

---

## Meeting Meher Baba (1 of 3)

---

### Ann Conlon

Meher Spiritual Center, Myrtle Beach, SC, USA

May 24, 1981

22:39

**ANN CONLON:** I had just been working for years as a newspaper reporter in Westchester County, New York. Perfectly content with my life, happy as a clam, and I wasn't looking for anything. I met a girl in the kitchen and on the refrigerator door she had a picture of Baba and without knowing who He was, I thought he had the kindest eyes I'd ever seen. She started talking about him, a little bit but very carefully because she knew that I was a Catholic and she didn't know what kind of reception she'd get. I didn't have any background in Eastern religion. So she started out trying to explain what a master was; but still spending about six months beating around the bush about who He was. Then her younger sister started showing up at these coffee klatches and she was a lot less patient than her sister Ginny.

Finally, one day, she just came out and said, "Well, He's the Christ, take it or leave it." I had had a feeling that is what they were leading up to and when she said that just everything inside of me just turned right over. I accepted it immediately. It sounded absolutely right. Well, I was content with that. I didn't feel at that moment or for some time after the need to meet Baba or to make any personal contact with Him. I was content knowing that. It was a very magic time. I can still sometimes get the feeling that the entire atmosphere, everything was sort of breathless you know and fragile and had a real magic to it.

Well, in 1958 Baba was coming back to the United States and Ginny and Liz asked if I wanted to come down here and meet Him. At the time Baba said that only those who love Me and are willing to obey Me should come. And my mind started going and I thought, "Well, I don't even know what love is, let alone whether I love Baba" and I thought if I couldn't say I loved Him I shouldn't come. You know, so I didn't.

The last night that Baba was here in Myrtle Beach in 1958 and I was home in New York. I was sound asleep and I am not a person who remembers dreams, very infrequently. But about 4:00 or 4:30 in the morning, I woke up scared out of my wits, sat straight up in bed and saw Baba standing at the foot of the bed and He was wearing the light blue coat you see Him wearing sometimes in the movies, looking very young. He had one hand on the bedpost and the other hand I can see Him standing, you know like with His head cocked, smiling. And the thought I had was that He was saying, "Well are you coming or aren't you?" I was so terrified I jumped out of bed and I heard my heels hit the floor so I knew I was awake and He was still there which terrified me even more. And the instant that I realized that He was there, and I was awake, then He was gone. I just climbed back into bed, I thought I was having a heart attack and I immediately went back to sleep.

The next morning, I remembered what had happened and was very confused by it. Two days later Ginny and Liz came back from Myrtle Beach from having seen Baba and I told them about it. Liz said 'well, perhaps I'd like to come back down to Myrtle Beach' because they knew at that time that Elizabeth Patterson had asked Baba who could come to the Center when He wasn't here. And Baba had said, "Those who love and follow me, those who know of me and want to know more." The only condition being if someone came who had not met Baba, then either Kitty or Elizabeth had to stay on the Center at night when that person was here. That was before Dilruba was built and Kitty and Elizabeth were still living at Youpon Dunes in downtown Myrtle Beach.

I said fine and Liz and I came back down here. Liz called Elizabeth. She said I could come and I remember there was no Gateway and Pine Lodge was not being used. There was no office, there was nobody here. Kitty and Elizabeth met us at the Center Gate and Kitty got out of the car and walked up with her arms out and said, "Another one has come to Baba" and just hugged me. Nobody had ever treated me like that in my life. I'd never met somebody like that, who was so loving and open to somebody she didn't know.

I was here about a week and each night it was Kitty who came out and stayed on the Center. She stayed in the Lake Cabin and we were in the Cabin on the Hill. Every evening I got to spend with Kitty. I've never had that much time since. [laughs]

I was sitting in the Lagoon Cabin one day on the floor in front of Baba's chair not really thinking about anything. Liz and I were the only people on the Center and suddenly I felt this wave of love come from Baba to me, go through me, turn around,

go back to Baba and close up until there was just a circle of love and there was no question of who loved and who was loved. It was just the love was there and I realized that at that point and for the first time I could say that I loved Baba. But it was only because He had given me the gift of His love and it was that love that I returned to Him. He had to love me first.

Well of course at that point began my desire to really see Him and with my sense of timing Baba of course had gone back to India. He was in seclusion and we weren't even supposed to write to Him you know, let alone ask to see Him. So time went on, I was going to the Monday Night Meetings in New York that Fred and Ella Winterfeldt and John Bass ran. I got to the point where I would get very angry at people who talked about being with Baba. I was jealous of all of them, I hated them all. I used to get up and walk out of the room when they started talking about Baba which Beryl Williams thought was hysterically funny. But Beryl and Kitty and I think Ella and Fred at that time had permission to write to India under certain circumstances and they all at one time or another would mention in the letter how much I wanted to meet Baba. Occasionally there would come back a letter to them from Mehera or Mani saying that Baba realized how much I wanted to meet Him and He sent me His love. Those little things you know, kept me going.

Well, along came the Spring of 1961 and one night I was reading out of the *Discourses* at the Monday Night Meeting and there was this line in there that said, "When the disciple is ready the Master comes." I thought well obviously you're not ready that's why you haven't met Him. You should be happy with what you have which is a great deal. The meeting would

be nice it would be the icing on the cake, but Baba had given me so much already that I should be content with that. I think at that point I did give up the idea that I would ever meet Him.

The next Monday night, Fred Winterfeldt came into the meeting with a *Family Letter* from Mani. Fred was an old poker face; you could never tell from his expression what he was thinking of and what was going on. He just got up very casually and started to read this letter and on page three it said that Baba says, 'Because of the longing of His lovers, He will allow them to come for one hour on any one day over a two-week period. They should not expect anything, not bow down to Him, not bring any gifts, not expect any discourses, just stay the one hour and go straight home.' [This is paraphrased and not direct quote – See page 100 *Family Letters*]

When we got the letter there were nine days left out of the two weeks that Baba had set aside because it had never occurred to them that anybody would make it from the West. It was too short notice and I remember at the meeting that night John Bass, saying, "Oh that's just for the Easterners it's not for us. But I was ready to start walking and realized that I had the feeling that if I didn't get there this was my one and only chance. I didn't have any money either. I had \$130 in the bank. Well, Liz was with me she was sitting next to me and she told me afterwards that she had no feeling about going which was unusual for her because she had had to go through a great deal to get to Baba in the first place, extreme difficulty, and she would walk over anybody to get to Baba. But she said she thought that if she turned and looked at me and I looked like I wanted to go she was going to give me the

money. And she said, she turned and she looked and it was obvious that I wanted to go.

She waited until after the meeting was over and she called her sister and they had a joint bank account and she asked Ginny if she would mind if she cleaned out the bank account and they'd send me to India. Ginny said, "No" she agreed. They had enough in the bank for one person to go. The fare then was \$1050.00 so she thought that neither one of them would have the nerve to go off to India and leave me behind after all those years of telling me about Baba that it wasn't fair. So she offered me the fare and I accepted it because it was obviously out of their love for me and their love for Baba. There were no strings attached and I accepted it.

The next morning which was a Tuesday I called Air India and asked for the first flight to Bombay. They didn't fly every day then, they flew every five days. The next flight out was Thursday night, so I figured I leave Thursday night, I'll be in Bombay Saturday morning and see Baba Saturday afternoon. I didn't even know where Pune was. How big can it be?

[Laughter]

Get back to Bombay Saturday night and get on the 1:00 AM flight Sunday morning and be back in New York Sunday afternoon and be back at work on Monday.

[Laughter]

and I'd only have to take one day off. One day and one night because I wasn't due for any vacation and my Editor had fired another reporter the week before for going off to Florida on short notice. But I went in and I booked the reservation. There was a lot of giggling on the phone from the Air India man, like it sounded a bit strange to

him anyway. I went into my Editor and I thought I'll quit if I have to, because I am sure that this is my only chance and if I don't try I'm never going to see Baba. I walked up to him and I said, "Vic I have a chance to go to India for the weekend."

[Laughter]

"I need someone to work for me Thursday night and all day Friday and I'll be back on Monday."

[More laughter]

I just waited for him to start screaming and he stood up and said, "Well, of course you have to go." He never asked why to this day as far as I know he doesn't know why. He turned to his Assistant Editor and he said, "Hey Harry, Ann is going to India for the weekend we'll have to get somebody to work for her."

[Laughter]

I had never been out of the country, so I didn't have a passport and I thought you probably just walked in somewhere and got one, right? Ain't nothing to it. I asked for, "Can you give me a couple of hours and let me go arrange a passport?" I went down to the County Clerk's office and got there just before he closed. He waited for me to go across the street and get a pictures and come back and I filled out all the papers and he said, "Now when are you going?" and I said, "Thursday night" He said, "But it takes three weeks to get a passport" and I said, "But I'm already booked on a flight and he said, "Well, you take these papers into the passport bureau in New York" and he said, "See this woman," he wrote her name on the envelope, "and tell her I sent you and maybe she can help you."

So, the next morning Ginny went with me and we went into the Passport Office. This

is towards the end of May it is the beginning of the peak travel season to Europe and other places overseas and the place is jammed. But we found this woman who was sitting alone at her desk, no line in front of her, having a cup of coffee and talking to somebody else. And I walked up to her and gave her the envelope and she looked at it and said, "Come back in three hours and I'll have your passport." I said, "When does the Indian Consulate close because I have to get a visa." She says, "Well then you better come back here in an hour because they close at 1:00 and you'll miss them." At that point it began to seem obvious that no one was going to say 'No' to anything and that this was going to work. Ginny and I went over to pick up the ticket at Air India and they had gotten a bit confused and had booked me out on we'll call it May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1961 and back to United States on June 1, 1962; because who went to India for the weekend? So, we got that straightened out and the agent said, "Lady, I went to London for tea once but you make me look like a piker."

[Laughter]

I asked him then, I said, "Where can I send a cable because I thought there was a line in that letter, Family Letter, which said that Baba would not wish people to come a great distance or a great expense for so short a time because he might give a better opportunity in his own way. I'd been hearing that for years and I didn't believe Him. I wasn't sure if it was an order, or it was His compassion for people who couldn't come. I mean, it did seem confused to us then. I can look at it now and it seems very clear.

I thought I will cable Baba and if it's not right it will give Him a chance to cable back and say don't come. So the cable

office was right around the corner from Air India and we went over there and I thought well I will try and cover myself in this cable. What I said in the cable was "No distance too great, no expense too high, I am arriving and will arrange my own transportation." Because the distance wasn't anything by jet and the expense was nothing because it wasn't my money.

[Laughter]

Okay. Standing there writing out the cable a man from Air India comes running into the cable office and he said it had occurred to them that I was going to India alone, that I didn't really know anyone there and if I would come back to his office, he'd make some arrangements. We went back there and he had already telexed his Bombay office and he said, "You will be met, we'll get you on the train to Pune, you don't have to worry about anything."

I went back and got the passport and went running over to the Indian Consulate and that was at the point where I thought I might have trouble because Fred and Ella had told me that the Indian Government was getting a little bit itchy about young Americans even at that point in '61 coming to India, staying on beyond their visas, getting in trouble, losing their money, and it was getting to be a real hassle for them. So that they were being very strict about wanting to know why you were going to India. And also, Baba didn't want any publicity at that time, so I shouldn't tell them why I was going. On the form when they wanted to know why you were going to India I put down I was going to see an old family friend who had been ill and this might be my last chance to see him. All of which in a way was true. Baba had been very ill.

When I handed him the papers, I asked the clerk, "Now how long is the visa going to take?" and she said, "Three days" and I said, "Well, gee I'm leaving Thursday night." And she said, "Well, in that case we'll just have to help you won't we?" She said, "You come back tomorrow." This is Wednesday, the flight's going Thursday. She said, "You come back tomorrow at 10:00 and I'll have the visa for you."

Thursday morning Liz took me by the hand and we went in and we got the visa and it was all ready. I went back and finished packing and Ginny and Liz took me to the airport Thursday night, the flight was leaving at 10:00. It was pouring rain and the last I saw of them they were on the observation platform at Kennedy Airport hugging each other, jumping up and down in the rain. They were happier than I was.

[Laughter]

Well, when I got into Bombay, very early in the morning and walked down the steps from the plane there was a Customs Officer and a young man from Air India. My cable had been received by Baba, it had been delayed in Bombay and they had received it only a few hours before I was due to land. Baba had Mani telegraph Air India and ask them to meet me and had tried to get ahold of a Baba lover in Bombay who would come out to the airport, but he missed me, and we just crossed. They rushed me through customs, they didn't look at anything. And the young man from Air India bought me breakfast in the airport. He drove me out to Dadar railroad station and gave me a quick lesson in Indian money which then was a lot more complicated, you know with annas and all that stuff before they went on the decimal system. He gave me to the Station Master and I sat in his office until the train came. He put me on the

train and he found somebody who spoke English who could tell me when to get off in Pune because the station names then were all in Hindi script and I wouldn't have known where I was.

I got into Pune and on the entire trip the only thing I had to do for myself was get a cab and get from the railway station to the Napier Hotel. Mani had said in the telegram for Air India to tell me to check in there and to call Guruprasad as soon as I arrived in Pune. When I went into the hotel I walked up to the desk and without identifying myself I just said, "The first thing I need is a telephone." The man picked up the phone and he dialed a number and he listened and he handed me the receiver and had Eruch on the other end.

[Laughter]

Eruch said that Baba said I was to stay at the hotel until 3:15 and he would send someone for me. He was seeing people and the hour He had set aside at Guruprasad was 4:30 – 5:30 but he said I was to come an hour early. I think I arrived in Pune about noon. I don't remember a thing of the next few hours.

But at 3:15 it was Meherjee who came. He drove me out to Guruprasad and we pulled up in front of the steps and I bent over to get out of the car and looked up and the doors to the hall were open and there was Baba sitting at the back of the hall. I saw Him and I saw His eyes and then all I could see were His eyes. It was like they got huge and they blocked out everything else and there were shafts of light coming out from behind His eyes. I thought if He drops his eyes I'll drown in that light and then it was back to normal. I went running past Meherjee, went running up the steps and as I stepped over the

threshold into the hall, I felt again that same wave of love that I had felt in the Lagoon Cabin here, only so much stronger ...