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## Meher Baba Center at Jafarabad & Iranian Baba Activity

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**Farhad Shafa**

Washington, D.C.

Date Unknown

43:53

**FARHAD:** Jai Baba.

**PILGRIMS:** Jai Baba.

**FARHAD:** Well Peggy and Andy and my dear brothers and sisters. I love to give a talk.

[general laughter]

In Persian, I was telling Jim this morning. The Sufis there have a saying. The say Hal and Gal. Gal is the first stage when you just talk all the time. And Hal is when you keep quiet and you really experience. So, I'm in the Gal stage.

[attendees laughing]

And both at the university and at the meetings I do all the talking. While Mr. Vesali, who is the group head, does the charging of the thing. So, I feel very comfortable talking. I usually don't say anything, [inaudible] Lots of talking.

It's very good to be here amongst you and one of the things I can't get over is that I don't feel that I have not seen you for 2 years. It has been almost 2 years. But it feels like it was just yesterday and I see everybody and say, "Hi, how are you?" That's what Baba's love can do. To bring hearts so close together. I don't know what specially you would like to hear. Maybe you would like to hear about our activities in Iran.

But before I start that there is one thing that I want to say for myself. And that's a fact that if I've been an instrument at all for Baba's work in Iran, to the extent that I've been successful or not has depended on the few years that I have spent with you and especially Peggy and Andy. And I'm sure that you people who have had such a close and direct guidance from Peggy and Andy, in later years when your opportunity comes to serve Baba you will realize how much you have learnt from them. Because now you might not notice it. But when the opportunity comes we realize that of course the discourses and the thoughts and the readings are all very good and helpful. But the living example is what really teaches. And I always at the times that I just can't take it anymore. Something comes in front of me of Andy doing something or Peggy saying something and keeps me going on.

Well so that, and to take advantage of this privilege that you have here. It's a rare one. And now Baba has really turned the key in Iran and everything is ticking. I hope it won't explode.  
[general laughter]

But I was very happy that I arrived in Iran at the time about a year before Baba decided to turn the key. So I saw what it was like and then after He turned the key and the activity started to see. I told you most of what was going on up to 2 years ago. When in my last visit. And since 2 years ago a few things have happened which are important. One is that the government has recognized the Baba community and group as a legal group. It reaches really nothing close of a miracle because of all the problems that we have. By the way I just want to mention something that I hope nothing of what I say will be printed or published in anywhere. Because I heard, I haven't received the newsletter but I heard that in one of the newsletters something about the fact that I was living next to the secret police and things of that sort was printed and those sort of things, it's best just to be a bit cautious rather than to you know indulge in anything. And the tape is just for you. Because you see you might not hear about it or know anything about it here but Iran is in a state of war. Every day that we go to the, especially the universities. That we don't know if we are coming out in one piece or not. And the riots that we've had there and the bloodshed and all the army invaded the dormitories there. And there was a lot of bloodshed and they threw out the students and all that. And as Baba would have it I am the dean of students and academic affairs for my institute where I work. So I'm close contact with these scenes and things of that sort. So, I know a little more than usual. So, this is just a private chit-chat.

And, but despite it all Baba's activities are also flourishing. The organization I mentioned and in the plans that we have for it or Baba had for it was that it would have different groups for different activities. Because I feel that to develop love you have to work at it. And if a child that you have you suffer for it and you pay attention and you do things for it. Then the love begins to increase more and more in you. The same thing with Baba. The more you pay attention the more you work at it and do things for it then it begins to sink in a little bit. And your focus begins to turn gradually from the variety of things that [inaudible].

So, I felt that it would be nice for everyone to have an opportunity to do some activity. So, we have different groups for different activities. And they're just starting and we all make mistakes. But we learn from our mistakes. We have printed cards, membership cards and lists of members. We have a finance committee. We have all sorts of different things and different people are doing it. And this has even inspired the young children of the group to. Just before I left all on their own they came up with a little pamphlet that they had put together. Beautiful one. It was a drawing of Baba on the cover and Baba's sayings. Then a poem of Rumi. Then life story of a saint. Then a puzzle, what do you call it?

**PILGRIMS:** Crossword.

**FARHAD:** Crossword puzzle. Let me show you. It's right here. If you would like. I was so happy to see this. And these are little kids you know.

**ANDY:** I'd like to say now that in the conversations with people at work or your friends or anything. It's always kind of a little playful to be able to say well I was just with a gentleman from Iran and now this is what we do not want to do. What was Farhad said was a private chit-chat and he means it. That nothing that Farhad says is to be discussed with other people. Simply because we don't know where their army is and what repercussions it could have in his life. But we have to give him the courtesy and the trust of keeping these things to ourselves.

**FARHAD:** Yes well this is just a xerox copy of it that I've brought out. And then they have made nice things. It's all hand written. And these are Baba's words. Then this a poem by Rumi. And then they have a little couplet by Saiyam and it's, they say that what is your interpretation of it? And so very interesting things. This is a saint's life and this is Meher Baba. Yea crossword puzzle which is Baba's name and then when you fill it out you find out that it's the names of the perfect masters. And people who were important in Baba's life, yes. And this is a couplet from Hafiz. They had opened Hafiz and written one from there. And this is from Saadi. About the dervishes and their manner of life and things like that. So, this shows that Baba is inspiring every age group.

So, then another project that we've been working on is a book of Baba for an introduction sort of. For people who want to get familiar with Baba. And it's a compilation of first Baba's life story, a short one. Then what Baba says about religion. What He says about mysticism. What He says the goal of life is. How you get there. What are the difficulties? Which are the sanskaras and all that? And then at the end it's the Avatar, the discourse called the Avatar. And a discourse; Perfection. Baba's discourse. So, we have put this together and another thing that we try to do there is that every project is a communal thing. It's not one person's responsibility. Everybody joins and does whatever he wants because otherwise egos get in the way and you can say you know it's my project or it's; I did this or I did that. Then it won't be Baba's work. So, we read this at the meetings many times and give it to people to read it and give their comments and correct it and do whatever they like. And then when I was here I noticed that one could make beautiful designs with Baba's name. As flowers for making ornamentations around pictures and things. So, I suggested this to the group and it was amazing that what. Even an old lady who was 60 years old, she came out with such beautiful designs. And but none of them were professionals so their hands aren't quite steady. So we will have a lot of pictures of Baba with these ornamentations of Baba's name around it.

So, and if you remember I told you that 2 of Baba's books have been confiscated by the government. So we went over there and we talked and finally they said that, "Okay, one of them we will free." And they went to the man who was responsible for it and had printed it went to collect it and they said, they have burnt. That they are burnt because they have been sitting in their thing for too long and they have burned all of Baba's books. So, if Aloba hears about this he would probably say that, "Ah all the fire that you see in Iran is because they burned those books." Maybe it is true don't know but. He's very. Anyhow so, I told the lady who was the head of that. A new head of that department and who turned out to be a friend of my mother's that we want to put another book out. And give it to some people who understand these things to read it. Because last time they had given it to some clergy people and they had, well first of all when I went and they gave me a lecture that you guys who go to America you come back with these funny ideas and you go and talk to one of these mullahs and he'll straighten you out. And the best thing I could do was not to burst out in a fury. I just said thank you and left.

But anyhow, so she said okay we'll give it next time to a good person to read. Then when I came out I was thinking that we; what we need to do now is to publicize. I mean to let people know about Baba. Because in Iran only a few people know about Baba. The books are not available anywhere. And we don't [inaudible] but we just let people know who Baba is so that those who have the connection and who can make the link. Because that's what Baba said. He said, "Give my message to people." So, we can't give His message of love because we don't have it. What we can do is to give His written messages at least.

Anyhow we thought that maybe it would be best to go to a big publishing company and give the book to the publishing company for them to print it and to publish it all over the country. And I was thinking that if we do that we will lose the copyright. The copyright will belong to that company. But I saw no other way out. And so we discussed it and everybody said, "Okay, let's do this." So, I went to the biggest publishing company and in Iran you have to know people to get things done. So, I had asked here and there and I found two people who knew the head of that thing and they told the man about us and so I went to see him. And they said, "Okay leave this here and we'll read it and we'll let you know." Then in 15 days they called and they said, "Sorry, we won't do it."

So, I said, "Make me an appointment. I want to see the head of this publishing company." And they made the appointment and they said, they probably wanted to discourage me and they said, "A week from now." And in Iran a week from now means forget it. But I said, "Okay," [general laughter] "A week from now." So, I went there and he was very pleasant. He had the book in front of him. And I said that, "Well such a person we were discussing this book and they said the best person to publish it is you." And all this talk. "And then now you say you can't do it. What's this?"

[pilgrims laughing]

And he says, "Well sorry but the boys have read it and they. We have a lot to do and this is not the type of work that we do. So we won't be able to do it." So, I said, "What can we do now? Shall we do it privately or give it to another publishing company that you will recommend?" And he said, "Yes why don't you do it privately." I said, "Well we don't know anybody to publish it. I mean we can't publish. It's not our job to publish and go around the country, distribute it and all that. And that's the main reason that we want you to publish it." He said, "I'll do the distribution for you. You do the printing. Bring it to me. I'll do the distribution." And this was just like heaven. Because both we would have the copyright to ourselves and he would do the publishing. So, Baba you see keeps us from making mistakes. And so I said, "Yes and there's also another problem and we have these photos and these designs around the pictures but our hands aren't steady and we can't make them properly." He said, "Bring it here. Let me see what we can do." So, we took it there and he looked at it and he said that, "Well no. We can't help you." But he gave us a lot of tips and hints on what sort of paper to do it. He gave us a printing shop, where to go and everything. He just gave us everything that we needed and for a professional to do this. Just a week before this happened our institute hired one, a man. And I gave so my professional work for him to do and he's superb. Absolutely superb and then beautiful calligraphy. And just a right man for it.

So, just before I left I told him about these. That we would like you to do these things here in the summer. Make the designs proper. Then we have some pictures there in Iran but I'm also going to see Hermes and get some maybe better prints.

**PILGRIM 1:** He'll be doing this on his own time?

**FARHAD:** Yes, he'll be doing on his own time and we'll pay him. I told him that you know because he gets off at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. And I told him that I want you to do this for us. So, the book after. And you know these are just latest things about the book. Daily things I won't bother you with. And then another very exciting project that we have is the center at near Yazd. At Jafarabad. Jafarabad is a village where Baidul's house is. Where he lived. Where Baba's first center in Iran was. And it's really charged. It's a beautiful place. And that is the place that we found those pictures that were hidden and all that. The first trip that I went, I went with Naosherwan and his mother. They had come and they wanted to go to Yazd. And I'd been there once so I took them. And we found these photos. And ever since and everybody who have gone there has found Baba's pictures there. We went there and cleaned the place. We took all of Baba's pictures out and then 3 people went after us and they each found a picture. It's just amazing. So, we also put bones in fish.

[pilgrims laughing]

That's right. And it is you know this much dust and dirt and everything. And all this. Baildul had one of those pictures. And it just looks like brand new. And from the first time that I went to Iran I felt that it would be very nice to have a retreat like Myrtle Beach Center here for Baba people who want to just get away and be alone with Baba for some time. For a few days you know. Could go there. And we thought about many places. Shiraz, Isfahan, Mashhad, Yazd. And Yazd appealed to me most. First of all the first it would be damn difficult to make anything there. Because it's just a desert full of sand dunes and nobody lives there for the last 20 or 30 years. Everybody has left there. But the other places have water and a nice and everything. Besides this, this is very much intimately connected with Baba's life. Baba visited there. Gave darshan there and everything.

So, as Baba would have it the dream happened. And within a year it happened because I talked to Mr. Vesali. And I said, "Look I think you know we ought to do this," and he always is very quiet. Never says anything. He just you know. I guess people whose consciousness is. Because he's conscious of that subtle world according to the books and Baba's sayings. And he occasionally mentions it. So, he hasn't been you know in the practical worldly life too much. But during the past 4 years it's amazing to see how much he has tried to leave his bliss and come and do Baba's work here. Get entangled in the nitty-gritty and all of that. So, a year ago I mentioned it and he sort of said, "Okay, yes do it." So, with the two young boys we went to Jafarabad and there's this one room which used to be a classroom. The students of which later went to Baba Prem Ashram. But the ceiling had fallen in and there was a lot of rubbish. And that was the room that we found all the pictures. So, we took shovels and we cleaned the place out and we put water and put incense and Baba's photo up and prayed and everything and said, "Baba, we want to make this your center and your retreat and so you know it of you want it of course," and all that.

So, we went and this room which for 40 years had been staying like this, that winter collapsed. Because the walls, we had to take down the walls to put a new roof on. This walls were all like this you see. And after we cleaned and we felt that that was a sign from Baba saying, "Okay, go ahead." [general laughter]

So, and as Baba would have it this young man came and I was telling everybody that, "Yes Jafarabad we have to do this there." And everybody, "You fool that place doesn't have water you can't do it." This man comes and he's from that village. His parents and all and they have land there. But of no use now because nobody lives there. And he says that, "Oh yes. I went to Baba in 1963 or 2 or something like that. And I mentioned Jafarabad that everybody has left and nobody is there. And what should I do anything there?" And Baba said, "Yes, it will be very good over there. Go and make it prosperous." "But I haven't done anything. And now yes I'll go there and do it." And this man is a sort of a lukewarm kind of with Baba. But Baba inspired him to go there in the middle of the wilderness and live like a hermit

for 7 and 8 months. And clean the place and get a bulldozer, put the rubbish out. He would call me up, "When are you coming to drill a hole, to drill well?" This that. And so he started there and later on we went there. Several trips and we dug a well there. Which reached water. And it was in the land that belonged to him. And we have a Sufi in the Baba group who had gone there and told him where to dig the well. And he had thought that since it would be in his land nobody could say that, "Why have you dug anything?" But none of us felt that it was right. We felt that the well should be in Baba's, in Baidul's house. Because that was to be Baba's center. And we had talked to Baidul's daughter in India. Gotten permission, if she would let us use it as a Baba center and she said, "Okay fine."

Anyhow they dug and it reached water. But then all hell broke loose. This land everybody claimed it and they said it doesn't belong to him and he all of a sudden found an oodle of brothers from here and there and the father-in-laws and all that. So, we said forget it. You have the well. We will dig another one in the right place in Baba's center. And we dug a well there and it reached water again.

**PILGRIM 1:** How deep?

**FARHAD:** We got water at about 40 meters deep. A man goes in and he makes a man hole and digs down. It's not like the Indian wells which is very big. It's just one hole. So, we reached water but to be able to irrigate you have to dig in the water. And then put a pump and bring the water out. So what to do now? The basic cost would be about twenty-thousand dollars. And so what to do? The only thing to do is to leave it to Baba. And as soon as we did that the money came. And twenty thousand dollars. Can you imagine? I mean I can never imagine how? And one example that I myself was involved I will tell you. For one particular project we needed twenty-thousand tomans. Some had been collected and this much was missing and all that. And I said, "Okay, I will put it." And then I came out and said, "Well I did it." I'd beg, borrow never mind. I'll somehow get it there. And at New Year's they gave me 18,000 tomans as a bonus. As a thing that I wasn't even counting on. So, there it came and I put 2 thousand tomans over it and for that. And you know it just collected that way. And we bought a generator, electricity generator. And a pump to bring the water up and this Sufi whom I mentioned. He's an expert in putting these things together. And he went there and put the cement and put the generator and did all the work. And one of the Baba lovers went there and he's there in this heat. It's very hot over there. Has left all of his family. His family is old now. Children have finished school and are working now. But nonetheless. You know he's the one who used to have a cab and give Baba's photo and water to everybody who got in the cab.

He's there. He's a little fellow. This big but just sparkles with Baba's love. And he's doing all the work there. And then I went there and we put electricity in the different rooms from the generator. And then we turn the switch on and there was

electricity in Jafarabad. It was such a joy you know. You have no feeling to see it. The run down village and we hope to. You see when we have the water up and a little activity there. All the poor people who used to live there and are now living in very bad condition in the cities, they will come back. And we'll gradually start a school and a hospital. I hope. These are still those dreams that one thinks that they may never come true but at least this much of it has come through. And of course we have had many difficulties. I don't deny but difficulties are the beauty of it. It is what makes it valuable. As Baba would say that like Meherazad where they had to bring all their [inaudible]. And besides what is important is the activity. The results are with Baba. And that's the way I feel that it is the activity itself that is what is precious. And that gives us an excuse to think of Baba and forget ourselves more.

The result will turn out whatever Baba wants. So, we slept at night in Jafarabad. Of course no beds or anything. We just slept on the ground. But hopefully in the next year the water that is up now we will build there. We will repair the building and we will grow pistachio trees and. [pilgrims laughing]

**PILGRIM 2:** Any particular reason? Pistachio trees.

**FARHAD:** Yes. To bring us out.

**PILGRIM 2:** To bring us there?

**FARHAD:** Well that too. For that region pistachio trees are just right. And also pomegranate.

**PILGRIM 3:** How about apricot trees?

**FARHAD:** Apricot trees well, I'll put a word in there for that. Probably we could do it. I don't know. I'm not that familiar with agriculture. But we have people who are more expert.

**PILGRIM 4:** Citrus probably.

**FARHAD:** It's very dry.

**PILGRIM 3:** Well Arizona all it takes is water.

**FARHAD:** Yes, so if they have enough water I'll plant it. [pilgrims laughing]

[inaudible][crosstalk]



Anyhow we have to just see how you know what we can grow there. We have designs where to put the trees and where to do this and that. And it should be very exciting.

**PILGRIM 3:** Why did they say there was no water there if there was water there? Did the water come back or they hadn't dug deep enough before?

**FARHAD:** No, you see they. Way they used to irrigate there was that they have a qanat. Qanat is a series of wells that you go from 9 miles or. No more, a lot more. 20-30. From the mountains they dig wells and they connect them underneath and they bring the water to where you want. Many many miles. 20-30 miles from the mountains they bring it. And this water had finished because they had dug a lot of deep wells. Deep wells there.

**PILGRIM 2:** Need to be careful.

**FARHAD:** And they had to also be careful of the water level had gone down and all that. So that water went and nobody had the means to dig a well and bring that much water up because it's expensive. Maybe 20,000 dollars.

**PILGRIM 3:** Now you have a good fuel supply. Fuel for running the pumps. You've got plenty of fuel now in that part of the world.

**FARHAD:** Oh. [Farhad laughs]

**PILGRIM 5:** Dig your own oil well right next to the well.

**FARHAD:** Yes. But gasoline is no problem as you say. We can get the gasoline all right.

So, this is the other thing that has happened. But just an example of how Baba makes sure that egos don't get involved. This pump that we were making. That we were using is a very good pump. And it's not for bringing up mud and water as well. It's just for pure water. But since we didn't have the other kind of pump we said we'll do it with this. We did it and it worked for a week. And then it stopped working. So we all sat together and decided finally that we should get the pump. Another pump, either rent it or buy it or somehow for digging purposes and then use this later when the digging is finished. I didn't agree with this idea. But Mr. Vesali felt that it was right and I said okay fine. It's good, we'll do this. But then the people who were in charge to do this they didn't buy this. They didn't do this. They went and said we'll use the old pump. We'll just clean it and use it again. And I was very sad because I knew that if we have decided something together over there it was like Baba's decision. And it's very sad to do something another. And I told them. I said, "Well if you have decided to this alright." And originally I thought this

was right. But we decided over there that thing. And you should do that otherwise you have trouble. And said, "No, never mind." So, they got it to several times. And they couldn't do it anymore. So, they went and they rented one. Fortunately they found one to rent and they started to bring the water with that.

And another thing that has happened recently is that a group of Muslims have joined Baba's group. Which is very unusual in Iran. I and the Sufi, we were the only Muslims who were in the Baba group. The rest were all Zoroastrians. And we had started a Sunday night class at my apartment. Not class, meeting for the newcomers who wanted to learn about Baba and all that. And see how Baba's planning is perfect. We know that people who are drawn to Baba must have had some connection. They must have you know it's just not the run of the mill people that you know come. And these people; one, two, three, four. Four people. And they are all. The three of them are in my lab and one is in the institute. Baba has brought us all together there. At the right time. And so, they started to come to the meetings. And one of them in fact is coming to India this year. I'll go there one day earlier so that when she comes I will be there to meet her and take her there. And another one is my graduate student. Another one is my technician. It's just Baba. From different [inaudible] yes and somebody who can tell them about Baba or has Baba's picture up or something. Now they can show them Baba and then they are pulled in. So, Aloba would have been overjoyed to see that so many Muslims because he's very adamant that. And you know this Aloba, he is just fantastic. All of his life is Baba. He can't think or know anything else but Baba. And you know when he writes for example somebody dreamt of a blue elephant. So, Baba is going to break His silence or this and that. Everything to Baba.  
[general laughter]

And he writes his letters to me and he says read them at the meetings. So, I read them at the meetings and everybody you know chuckles at me. And I said, "You don't understand. We have baseball, football, soccer. Then books, other things. But he has only Baba to connect everything with." You know it's very beautiful to see his one-pointedness. And in fact when he came to Iran all the Sufis and their dervishes were disappointed in him. Because the Baba people took Aloba as the disciple of the Avatar of the age. To show to all these learned ones you see. And he would pick up a coin and throw it up. [general laughter]

He has this thing with Baba that whatever he does you know, he throws up the coin and heads means do it. And he does this just very simple things you know. And if he talks he talks very simple. And they were all disappointed in Baba in him. And that maybe this Baba is just nobody. But and in fact this Sufi who is really a, he's a great person. So dedicated it's unbelievable. But I told him frankly that I felt that he still had a lot of his old Sufi things that Baba had changed. In his greatness he sort of didn't admonish me or anything. I just felt that way and I said that I've been pleading with him to come to India. Because when he sees Baba's atmosphere it

will help him greatly to re-orient himself. But he has done greatly on his own. I mean he had 2,200 followers and he was you know a great Sufi sheikh there. And still New Year's all the Sufis send their representatives to say hello to him and do all the things that they do. But when he found Baba he threw everything out and he said, "This is Him and [inaudible] know nothing and I am a disciple and forget it." So you know this is the extent of his devotion and sincerity. Which is a very difficult thing to do. We all know that. It's very difficult to throw away your big stature as a spiritual leader and do this. But then he has done that. But they spoil me. They allow me to be frank with them and I take advantage. And I hope that one day he will come with me to Baba. And when I insist too much he gets angry with me and says, "Is Baba in India? Do you want to take me to Baba to India? Baba is not in India. Baba is in here." And all that things. Which is right of course. But I just want to get acquainted with the ways of Baba.

So, well how did we get there? [general laughter]

**PILGRIM 6:** Talking about the different. The 4 Muslims who had come into the group there.

**FARHAD:** Yes, yes. And well this Sufi he says very beautiful poems. When the mood comes he just writes these fantastic poems of Baba. That when you read you just get out of yourself. Beautiful poetry that he writes for Baba. And out of the heart he writes.

Yes, we were talking about.

**PILGRIM 6:** Aloba.

**FARHAD:** Aloba.

**PILGRIM 6:** Disappointed the.

**FARHAD:** Yes the Sufis who were disappointed in Aloba. Yes and the thing that I wanted to say that all of these disappointed Sufis. I was talking with the Sufi, with our Sufi and he was saying that, "Yes, he did this. Aloba did that you know and he disappointed everyone and didn't make an impression and everything." And then as he started to tell me all of the people that Aloba had met their life has been completely changed. The one who had rather long beard and the whole big thing. He had shaved it and completely changed. This visit of Aloba's had had a transforming effect on all the people that he visited. All the Sufis that he visited.

**PILGRIM 7:** Let me just briefly mention that Erin and I met with Aloba. And he talked very fiery. He talked about end of the world. And he got us into this mood you know being at the end of the world you know. We just got included so. And then when we went home she and I were riding in the little rickshaw and the

clouds build overhead and suddenly down it is very dark and it was tremendous turmoil and everywhere we looked we'd see Baba's face grimacing at us in the trees, clouds. It was just like Aloba and nature were just completely in love with each other. [pilgrims laughing]

**PILGRIM 8:** Was it romance?

**PILGRIM 7:** [inaudible] [crosstalk]  
[pilgrims laughing]

**FARHAD :** And all the mandali tease him about you know this particular thing.

**PILGRIM 2:** Oh yeah. Yeah.

**PILGRIM 7:** Well I think all the Sufis there saw. They saw Aloba. But they didn't see Baba. Baba's influence and His, what Baba wanted to accomplish through him was accomplished even though they didn't know it. [crosstalk]