
BABA'S FATHER

Mani S. Irani

Mandali Hall, Meherazad, India

July 31, 1990

12:22

MANI: And my father had green fingers. My father was one who constantly, his tongue; his heart I could not see but his tongue I could see. Constantly repeating God's name, yes.

[clock chimes]

It doesn't mean.

PILGRIM 1: No. Yeah. [general laughter]

MANI: It doesn't mean the moving of the lips. What he has done. Doesn't mean the moving of the lips. So, when I was little. [clock continues to chime]

Because he could have been my grandfather. I was the littlest of the family, youngest. So, when I would sit next to him and look up at him I could see, you know. The tongue going like the tongue of a bell. Constantly, "Yezdan, Yezdan." So, and anything my father he loved gardening. All Iranis do. All those in Iran they love fruit. In that little garden, in that space around the well in Baba house he planted a mulberry tree, a pomegranate tree, a henna tree, two papaya trees, a chikoo tree. I've forgotten there were two more. Something. So, you know and he just put something and he just dug a little and, and then roses and things he would put around the well. So, when he was working there, that garden flourished. Anyway Poona has good soil.

PILGRIM 2: Yeah.

MANI: But still it was beyond that. So, the Parsi, the benevolent Parsi who had father and his employer in the garden was so pleased. And somehow people would always feel something for my father. So when my father had to leave because now the next step was tea shop and then came the toddy shop. Then there were more tea shop more toddy shop. So, when he left, the Parsi gentleman pleaded with my father. He said, "Sheriarji, please, come once in a while. Just put your gaze on my garden and the garden will flourish. Don't do anything. And then take whatever potted plant you like. You are free." For sometimes I would watch my father coming down the Dastur Meher Road and a servant behind with a pot and a rose that went bob, bob, bob, you know as the man walked. And then he would come and place it around the well and then he would put it in the sun and yet all the time saying, "Yezdan, Yezdan." And you know doing his little gardening over there.

So, I used to be very interested as a child to see what did Bobo bring today? I used to call him Bobo. And mother was Memo. It's an Irani way. What did Bobo bring today? One day he brought a kundi [foreign], a pot, an earthen pot that seemed to have nothing in it. Just leaves. So, I was disappointed. I said, "Bobo, no flowers today?" He said, "Yeah, yeah. Child, Dikra [foreign]." "No, there's no flowers." And then he said something which I've remembered a number of times. He said, "Beautiful things are not always seen. You have to find them." So, "But I still don't see this." So he says, "Bend, look, look." So I bent down practically put my nose in it and then I got the fragrance of violets. And I realized that the flowers were just underneath the leaves. You know, violets used to be very shy in those days. Even violets. [general laughter]

So, then when I, I used to go to the Convent of Jesus and Mary. My education. When we have seen St. Joseph's picture I mean, father of Jesus. When he carried a staff then we have seen pictures of St. Joseph with the lilies. With the sprig of flowers shooting out of this dead staff. The staff that he carried. And so then everybody said it was a miracle but to me it wasn't at all surprising. It could easily happen to my father. [pilgrims laughing]

He'd just touch something and it would. And Baba said, the last time He said it was in 1968 in Poona. And Baba said, you know, He said, "My father, no match for him in the whole world. Which is why I was born to him." Because he set out looking for God. Right, he left home, he left country, just went out. And he wandered all over India and I didn't realize that. I mean I knew it, but when we were traveling with Baba in the Blue Bus and at times when we were climbing to in the mountains at the foot of the Himalayas. [inaudible] You know going up in the Himalayas. The Blue Bus was labouring. [Mani imitates the roaring engine]

The machine was you know going so, as if the poor bus couldn't climb but it was labouring to go up somehow. And making such a lot of noise we couldn't even talk with each other. Suddenly Baba turns around and says, "Very difficult to go up isn't it? In these mountains. The Himalayas." I said, "Yes Baba." "But My father he walked all the way."

That was one and then another time when we were in train mind you. We passed a desert in Gujarat, Kutch. Rann of Kutchun and we were going by train. And it was so hot and the wind was going around us [inaudible] sand. And we were closing the windows and all that. Baba said, "Terrible isn't it?" I said, "Yes." And Baba said, "Yet we are sitting in a train. My father, he walked. For My sake." I forgot to say that. For My, looking for Me. Even when He said he walked in these mountains barefoot. He walked all over these mountains looking for Me. And then when it was the desert He said, "He walked through this desert, looking for Me." [inaudible]

PILGRIM 3: Your father had a gift for languages?

MANI: Who?

PILGRIM 3: Your father had a gift for languages?

MANI: Not really. But he knew. No, I will tell you why. Because his accent of Hindustani was still an Irani person speaking. [foreign] [Mani imitates Sheriarji's accent] When my father said that to me I knew that I had displeased him. You know that's that strongest thing my father would say. He would say, "Why do you pester mother? May God do you good. May God be good to you." [foreign]. It's a blessing, it's a blessing. And then I knew. I mustn't go any further. Baba is not pleased. But so, I was very amazed that father who had not been to school knew Persian. My mother did not know Persian as such. She used to talk Dari like I did. And I would talk with mother in Dari. But my father taught my mother Persian. So they would sit in the evening with the Shahnameh on that sandalwood carved; that book thing. And he would read out. He taught her Hafiz and she would always have her Hafiz book with her when she came to Nasik. She would read out for all, you know.

And so my father, that is how I was named Manija. Because they were reading the Shahnameh and they were reading the story of Manija and Bejian. This Persian princess and this Bejian. And so then when she had to be rushed to the hospital. But I was also; it was a new moon day. So my Parsi neighbour said [foreign] [general laughter] "Name her Chandan." "No, it's a very old fashioned name. No, no I won't put Chandan." And so my father said, "Well we've been reading about Manija, why don't we name her Manija?" So, that's how I was named Manija.

So, then it suddenly came to me there used to be an Israeli lady, a Hebrew speaking lady you know from Israel. And she was a friend. Because we had; we were universal. We are in India. In our alley. I was an alley child. Every imaginable religion and all, we were all, all the children would play together and neighbours. And so, this old lady, very lovely looking even in her old age. And bangles from here to here. I would admire her bangles. And she would sit and she would talk with my father [foreign]. My father would [foreign].

This I was listening. And then there was another man. Now this is Persian, Hebrew. Then there was an Arabic person who was translating a treatise or a Muslim person who was writing a treatise and from Arabic into some language. So, whenever he was stuck he would come to my father. My father would point it out. I said, "What is this? Father never went to school. I go to school and studying." I never did homework though, I sure got that right. They would say, "Mani, all the children are doing their homework." I would come and throw my books and run out to play. And I said, "All the children are mad."
[pilgrims laughing]

"Their parents pay for them to learn in school. School is what it is for. Not home."
But then I thought, "How come father knows so many languages? And he never

went to school. Out in search of God." So one day I was sitting next to him I said, "Bobo, how come you know Arabic, Persian, Hebrew and you never went to school." "Yezdan. Yes child, it came to me in a moment. Yezdan." I accepted it. Children don't have those barriers. But when I grew up I thought to myself, "How could father have lied? It can't be possible you know. He never lied." If any lying was done around that was by me. I could lie at the drop of a pin. "But father never lied. How come?"

So, I asked Baba. I'm so happy I asked. I said, "Baba our Bobo said like this and like this." He accept, fine, "So, so, so what?" He tells me, He said, "So?" I said, "But Baba, he never went to school and then he knows all this?" And He said, "Yes." He said, "It's all." But I said, "In a moment?" "In a moment," He says.

And He said, Baba said, "It's all within us but it's covered." "And then how long does it take to uncover?" He points at the window or something, "How long does it take to put the curtain?" I said, "A moment." "Exactly." But then He said, "It is given though to rare people. It's rarely given. To the ones who have given up everything for Me, for God. Then it is God, is bound to give it." So nothing that you give up for Baba, for God is lost. Nothing is lost. It is always given. He takes, He has to take care of our toys. He has to see that; He's bounded by love. By that state of love with which I mean my father just gave up everything like that. So then Baba gave him all.