face, He looked pale, but the moment He entered the shop and met His father, colour returned to His face and a kind of secret joy radiated. I was expecting Merwan to complain about Kabuli to His father, but He kept quiet as though nothing had happened. As per practice, Sheriarji soon left for home after handing over the charge of the shop to Merwan. It was only then that Merwan told me what had happened inside the house.

After Kabuli dragged Merwan to his home, He was very firmly and forcefully told to have physical relationship with a cheap type of prostitute who was in the adjoining room and if He did not comply, He would not be allowed to leave the place, come what may. Dragging Merwan to the room, Kabuli opened the door and sternly warned the prostitute who was waiting there not to open the door until after she has had sex with Merwan. Till then they should remain closeted. Saying this, he pushed Merwan into the room and left the place. Fortunately, this dark dungeon-like broken down room had no locking device either from the inside or from the outside.

Leaning against the door Merwan gazed at the prostitute's face with a calm, clean mind. No sooner the prostitute seductively advanced towards Merwan with a smiling face, than Merwan fell on His knees and placing His head at her feet spoke to her in Marathi, "Mother, I am your Son. Whatever you may be doing with others, but to Me you are My mother. Protect Me, and help this poor helpless child of yours and save Me. It is the duty of every mother to help her child. At this time, perform this duty of yours for which I shall ever be grateful to you."

Even though she was a prostitute, she had the tender heart of a woman. Although she was in a cheap profession, karmically she was kind-hearted. Asking Merwan to wait there, she went to the front room. Returning from there, she quickly asked Merwan to follow her. Accordingly, Merwan followed her light-footed and when they came to the

front room, He saw Kabuli lying on his huge bed with both hands and legs outstretched snoring in deep sleep. The lady stood at Kabuli's bed and with a smile signaled Merwan to leave quietly. Merwan thanked God with all His heart and joining both His hands, lifting it to His forehead He gestured a final *namaskar* [salutation] to this woman, who though being of low caste had a very good and kind heart. Merwan left the place very cautiously and heaving a deep sigh of relief came and met me. Merwan had strongly warned me not to disclose this to anyone.

[Elsewhere in the Memoirs, Baily has written that during a certain period of Baba's life, He retained only a few of His lovers with Him and the rest were allowed to lead their own lives, freeing them from whatever orders, instructions, promises, *kasams* [oaths] they were bound by. "I too, like many others, was released from all promises given to Baba and, therefore, whatever I felt like writing, my pen wrote freely in my memoirs. And I am thankful to Baba for that"].

The following evening Kabuli visited the toddy shop. Sheriarji was not present in the shop at that time. Seeing Merwan, Kabuli folded both his hands in greeting. It would not be wrong to assume that the kind of respect Kabuli paid to Merwan on this occasion may be the first time in his life that he respected anyone. Merwan too returned his greeting. After that, leaning against the wooden crates nearby where Merwan was sitting and where bottles were stacked, Kabuli started talking. Although he was drunk, he was in his senses. He expressed regret over the previous day's incident and even sought pardon. He confessed that in order to test Merwan, he had devised this plot. Now he knew that Merwan had passed the test, he assured Merwan that he would never repeat such an act in his life. Finally, before leaving, he said, "Merwan, from today onwards, You are my Father and I have become Your son. I will not simply address You as my father, but will also discharge my duties as a loyal son. You will experience this Yourself." Saying this, he clasped and took Merwan's hand in both his hands and said, "Praise be to Your Creator, honour be to Your parents and admiration to Yourself." Although Merwan insisted that he drink toddy and leave, Kabuli left quietly.

After that day, whenever and wherever Kabuli met Merwan and whatever condition he may be in, he would always fold both hands and greet Him first. On every occasion, he would address Merwan as 'My Father.' Not only that, but whenever Merwan was present in the shop, he would never consume toddy in His presence. Similarly, he would not create a ruckus or quarrel, and if a ruckus or quarrel took place elsewhere and if Merwan were to pass by, he would at once stop and command his other companions to stop too. The manner in which Kabuli expressed respect for Merwan astonished everyone to such an extent that the matter could not be concealed from Merwan's father Sheriarji, who then told Shireenmai about it. If an individual has a strong will, one can accomplish anything. Indeed, Kabuli's example proved it.

WHEN MERWAN ALMOST JOINED THE SERVICES

During World War 1 in the year 1914, I too joined the field service in the capacity of Grade 1 storekeeper. Merwan was unaware of this development because at that time I was working in an Irani hotel at Mumbai and I was not having any communication through letter writing with Him. I resigned from the hotel job and without informing anyone at home, I enrolled myself with the services and reported on the hospital ship "Syria" as per orders received.

My steamer "Syria" was only making trips between Basra and Bombay and I got bored with it. Finally, being tired of sea voyages, I applied for a transfer to land duty which was granted. Before I could report for this new assignment, I applied for my rightful leave of one month and that too was sanctioned and so I came to Poona. During such routine trips between Basra and Bombay, I would regularly take the opportunity to come to Poona either for one day or one night and meet Merwan.

At this time Merwan was in full consciousness. He had achieved the highest state of consciousness through just one embrace from Poona's reknown *Mussalman Stree Sant* [Muslim Female Saint] Babajan. This I had not known. Also, I did not believe in matters of *sadhu-sant* [holy men] nor have any knowledge or recognition of them. On the contrary, if ever Merwan would broach any topic concerning saints, I would make fun of them and irritatingly ask Him not to create headache for me with such useless philosophies. And if I am not mistaken, it is for this reason that whenever Merwan would visit living saints, *walis*, *awliyas*, [holy men] for their darshan, He would prefer to take along Khodu, alias Sailor, instead of me. Whatever that may be, during the period of my one month's leave at Poona, I felt a difference in Merwan's attitude. The earlier Merwan was no more and I was in the company of some unknown Merwan. That is what I felt in my heart all the time.

As my days for leaving drew nearer, I became more and more aware of Merwan's detachment, distance and aloofness. At last one day in the evening, while we were strolling, Merwan opened up His heart and said, "Baily, I too am desirous of joining in the war service along with you. Do you think I would be given such an opportunity?" I replied in the affirmative adding that that would be quite easily possible without any difficulty. To accept this offer, it would not take them any time and it is now my responsibility and I will see to it that it is accomplished. Merwan agreed to join the services on one condition that He should be posted at the same place wherever I was posted. Although such a thing was highly improbable, I assured Him that I will try adding, "Money makes the world go round" and so if He was willing to spend a good three-digit sum, I could manage that task too. This was acceptable to Merwan.

Resultant, the very next day I met my Depot In-charge Officer and made a special request concerning Merwan. The said Officer was a very amiable and good natured simpleton, a Christian military pensioner of around 65 years. He was holding the position of a Major. During war time, because of very great demand for Officers in the field

service, the pensioner Officers were called for service near the place of their residence and the regular Officers were sent to the fields. This Major was also residing at that time in Poona together with his family and could speak fluent Urdu and Marathi as a result of which, I felt comfortable communicating with him in Urdu. He was willing to try his level best for Merwan to be on field service together with me, but he was unwilling to bind himself in a promise that both would be posted at the same place and at the same time, and for that he expressed his regrets.

When Merwan was informed about this matter, He too appeared sad. Yet, He agreed to leave together for the same field. Accordingly, we started our preparations with great enthusiasm and after running about here and there daily, we completed all the formalities and waited for the orders. Obviously, all this was kept a secret and was concealed from Merwan's family as well as from outsiders. Except Merwan and I, no other third person knew about it till the end. Merwan was of the view that only after the name was registered, father Sheriarji would be informed about the posting order just a few hours before leaving so that he could do nothing about it and feeling helpless he would not object to His joining but give his permission. Besides, once the order is served, he would have no say against the military authority's rules and regulations.

Feeling satisfied about the arrangement for enrolment Merwan encouraged me to be worry-free. But He was proved wrong. God had something different in His destiny. Human beings may make so many plans but for that to come to pass or not is ultimately in God's hands. What had transpired was that in the military depot frequented by us to fructify our plans, there was a worker who knew Merwan well, but Merwan had never come in contact with him. The worker's father was a regular customer at Sheriarji's toddy shop and he made a casual reference to his father about Merwan having registered His name for the field service.

That same evening when the worker's father visited the toddy shop as per his usual habit to quench his thirst for a drink, Sheriarji as well as Merwan were both present there. Merwan had just taken charge of the shop's cash counter and had relieved Sheriarji to go home. Just then the worker's father took Sheriarji's hands and congratulated him for his courage and sense of loyalty towards the Government in permitting his educated, good-natured, lovable and favourite Son to join the war. It was really praise worthy, he commented. Sheriarji heard all this quietly gazing at his customer's face. When he stopped speaking, Sheriarji, with a smile on his face said, "Have you got intoxicated today even before consuming toddy?" But when the person clarified everything in details, Sheriarji was very shocked. With a serious look on his face he walked towards Merwan and speaking in *Dari* [a dialect of Farsi Persian language] enquired of Merwan if that was true. At that moment, Merwan could neither conceal the truth nor tell a lie and so in brief He acknowledged the news and said that it was a fact, whereupon Sheriarji lost his composure and sternly reprimanded Merwan who quietly heard it all while continuing to attend to the customers.

Sheriarji was visibly agitated and also looked sad and pale. He did not feel it prudent to inform Shireenmai about the episode and kept the matter to himself going about his work at home. The next day Sheriarji, with the help of his toddy-loving customer, met his worker-son and through him saw the Depot's Major Saheb and begged and pleaded with him to cancel the order. When the Major Saheb said that it was already too late, it added to Sheriarji's fears. However, when he assured Sheriarji that he will try his best to see if anything can be done, two tear drops rolled out of this meek, loving father's eyes. The Major too saw it but kept quiet.

Sheriarji then quietly removed an envelope from his coat pocket and holding it with both hands extended towards the Major Saheb who without hesitation slipped it into his own pocket saying, "Your Son has done something immature. He has committed a crime of forgery by forging your signature on the form which required your consent. The military court considers this a very serious crime and the penalty for it is also very heavy. The youth of today do not realise the seriousness of their actions and as a result, put their relatives to much trouble. I too have to see and ensure now that I myself do not get into any trouble. I will now have to make alterations in several records and that has to be done with much thought and care. For your sake I will undertake all this. Be worry-free now concerning your Son and do not give Him any punishment. Just give Him a few words of advice and forget about what has happened. Inform Him that His name has been struck off from the register of persons enrolled for field service and hence He has no need to present Himself here.

Sheriarji then returned home in an elated and joyful mood and informed the entire episode to Shireenmai. He told her not to hassle with Merwan on this issue or to raise this topic with Him again and close the matter. Although Mataji did scold Merwan lightly, she was greatly upset with me and I had to bear the brunt of her ire as she thought that I was the cause of all this mess, that it was all my idea of encouraging and pushing Him in that direction and that I was the one guilty for all that had happened. She sternly forbade me from entering their home and also stopped Merwan from talking with me or having any kind of relationship with me. This restriction came heavily upon both of us, in spite of which, we continued to meet secretly. Although we could not meet openly and freely as before, we continued meeting daily at different places at different times as pre-arranged by us.

STRANGE PRACTICE

I would like to narrate an episode to highlight Merwan's exalted state and His connection with Bahadur Khan a *Harijan* and one of His favourites. Bahadur Khan was not only held in high esteem amongst the *Harijans* but was also worshipped as their *guru*. In Poona there is an area called Kamatipura which is inhabited by the financially weak and low caste people. There are several numbered lanes and Merwan rented a house in one of the lanes with long *chawls*. Every afternoon after His duty from the toddy shop, He would come to this house in the company of Bahadur. After removing all the clothes except for a small *langoti* [narrow strip of loin cloth traditionally worn by men as underwear], Merwan would sit on a low stool inside the house. Bahadur, in the meantime, would go around and collect human feces in a basket from the nearby area and apply it all over Merwan's body from neck down to the legs. Merwan, with His body fully covered thus, would sit in silent meditation for periods ranging from one to two and a half hours. During that time Bahadur would stand guard outside the door. After this practice, Merwan would take a cold water soap bath under the tap, put on His clothes and leave the place.

After Merwan's departure, Bahadur would clean the room with *phenyl* [detergent] water. He would then lock the house and hand over the key personally to Merwan at His Sachha Peth Street toddy shop in the evening. Thereafter he would enjoy his free drink of toddy and in that ecstasy would sing till late evening. Merwan would leave the shop immediately on Sheriarji's arrival. No one ever knew this state of Merwan, and Bahadur was strictly ordered not to disclose it to anyone. This was their daily routine which lasted for about two to two and a half months. After that, the house was given back to its owner. Bahadur was paid a substantial amount for this service. He loved Merwan from the depth of his heart and eagerly obeyed any of His orders. Whenever he composed any *bhajans*, he would include praise in the names of Merwan and His two *gurus*, Babajan and Upasani Maharaj. He had great respect for Merwan till he breathed his last.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPH AFTER GOD-REALIZATION



Meher never showed any eagerness to have His photos taken. However, when He left Sakori [1922] and came to Munshi Saheb's home at Bombay Chowpatty, Munshi Saheb expressed his heartfelt wish to have Baba's photograph taken. Baba gave His consent only if it was taken in the same clothes and in the same position in which He was then seated.

Munshi Saheb was fully aware of Baba's habit of frequently changing plans, and not wanting to miss this opportunity, immediately rushed Sayed Saheb in a car to bring a photographer at once. Fortunately, Baba was in a happy mood and continued talking and discussing with His companions, whilst still seated on the floor. The photographer arrived in no time and Baba with a smile on His face asked him to take His photograph without the slightest delay in the same posture as He was sitting then. The camera was quickly focused on Baba and in a moment the photo was clicked. With a respectful "thank you" the photographer left. Baba too got up.

Munshi Saheb and other disciples surrounded the photographer discussing something. Seeing Baba alone, I voiced my opinion, stating that it would have been better if He had worn some other clothes and sat in some other pose instead of on the floor. That would have looked more attractive and beautiful. After listening to my unsolicited suggestion, Baba indicated with a smile that in times to come His photographs would be taken on a daily basis, in great numbers, and in different poses. They would be flashed in newspapers of different languages of the world and in books and magazines. His photos would be used in lockets around necks, key chains, coat buttons, finger rings, etc. Films would be taken of Him and they would be screened. There would be paintings in all postures; smaller than the smallest *channa dana* [pea size] to bigger than My size – six foot tall or larger. I did not utter a word.

Even then this photograph taken through Munshi Saheb's initiative has a special significance that no other photograph will have because Baba has put His whole Being into it, and that would not be found in any other photo. This photo was taken with Baba sitting on the floor of the Chowpatty Reclamation House. Baba was wearing an old, dirty, tight-fitting coat and pantaloons. His *sadra* was tattered. The photograph was taken with Baba's right leg on the floor in a folded position, His left leg is in view, folded from the knee, elbow of His left hand resting on the knee, His head supported in the palm of his left hand and His right hand resting on the ground, His hair cut small and moustache trimmed. This photograph may not be considered attractive, but according to Baba's declaration, the importance of this photograph is quite distinctive. At the time when this photograph was taken, Baba paid full attention to the focus. That itself is a very important point. Besides, to my knowledge, this was the first public photograph taken of Baba after His achieving the divine state of God-Realization.

LIFE AT THE JHOPDI

Baba spoke at last in the train journey from Bombay to Poona and gave indications about the tasks that will have to be performed on reaching Poona [*Jhopdi* at Fergusson College Road] – the sort of life to be led, tasks to be performed, etc. He kept on talking about His programmes. Similarly, He explained in detail the nature of my duties and asked for my personal opinion in the matter – whether the programme arranged by Him was agreeable to me. On hearing my short answer that His wish is my wish, He was very pleased. He indicated that if I were to obey all His wishes and desires as my own, He would mould my life in a totally different manner. From now onwards, my life with Him in the *Jhopdi* would be totally different. *Navi Gilli Navo Dao*. [A new beginning to life].

Baba was not going to remain in His earlier state of Being. Hundreds of people would now be visiting His *Jhopdi* daily for His darshan. People of different communities - rich and poor, men and women, of all ranks and positions would now visit Him from morning till night. He would not have a moment's rest. Besides framing the rules, we both had to maintain quietude and take rest and for that we had to frame and observe another set of rules. All such rules and regulations would be formed by Him after reaching the *Jhopdi* in the presence of all of us.

Completing this topic of discussion, Baba then made an unsuccessful attempt to explain to me some spiritual matters and about *divya shakti* [divine powers]. He continued to tell me about His self-achieved high spiritual status and about the divine duties He has to perform in the future, consequent upon which He would have to undergo much suffering and difficulties. Finally He explained to me, as well as warned me that I should, under any and all circumstances, remain with Him at all times and follow all His orders whole-heartedly with respect, faith, firmness and love, taking them as my bounden duty. He sought my wholehearted solemn promise, which I gave with great enthusiasm, and firmly assured Him that I would never back out on my promise.

Obviously, all this was due to my cheerful disposition at that moment. Also, as my heart was full of joy and enthusiasm, I was excited to give both, my promise and my full assurance to keep that promise. Otherwise all these spiritual and God-related matters were of the least interest to me. I was not able to gulp down all such philosophies at that time. In fact, I was totally bored listening to such topics. I only desired Baba's companionship and togetherness. Other than that I had absolutely no interest nor cared to listen to spiritual subjects or ask questions concerning them. My attitude was: 'Let Baba do as He desires, stay wherever He wants, or say whatever He wishes to. For me it is sufficient that He spares me from all this and leaves me to be on my own.' I was attached to this way of thinking. Not only at that time, but even after knowing, believing and receiving everything, I remained adamantly stuck to this attitude of mine. This is my great misfortune. I was creating a dark future for myself when I was given so many opportunities by Baba to achieve infinite happiness.

Merwan and I alighted at Poona Railway Station where Sadashiv Patel was waiting to take Merwan to the *Jhopdi*. In the city there is a famous hillock named “Chaturshringi.” On the road leading to this hillock and just opposite the famous bungalow “Moti Baug” outside the Police Line public road, this special *Jhopdi* was built. It was big enough to accommodate two persons comfortably. The door of this beautiful *Jhopdi* was made of hay, but was strong and had provision for latching from the inside and the outside. Opposite the door leaving a wide open space, were rows of small and big trees on the left of the *Jhopdi* that gave shade, whereas on the right were thick bushes and farms of grains and vegetables. There were also rows of *Sitafal* [custard apple] and *Ramfal* [Bullock’s hearts] fruit trees. The setting was beautiful and it portrayed a wonderful sight.

Behind the *Jhopdi* was a deep *nallah* [open trench] that filled with water only during the monsoon season and which was useful for farming. During the remaining months it would be filled halfway through with dry leaves and twigs. Crossing the Police Line pavement, visitors to the *Jhopdi* have to pass through the open *maidan* [grounds]. After walking twelve to fifteen steps they have to cross over the *nallah*, take a left turn and walk another few steps to arrive at the door of the *Jhopdi*. Opposite the door and behind the rows of the trees was a deep and wide well which was used for farming. The atmosphere surrounding the *Jhopdi* was very beautiful, peaceful and pleasant, exactly as Merwan wanted. Being extremely pleased, He patted Sadashiv Patel’s back in appreciation. Sadashiv Patel became very happy and accepted this gesture of compliment as a reward for all his efforts.

From here we were to start our new way of life. In fact, it got started already. From now onwards in these writings, I will call Merwan “Meher Baba” although this blessed name was given to Him about a year later by Sayed Saheb, one of His great Muslim followers during one of His visits to Nasik. Sayed Saheb proposed this name and all the followers and disciples gathered there accepted it with one voice and put their seal on it. And it is with this same name that He became world-renowned. I was still calling Him Meher. However, gradually when He was together with others, I would sometime call Him Mehoo and sometimes Merwan. Afterwards the name Meher vanished from my tongue and only the name Merwan continued. Even after this visit to Nasik, I continued calling Him Merwan for some time. But this did not last long, and that was natural. Why? When everyday everyone in hundreds and thousands called Him Meher Baba, I felt hesitant and shy to address Him as Merwan. So I felt it wise and respectful to call Him Meher Baba as the others did.

From the next day, Baba’s disciples, companions, lovers of *Bhoi Mandali*, [those living in Bhoiwada region of Kasba Peth], relatives and other outsiders daily flocked around Him. Under such circumstances, Baba found it necessary to formulate certain rules. All these rules were to be followed implicitly by all. They were equally applicable to people criticizing and backbiting Him, people speaking ill of Him, spying on Him, others who came to quarrel with Him or expose Him to the press or to make a fool of Him. Whether friend or foe, rules had to be followed.

Every day regularly in the morning, Rustom Masa, Pendu's late father [Masaji] who was rendering his services as a cook in one of the famous fire temples of Poona would bring freshly made *masala dal*, [spicy lentils] tasty and drenched in pure *ghee* [clarified butter] along with *rotli* [unleavened bread]. After we had done full justice to the food, Masaji would meet both of us and take back the utensils. Merwan and I would then walk the distance up to the toddy shop at Kasba Peth and standing outside the shop would receive our post. After receiving our letters, we would go to Baba's house, where we would spend some time – between fifteen minutes to an hour – and then return to the *Jhopdi*, by which time it would be around 10 to 11 o'clock in the morning. Around this time, some of the visitors would have already arrived and would be waiting for Baba's *darshan*. He would first give His *darshan* to all of them and then enter the *Jhopdi*. He would then give me brief instructions about how to reply to all the letters and then once again emerge from the *Jhopdi* to answer all the visitors' queries and give solutions to their problems.

After this, *bhajans-kirtans* [devotional songs] would start. Baba too would participate in the singing by playing the *dholak* [type of drum]. This would continue till about 3 to 4 in the afternoon. In-between, Baba would also meet the newcomers and listen to them and give them advice and guidance, where necessary. As per rules, at 5 o'clock the visitors would again start coming. At times the *Bhoi Mandali* would sing and entertain and that would go on till around 7:00 or 7:30 in the evening. After that, the rules required them to disperse. Between 8 and 9 o'clock, the mandali too would disperse. After 9 o'clock, none was allowed to stay on the premises or to visit Baba. This was strictly enforced and so no one ever came after 9 o'clock.

Baba and I would stay alone in the *Jhopdi* with the door bolted from the inside. Even during the daytime, no one was allowed inside the *Jhopdi* and this rule was also strictly observed. Hence everyone took their seats at a distance away from the *Jhopdi*. Visitors coming to Baba were from different communities, castes, religions, women, men, children, rich, poor, *sadhu*, *sanyasi*, *brahmins*, religious preachers, scholars, illiterate and ignorant, those on the path and those caught up in *maya*, good people, bad people. People would come daily in groups to pour out their hearts to Baba, and would return in peace, contentment and satisfaction, receiving Baba's advice.

At night, after locking ourselves in the *Jhopdi*, Baba would lie down on a thin mattress and cover Himself right up to the head with a white sheet, appearing to be roaming around other worlds and at the same time doing spiritual work for this world. Meanwhile, I would be sitting on a similar mattress with a small floor table of the kind used by clerks and merchants who sit with *gaadi-takya* [cylindrical pillow] on the floor. With the help of a lantern, I would write the life sketch of Shri Upasani Maharaj, *Sakorina Sadguru*, which name I had been permitted to select. I would write in this manner every night. This was my main duty at the *Jhopdi*. Sometimes I would write the whole night and sometimes for four to six hours and then go to sleep. At times, I would not have any inclination to even lift the pen and so would sleep early and wake up fresh and in a pleasant mood.

Whenever I stayed awake the whole night, I would sleep the next day in the *Jhopdi* or if there was some commotion because of the visitors, I would go behind in the bushes or in the farm or underneath the tree wherever I found it comfortable and sleep for two, four or six hours. As per Baba's instructions I had also to reply to all the letters received by Him, which I would do quickly by giving short replies and then hand them over to Sadashiv for posting. I had also to clean the *Jhopdi* from inside and outside and to fill up the water container, which was used only by Baba and me. For the other people who got thirsty, some other arrangement was made.

Twice in a week, I would go to my house for a bath and a change of clothes and after finishing that quickly, would wait at my house for Baba's arrival and both of us would then go to the *Jhopdi* together. Owing to changed circumstances, some of the rules framed earlier had to be altered from time to time, and hence the original rules gradually disappeared. Only a few of the original rules continued to be implemented especially the rule not allowing anyone to stay in the vicinity of the *Jhopdi* after 9 o'clock. This was strictly enforced.

FIRST BIRTHDAY AT THE *JHOPDI*

[Baily mentions elsewhere in his memoirs that a day prior to Baba's birthday, he was secretly informed by Baba the full details about the sequence of events that would unfold from morn till night on His birthday. And that is exactly how the day went by, scene by scene].

The grandeur of Baba's first birthday celebrations at the *Jhopdi* was something unique. To participate in this auspicious celebration and to also take advantage of Baba's *darshan* and *sahavas*, Munshi Saheb and Sayed Saheb had arrived from Bombay, besides others. They wanted to do something special to please Baba and earn His grace. All the way from Bombay, Munshi Saheb had brought for Baba a huge basket of sweetmeats, another basket filled with hundreds of small flower bouquets, one large garland of sweet smelling roses, one hand *tohro* [bouquet]. Earlier, whenever Munshi Saheb would take Baba's *darshan*, he would kiss Baba's right hand expressing his love. But for the first time today, he bowed down to Baba and after embracing Him offered to garland Him with flowers. Sayed Saheb also did the same, first garlanding Baba and then bowing down to Him, sought His blessings. The Kasba Peth and Bhoi Mandali had been regaling everyone since early morning with *bhajans*. Disciples and other outsiders kept coming in regularly. As per the routine, Rustom Masa brought *ravo* [sweet snack especially prepared by Zoroastrians on auspicious occasions] drenched in ghee. After having breakfast Baba started for His home.

Today, *Mataji* [Mother Shireenmai] had decorated the family home with the customary *chawk-toran* [patterns made on floor with white and coloured flour; and flower garlands over threshold of door frames]. The neighbors, some family members and other acquaintances were all waiting for Baba to arrive. In the hustle-bustle even the sound of the gramophone was not audible. At that time, those present there were predominantly ladies waiting to wish Baba 'Happy Birthday' and have His *darshan*. On the male side were only His three brothers and three other friends, hence not more than half a dozen men.

After having his bath with warm water which had been kept ready by Shireenmai, Baba dressed Himself in new clothes especially stitched for the occasion. As per tradition, Baba was immediately made to stand on a *patla* [low flat wooden stool]. Mother Shireenmai was the first, followed by other ladies to apply *kanku* [vermilion] and rice on Baba's forehead. They then performed the *owarna* [a gesture inviting good luck and keeping evil eye at bay] and put garlands around His neck, and some even gave the traditional silver coins as a gift. The atmosphere was very cheerful.

Suddenly, one of the ladies drew the attention of *Mataji* that *topi* [cap] was an integral part of the traditional Zoroastrian attire and that Baba should wear it and that it should also be new since the entire set of clothes for the birthday was new. Hearing this, *Mataji* was slightly taken aback, but promptly said in defense, "There is a brand

new cap in the cupboard, but since Merwan never wears a cap, and even if He is made to put it on, the moment He steps out of the house, He will give it to somebody. So why should I let go such a nice black good quality velvet cap? I have paid three rupees for that. Is that for giving it off to someone? Instead, it would be better if His brothers wear it. I'd feel happy about that."

All the ladies spoke in one voice that a new cap is a must and it was okay if He wore it only once for this occasion. They also suggested that after the ceremony she could take the cap back from Him and store it in the cupboard. *Mataji* was helpless against all these voices, so going into another room she opened a cupboard and from its top shelf brought out a tin box which was a size just large enough to hold caps. Placing it on a table she opened the box and in view of all gathered there, she first brought out a small glass beaded cap that was made especially for Baba's young sister Mani. Then she removed another red velvet cap and kept that too on the table. As she was removing the third cap, her eyes got transfixed upon something lying within the fourth cap. The caps had been placed upside down in the box in such a manner that the bigger ones contained within it, the smaller ones. This fourth cap was also placed in such a manner. *Mataji* saw three silver Rupees placed in it and she was astonished. At that time, all the ladies were also standing close by and I also witnessed the whole scene, which was unfolding in exactly the manner that Baba had foretold the previous evening to me.

Mataji immediately realized she was witnessing a miracle, and who but Baba could be the source of it? She was fully convinced, and she said, "Because of my excuses for not giving Merwan the new cap and because of my mentioning having spent three rupees for the cap, Merwan has miraculously placed these coins in the cap so that He does not embarrass me by giving me money openly in my hand. I now understand everything. After all, am I not His mother?"

She further explained, "The cupboard key is always with me. I never part with it. Even if Sheriarji needed anything from the cupboard, he would ask me for it. I never ever keep money in this cap box, for, even a thought had never crossed my mind to keep it there. Then where did the money come from, and that too the exact amount of the price of the cap. Why not two, or five, or ten?" Hearing such statements from Mataji the ladies gathered there were wonderstruck. All started talking in hushed tones with one another. Some quickly came to where Baba was standing and informed Him about the whole episode, including what Mataji had said. Baba just smiled and pleaded ignorance, saying that He didn't know anything about it. Mataji without saying a single word about the incident brought the cap and placed it on Merwan's head. When Baba left home that day, He quietly slipped the cap into the hands of His young sister Mani and walked off towards the *Jhopdi*. This incident was much talked about by the ladies and gradually it spread to several houses.

We reached the *Jhopdi*, and exactly as Baba had predicted the entire *Jhopdi* was decorated with flowers. It looked so beautiful that it was difficult to take one's eyes

off the scene. Baba allowed the flowers to remain for 48 hours, and thereafter He had them removed. There were so many bouquets that even after decorating the *Jhopdi* and giving some to visitors who came in from morning till evening, there were some left. Mataji also paid a visit to the *Jhopdi* together with Mani and was delighted to see the beautiful atmosphere.

The sweetmeats brought by Munshi Saheb were freely distributed to all the visitors up to late evening, and from the three pieces remaining, Baba gave one to Munshi Saheb, one to Sayed Saheb and the last one He ate Himself. Seeing this, Munshi Saheb shed a few tears of joy. Baba noticed it and asked Munshi Saheb the reason thereof. Munshi Saheb explained, "I was getting this nasty thought in my mind that Baba should partake of the *prasad* Himself and as long as You did not, I thought that You were not all-knowing. I was fighting within myself all through the day to ward off such wrong thoughts and thus exhausted myself not knowing what to do. I had become completely restless and just then You read my mind and as per my heart's desire, You ate the last piece of *prasad* and the joy and relief You gave my mind and heart is no small thing. It is because of this that tears trickled from my eyes. I have now experienced total satisfaction. Please forgive me that I have doubted You even once. I wonder how such a nasty thought could ever have entered my mind."

Baba then embraced and consoled him, and told him not to give another thought to the incident and also not to take it so seriously. Baba further said, "Keep calm and remember My name constantly at all times." And the matter rested there.

A special music programme was arranged for the evening and everyone enjoyed the songs sung to the accompaniment of *tabla* and harmonium. Thereafter at about 7:00 P.M. people started dispersing gradually. Only those stayed behind whom Baba had asked to. The *Jhopdi* was then locked from the outside and Baba, I and others totaling twelve people started for the *maaryu* [loft] of Arjun's house which was located at Bhoiwada at Kasba Peth, where a special dinner programme was arranged. We did full justice to the various delicacies served and then at around 10 P.M. we returned to the *Jhopdi*.

Baba made me count the garlands offered to Him during the whole day which were kept separately by me in one corner of the *Jhopdi* and the number tallied exactly with the one given by Baba to me the previous day. This was the last item predicted by Baba and that too was now complete. This whole day went by as if I was seeing a film show, each scene passing by before my eyes, one scene after the other, in exactly the same manner as Baba had predicted a day before.

AN OBSTINATE IRANI MERCHANT

One *Bawa* [holly man] had established his seat in one of the well-known suburbs of Bombay. He was a Zoroastrian by religion. This *Zarathosti Bawa* had many Zoroastrian followers and he was famous among people of other communities as well. An Irani merchant from Bombay was also a follower of this *Bawa* and had complete faith in him. This Irani merchant was always in a remorseful mood owing to some very personal and secret reason. He could not divulge this to anyone, not even to the Zoroastrian *Bawa* although he would draw the attention of the *Bawa* to that issue discreetly and seek his blessings. The *Bawa* would console him saying that all would be well in good time and that he should not worry about it. But the Irani could not be pacified with such assurances and continued to be sad and gloomy.

Incidentally, the Irani came to be informed that Meher Baba was staying at the *Jhopdi* [At Ferguson College Road]. He came to Poona and stayed with his relative for a few days to find out more details about Baba. In two days' time he collected the necessary information and the next day he stood before Baba at the *Jhopdi* for His darshan. Standing some distance away from Baba, he lifted his right hand and touched his forehead in salutation saying, "*Sahebji* [a common salutation among Zoroastrians]. I am a disciple of a famous Zoroastrian *Bawa* of Bombay and I have spent my money to come to Poona specially to test You. If You really have divine powers then console my mind. What is going on in my head is consuming me from inside. Nobody knows about it, nor can anyone know about it. Even my *guru* has not been told what it is, and he is not likely to know also. If You can tell me in private what ails me then I will leave my present *guru* and become Your slave forever."

It was plain and obvious that this Irani was full of ego and pride. He thought of himself as some hero from the *Mahabharata* [an epic narrative of Kuruksetra War]. He spoke to others in an ill-mannered and angry tone. He even spoke to Baba in the same disrespectful manner. Notwithstanding, Baba continued listening to all he had to say with a cool mien and a smile on His face. After he finished speaking, Baba, smiling and unruffled, said that He did not have any divine powers nor had He ever claimed having such powers. In fact, He said that He was eager to become dust at the feet of one who would have such power.

Baba told the Irani that he had been misinformed and further advised him that it would be best if he were to return to his *guru* and take advice from him for his problem. Not being content with what Baba said, he insisted that Baba might be capable of knowing everyone's mind and heart and that he intuitively felt that Baba has such powers. Therefore Baba would surely know his secret problem and He should reveal it without making him endure this anxiety any further.

Baba then placed this logic before the Irani, saying, "When you know that Baba knows and understands everything and that Baba has such powers, and since you yourself

also know what is in your heart, then why do you insist that Baba should spell out your thoughts and feelings in words? It doesn't seem to make sense. What is the purpose of such insistence and what benefit are you going to get out of all this?" But the Irani was adamant.

As he was wasting a lot of time and since many others were waiting for Baba's *darshan*, He suggested that the Irani should leave then and maybe return on a later date. The Irani expressed his helplessness as he was to leave for Bombay that very night.

To this Baba said that if he was so very anxious and eager to see Baba, he was welcome to return to Him but only after a lapse of fifteen days and furthermore, until fifteen days are over he should not attempt to set his foot near the *Jhopdi*. Hearing this order, the Irani seemed upset and for some time he sat there still and motionless. But Baba immediately got up and went towards other visitors who had been waiting for Him for more than half an hour. Hence this Irani fellow, feeling helpless, returned the same way he had come. While leaving, he did not even have the courtesy to salute Baba.

Barely had seven days passed than this Irani appeared once again at the *Jhopdi* to see Baba. Baba was upset at this visit and told the Irani that if he were to disobey Baba's orders in this manner, he would be forbidden to visit Him forever. Baba asked him to return immediately and not to visit Him for another fifteen days. All efforts by this Irani to pacify Baba and also all his pleadings for forgiveness were in vain and so at last the Irani had to return. At this time, he showed his respect for Baba by shaking hands and bidding goodbye with *Sahebjji*. Baba heaved a sigh of relief and said that this troublemaker was not going to leave Him and that he will visit again, and this proved true.

After the passage of fifteen days this Irani merchant did come to see Baba and once again started pestering Baba and demanded His answer. Baba was calm and welcomed him with a smiling face. After a lot of discussion, Baba agreed to disclose the secret of the Irani's heart to him alone and in private, but on one condition. And the condition was that after hearing the secret of his heart from Baba, he should refrain from asking Baba the solution to that problem. Baba said that He would never reveal the solution, come what may.

The Irani immediately accepted the condition and gave Baba his solemn promise. Baba repeatedly warned the Irani that if he were to break his promise and if he were to insist on the solution from Baba, he would not only not benefit from that, but would also incur a huge loss. In the knowledge that no solution will be offered by Baba, the Irani should quietly meet Baba and go away, as otherwise the repercussion of his ignorant insistence would be too severe. All this was willingly accepted by the Irani.

Only after taking the solemn promise, Baba got up and signaled to the Irani to follow Him. Baba stood underneath a *neem* tree about ten to fifteen steps away followed by this merchant. Then in a very soft voice Baba spoke something to the Irani. Hearing that, the Irani started crying and weeping loudly keeping both his hands on Baba's shoulders.

Baba tried to release Himself from the grip of the Irani's hands over His shoulders, but could not do so. Finally, with great effort Baba gave a strong sudden jerk, stepped back two steps very swiftly and started walking very hurriedly towards the *Jhopdi*.

But this Irani merchant was also a smart fellow. He too ran quickly behind Baba and clung tightly to Baba's feet with the result that Baba was unable to take any further step. Baba tried to free Himself several times but in vain. Baba now became composed and calmly asked him, "What is it that you want now? I have told you all that you wished to know. To behave in such an abnormal manner is not befitting an adult Irani merchant like you. It is shameful for you to behave in such a manner in front of so many people. You are reducing your own prestige and making a fool of yourself. If you have anything to tell Me, you may do so in a decent, well-mannered way."

On Baba's admonition, the Irani released his grip. He came to his senses, got up and wiping his eyes, nose and mouth asked Baba for the solution to his secret problem. Baba reminded the Irani of his solemn promise just given and asked him to abide by that. In spite of all the explanations, the Irani insisted that Baba should give him the solution. Baba finally asked him to leave and return after fifteen days, whereupon if Baba deemed it okay, He will think over the issue.

The Irani merchant was so restless that he returned to meet Baba in just five days. This time Baba sent a message through a disciple refusing to see the Irani and ordered him to leave at once. But how was that possible? The Irani was adamant and insisted that unless Baba listened to what he had to say, he would not leave that place. He waited for three hours under a tree at a distance and started smoking cigarettes, one after the other.

Baba called him and wanted to know why he had once again disobeyed His orders. The Irani informed Baba that the night before, he saw a dream in which Baba had sent him a small letter written in His own hand. That letter instructed the Irani to come to Poona immediately, without any delay. So he started at once in the night and came straight from the station to the *Jhopdi* with the thought that Baba has called him through this dream. The Irani concluded, "So without informing anyone in Bombay, and leaving behind all important work, I have come here with much hope and expectation."

One more time and with finality Baba told the Irani that it was not possible for Him to give any solution to his problem. If that was possible, Baba would have done so on the very first day without hesitation and without any inhibition and Baba would also not have had to go through the resultant headaches or strain and waste each other's time. Baba exhorted the Irani to let better sense prevail and demanded that he obey Baba's orders and try to arrive at the solution himself whereupon Baba may guide him inwardly. It was made known in no uncertain terms that such obstinate, adamant and insistent behaviour extracting a solution from Baba would do him no good. Baba further stated that even if He were to give him the solution, he would not be able to implement it and therefore the solution would go in vain.

In spite of all these efforts to explain to him, as one would to a small child, with much love and tenderness and repeated requests, the Irani did not listen to Baba and kept persistently insisting that his demand be fulfilled. At last Baba told him that He would give him the solution but now he should leave and come back only when Baba called him to listen to the solution.

After much hesitation, the Irani finally got up, bowed down to Baba pleading Him to call him soon through a telegram, and then left. He left forever. He was never again seen coming to Baba's *darbar*, or to have Baba's *darshan* anywhere else. The reason was this. It was learned that about four to six days after leaving Poona, the Irani lost his mental balance and went insane. Could this be the result of consistently disobeying Baba's orders and constantly creating problems for Baba? Baba alone knows.

The Irani remained in this state for a few years, and then gradually became normally involved in his business and now for the last several years he has stuck to his business and family.

RESULT OF DISOBEDIENCE?

I am reminded of another similar incident that occurred at the *Jhopdi*. The wife of an Irani gentleman well known in racing circles, financially well off and residing in Poona came one day together with four other Zoroastrian ladies who were her relatives to visit Baba at the *Jhopdi*. They all had love for and faith in Baba. They had come to experience the environment and see the activities around the *Jhopdi*. They wished to satisfy their hearts' yearnings and they found contentment in their hearts at the *Jhopdi*.

In her very first meeting, she developed respect and love for Baba. Every day she would come for Baba's darshan in her car, and thereby she came to know Baba and His activities closely.

After a lapse of few days, she wanted to test Baba's divine powers. So one day she told Baba that she has a secret desire in her heart and if Baba were to reveal that to her through His divine powers, she would become His slave and would obey all His orders and wishes willingly and eagerly. Baba openly declared that He had no such powers nor had He ever claimed to have such powers. He further remarked that it was just a fancy of the believer that Baba held such powers. And if she was one amongst such persons who believed thus, Baba advised her to come out of it.

As the lady kept persisting, Baba told her that there was no need for her to become Baba's slave or to kiss the dust of Baba's feet. Baba agreed to reveal the desire of her heart on the condition that within three days of her hearing the secret from Baba, she should broom the dust out of Baba's *Jhopdi* only once and throw the dirt in the *nallah* behind the *Jhopdi*. She could do this any time at her convenience. The lady, taking this condition of Baba as very simple, willingly and promptly agreed to do so, in front of all the people gathered there. Baba warned her openly that this would not be as simple a thing to do as she had imagined, and that performance of this promise would be very difficult. He asked her to drop the whole idea because non-performance of the promise would lead to drastic consequences and then there would be no escape from it.

In spite of the clear-cut explanation and warning, the proud lady agreed to the condition and took the responsibility on her shoulders. Baba took her aside at a distance and whispered something into her ear, and quickly returned to His place to keep company with the others. The lady was dumbfounded and stood like a statue gazing at the *Jhopdi* in fear. Then, taking hesitant steps, she came and sat down slightly away from where the others were seated.

The lady was asked when she intended to sweep the *Jhopdi*. In response she informed the gathering that she intended to postpone the task till the morning of the next day. Baba once again warned her that any time during the next seventy-two hours, except between 9:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. she must sweep the *Jhopdi* just once and that if she were to fail in fulfilling this promise out of ignorance she will have to suffer a lot. No

amount of repentance, requests for forgiveness, pleading etc. would be of any avail. At this the lady jokingly expressed, "How difficult could it be? Is it so difficult that I could not do it? And besides, there is nothing to be ashamed of in doing such work. That is a daily duty of the womenfolk in the houses of all families." She said all this with pride. Baba expressly mentioned that in spite of all that she had just said being true in its place, what remained to be seen is whether she would complete the promised work.

Baba then suggested that she should pick up the broom at that very moment and sweep, since as per her own admission this work would be neither so difficult nor shameful and besides, it wouldn't require much time, maybe only ten to fifteen minutes to complete, so why postpone it until the following morning? Baba continued, "If it can be done now itself, it would be very convenient and better, and the matter will end here and now. All's well that ends well."

However, to take up the broom in such fashionable clothing would not be convenient and hence she postponed it till the next day when she was to come in ordinary clothes and do the task conveniently. On hearing this, Baba smilingly said, "O.K., what she says is also right, we will see tomorrow. It is not far off. We'll see." The next day dawned, and it became evening and evening turned to night but that rich lady was not to be seen. The second day and then the third day went by. There was no sight of that lady. She had failed to fulfill the promise given to Baba.

Baba had hinted from the very beginning that the lady would never sweep the *Jhopdi*. Looking to the rich and honourable social status which she had, she did not like this type of work and so because of her pride the desired result had come to pass. Similar to the fate of the Irani merchant, this lady also lost her mental balance gradually and in a short while she became demented; and in that state she even lost the support of her caring and famous husband. What happened to her thereafter I do not know nor have I any interest in knowing nor feel it necessary to know.

The question that arises naturally is whether an *Avatari Purush* [God-Man] like Baba would inflict harsh and merciless punishment on those who disobey Him or who do not follow His orders intentionally or knowingly break the promise given to Him? Obviously not! It is just the opposite. Such persons come to earth with a destiny to suffer such a state. And the all-knowing saints know it and to save such unfortunate ones, they give orders that may be simple or difficult. And when such orders are not followed or they are broken, then the fault does not lie with the saints. Then the saint becomes helpless and solutionless, and the saint then leaves such a soul to its own destiny. And when such souls suffer agony, they put the blame onto the saint and thereby exhibit their folly.

THEIR DREAMS SHATTERED

I would like to narrate one more incident that is as much interesting as it is saddening. One day three sons of a wealthy Irani gentleman came to the *Jhopdi*. None of the three had any prior connection with Baba and similarly Baba too did not have any contact with them. They had arrived to take Baba's *khabar* [teach Him a lesson], and to make Him *seedha* [straighten Him up]. It is a fact that during that period there were numerous rumours and false propaganda against Baba. The three, believing that to be true, wanted to attack Baba, make Him flee the *Jhopdi* and save the people from His snare.

Although these three were educated and well-mannered, they being in wrong company were misinformed and they believed the false propaganda to be true and decided to take this bold step. Instead of making good use of their youth and energy, they resorted to *dadagiri* [hooliganism] and they took pleasure in behaving so. They had conspired to beat up Baba and throw Him out of the *Jhopdi*. They must have dreamt about the honour that would be bestowed upon them if they were successful in frightening Baba and making Him flee from the *Jhopdi*. They would then become popular not just in Poona but in other places as well. And popularity of so great a magnitude is no small achievement, so why shouldn't they gain that?

Drowned in such high flying and joyful imagination, these three brave youngsters arrived on their bicycles at the *Jhopdi* one afternoon at around 3:00 o'clock when the crowd of visitors was less. Two hours before their arrival, Baba indicated indirectly without revealing much that if I wished to see some fun, I should forgo my afternoon siesta that day. This was the first time that Baba had suggested thus. So to satisfy my curiosity, I sacrificed my afternoon nap. Baba also asked me to bring out our two wooden staffs and place them near His seat under the tree. I placed them as per His wish.

Of the three Irani youths, only one paid respect to Baba with folded hands and the other two kept looking at Baba's face with arrogance and pride. At that time only about eight to ten visitors were sitting there. It was good that there were no women visitors at that time since these youth were under the impression that there would be young women of all communities staying with Baba serving Him, pressing His legs, etc.

Their first impression was that there was no truth to the rumours they had heard and what they witnessed was not as per their belief and expectation. Seeing the three of them standing quietly for some time, Baba asked them to sit down on the floor which they did with some difficulty. After that Baba made enquiries about them, their health, etc. and only after they responded politely Baba asked them their reason for coming to the *Jhopdi*. All three were dumbfounded as if their tongues had stuck to their palates. Then Baba specifically addressed the youth who had folded his hands in respect to Baba, "With what intention or expectation have you all come after so many days and from such a long distance in the heat of the sun? There has to be some reason."

The youth replied that they had come just to meet Him. Hearing this lie, Baba suddenly got out of mood and used some strong language, which is normally not uttered in the presence of women. He angrily said, “You all have come not to meet Me, but to beat Me. Foolish chaps, you should have brought with you some sticks or other such objects. Here take these sticks and beat Me. Use all your strength to do so.” Saying this, Baba threw both the sticks at them and continued speaking, “Cowards, get up. Your bones have no strength even to get up? You don’t seem like men. You are cruel youth; you are cowards. Instead of *lathi* [stick] you should have bangles in your hands, wear them. That would suit you better and then people would praise you and spread your name far and wide. Instead of dreaming of showing your bravery to people and earning a name for yourself by beating Me up and throwing Me out of the *Jhopdi*, it would be better if you wore bangles in your hands and tied *gungri* [trinkets] on your legs and ran around the street clapping your hands [like eunuchs]. That would bring you a greater name, I can guarantee you that. You have arrived here not to earn name and fame by beating Me up, but to bring shame on your education, to disgrace your parents and family name, to exhibit ignorance and tarnish your future. If some ignorant lowly people had taken such a step, there might have been no remorse, but if educated people like you, coming from good families stoop to do such a mean contract, then that is really cause for concern. I am really sad for you because of your behaviour. But still I can hope that you will at least now change your thinking and behaviour and bring good name to your family and your Irani *kaum* [community] and conduct yourselves in a manner that your life is a success. Now get up and go – you have My blessings.”

What they must have thought about this sudden outburst in Baba’s behaviour I do not know, but there was a marked difference in their attitude and behaviour when they got up to leave. They respectfully folded their hands and sought Baba’s forgiveness and gave their promise to behave in the manner advised by Baba. Not only that, they also expressed their feeling to come and meet Him as and when time permitted. Before leaving they all shook hands with Baba and kissed His hands one by one. The one who had initially folded hands before Baba refused to return with the other two and sought Baba’s permission to wait for some more time. After about two hours he left after taking Baba’s blessings. That man is still attached to Baba with full faith in Him and comes for Baba’s *darshan* time and again and obeys His orders. The other two are also conducting their lives and businesses respectably in peace and happiness.

“NOW LEAVE FROM HERE”

As the days for abandoning the *Jhopdi* drew near, the rules pertaining to our conduct therein also seemed to have been relaxed. Except for the rule that all should leave the *Jhopdi* by 9:00 P.M., all other rules were almost nonexistent. There was a noticeable difference in Baba's daily routine also. The daily morning visits to His house would be skipped sometimes for two to three days and at times even up to four or five days, although *Mataji* would visit the *Jhopdi* from time to time to meet Baba. However, *bhajans*, *kirtans*, *puja*, *aarti*, hymns of divine love, reading of spiritual books along with Baba's messages and explanations continued daily. Listening to its deeper and esoteric explanations was a unique experience. Baba's sweet voice singing in praise of God, and His playing the *dholak* created a divine atmosphere that permeated everyone's soul. Together with all this, Baba's own presence ignited a flame of love in our hearts and minds that would make us dance with joy within our hearts.

Baba had the habit of visiting the house of any member of the Kasba Peth mandali at any hour of the day, except after 9:00 P.M. when He would always be in the *Jhopdi* and would never leave it. However, one day, a time came when even that rule was rescinded. On one of the Hindu festivals, the Bhoi mandali members had invited Baba for dinner. Seeing their love and devotion towards Him, Baba accepted their invitation. Giving charge of the *Jhopdi* to me, Baba left in the company of a few of the Bhoi mandali at around 7 o'clock in the evening. Before leaving He told me not to be frightened of being alone and to keep repeating His name continuously. Although He was to return soon, instead of awaiting His return, I decided to concentrate on my writing or otherwise relax. Baba also warned me that under no circumstances I should leave the *Jhopdi*. He assured me that on His return He would bring dinner for me. Locking the *Jhopdi* from the inside, I sat to write with full concentration. [Baba had instructed Baily to write Upasani Maharaj's biography].

After writing successfully for about two hours with joy and satisfaction, I set aside my pen and awaited Baba's return. It was around 9:30 P.M. and Baba had assured me that He would return by then. Since I was alone and my mind was unoccupied, a slight fright entered my heart. I thought it best to lie down and try to get some sleep. However, this plan worked in reverse. After hardly ten to fifteen minutes, as I was trying to catch some sleep, I heard whispers of two men coming from the direction of the *nallah*. I could not decipher what they were talking or what language they were speaking. I was extremely frightened and could not think straight. Without the slightest movement, I lay there half dead like a log of wood and felt as if all the blood in my body had dried up. Although the sounds of whispering stopped after some time, my fright continued and made me more restless and frightened. I stayed stiff and still for some more time but after a while I started getting painful sensations all over my body. I could not bear it any further so I sat up.

Since Baba had not returned as per His assurance, I thought something may have happened to Him. Instead of sitting all alone in fright inside the *Jhopdi*, I felt the best alternative would be to go in search of Him. I slowly opened the door of the *Jhopdi* and stood there for some time. Only after ascertaining that there was no one around, I placed my foot outside the *Jhopdi* and very gently secured the door from outside. Walking very softly without making any noise, I came up to the main road and heaved a sigh of relief as fresh blood started flowing through my veins.

I now walked briskly engrossed in my happy thoughts of meeting Baba. Just then I got myself into a fresh problem. Baba had earlier ordered me that if ever I were to leave the *Jhopdi* at night for any reason, I should always carry a staff with me. Baba had kept two bamboo walking sticks and two wooden staffs carefully in the *Jhopdi* explaining that they were necessary weapons to ward off poisonous snakes, scorpions, dogs or such other animals. There was no doubt about this, since we had experienced such situations several times. And for this reason, as I set out, I had picked up a wooden staff as per Baba's orders.

As the wooden staff banged on the ground, it made a noise which attracted a black stray dog that started barking and came running towards me. Because of the staff, he did not come very close to me, but he continued barking and following me in spite of my trying to shoo him off and showing him the staff. At one time I swung the staff at him in the hope that he would run away, but instead he became more aggressive and started barking more piercingly.

The barking attracted some other dogs in the vicinity to join in and all of them kept barking and following me. I was frightened to the core but kept on walking without showing any external signs of fright. At every other step I would look around to ensure that none of them was too close to attack me. Walking thus, I now entered a narrow bridge running over a shallow river leading towards Bhoiwada in Kasba Peth. The bridge had no railings or side walls. It was open from both sides. It was pitch-dark and not a soul was to be seen except for these wild dogs barking and chasing me.

As I continued walking over the bridge, suddenly from nowhere a dozen dogs joined my earlier pursuers and came charging at me. It is not possible for me to narrate what I felt at that time. Except for taking Baba's divine name, I had no other weapon to protect me. My other weapon – the staff, instead of being a help turned out to be the cause of this entire crisis. If ever I decided to use the staff against any of the dogs who were gradually closing in, I do not know what they would have done of me. After every few steps, I would turn my neck to make sure that none of them was close enough to attack me.

At last, when I finally crossed over this dangerous bridge and stepped on to the road, what I saw terrified me to near-death. Right before me were another pack of a dozen wild energetic dogs ready to attack me. There were now over two dozen dogs frenziedly barking at me in a manner as would rupture anyone's eardrums. I felt more angry than surprised because just a little distance away there was a police *chowky* [sub-

station] with an oil lamp burning inside indicating that someone was on duty and yet no one came out to help me. I felt as though I was in a street populated by the dead. Now this mass of dogs blocked my way completely by surrounding me from all sides and barking incessantly.

It was as if they were trying to teach me a lesson for not obeying Baba's orders not to leave the *Jhopdi*.

Just then I saw at a distance a group of about five persons carrying a lantern and walking towards me. Oh! How can I ever express my relief and happiness? And my joy was compounded when I heard the most soothing Voice of all voices – that of Baba shouting, "Baily, don't be frightened, stay where you are. I am coming." Saying this, Baba rushed towards me asking the other companions to stay where they were. The treacherous dogs, as if frightened by Baba, not only stopped barking but also disappeared on hearing these four words from Baba, "*Ave aythi chaali jaao*" ["Now leave from here."] It was beyond me to comprehend where all these wild creatures disappeared all at once. I was in a dazed state and wondered whether all this was really happening or was I having a nightmare.

Baba then indicated to His companions to return from there and taking me along with Him we arrived safely at the *Jhopdi*. Just then the bell of the Police Line rang twelve. It barely took us half an hour to reach the *Jhopdi* whereas it had taken me more than one and half hours to reach the bridge. On the way back, I narrated the entire episode to Baba in detail. He was enjoying and laughing as He listened and even poked fun at me. Finally Baba said, "Had you not carried the staff in your hand, you would have been either lying in a hospital bed or in the morgue in eternal sleep."

Next day while discussing this incident with one of the Bhoi mandali named Arjun, I came to understand that Baba, in the midst of a discussion the night before, suddenly stated, "Baily is surrounded by a pack of wild dogs. He is alone and frightened. He will put himself into trouble. I must leave now to assist him." Saying this, He suddenly got up and picking up a lantern started off quickly, allowing anyone who wished to accompany Him up to the outside road leading to the *Jhopdi*. It was after this that they heard Him shout, "Baily don't be frightened, stay where you are. I am coming." The mandali who stayed at a distance could neither see me nor the dogs. Except for hearing the barking of the dogs they could not see or understand anything. Such barking of the dogs was a common occurrence in that vicinity and so nobody ever pays cognizance to it and perhaps that was the reason why the police on duty at the *chowky* did not bother to give it any importance.

A VERY PIOUS TASK



Daulat and Jehangir Irani

At one time, Baba with a few of His disciples was living at Irani Mansion, which is in the same area [Dadar, Bombay]. There, one very noble, generous, devoted lady of Poona [Referring to Daulatmai Irani] would visit Baba for His *darshan*. She had received a handsome amount as inheritance after the death of her beloved husband [Jehangir Irani]. She was confused and unsure as to where and to whom she should give this amount in charity. She was also pestered and pressured by her family members. So finally she pleaded with Baba to accept the amount and placed the entire sum of approximately Rs. 1 lakh at His feet requesting that it be used as He pleases – to give it in charity or to do whatsoever He deemed fit. Baba openly indicated that He would not like to refuse this good-hearted and pure lady's offer and added that it was a very pious task which anyone would be happy to discharge.

However, a younger brother of this lady [Captain and later Lt. Col. M. S. Irani] was opposing Baba's activities from the very beginning. Baba, knowing that her brother would come to know that she had given such a large donation to Baba, asked if she was prepared to face any and all consequences. The lady, without giving much thought, said that her brother had left no stone unturned to procure this amount for himself. Now that she has not heeded any of his advices, conditions, etc. and had chosen to do what her conscience dictated, she was prepared to face any consequence without any complaint. At this, Baba accepted and took charge of the amount.

As expected, the brother did come to know all about it, and openly started criticizing Baba in a big way. He was quite well off himself and was holding the rank of Captain in IMS earning thousands of rupees a month. But *lobh ne thobh nahi* – [greed has no stopping] and so in anger and in spite, taking the help of one Gujarati weekly newspaper published from Bombay, he contributed articles against Baba which were fabricated, malicious, defaming and disgraceful. The allegations were totally untrue and not in keeping with the high status he held. But such articles did provoke the general public.

Several times, we His lovers, requested Baba to allow us to reply to this false and baseless stream of allegations, but Baba, totally poised and at ease, would say, "He too is doing My work indirectly" and that this was in fact helpful in His inner spiritual work. Only on one occasion Baba sent me along with Vazifdar in our *khatara* [rickety car] to the publisher to publish just one paragraph explaining briefly about Baba's fasts and daily activities. Initially the publisher refused to accept any matter concerning Baba, but we explained that the article was not in connection with the allegations made against Baba. We asserted that our proposed article only pertained to Baba's daily workings, fasts, etc.,

and hence there should be no objection in publishing it. We also indicated that even if this matter was accepted as advertisement material, we were prepared to pay four times its normal charges. Saying this, I held out before him a fifty rupee note given to me by Baba. He initially showed reluctance but then quickly accepted the money, swiftly slipped it into his drawer, extended his hand in salutations and dismissed us. The article did finally get published in my name. After this article, another one was given that same week, clarifying in details about the amount donated by that noble lady; and by Baba's Grace, the whole matter was put to rest.

Baba had thought it fit to give the amount in charity to Iranis, since the deceased husband of this lady had great affinity toward Iran and Iranis, and he used to give substantial amounts in charity to them. Taking this into consideration, Baba sent a sum exceeding half a lakh of rupees in the deceased husband's name to Yazd in Iran for building an orphanage and also to give to the poor *Zarathosti* widows, poor single ladies for their marriage, education for orphans, medication, food supplements and vitamins for poor and suffering *Zarathostis*. In this manner Baba disbursed almost the entire sum in the name of the deceased husband to five deserving institutions. The orphanage is functioning even to this day.

Baba did not forget the families of poor disciples like me. Whatever balance amount was left, Baba distributed to these families, visiting their homes personally and handing over the amounts to the heads of the families according to their financial condition. If that was not possible for one reason or another, the amount was sent by money order or by registered post. An amount of Rs. 300/- was also offered to me to be utilized as I deemed fit. While respectfully thanking Him for this gesture, I expressed my inability to accept it with regret and the main reason for that decision was the Military Captain.

On account of some unfortunate incident between the two of us when we were serving together in the First World War, I could not accept that amount given through his sister, as I then had this belief that there was no difference between a brother and a sister and accepting such help in charity from their family for my family was too much for me to bear. Further, the fact that the help was coming from a lady was also not palatable to my pride. I considered it below my dignity to accept anything from a lady. Baba was aware of this stupidity of mine and so He asked me to set aside all that nonsense and obey His wish by accepting the amount. He added that if I was reluctant to send the amount home to my family, I could deposit it in the Post Office for future use. This too I refused giving the excuse that even if I were to set aside my objection concerning the unfortunate incident with the Captain or my pride of not accepting any help from a lady, I could not accept it, since previously Baba had instructed me that if I were to receive any sum from anybody, I should offer it to Baba, the Poorest of the poor, instead of giving it to any other poor person. And so taking refuge in that injunction from Baba, I offered the amount back to Him, feeling happy that at least I did obey this one order, if not any other order, and that brought me peace of mind.

“That’s where you are mistaken,” Baba retorted. “This order of Mine annuls My earlier order to you. That much you should understand. You do seem to have basic common sense, but you do not know how to put it to proper use. Even now obey My order and do as I tell you.” I do not know why even after Baba’s admonition I stuck to being adamant and did not follow His wish of depositing the amount in the Post Office in my name. I told Baba that if He so desired, He was welcome to deposit it Himself in the Post Office in my name or ask some other disciple to do so. For that I had no objection, nor would I feel unhappy, but I would not deposit it of my own accord. Baba expressed His opinion that even after my being with Him for several years and regularly receiving suggestions, explanations, advice from Him, I did not care to follow His wish. Had I followed any one of them, He continued, I would have transformed myself into a human being from the animal that I now am. Saying this, He left the place.

Kutrani puchri waki toh waki [A dog’s tail that is curled remains curled and cannot be straightened – signifying that the basic nature of a person cannot be changed]. I was incorrigible. In the end, I did not know what happened to that money, nor did I show any eagerness to know. But one thing is sure that the amount was never deposited in my account, and for that I was happy.

PECULIAR ORDER

Once in an Irani restaurant in Bombay, after having tea, when I was about to pay my bill at the counter, one known young Irani introduced me to the owner as one of the staunch followers of Meher Baba. Because of that, the owner started making enquiries of Baba and I too gave him the required information in the belief that I was doing my duty. But all of a sudden, the owner started abusing Baba. Although I felt extremely angry within, I controlled myself and started explaining to him that it was inappropriate of a person who hails from a good business family to use such abusive language against another person whom he has neither seen nor experienced His company and has no awareness of His status. To form an opinion without weighing both sides is not a sign of wisdom. That was indeed sheer foolishness. Hearing this he started giving even worse abuses. So without waiting a moment longer, paying my bill and not even waiting to collect the balance, I gave him a disgusted last look and quickly stepped out of the restaurant and headed straight to my destination, whereupon I saw Baba standing on the verandah as if waiting eagerly for my arrival.

He immediately asked me where I had been and why was I looking so pale in the face. As I started narrating the entire episode in details, He kept on smiling and enjoying the whole drama. He then said, "Baily, you have really committed a big blunder, if I was in your place, do you know what I would have done? I would have joined hands with that Irani and added two more abusive words against Meher Baba. There is no sense in all this, so get rid of this entire episode from your mind and be free of it. And remember, in future, if you encounter a similar situation, you should also join in and add a few more abuses towards Me and play that role. That is My order to you. I will give this order to the other Mandali also. All of you will take this order as your duty." And before I could say anything further, He summoned the other Mandali members to the verandah and gave the same order to all. Fortunately, I never encountered such an experience ever again, so I had no occasion to follow this peculiar order from Baba. That was the beauty of Baba's order.

FIRST PHOTOGRAPH WITH A SINGLE PERSON



The photos of Baba taken in the earlier days, were either of Him in a group, or alone or with two or four others. I am quite sure that Baba had not permitted for a long time any photograph of Him to be taken with just one person, and when that occasion arose, I was that privileged one. Baba especially drew my attention to that. I still remember it vividly. This fortunate incident happened at Meherabad.

During that period, all of the mandali were residing in the quarters next to the road, whereas Baba was staying on the other side across the railway line, up on the hill in a *pucca* [sturdy] constructed building, with His select close disciples. This place was popularly called *tekdi* [hill]. Many times during the day Baba would come down to meet us and thereafter climb up the *tekdi*. This was quite exhausting for Him.

With the passage of time, Baba altered His programme. He would come down and give us His company from 11:00 in the morning till 6:00 in the evening. Then He would go up, only to return the next morning to give His *darshan*. There were occasions when due to some reason or the other, He had to come down again in the late evenings or early mornings. In view of this, the necessity of a hand-pulled rickshaw was felt so that it became convenient for Him and also, He would not feel so tired and exhausted. This seemed the only convenient mode of transport for Baba to go up and down the *tekdi* and any mandali who volunteered to ferry Baba was most blessed.

I do not intend to write more about the rickshaw as that would relegate the main issue about the photograph. In short, I wish to state that the hand-pulled rickshaw, as can be seen in Calcutta, Rangoon and other places, finally arrived. Two persons could easily sit in it. It had two wheels, two long handled poles made of very light but strong material. This was presented to Baba and He was requested to take a trial. Baba readily sat down in the rickshaw, but who was to inaugurate the first trip? That decision was left to Baba. Baba honoured me by calling out my name. I immediately took my position between the two poles, picked them up from the ground and quickly ran with it up to the railway line, took an about turn and pulled it back right up to the top of the *tekdi* where others were waiting to witness this maiden ride. The pulling up was slow and steady and Baba got down safe and sound. When Baba was requested for a photo, I once again stood in between the poles, the camera was set and in a moment all was over. This was the first photograph of Baba that He permitted with just a single person. Hence I was fortunate in two respects: firstly, to take Baba in the new rickshaw and secondly to have my photo taken with Him alone. This was a very auspicious and a memorable day for me.

BABA'S DARK SECRETS

Initially I thought of settling down in Rangoon, Burma, but in just about two months' time, I left that place and came to Calcutta. After wandering through Assam, Darjeeling and surrounding areas, I ended up returning to Poona. After a little while, I proceeded from Poona to Madras with my little daughter [Hutoxi] and wife, [Goher] and got a steady job. However, here too, owing to the inauspicious time in my life, I resigned from the job after a period of two and a half years. I once again returned to Poona where I confronted more difficulties. To procure a job here was most difficult. In due course, I had to borrow heavily from friends and relatives to provide for my wife and daughter. Borrowing too became difficult as time passed and the only thing left for me to do was to stretch out my hands in begging, which too I could not do for long.

Coming to Bombay, I spent a few days there in search of a job. I could not get any response here in spite of my roaming around from morning till night. I was surrounded with problems and difficulties from all sides. I would roam around all day long hungry and thirsty knocking at each door requesting, pleading, begging and stretching out my hand for alms before one and all. I was tired and disgusted with my life and found my way back to Poona. As the saying goes, *Bhai kah toh jaana tah* [return to the starting point without any progress].

It was not just a question about myself. My wife could have managed on her own by going to her parents' home or the house of any of her relatives who were quite well off financially. But the main problem was that of my little daughter. I did not wish that my only beloved little daughter should live on the mercy of others, feel compelled to tolerate others, bow down to their wishes and orders, to sustain herself on the mercy and obligation of others, be suppressed under their obligation and consider her life as a curse and also curse me in the future. All such thoughts assailed me day and night and would consume me from within. Only this consideration for my daughter made me feel as if my legs were bound by chains, otherwise I would not have stayed even a single day in Poona.

One evening in a frustrated and dejected state of mind, I was sitting on a bench of a small municipal garden, deeply in thoughts, when suddenly I noticed one of my close relatives walking in the company of Lt. Colonel Irani across the pavement. A fresh ray of hope and a wave of expectation passed over me. I thought to myself why not join the camp opposing Baba and take sweet revenge on Him? In any case, Baba is never going to ever trust me or invite me to join His mandali. Such reckless thoughts assailed me, but at that time I considered them useful and full of hope. I decided to meet the Colonel Saheb next day morning. He knew me very well. During my days in Aden, I had the habit of taking my food only at his bungalow. We were known as 'kings without the crown.' The late *Zarathosti* Sir Hormusji Edenwalla along with his manager, other invitees and other big shots totaling about ten to twelve people would daily sit in conversation for about one and half hours after dinner and then disperse.



Lt. Col. Merwan Sohrab Irani,

Colonel Saheb knew all about me — that I was a childhood friend of Baba's, had lived in intimate friendship with Him for several years and as a result knew all about Baba's activities, inside out, and was considered as Baba's favourite disciple. Not only that, he also knew that I had severed all ties and connections with Baba for good and was maintaining myself with my wife and daughter independently in spite of my unemployment and utter hopeless condition. He also knew that Baba had forbidden the Mandali even to utter Baily's name. This order was also circulated amongst other disciples who were staying far away from Baba as well as abroad. I was utterly surprised when, during my conversation with Colonel Saheb I realized that he knew every single detail about me.

On that fateful morning at 11 A.M. sharp, I reached the bungalow of Colonel Saheb. Seeing the front gate open, I emboldened myself to enter and sit in the compound. Climbing the stone steps of the bungalow, I reached the main door and gazed at it for a while. Then taking the name of *Parvardigar*, I rang the doorbell. After a few moments, holding half the door with one hand, he opened it and stood before me. I respectfully saluted him and in response he asked me the reason for my coming to him. He stood near the door in such a manner that I could not enter. It took me no time to sense that I was an unwelcomed guest. In spite of that, mustering all my courage I said in return that I did not doubt his remembering this *nacheez khaadim* [insignificant servant] even though we were meeting after a very long time. I added that just as I was happy and proud to meet him, he too must be experiencing at least a fraction of that feeling.

Tactfully brushing aside my sentiments, he said that since I had come without an appointment, he would not give me time to speak to him. Besides, at that time he was preparing himself to attend to an ailing person and so he asked me to return at some other opportune time. When I asked him for an appointment, he looked through his diary and gave me one. Only thereafter he invited me to come and sit inside. After that he disappeared, as I waited in the front room thinking about my life.

I was thinking, 'Is this the very same Irani fellow who did so much for me at the field force in the military where he held a high position. He used to take me around with him as if his equal, feed me, honour me, made me his companion with rich merchants, every night made me feel like a welcomed guest. Today this same fellow has given me such a cold shoulder, tells me to take an appointment, adding that he will meet me only if he likes. Imagine the trend where the world is heading. Or perhaps he is treating me thus since I had earlier joined Baba's side opposing this Colonel Saheb.' My mental confusion could only be sorted out in our next meeting and till that time I would have to patiently wait on that thought. I had to wait for four days, since Colonel Saheb had given me an appointment after four days; the time given was 3:30 in the afternoon.

I reached the bungalow promptly at the appointed time. This time the door was open as if Colonel Saheb was expecting me. He was waiting at the door and ushered me inside. He closed the door behind him and took me to his private office. Offering me a chair next to his office desk he enquired if I would like to have a cold drink or tea. When I asked him for tea, he got up from his seat and left the room for a while and then returned sitting once again on his rolling chair.

The very first question he asked me was whether I was still a disciple of Meher Baba. After that he asked me several questions pertaining to my past associations with Baba, and such other relevant queries. He then indicated that because of my closeness to Baba, I must know all the good and bad of Baba which no one else would know. Even if there were others who knew, they would be very few in number and amongst them some would have died by now. The rest may have nothing to do with Him or may have forgotten about Him. Hence I must be the only one who knows all such intimate details and can tell about them. "Isn't it?" He asked. Saying that we could discuss those matters at some later date, he enquired about the purpose of my visit.

For a moment I felt disoriented, for, although I had prepared myself what to talk about, his inquiring about my close connection with Meher Baba made me forget all that I had crammed up to ask. As I settled myself in the chair and was about to start speaking, the servant of Colonel Saheb entered the room with a tray containing tea and as per the Colonel's order placed it before me and left. Requesting me to have tea, he also got up and left, leaving me once again in the room all by myself. This was a welcome break, for in those ten minutes I regained my composure while enjoying my cup of tea.

When he returned, I briefly informed him about what I had gone through during the last few years and my present situation in life. I begged for his help. He listened to me quietly, seriously and attentively and when I was through he asked with the same seriousness whether, if I were to approach Meher Baba or write to Him giving details about my life situation, would He not extend His helping hand to me? He further added, "You have not committed any such act whereby He could make you suffer like this, or you have not committed such a sin that you cannot face Him or seek *pashemaani* [repentance]. How long are you going to stretch out your hand in this manner and how long can anyone help you? So listen to my advice and join up with Baba and have all your needs fulfilled. That would be the most prudent thing for you to do." He then added, "Instead of wasting your precious youth in the service of Baba, had you taken up a job abroad or had done some business you would have earned thousands of rupees and you would never have had to see this day of utter hopelessness. You would have been leading a happy and prosperous life with your wife and family. If, after asking Baba's help He refuses to bail you out of your predicament, it would be your sacred duty to remind Him about all that I have told you now. He is bound to help you in one way or the other. So without any hesitation or doubt demand from Him your right to be helped."

In response, I informed Colonel Saheb that if I were to approach Baba He would help me at any time and for whatever amount without any questioning and without my demanding from Him. That much faith and confidence I have. But in spite of that I would prefer to die rather than take a single pie from Him for that would be *haram* [forbidden] for me. When Colonel Saheb realized that I hated Baba to such an extent at that time, he excused himself by saying that he had some other things to attend and that I should leave and that we could continue the discussion at a later date. He ended our meeting saying that he would be prepared to help me but only on one condition. To accept or reject that condition rested solely with me. But if I needed his help, I would have to accept the condition. So having said that much he gave me another appointment for the day after next, asking me to join him for breakfast when this discussion would be carried further. With that we left each other's company.

The cat was finally out of the bag on my third and last meeting with the Colonel Saheb. The treatment meted out to me in this meeting was quite different from the previous two, which kept my mind thinking and my heart palpitating. Commencing the conversation with some unrelated topics, he asked me what my reaction would be – whether of joy or sadness – if some of Baba's inner secrets would be brought out to the notice of the general public or likewise any of Baba's such activities would be made public and spread everywhere. I could easily sense what he was leading me to. Hence I needed to be cautious in my response and so instead of giving a prompt reply I kept quiet for a little while. Then pressing his wrist and with a smile on my face I said, "Saheb, you yourself know that human emotions keep changing moment to moment, sometimes this way, sometimes that way. They are never stable or constant. Still if I have to give a reply at this time I would say that I would have mixed feelings of joy and sorrow." When he pressed me for further clarification, I replied, "The joy would be that my several years' thirst for revenge would be quenched. Like pouring water on fire – and the sorrow would be that my childhood friend whom I had revered and worshipped had brought me to this state. It is natural that howsoever great an enemy is, when he falls down, some feeling of sadness would be felt for a short time."

He did not know what to make out of my statements and his confusion was visible on his face. We both sat quietly for a while and then Colonel Saheb openly asked me to state anything I remembered of Baba's past youthful life, when we were so close to each other or of Baba's present high status which is *naboju, nirlaj, nagunapananu, naboshi-bharyu* [negative, shameful, derogatory, devilish or sinful], or having connection with black magic. He enquired if I had heard, seen, known or experienced any such activity in my long and close association with Baba or any other episode that would slander Him and expose Him in the public eye. Only on this one condition, that is, my readiness to mention just one or two such instances, would he help me. He also agreed to offer me Rs. 1000/- immediately and a stable job with a good salary through his influence.

Hearing this unbelievably tempting offer of immediate help and the prospect of a good steady job made me swoon. I started to feel giddy and began salivating. Oh how I

wished I had known even one such occasion or incident, or if I had seen or experienced one such instance; all my problems would have been solved at once. Where, even after weeks of agony of pleading, begging and borrowing, I could hardly make one rupee, here I was being offered a handsome amount of Rs. 1000/- at one stroke. I would have become a different Baily altogether and procuring a nice stable job I would have started my life afresh. But alas, it was not in my destiny. I told the Colonel Saheb that had I known even one such instance, I would never have waited this six to seven long years. After separating from Baba, I would never have hesitated to expose Him right at that time itself. With the might of my pen or with the help of some rich people who were against Baba, I would have taken my revenge then and there and not waited a moment longer to quench the fire in my heart. I am not one of those to remain silent in such matters.

He listened to my excited proclamation with patience, playing about with a colourful paperweight with one hand and turning about his rolling chair. When I finished speaking he got up from his chair saying that he did not believe in giving any charity or help to individuals and so expressed his inability to help me. However, he added that the bumper and attractive offer of Rs. 1000/- and a steady job was still open for me on that one condition and that his doors were always open for me at any time, otherwise I should consider this meeting between us as the last one.

He was still hopeful that if I cared to go to a secluded spot and tried to recollect my past, it was quite possible that such an incident might pop up in my mind. Such recollections have been experienced by many in the past and so in my case also it was quite possible. He even went further to state that if at all I was hesitant to report in public, he would suppress my name and publicize the episode in his own name. In such a case, it would not be a question of taking revenge; rather it would be a kind of public service. In more or less these words, he continued, "There is this Person who on account of selfishness fools the ignorant, gullible and uneducated lot, through glib talks, tempts young girls and ladies, Himself sitting on the heap of wealth by cheating and fooling people and then leaving them high and dry, throwing dust in the eyes of others, indulging in black magic to control others, making them possessed and making them His. If such a one is exposed, surely it is a very great public service. The credit for all this will only come to you; it is no small matter. And you may continue to reap the benefit of that in the future, too," he concluded. This is how our third and last meeting ended.

After that, I was least interested in staying in Poona to see the Colonel Saheb again. He too did not show any further interest in the matter. Even to think over the condition of Colonel Saheb is nothing but stupid and childish. It was indeed as foolish and immature trying to draw out dirty and stinking water from a clean, clear, holy, pure and quietly flowing river. It was my good fortune that I was not prepared to make a fool of myself thus. It is advisable then to drop the curtain on this subject so that we may proceed to something else.

SOMA HAS COME TO ME



Sorabji Manchershaw Desai (Soma)

Sorabji Manchershaw Desai's [Soma] last book was entitled *Maru Chhelu Will* [My Last Will]. After this book was published, Soma's health began to deteriorate. He was bedridden. A marriage in the family was in the offing and as per Soma's wish, Baba was requested to fix the date and time of the marriage. Baba did so, conveying His blessings. Accordingly, preparations began with invitation cards being printed and sent to the invitees. Baba even agreed to attend the marriage in view of the heartfelt request from Soma and the family.

Just four days before the marriage, Soma's health took a sudden turn for the worst and the doctors gave up hope. The family members became very tense and gloomy. In such a situation who, except Baba, could come to their rescue?

They asked Baba if it would be prudent to postpone the marriage, and if so, to advise the revised date and time. Baba, in reply informed the family not to postpone the marriage, to be completely at ease and that the function should go on as per the previously given date. He once again assured them that He would attend the function. Hearing Baba's response, all felt relieved and with renewed vigour and enthusiasm carried on with the preparation for the marriage, much against the doctor's advice.

Two days went by and on the night of the third day, Soma's health became critical. The Doctor declared the case hopeless, and asked that the members of the family be called as he was not likely to survive the night. Baba was informed by an urgent telegram. In reply, Baba simply stated, "Do not worry. I am coming." That night Soma slept peacefully. On the morning of the wedding day, Soma remained semi-conscious. No particular line of treatment was administered as the doctor too admitted that he cannot give any opinion about Soma's changing condition. So, leaving all to Baba, the family awaited His arrival.

At long last, Baba arrived in the afternoon, accompanied by a few disciples. After giving His *darshan* to the awaiting family members, He headed straight for Soma's room. Soma was lying on his bed with eyes closed and barely conscious. As Baba approached Soma's bed and before anyone could bend down and speak into his ears about Baba's arrival, Soma opened his eyes and turning his face towards Baba sat up in his bed.

All present were astonished. Bedridden for the last several months, his body had become limp, such that he could not be made to sit up even with the support and help of two persons. For such a one to get up in this manner was nothing short of a miracle.

When the doctor was later informed about this incident, he too felt that such a thing was not medically possible, but the fact that it did happen proved undoubtedly that there is the hand of some super hidden power in it. It was indeed a miracle.

Before Soma could settle down in his sitting posture, Baba placed both His hands on Soma's shoulders and gently made him lie down in bed. Thereafter, placing His right hand on Soma's forehead, Baba blessed him and with a smile indicated, "Now that I have come, do not worry and do not be anxious about anything. Just relax and keep thinking of Me and keep repeating My name." Saying this, He left the room. Soma's face brightened and showed visible signs of joy.

After Baba left, Soma surrendered to sleep. However, when he awoke after some time, he was once again critical and the doctor was immediately summoned. The family members felt concerned and wondered if Soma would survive till the wedding got over. There were still a few hours to go, and all prayed that the angel of death should spare him that long. Although people around did have faith in Baba, they were rather anxious about the final result. At last the auspicious time for the wedding came and the ceremony went well. All were overjoyed.

The married couple [Minoo and Bapai Desai] took Baba's *darshan* first. Baba indicated that they should quickly go to Soma's room and take his blessings. When they entered his room, he was struggling for life, but when the couple touched his feet and asked for his blessing, he slowly opened his eyes, took the hands of each of the wedded couple into his hands and tried to lift himself. Being unsuccessful, he closed his eyes for a second and then again opened them, lifted his head slightly, saw the couple and once again put his head back on the pillow. At that moment his eyes closed by themselves, and forever. The firmly held hands of the married couple were let loose from the now lifeless tender hands of Soma. His *pavitra praan* [pure soul] had reached the Almighty in peace and joy.

Baba who was seated in the adjoining room heard soft sobbing from Soma's room. Baba knew what had happened. He asked everyone there to be composed and not to declare to the other guests about Soma's passing over. He said it would be prudent to withhold the information, allow the guests to celebrate the function, enjoy the food and only thereafter to make the announcement. And that is exactly how it was done in accordance with Baba's wish. Baba then offered His final *sechdoh* [salutations to a dead person] and left. Before leaving, Baba informed the family that Soma was very fortunate and that he has come to Him. Therefore, no one should mourn his death. On the contrary, they should feel happy that Soma has gone to Baba.

Baba as well as the mandali did not join in the function or partake of the food. They were all the time inside the house. Being all-knowing, He knew everything from the very beginning and allowed the flow of events as He willed. There is no doubt that there was Baba's hand in all that happened, which brought about the desired dual result of joy and sorrow.

[Several years after the death of the couple, Cyrus Khambata happened to visit their daughter Dr. Meher Desai at her residence in Bombay and in the course of conversation recounted this incident for her validation. Meher, while confirming the sequence of events, said that a very important aspect of this incident was missed out. She informed that when her parents met Baba at a later date, they thanked Him once again for His presence at their wedding and saving the situation.

At that time Baba indicated, *Patang to chaar dara pehlech kapai gailo; aito h mai maanjo pakri raakhelo*. [The kite was cut four days ago; it was I who held on to the string].

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai