

KG-001A**Arnavaz Dadachanji: The Life of Nariman Dadachanji**

Meherazad, India

February 1975

28:03

Note: Continues on KG-001B

Content

Dara asks Arnavaz to talk about Chanji. He was Nariman's uncle as well as mine, the first member of the family to come to Baba. His wife left him for another man and he was very unhappy. In the 1920s divorce was unheard of. My granny was do upset to hear about it that she said she would commit suicide if Chanji divorced. Uncles said divorce should be taken, otherwise all the responsibility would fall on him, so the divorce was taken. Uncle was the manager of a film house in Bombay, and later he was so interested in film that he came to own a movie theater, and he had a partner who was the source of finance. Good movies but eventually it ran at a loss. English pictures, Indian pictures, how could a full house run at a loss? Partner was swindling him. Debt grew, and he became more and more frustrated, and he was unhappy with family life, and debt, so he thought there was nothing to live for, so he should end his life. Uncle went to Chowpatty beach in Bombay at dinnertime, a lonely beach since Bombay of those days was very sparsely populated.

Baba was at the beach that same day. He was in Bombay, living in the Bharucha building. Baba saw Chanji, and sent Naoroji to see him where he was sitting. Naoroji knew Chanji and knew that he was very unhappy. Baba told Naoroji to call him, and brought Chanji to Baba. Baba just inquired for a few minutes, talked to Chanji and said the next day he should come to visit Baba at Bharucha building. The next morning Baba sent Naoroji to bring him rather than waiting for him to come. Baba asked Chanji if he wanted to tell Baba something and everything was poured out by Chanji. It was pathetic and all were touched who were around Baba. Chanji felt so relieved. Baba said, "will you do what I tell you? Leave everything and come to me in my ashram."

Chanji had gone to the beach with the idea of tossing himself into the sea, but Baba was there to save him.

Naturally Chanji had business, and Baba gave him a few months to wind everything down. Family was wild, because in Zoroastrianism there is no concept of master or guru, so Chanji wouldn't be able to explain in terms the family could understand so the family would not interfere.

Chanji came to Baba in 1924 when Baba was talking. 3 or 4 months later, my father who was a contractor, had a job to build something in Pune, and Chanji

convinced the family to come to Ahmednagar to see Baba, and that is how we all came to Meherabad-- big group of Dadachanjis, and that was the first time the family met Baba and I was only 8 years old at the time. Later, when Baba came to Bombay, Byculla, RustomBagh, he used to stay at our house, which was a joint family house, also belonging to Chanji.

After joining Baba, Chanji went everywhere with Him, which meant going to Toka with Him. There was a river there. Chanji got somehow caught in the current and he was drowning. The mandali pulled him out, but Chanji felt that he went down twice, and the third time he was going under he shouted Baba's name and he felt a great hand just pull him to the surfaced. Chanji felt that he knew what death was like. He came and told the family, and the family was so impressed. My granny used to worry about my uncle and she wanted him to re-marry. Chanji was with Baba and she did not understand the ways of Baba and she went on and on. When she knew she would not remarry, she decided to show his horoscope to a horoscope reader. Granny went with the aunt, showed Chanji's horoscope to the man who got angry telling them that the man was dead. (What were they trying to pull?) "But there is no life in this. He's dead!" Granny came home perplexed. She thought maybe the horoscope reader made a mistake, but then when the drowning incident was narrated (to impress the family that if he had not been with Baba he would have been dead) it suddenly clicked with my granny what she had from the horoscope reader. Baba is a great man, to granny based on this incident. From there onwards, granny stopped pestering my uncle to marry, and not only that, she started having faith in Baba.

Chanji was the only secretary of Baba at the time, and he traveled with Baba ten or eleven times on major trips abroad, and also all over India. He was very close, and kept correspondence with western and eastern lovers.

Chanji had humor and wit and a wonderful nature. He was superb, would make us laugh and he was so loving in nature, and wherever he would go, people would love him. And since he had brought us to Baba we loved him all the more. Baba used to have great fun with him, and the mandali used to have fun with him. He was very intelligent, so particular about Baba's work, the smallest things, but he tended to be very absent-minded about things -- he would search for his specs when they were on top of his head. When they used to travel by train, they would go by third class, and he would carry his own water bottle with him, but he would leave the house and then come running back for the water bottle he had left behind. All the arrangements of travel he had to do, and that meant that he had to come to Bombay quite often. In those days Baba had to travel by ship. Once he went to London. It takes 13-15 days to reach London from Bombay. Yet Baba sometimes would only stay 2 days in London, so he traveled 26-30 days just to be in London for two days!

Chanji died in Kashmir, and it was such a shock to everyone, not only the family but also the mandali and Baba Lovers all over the world because they loved him so

much.

Chanji's death: In May 1944, Baba sent Chanji to Bombay and told Chanji that bring all his belongings from Bombay because he would not be back to Bombay for a very, very long time. He stayed for a few days, and he was alone with Arnavaz in the house just before he was to go to the station. Chanji was very sad, and he said, "Well Arnavaz, I am not going to come to Bombay for a very long time." I thought that Baba's long time could be months. No, Chan said, and there was some undercurrent in his voice that made Arnavaz feel that he would not be coming back. Chanji went to the station but he was told by Baba not to tell anyone where he was going, because Baba told him not to let anyone know where he was going. He was very sad. I feel that he knew his death was imminent. He loved all of us, Nariman particularly, and I used to tease Nariman that Chanji will give all his inheritance to you. But this was a joke, because Chanji had nothing. Nariman used to give Chanji clothes and whatever he needed.

This actually happened. The connection Nariman had with Baba was so deep and close that she feels that it did happen, and Chanji's inheritance was that connection with Baba.

Baba went to Raipur, and then to Kashmir in July or August and there Chanji was kept in the hospital and within a week he died. Baba sent a telegramme to us, and we couldn't believe that Chanji died. He was hale and hearty and now he is dead?

Baba sent to Adi Sr., but also he did not tell where Chanji died. Some men mandali cried to hear of his death. Later Baba came back and asked why Chanji had to die, he was only 52! Baba replied, "I saved him twice (Beach, Toka)..." tape ends