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Content

That's how he plays the game with us. You see, he was our household Baba, with us all the time. So naturally we didn't remember all the time that he was God, but he would remind us casually. In Guruprasad [at the '62 darshan], suddenly it was like quicksilver, there was so much excitement, they would just pour in, wave after wave, we women who were not participating actively in the darshan, we who were behind the scenes, seeing if Baba needed anything, or looking through the glass panes, or even through the cracks in the doors if it was a smaller darshan, we were witnessing the darshan but we were not participating. So, we would wait for the time when it was all over. There would be a wonderful wave of Baba's love and Baba would come inside and change his sadra, [and] just be our Baba again. He might say, "What's for lunch today, Naja?" Or turn around to me and say, "What book are you going to read to me now?" We just waited for that. And Baba would be in his coat, [maybe] the rough, gray one, or one that had been frayed at the edges because he liked it so much that he didn't want a new one, you know, our Baba -- that is what we missed.

At those times the other Baba would be there, strongly. First we saw everyone in the One, and now we saw the One in everyone. But we terribly, sorely missed that Baba which was just our household Baba, and it doesn't grow less by time, really. Sometimes we miss him more now, whereas in the past there was his work that took him away from us, and we existed by wanting whatever was his pleasure, his joy. Baba used to say his children were coming and "you will see..." Now we are watching, we are seeing, and it is for you all that he wants us here, but ... Even going to Baba's samadhi for darshan is more for you all than for us, because if it were for us we would like to go individually, to sit alone at the samadhi, but as I tell people, although we want that, we don't need to do that. Because if you are anywhere, in the samadhi, in Baba's room, in the garden, if you are wholeheartedly with Baba you can be anywhere. Some have come to us and said how touched they are when Mehera is in the samadhi. Some [who have said that] are not even Baba lovers and yet they have felt that. Everybody should have the opportunity of seeing that, but the Baba who would come on the lift chair from the women's side to here and just be so human, we miss. I know Baba is here but keep longing for that which we had and you will have it. No longing ever goes unfulfilled. Time? What is time? We talk of time because time is an agent of illusion. Time does not belong to any reality, which is why we always measure things in terms of time. But his coming before us, manifesting as man, is nothing but the fulfillment of all the longing and all the promises.

You know, sometimes I was a bit naughty and when Baba would come, I'd have a little smile inside me, seeing that Baba had made some promise, but I didn't believe that he kept all his promises, and what's more I didn't see why he should. So one day when Baba

said some promise to someone I had that little smile on the inside, [though] endearingly [rather than cynically]. Baba turned to the others and said, "I am the only one who never breaks a promise." But we go by the time factor, that he didn't do it now. So for Baba, anything longed for, anything asked for, will be fulfilled, if it is for him.

I remember in 1968, December, that was the last time Baba appeared to his lovers for the darshan here in Meherazad, for Mehera's birthday and Dara and Amrit's wedding. About 300 lovers were called, from the areas around Ahmednagar, and Pune, some from Bombay and of course Amrit's family members from Dehra Dun. Baba was seated on the veranda, and his lovers were streaming by and even at that time Baba was giving of himself. We knew Baba's physical body wasn't up to the strain but he was still giving of himself so freely, so Oceanically. There were some who were offering of themselves through singing at the time (in the sense that such an offering is like offering flowers), so the Twins were singing, "There's a Hole in the Bucket," and Baba turned around and smiled. Najoo Kotwal, a Baba lover from Bombay, one of the old-timers, who had been with Baba as a child. She sang a song that was not a Baba song ["Come Back to Sorrento"] but there are so many songs that could have been written for Baba. Here is this song she was singing, we saw Baba completely occupied by giving of himself, yet when she came to the last line of the song, "waiting for you but in vain," Baba stopped her and asked her to sing the last line of the lyric as changed by Him to, "waiting for you not in vain" because he said that waiting for him was never in vain. She still sings the song with that change in place of the original words, because waiting for him is never in vain. That's the whole message -- for him it is never in vain. It's all up to you, the measure of your longing. To what measure is your longing? That much will be given to you, no more, but no less.

So I say, "Long to be with him when he is again man on earth," It may happen, but if I were to long for anything it would be that -- it's the only thing to long for.

This morning I had the feeling of missing Baba, very much. And I said, "What? After 16 years? Mani, you're a fool." But it is wonderful to be his fool. When I do something that I am not really proud about, when I don't feel I am really pleasing him, I want to dissociate myself from him. I talk to myself in the third person. I start ranting, "So stupid, so dumb, how could she do something like that..." and now sometimes someone hears me and says, "Who's that? [whose behavior are you complaining about?]" and I say, "[I'm complaining about me!]"

Baba grants all that longing, but he also takes care of the material side. He is so compassionate, so understanding, so wholly understanding, and when you call out to him, (because that is what prayer is all about), he helps. It may be a different answer from the one you are looking for, but even that he takes care of. Because you see when he appears as man to us, everything that he does (because he is God, because he is Reality) everything he does is a blessing -- to the one it is said to, a blessing to those who are connected to that person, it is a blessing to the whole world. The blessing is not always obviously sweet to us, but if only you will wait and have patience, you will find that nothing that he gave was not a blessing in the end.

My father was like that too. Even when [Mulog -- LMOOnline, p. 635] cheated him out of his whole business and livelihood, all there was on his lips was a blessing for him. Even though he was cheated into signing a false statement by the person who thereby stole the business, a person whom he had trusted and helped by taking him into the business, the one who had him sign a false statement that resulted in the whole business being taken over, Father had only a blessing for him.

I remember when I did something as a child, pestered Mother for something too much, I knew when my father was displeased.

About my Father, it's a long story. My father had left home as a young boy, left his native land of Persia, seeking God in Persia and then in India. After my father had traveled miles and miles, a voice had said to him that it was God's will that he should rejoin the world [from his prior life as a wandering mendicant]. God had said to him that he had to become a householder, and my father would find what he was seeking in his son. Anyway, when [my father became a householder], his household, after the wedding, consisted initially of Father, Mother, and Mother-in-law. When that happened, [a domestic crisis arose since] my Grandmother, his mother-in-law had the thought, "What to do? My new son-in-law has vowed to God to be a vegetarian." But vegetarianism is not possible in a household of Iranis. Iranis can't do without their meat. "We can't cook something separately for him all the time. This is not right," thought Golandoon, the mother-in-law. So one day she cooked a rice dish and she embedded meat in it, hiding it under the rice. She gave it to my mother, and said, "Now go and serve this to him." My father ate it, including some meat, and said to my mother, "Shirin, God forgive you, you don't know what you have just done." Shirin, who was only really a child, had no idea what she had done, but that night she had a dream. In the dream she saw a big black man with very little clothes on. In one hand he had a whip, and in the other hand he had a glass filled with a red liquid, which she realized was blood. The man said, "Drink this." She responded, in a pitiable tone, that she didn't want to drink it but the man cracked the whip. This sequence, his demand and her refusal, repeated twice more, and after the third she woke up crying and called out loud for her mother. Her mother said, "May God forgive me. What have I done? What have I made my daughter do?"

After this, my father ate meat. My father used to say that everything from God is a blessing, whether it is suffering or joy, a calamity or happiness. Just as Baba had told us in the New Life, [that we should] remain indifferent to slander or praise, joy or unhappiness. That gift my father had, so when there was meat he ate it. When there was nothing but gruel, to him it was the same.

At school in my youth, I and all the other girl students were expected to wear uniforms -- a dark blue cotton skirt and a white blouse with a tie. I wasn't usually particular about clothes. I wasn't fanciful about, "I must have this or that piece of clothing," although I was very particular about food. I wanted my meat and fish and didn't like vegetables ... things like that. But one day I saw a girl in our convent wearing a finely pleated satin skirt in place of the required cotton skirt. Small, small, small pleats and when she walked, I think she purposely swung her hips a bit. The effect was that it moved like an accordion. That

captured me, and I decided that I had to have one too. Wherever that girl walked, my eyes followed her. So, I went home and told my mother that I had to have a satin skirt with pleats -- lots of pleats.

"What?" said mother. She couldn't understand, and I was arguing with her. My father said, "Mani, may God do you good. Why do you pester mother?" I went on about how I needed this fancy skirt because mine was too plain. Then my father said something I still remember. "If anybody says your skirt is too plain and not good, say, "Whatever is, is. If you like it, fine. If you don't like it, fine." And that is how it should be with us, whether the best of things, whether the worst of things, all is well. He had that same relationship to every material thing, every incident.

Remember I told you about the theft of Father's business? My father and mother had to go to court [In response to a question Mani says this took place in 1929-30 when Mani was about 11-12 years old], because we had to protest that father's assistant had stolen everything by invoking a document that my father had signed without looking at it. But in court and under questioning my father spoke well of his adversary, the young man. He said, "Of course it is not the young man's fault, I did sign it." Shirin was not happy that my father approached it like that, but Father said, "Shirin, you do not see what I see. I see ahead. The young man is going to have to suffer." My mother was beside herself, the lawyer was upset at Sheriar's way of complimenting the young thief.

The lawyer would create a document, from time to time, in English. This posed a problem because my mother, although highly intelligent, did not understand English. Whenever a new document would be received, my mother would take it to her friends who would translate it and tell her that it was alright to sign and return the document.

Mother was a very methodical person, and one of her patterns would be that she would take out her umbrella when she went visiting, and I could tell, when coming home after school to an empty house that she had gone to visit if the umbrella was missing.

While the court case was in process, there was energy, activity, stimulation, momentum in the house every day. But one day I went home and there was a silence, a stillness, like the sudden silence that comes after a lot of people have been talking all together in a room, and when everyone stops there is a kind of stillness? I had not my mother's intuition, which she had to a very high degree, and I wasn't as observant as she was, but even I felt that something had happened but I soon came to find that we had lost. There was no emotional explosion that I might have expected from Mother. But I heard Mother say to Father, "Sherog, we have lost everything!"

But my father responded, "But Shirin, how can we lose? We have won, long ago." My father had the perspective that covers not only one life, but many lives.

In situations like this where Sheriar denied the importance of material concerns, a lot of suffering was done by my mother. She had saved little things like jewelry and earrings to pass on to the next generation, set things aside for the daughter or son when he or she

came of age, a kind of Zoroastrian practice common in her generation, but now everything was wiped out, paying for the court and the lawyers and we of course did not have money to appeal.

This interaction between my mother and father, by the way, was typical. I have often heard my mother say to my father regarding some situation, her perspective, very practical and logical, not a note out of tune. He would respond from God's angle, the spiritual angle, rather than the material angle that mother had so beautifully expressed. All through my childhood I would hear my father's counterpoint to my mother, and I would think, "Ah yes, that is right..." Another thing that was right about it is that it would always calm Mother.

However, in the ensuing years my mother had to see that the party who had injured us was prospering, and this was not easy for her. She could see [Mulog] building more properties, buying more horse carriages, and she couldn't escape seeing it right in front of her face or hearing about it.

I feel that the business and all that was only used by Baba for that period, and the court case wiped clean all our money and her incidental possessions. Baba wanted us to have it for that period, but now he didn't want it going forward.

The judge made a remark in court, I was told, that though the young man clearly had done bad, he couldn't [substitute his judgement for the signed document].

This was all Baba's working. We were not meant to win. This injustice was meant to be done, because Baba was wiping the whole thing out. The toddy shop [the business Sheriar had been in], it was finished -- it was only ordained to be there up to a certain time. Baba had fixed who was to be father, mother, sister, brother, now there was no need.

[This still left children to raise, and somehow money had to be earned. Baba was living his ministry, his brothers were mostly with him, and] mother asked Baba if he would send at least one elder brother home to her to help. "Look at me," Shirin would say, "I have four grown sons and not one will come home to help me." [All these references to grown sons carefully to distinguish Adi Jr. who was still a young boy.] Baba would say that he would send one or another, but he never did.

To make living possible for them, Baba himself would send money. It had to come from him. What Baba would send every month was not much, but my mother could be very frugal, very economical, so they managed. I really felt strongly that Baba had wiped the slate clean and now the dependence came from him, as it should.

On a different topic, I look back to try to find the moment when my mother let go of Baba as her son and gave him to the world. She fought to hold onto him, but in the end, though it was a lengthy process, I saw the final thing. It happened like this:

I was educated in a Catholic school, the Convent of Jesus and Mary. I loved it. I loved the nuns, I loved the Catholic Church, Baba was very much there for me, and the school was within walking distance of our home -- it was not far away. I would come home for lunch, and my mother, being very practical and methodical as I told you, would have food on the stove being kept warm, everything just so, the table set, all of that. But one day I came home earlier. Something had happened, I don't know what. It was the time of the British raj, and maybe a British governor had died. In any event, school was suspended due to this event. Mother was not expecting me. I quietly opened the door, which was not latched, and I went in and stopped. I saw a very unexpected sight. You see, in the house, like many Zoroastrians of the period, we had quite a few pieces of Victorian furniture, carved, heavy. For instance, we had a dining room table, with its one wooden leg carved to resemble three dragons. Cupboards and beds -- quite a few such items were in the house. But there was one cupboard that my mother never left unlocked. She didn't use it. When I came home that morning, I saw that cupboard was open and Mother was seated in front of it. On her lap was draped a pair of trousers and a coat, sort of a suit. She was holding it, and I could see silent tears were falling from her eyes on the clothing. I couldn't move. I recognized that Baba had worn these clothes to college, and the other things in the cupboard were also clothes of her son. And now she was parting from the clothes, giving Baba to the world. A few days later I opened the cupboard, which was no longer locked, and found it to be empty. She must have given away the clothes.

Going back to the moment of my return to home, I stood there, motionless and soundless as far as I knew, but she eventually realized I was there. She didn't want me to see, and hurriedly switched to her practical self again, saying "What are you doing here? Is something wrong at school?" So I only had a glimpse of that personal occasion with her memory of Baba. Babajan had told her, "He's not your son, he's for the whole world," and she had finally acceded.

These talks just give the essence, the fragrance of the times. In spite of the attempt we make, I feel that these talks are empty, kind of hollow and full of holes. That is what a flute is like -- his breath comes through and then you all can hear it. Because these talks are his, because he can handle it, because it is his breath coming through it that is why you can hear some of that music. We don't actively ask him [to wind it all up], but it's just passively a marking time. He is handling it, in charge, but day by day we are receiving, seeing his reflection from so many of his lovers, his children.

You know I sit out at that office [on the veranda in the Trust Compound, since she at that time was Chairman of the Trust] and see the birds, the chipmunks, and I love looking out. That is how the Family Letters were composed. On one occasion at Meherazad, I remember looking toward the mandali hall and seeing a very striking bright shining object on the ground. I got up, approached it carefully, and discovered a very small particle of a little stone that had perfectly reflected the sun at the right time and the right place.

Likewise, his reflections are many, including us, including you, and our job is just to reflect, not to purify ourselves by action, but to keep clean, pure inside, not dusty. Trying to describe Baba I use the simile of the soft pink rose, but also the majesty of the sun.

I don't so much remember Baba's visits to my family, since I was with him after I was thirteen and a half. I do remember when I used to have the chance to visit Baba wherever he was, Meherabad, or Nasik, or Toka. Baba visited many places. I would just live for the time to be with Baba. It must have been since I was a baby. Even when I was six years old I used to say to Mother that I wanted to live with Baba. I was never going to marry. So Mother would say, "So you're going to live with Merog? What are you going to do? You can't do without your meat, fish, eggs. No matter how beautifully I cook the vegetables, okra, spinach, you stick up your nose at it." In fact, Baba didn't like vegetables for a long time. It may be a family trait. Baba was an absolute vegetarian for many years, though.

I said, "That's alright. I'll eat rice and dal."

There's a traditional Parsi dish, dhansak, that incorporates dal and can be made with meat. On this particular day, Mother had made dhansak, some brown rice, and along with that she had made minced meat cutlets. It's a traditional pairing like fish and chips, dhansak and kebab. But one day there was no cutlets, just the dal and meat. I saw that and just pushed my plate away. Mother saw that -- she was very shrewd. "Now listen, Mani," she started, "the butcher didn't have the minced meat..." I cut her off and told her I wasn't hungry. She knew I was hungry but I wasn't going to take the dhansak without the cutlet. "Alright," she said, "and you are going to go live with Merog? They just have goat's milk there."

I rejoined that I liked rice and dal, because it is true. According to me, it's the nearest substitute to anything civilized. So eventually I went, and it was very much like being in a convent, but more strict, and I know because I have seen the various convents, and have been much associated with convents and nuns, and I knew this was even more real than anything like that. Now look at the way Baba works. He didn't say, "Now Mani, you stop eating (this or that)." He gets to one through his own weaknesses or attachments. Baba sent me for some reason to a doctor. Now I've had these indirect orders from Baba more than once and they are the most difficult to follow. If Baba says, "Give up (so and so) for me," that's one thing. "Give the scarf you like to her," that's one thing. But now Baba says, "Go to the doctor and do whatever he tells you to do..." Now that's shifting my allegiance from one place to another and that to a complete stranger who doesn't know me, who doesn't know Baba. In those days I couldn't have even thought of complaining to Baba or groaning and moaning about it. So I went. You know what he says, that wretch? Eat no dal of any kind. Every week a big dose of castor oil! Which every child hates. And spinach -- I couldn't stand spinach. Boiled spinach -- I hated it. This doctor must have been Baba's agent.

Now I come back to the ashram, and as you probably know dal means chana dal, chick peas, there are an entire family of dals. We make every conceivable thing with chick pea flour, whether sweet or sour, hot -- everything. Naja who cooks for us, used to put onions, chilies, coriander leaf, and make egg-free omelettes for us. Now I couldn't even have that. Poor Naja would make wheat-flour omelette for me. Have you ever tried wheat flour omelette? Don't. Take a piece of leather instead. I used to fight with it to extract any

taste. Chew and chew -- I was young, and hungry. It's extraordinary when you give something up for Baba. You don't feel the lack, but it is difficult. You never feel deprived.

But anyway, this went on for three years. Now see how Baba reverses things, so naturally. We were all having rice and dal, and Baba looks at my plate and says, "What's the matter, you don't like rice and dal?" I assured Baba that I loved it. He went on, "Then why aren't you having some?"

"Baba, I'm not allowed to."

"What? Who said so?"

"The doctor."

"The doctor says you are not to have rice and dal? The doctor is nothing but a barber. He doesn't know a thing. Come, have rice and dal."

So that day Baba served with his own hand and it was more delicious than any meat pillau that I had ever had,"