
HIS LIFE WITH MEHER BABA

Dara Irani

Location unknown

Date unknown

45:26

CHARLIE: Start with a joke.

DARA: Start with a joke. [Dara laughs]

The joke is that I'm sitting here and having to do this. [general laughter]

CHARLIE: Well, I'm sure there is something —

PILGRIM 1: Adi always used to say, "Jai Baba. We'll start out with a Jai Baba." And, then he would tell what he meant by Jai Baba. [inaudible]

DARA: Hmm.

CHARLIE: I'm sure there's some people who haven't met you here. Who don't know what your story is.

DARA: And, for those who already know, do we have some, some, you know headphones? Or, they could listen to some Michael Jackson or something like that. In fact, I could do with that, you know. I don't want to hear my story again. [general laughter]

Well, Jai Baba everyone, and thank you for having me here. Despite what Charlie said, you know, I was glad to have the opportunity to be here. But this I must say was a bit of a surprise, what he sprung on me tonight. However, if you'll bear with me, I will try and get across to you, the times that, the opportunities I had of being with Baba.

Now I had the very good fortune to have been born into Baba's family. My father is Adi S. Irani, one of Baba's brothers, who at the moment is living in England. And I was also very fortunate that, at the time of my birth, within about half an hour, Baba was actually there by my bedside, by the crib. And that wasn't so much because of my birth, as that my mother who was giving birth to me, died. So, when Baba was informed, at the time Baba was at Meherabad. And when He was informed that my mother was dying, He actually came to Viloo's. That's where I was born. And He was by my mother's bedside when she died. Which of course is a really incredible blessing for my mother, to have Baba there. Then of course, at the same time, you know, He came to where I was. And picked me up and promptly put me down, and then left.

So let's say I was born into the family, but it didn't mean that I automatically accepted Baba as God. In fact, through my childhood, I used to find it quite amusing to think that I have an uncle, who was God. I just couldn't understand how that could be. And I had for a long time, no real idea of Baba's true being. I would just consider Him to be an uncle. At the same time we — I was brought up since my mother died, Viloo and Sarosh brought me up. They brought me up like their own son, and I grew up with them. And although Sarosh from the age of 16 was with Baba, and accepted Baba to be the God-Man, Viloo didn't. I mean she'd struggle with that for many years and, with that she — since we were under her care, she was the one who took care of the children. And when I say we, I mean her children also. And she would almost sort of shield us from Baba. She would, you know, feel that we might get influenced, and kept us all ignorant of anything to do with Baba. And I often thought how nice it would have been that, say on the auspicious occasions, like one's birthday or some family celebration, instead of parading us off to the fire temple, where we just you know did all the prayers which we understood nothing of, she would have taken us to have Baba's darshan.

It would have been so much more meaningful. But whatever it was, you know, it didn't happen. And yet, simply because Baba was my uncle, she would see it has her duty that from time to time I did go and visit Baba. And of course the time I'm talking about, Baba was readily available to His lovers and especially one's — His close ones. And so the opportunity was there and she would say from time to time, take us out to visit with Baba at Meherazad or Meherabad. And of course we were always, as children we were always brought up and taught to respect elders, be on our best behaviors, and you know, dressed in our best clothes and paraded off to visit our relatives. And the same of course was when we went to see Baba. But as soon as one got into Baba's presence, even as a child I could grasp that this was something different.

It wasn't really — to be in Baba's presence, as a child, it wasn't at all uncomfortable. Because Baba immediately would come down to your level and you felt completely at ease in front of Him. And well He would, He would embrace you and caress you and then, He would pick us up, put me on His lap, and then start playing games with us. And His favorite game was where we — He would hide the fingers of one hand, cup it in the other hand and we were, we were to find the middle finger. And whenever we did it amongst ourselves, it was really a simple matter to find the middle finger. But when Baba would, we never could. It was — inasmuch as we tried, and of course you know, as soon as we thought we got it and we'd catch the finger, and we'd look up at Baba's face, and Baba was sort of beaming you see. And then He would release His hands, and we'd realize we'd got the wrong finger. And He would chuckle.

Well it really was to say, even as a child, it really was wonderful being in Baba's presence. Even though at the time I'd say, I'd consider Him to be nothing more than just my uncle. But one thing was quite apparent, and that was Baba's love. As soon as one walked into the room, seemed like you were totally immersed in His love. And it was so apparent that I'd say, even as a child, I remember feeling

that, you know there's something quite different about this uncle of mine. Didn't have the understanding to see, or to realize what it was. Of course, at the same time I would, especially with my school friends, I would tell them that I had an uncle called Meher Baba. He was well known in the town, and I would tell them that, you know, He's my uncle and you know, He's a big celebrity. He's famous. Lots of people come to see Him. And just pride about this, in a childish manner. And of course feel quite proud that I'm related to this celebrity. But nothing more than that.

One of my earlier childhood memories of Baba was again at school, with my school friends. It was during the lunch break, and I was outside. It was hot, it was sunny, it was during the summer days. And I was outside playing marbles, and as I was waiting for my turn I noticed Baba's car going by on the road, which was just outside the school compound. And I stood up and watched the car as it slowed down, and then it came to a halt, and a door opened and I recognized one of the Mandali beckoning me to the car. So I ran out. I got under the barbed wire and ran to the car, and Baba was seated in the front, next to the door. He opened the door and He lifted me up and He put me on His lap. And, the first thing He did was, put His hand on my head and He felt that it was hot. Being under the sun and you know, He waved a finger at me, telling me that, that's no good, I shouldn't be out in the sun. And, I said, "Sorry Baba, but I was playing marbles." And then, Baba with a gleam in His eyes says, "Were you winning?" So luckily I was, so I said, "Yes Baba." He said, "Good, go back and continue the game." [general laughter] So, I did that.

So, let's continue the game Charlie.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

DARA: Yeah.

CHARLIE: Another joke.

DARA: Oh, another joke.
[Dara and Charlie laughing]

CHARLIE: How old were you when you first went off to England?

DARA: Yeah, I was 13 when I moved to England.

CHARLIE: Did Baba tell you to go to England?

DARA: No, Baba didn't tell me to go, but what happened was that my father and step-mother had already moved to England, about three or four years before I went. And well, some madness got into me, and I felt that I also should be there in England with my father. But that was just an excuse really. I guess at the time I was enamored by England, the West and thought this is a great opportunity to, you know, go there. So I started to pester Viloo and said, "Well,

I'm very unhappy here. I want to be with my father." So much so, that one day she got really fed up, and she goes to Baba, and says, "Look, this Dara you know, he keeps saying that he's unhappy here, and he wants to go to England." So Baba said, "Well, if he's unhappy here, then send him." So it was arranged. My step-mother Freiny and I have a half-sister called Shireen. She had just been born. So she came over with Shireen and I returned to England with her for the first time, which was in 1958. But very shortly afterwards, I was ready to come back to India. But then Baba said, "No, no you just stick it out there. You wanted to go, now you suffer out there." So, I ended up staying there 15 years. [Dara laughs]

Well He didn't say that, but I'm sure that's what I really had to learn.

CHARLIE: Yeah.

DARA: Anyway, so I went when I was 13 and I say, lived in England till I returned to India in 1973.

Whilst I was in England, well the first opportunity for me to visit back to India was, came in December of 1964. Then we all came. My father, step-mother, Shireen. We all came to Nagar, and I was lucky enough to be there for 3 months. During which time, I was again fortunate to spend quite a lot of time with Baba in Meherazad. And it was then that one day, what seemingly seemed, you know, just out of the blue but, Baba, Mani aunty was interpreting Baba's gestures to me. So Baba turns around to me and tells Mani aunty to tell me that, Baba says, "Don't worry. I have the perfect wife for you with me. And I will, I will see to everything." And I was — I thought to myself, "What on earth is this?" I mean, that's the last thing on my mind at the time.

CHARLIE: This is when Dara?

DARA: In 1964.

CHARLIE: So, you were how old then?

DARA: How old? 18, 19. 19. And fortunately though, I never questioned Him. And all I said, "Yes Baba, whatever you say." And Baba seemed quite pleased that I just accepted it. Of course, it was a real blessing for me up until now. But anyway, so the seal was set. But nothing happened till 3 years later. Of course, I was there, still with Baba for quite a time visiting. And on one occasion when I was with Baba in the hall, Baba turns around and asked me, "How far is it to where you go to work?" So, I said, "Baba well, it's about 4 miles." Baba said, "Well, how do you get to work?" I said, "Baba well, I have to walk the distance, then get a bus, and then again walk." So Baba said, "You do that in the winter also?" I said, "Yes Baba." So He said, "Isn't it very cold then?" And, as He said that, you know, Baba sort of made as if He were shivering. And I said, "Yes, it's cold, but I get used to it Baba." So He said, "Oh!" He says, "You know I don't think I could do that. I don't think I could get used to that cold weather." So I

said, "Well, you know we have warm overcoats, and it's not so bad Baba." [long pause]

I was also fortunate that I could — I had enough sight to actually see Baba's beauty. Because He was incredibly beautiful. I mean, most of the time that I was in the hall in Baba's presence, I really wasn't too aware of what was going on. Because all I'd do was sit in front of Baba and look at Him. And just be overwhelmed with His beauty. And of course, Baba would from time to time, turn around and smile at me. On one occasion, that was the only time Baba really referred at all to my eye condition. He, He would, well, first of all, there used to be a bed in Mandali Hall, where those bookcases are now. Towards the end where the big garage gates are. There are book cases now there, with albums and Baba books. Well there used to be a bed there, there were no bookcases or anything of that sort at that time. And, from time to time when Baba would be in the hall after sitting a while in the chair, He would get up and He would exercise a little. He'd be made to walk up and down the hall, and then He would go and lie on the bed, whilst one of the Mandali, Bhau or Eruch would be massaging Baba's body. And on one occasion when Baba did that, He asked me to sit right in front of Him, which I did. And then He just gestured to say that, "Can you see me better now?" And of course, I could because there was much more light at that end of the room in Mandali Hall, than there is where Baba's chair is, at the corner, it's quite dark. So I say, I had the good fortune also that He enabled me to see Him clearly.

Well, I'll say that was during this visit of mine, Baba had taken upon Himself to find a wife for me. And say it was said and everything. That was the end of the matter then. And I returned to England, continued work, and well from time to time I would think about it, but not you know, let it really play on my mind too long. And nothing happened till three years later. That was the time my father was to visit Meherazad. Baba had called Him for a visit. And this was again in December, but it was in '67. And before my father was to leave for India, I received a letter from Baba, asking me whether I was ready to get married. And I just thought to myself, well, it's got to be done, might as well get it over with as soon as possible. So I said, "Yes Baba, I'm ready." So when my father visited Meherazad, he was there for about 6 weeks. Well during that time, all the marriage arrangements had been fixed and of course, that's the first time that I got to hear of Amrit's name. Till that time I didn't know of her, and I'm sure she hadn't heard of me either. And although neither of us were there at the time, it seems like when Baba received my answer, He then set about trying to find the right girl for me to marry.

So, He you know, He asked the women Mandali. He asked Mehera, and Mani and Goher if they knew of any Baba lover family who had a daughter, who might be suitable for me. And who's eligible for marriage. So they suggested a few Baba families, whose daughters would be the right age. And for one reason or the other, Baba rejected them all till Mehera remembered that when they were in the New Life, they had stayed in the village that Amrit's parents live. And they remembered that family called Shatrughan Kumar and remembered

they had a daughter called Amrit, who in fact Mehera and Mani had named. They had named her Amrit. And they sort of calculated and said, well she would be about the right age. So Mehera said, "Baba, what about Shatrughan Kumar's daughter Amrit?" So, Baba said, "Yes. But find out if she's still available." So, of course they, you know, through very discreet ways found out that Amrit was going to college. She wasn't married. So then Baba sends off a telegram to Amrit personally saying that, it is His wish that she marries Baba's nephew Dara, but not to take it as an order from Baba. Well, Amrit of course said she didn't hesitate for a minute and sent back a reply saying, "Baba, we are very happy to fulfill your wish." Of course, now she tells me different, but that's another story. [general laughter]

Anyway, she sends back the reply and Baba then sets about arranging for the marriage itself. And, after some discussion with my father as to what day they should hold the marriage, Baba said it will take place on 23rd December 1968. And the day before that, on the 22nd of December, which would also be Mehera's birthday, we'd have our engagement ceremony. And I was, together with the rest of the family, to come from England a couple of days before the marriage was to take place. And then, of course in the meantime, they sent me a photograph of Amrit, and Baba sends me the message that He's chosen Amrit to be my wife. And I was to write a letter to her but, I should send it through Baba. Of course, I was quite perplexed as to know what to write. I mean, you know, do you write a love letter to, you know, a woman whose name you just heard for the first time in your life. And as it is, you know, it was going to be censored before it ever got to her by Baba. So I just had the good fortune to think of just writing that, well, we are so blessed that Baba has taken it upon Himself to arrange for this marriage. And few other lines to that effect, and did my duty as far as writing to Amrit. And then, to say, just waited another 9-10 months, till the time came when I came to India for the marriage in December.

Well, a lot of people who have seen the movie of the marriage have stated that, you know, I look frightened. I said, "Well I was not only frightened, I was petrified." [general laughter]

I arrived in Meherazad. I was staying with Viloo. Amrit was already staying at Meherazad. She had already arrived there a few days earlier with her parents and she was staying at Meherazad. Well, the day of the engagement, which was also Mehera's birthday, which was the 22nd of December, I came to Meherazad at the time that Baba had told me to be there. And, promptly paraded through the gardens at the back there were at Meherazad. And, which of course was, well, full of Baba lovers. There must have been anything from four to five hundred Baba lovers that were invited by Baba from Bombay and Pune, and other parts of India to be there on this occasion. And they were all strangers to me. And I was led up to the verandah where Mehera sits. There were just two chairs placed there, and I was told to sit in one of them. And whilst I was sitting in one of them, probably that's why I've got such a fear of crowds. I would look up and see this, what seemed to be a mass of humanity. And I felt that they were

all looking at me, and I was a spectacle there. I really didn't know what I was doing there. I felt that I shouldn't be there. [loud drilling sound]

And I was quite nervous, and I didn't know which way to look. Well, shortly afterwards, a group of the women Mandali brought Amrit onto the verandah. Brought her out from her room and brought her up. And as she came up, I didn't know what I was supposed to do. Stand up and shake hands with her or, what? Well, I decided best thing is to just sit quietly in my chair and of course Amrit then joined me, also equally frightened. Well luckily, then after that Baba was brought out from His bedroom, and then of course, we just knew that no one was looking at us. Everyone's gaze just turned at Baba, and so did ours. Baba just took over.

As I said, it was also Mehera's birthday, so there was a cake. Mehera's birthday cake, sang Happy Birthday to Mehera. And there was a little entertainment program. And then, well, we had our engagement and that was very simple. We went up to Baba, we had rings with us, which we gave to Baba and He put them on our fingers and we garlanded each other. Baba requested us to garland each other, and then we garlanded Baba. And of course, we hugged and kissed Him. And returned to our seats, and after Baba giving a short message, discourse. [airplane sounding]

One aspect of that which I clearly remember was Baba telling everyone there that, "Avail this opportunity I've given you, to see Me. Because you won't see Me like this again." He repeated this several times. Of course, no one even then, ever thought that it would be — You know just over a month after that, that Baba would drop His physical form. And then, Baba's — let's say another aspect was time. Baba kept speeding up everything. He would say, "There's very little time left. Hurry up." Everything had to be speeded up. And of course, Baba, whilst all this was going on and He was making Himself available, physically, He was very weak and going through great suffering. So He gestured that, you know, He should go back. He should be taken back to His room and, there was then a little—