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## Challacombe and Italy

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### Delia DeLeon

Washington, DC

1978

11:59

**Attendee 1:** This is Delia DeLeon and this is Matthew Price and what we are going to do this evening is Delia's going to answer questions for about forty-five minutes or so and then we are going to break and have some refreshments around ten o'clock everyone can clear out and get to sleep and get back to work tomorrow. I would like to give a brief introduction of Delia for those who do not know much about her.

Delia is a very special person. She was one of the original group of Westerners to meet Avatar Meher Baba in England in 1931. She was drawn to Baba through a letter that appeared in a publication called, *Everyman* magazine which was edited by Charles Purdom, who subsequently became one of Baba's early biographers. The letter was from a man named Meredith Starr. Meredith had spent six months in 1928 in India with Meher Baba and had been sent back to set up a retreat which was set up in East-Challacombe and Devonshire, England, and his letter was referring to that retreat. Delia will perhaps tell a story of some of her experiences at that retreat; some of the people who were there and how that led to her meeting with Baba.

In 1933, Meher Baba invited Delia, along with others to come and live with Him in India forever. Delia went and then three weeks later Baba sent her and the others back.

[Laughter]

She also joined Baba in 1937 at the Nasik Ashram and was with Baba in India in 1948, in Myrtle Beach in 1952 and 1958 which was when she was last in Washington. And in 1962 at the East-West Gathering. She was also present in February of 1969 at Meher Baba's entombment. She is the Godmother of Great Britain. She has become a movie star in recent years and a very glamorous personality in the rock and roll world. Maybe she will tell us something about that too. Delia. Jai Baba!

**Attendees:** Jai Baba!

**DELIA:** I would first like to say I am very pleased to be here tonight and to meet the Washington Group and to renew my acquaintanceship with the Muirs, who I met several times in the past. We have been to Myrtle Beach for two and a half weeks and there I was very stimulated and inspired by the wonderful group of young people we met there. It was really, the dynamic energy there is something extraordinary. I also of course, went especially to be with my old friends, Kitty and Margaret and Elizabeth. The place is just permeated with His love. And it brushes on anyone who comes there, it really is as Baba said, "Love begets love and it transforms everyone who comes in contact with it." Something happens to you there.

Well now, perhaps you'd start me off by asking a question.

**Attendee 1:** Could you tell us about Meredith Starr and East Challacombe and how you found out about Baba? I'd like to say I wanted to ask that question first but any questions, you don't have to take this chronologically. Anything that pops up is fair game.

**DELIA** Well, if that would interest. First of all, I must explain that like most of those of us that came to Baba in the early days, I had come to a crisis in my life. I had been desperately seeking for some way to find God and I [inaudible] all the Saints and isms and I hadn't found an answer. And I was at that time running a little experimental theatre at the foot of Kew Bridge with my brother. When this crisis came, I came across this little cutting that I cut out from the *Everyman* magazine and something said to me, "you must go there." And I wrote to Meredith Starr and I went there and I stayed three weeks. Actually, the first person I saw was Margaret.

I liked the place very much. Some people didn't. It was an old farmhouse, converted. And it was very austere. It was strictly vegetarian. We meditated four hours every day and we had to do tasks in the house, chop wood and other things, helping. While I was there a cable came from Baba saying He was coming to the West. I couldn't stay to meet Him there, so I returned to London and an appointment was made for me to meet Him when He came to Kitty Davy's house. Actually, Baba had said He was going to spend a year at East Challacombe. But already he gave us all a taste of His way. He stirred up people, the way He changed His plans. So instead of staying there a year He stayed there ten days and then He came to London.

Now, then I had a message from Margaret saying, "Baba wants to go the theatre, and I've taken a box for Him at the Coliseum for a show called *White Horse Inn*. I told Him that we have a surprise for Him and you are to be the surprise." But I was told I mustn't go up and speak to Baba I must wait until I was called for and introduced to Baba. So I saw them go by and then I was taken into His box. And by that time Baba had taken off a hat they'd put on Him and His coat and His hair was just flowing. He looked really radiantly beautiful. I sat by Him and I can only say I wasn't conscious of the play at all. I just heard Baba chuckling because He liked comedy men and it was a very charming musical show. And at the end of it I said, "Baba, I must see you again." Then I saw Him everyday at Kitty Davy's house until He left for America. Did that answer what you wanted to know?

**Attendee 1:** Sure. I would like to hear a little bit more about some of the people that have been the circle of people that were at East Challacombe with you and some of the stories there.

**DELIA:** During that week, Kitty Davy and her brother Herbert had been down to East Challacombe in the spring, so they didn't come again in the summer. Mr. Purdom came down while I was there, Kim who was also one of the early group, Margaret was there and a whole lot of others. Those were the chief ones there. Really all of us who were destined to meet Baba at that time were drawn to this place by completely different circumstances. Baba had said to Margaret actually, "It was your love that drew me." Our searching and our love and the love that Meredith had put into this place had brought Him from India.

It was in England that He gave His first message to the West for the Paramount news reel. Charles Purdom reads His message. It was taken at the back of Kitty Davy's house and Baba points at this alphabet board and He gives this wonderful message. I think if you haven't got that film, you really ought to make the effort to try and get it because I think from the historic point of view it is very valuable. You see Baba as He looked in those early days.

**Attendee 2:** You said you heard Baba chuckle.

**Attendee 1:** Speak louder

**Attendee 2:** Chuckle.

**DELIA:** In those early days, He used to, "hmm umm hmm" like that and He used to chuckle. Later on, when He threw away the alphabet board He went into deeper and deeper silence and then He just made signs. Baba had a terrific sense of humor.

**Attendee 2:** I've seen a picture of Baba sitting with, I think it's you, in St. Mark's Square with all the pigeons.

**DELIA:** Oh, yes.

**Attendee 2:** Could you tell about the travels with Baba in Europe and I heard that He said that spot was very significant.

Delia: This was after the first Italian holiday in which we had a villa facing the sea. And it was during that period that Baba broke it and went to Assisi. During the holiday, He used to come every morning with us and sit on the rocks. And some of them went swimming, and we did excursions, all kinds of excursions with Baba.

On one of those excursions, He gave us wine, one of the few times Baba gave wine, which is very significant when a

Master gives you wine. And I'd only had it in Europe. I never had wine in England or America or in India. In Europe He gave us wine. And then we went to Venice with Him for two days. We had those photographs taken, each of us and then the group thing. He started already from that period training us in obedience. He said that He wanted us to be with Him, that He was soon going. But already some went to look at shops and then Baba gestured all right and He came back and let them. Margaret and I happened to be with Him and He said, "The West wants Me at their feet, but the East sits at My feet. He said, "No one in the East would think of leaving the Master for one minute."

**Attendee 3** You also said something, sorry, just to finish up that question about St. Marks, Venice, didn't He?

**Attendee 2:** I just had read something that Baba said that spot was very

**DELIA:** Yes, do you know all this concept of film. You see St. Mark's and Baba made us bring out pencil and paper and first of all He told us that on that spot Jesus and two of His disciples sat before the crucifixion. They were in Venice with Jesus. Jesus and two of the apostles, actually. He led us all around St. Mark's with a pencil and paper and count. He pointed out the different pillars of the circles and He said that was an exact plan of the circle of the Avatar, the inner circle, and the outer circle.

**Attendee 2:** I knew there was something.

**DELIA:** Baba was always very happy in Italy.