

KG-175A

Shtrughna "Kumar" Ghildial

Haridwar/Rishikesh area

October 1978

40:20

Content

Interviewed by Dara

[Dara, his father in law Shatrugna Kumar and Kumar's daughter Dara's wife Amrit are touring through the Haridwar/Rishikesh area, where Kumar is telling stories of the times when he came here with Baba. A lot of the tape is natural sound from the streets, so there isn't much in the way of text, but what there is is interesting.]

Dara: 65 Km from the center of the city of Dehra Dun, Haridwar is one of the seven most sacred places of pilgrimage where the Ganges flows, and we have come here with Shatrugna Kumar, who had also been here with Baba during the New Life.

Kumar: This is also the place of the Kumbha Mela, and for some reason Baba came here in 1949 from Dehra Dun. He stayed first in Majri Mafi, and the next stopping place was at Motichur. This was the final place to which He came. It is supposed that from all over India all the village people, saints and sadhus come here every 12 years for the Kumbha Mela. All the saints from India come here. So, that time Baba also wanted to come, and He came here. So this was the last phase of the New Life when Baba came from Ahmednagar with the caravan and the procession along with all the mandali. So all the way from Ahmednagar where they started, and the end was here in Haridwar. Of course, the end stopping and resting place was Majri Mafi, but that trip ended in Haridwar. He went back to Dehra Dun, and from there he returned to Ahmednagar.

Dara: Did Baba actually stay in Haridwar?

K: Yes, the main day of the baths that particular time when all the naked Nagas come here, and they take bath in this Ganges, that particular day Baba was here in Haridwar, and He was just on the terrace of a building along with the ladies mandali, and Amrit's mother as also there, and Amrit was 3 or 4 months old, in the lap, and Baba watched all the procession from the terrace. Before that, Baba sent Baidul to fetch some water from main stream, because you have seen the water here in Haridwar, it is a sort of canal. The main stream, on the other side, is called Neel-dhara, means blue stream. Baba had the water brought, took His bath in it, and then the remaining water was sent to be poured back into the water, that I remember. That day first Baba took bath in the Ganges water, [this part is obscure, but it seems, from the presence of Baidul and also the narration, that the men were there in a different room lower down than the women mandali, that Baba watched the procession with the women, but the men also looked at it.]

K: Huge procession, longer than two miles long containing lakhs of persons. When the process was finished, it was evening, and Baba proceeded to the railway station and got down near Majri Mafi (now Meher Mafi). Baba came earlier, stayed in Motichur, and for about a month came here each day from Motichur and returned by evening. While here, He would bow down to the saints and sadhus, incognito. Dark glasses, big hat, and dressed uniquely. Some He touched, some He bowed down to, some He caressed the cheeks, some he embraced. Then on the final day, He simply watched.

D: This Kumbha Mela took place in 1950?

K: Yes, 1950.

D: Was it Baba's last visit here?

K: Last on the new life but Baba came here in 1953. He stayed in Rishikesh.

[Dara and Kumar visit the main bazaar, General chit-chat with Amrit also, in either Punjabi or Hindi. Some haggling also for statues of Ganesh.]

D: Why do all these sadhus come to you?

K: Sometimes they are begging, sometimes they are offering to say prayers for you, [Amrit interjects] "Some sort of businessman."

[Kumar refers to his sister's husband. Dara says he had no idea that Kumar had a sister. Amrit and Kumar quickly explain "cousin-sister." Guy with a bull horn is "selling sweets."]

[This part of the tape, from about minute 15 to 27 is a sound track of what the streets of Northern India sounded like in this period – a few cars of only Indian manufacture, some trucks but also horse-drawn tongas, a few auto-rickshaws, bicycles, Rajdhoot motorcycles (Indian-manufactured Jawa CZ Czechoslovak motorcycle design), mobile PA systems with nasty voices. Amazingly little horn-honking.]

D: "We're moving around the streets on a three-wheeler cycle rickshaw. Quite an experience." [Mostly this mode of transportation doesn't exist in Ahmednagar, but it is common in more northern parts of India.]

D: We're at the Haridwar bus station waiting to go to Rishikesh. Is there a mast associated with Haridwar?

K: Yes, Nilkanthwala. Baba called him, and I took him to Ahmednagar and to Meherazad. He remained with Baba for about a fortnight. In the last, when he was departing, he said to Baba, "Please call me." Up to then he had not made this request, but that particular day he in a pathetic way, as if he had tears in the eyes, he said this, "Oh please Baba call me to you." Baba, in His way, put His hand on His heart, signing that He would do it. The poor fellow came back.

Afterwards, (though Baba didn't ask me to bring him back to Him), I came to know that within three months he left the body.

Nilkanth mast was always naked, just naked. Baba once took us all to Rishikesh where he was keeping at that time. Baba said he was the emperor of Northern India. Generally he used to live in both the places, Rishikesh and Haridwar. In Haridwar he used to live on the banks of the Ganges near a good neem tree, where there is a Shiva ashram. The saint who is the head of that ashram feeds the poor. That saint is still alive. One day, the saint saw a mad-like looking man, who was this Nilkanth, I mean, with a small stick under his armpit, and he was just roaming by the Ganges. Nilkanth was just muttering that there must be a big platform on the other side of the Ganges. Later on, it happened and everything was constructed as Nilkanth used to say.

Anyhow, this saint saw Nilkanth and he called Nilkanth to him. The saint asked Nilkanth where he came from, and expected Nilkanth to sit at his feet, but Nilkanth sat just above him, on a table (referred to below as a "gaadi") where there were statues of various deities. Of course, the saint was furious but he didn't say anything. Later on when the saint again asked Nilkanth where he was coming from, Nilkanth abused him. The saint dragged Nilkanth by his foot off the platform, kicked him and told him to get away from here. Nilkanth just laughed and left, but now the foot of the saint started sleeping. After some time it became paralyzed. Doctors were sent for, injections were tried, and now the saint was sick. His leg was deteriorating daily.

After some time, a month or two, he again saw Nilkanth. Without caring for his foot, the saint rushed out and caught hold of Nilkanth. The saint said, "Why have you made my foot like this?"

Nilkanth said, "No, I did not do anything."

The saint said, "Please forget all these things and pardon me. And if you don't forgive me these things I am going to jump in the river and commit suicide."

Then Nilkanth said, "All right, pray to God and He will make you alright." The saint did recover and from that day forward no longer rested on the gaadi from which the saint had ejected Nilkanth. It was made Nilkanth's gaadi, and all the sadhus used to feed Nilkanth, though Nilkanth never went out to beg for anything. He was supposed by them to be the sadhu of sadhus. People now worshipped Nilkanth. In this way things were going on and Baba used to call Nilkanth to Him, keeping him in Satara sometimes and at Guruprasad Bungalow in Poona also. And sometimes He would cause Nilkanth to be brought to Him in Ahmednagar or Ahmedabad. Last time, Nilkanth was called by Baba to Meherazad.

In those days, I was in my village, Meher Mafi, and Baba sent me a telegramme, "Bring Nilkanth immediately, and if he does not come with you, you come."

I went to Nilkanth who was then in Rishikesh, I requested him, but he did not agree. So I had to go to Ahmednagar alone, and I stayed there for 15 days. One morning Baba came

to men mandali from the bungalow, and he asked me to leave instantly for Dehra Dun, but not to so much as meet my family, but instead to go to Rishikesh to get Nilkanth. When I got to the place where Nilkanth was staying, people told me that from the morning of that day, he had been furious. I found him in a small hut distributing cold water to pilgrims. As soon as Nilkanth saw me, he just jumped out of the room and caught me by hand. Nilkanth said, "I was just waiting for you."

I said, "Then come along with me." By that time a big crowd had gathered there, and they said, "No, you cannot take him away." I rejoined that I had not exerted any power to make him leave, and if he wants to go you cannot check him. I asked Nilkanth if he wanted to go, and he said he did, so I called a taxi. It came, the taxi walla charged me double, but anyhow I took him to Haridwar. In Haridwar I bought tickets and reservations for us. Train was a problem for me because Nilkanth was stark naked. It would not be possible to take him with a crowd in a compartment. I booked a coupe, for two persons.

One thing very funny, he was always naked, never a stitch of clothing on him, and people would object and be on me also. Nilkanth was very child-like. He had a small round brass pot with him, shaped like a ball, with a small handle, and I told him just in his ear, "Baba, all these people are thieves. They are intending to steal your brass ball. Just put it between your thighs, and keep it safe." Now he was covered and the problem decreased. The whole journey he kept it there.

Last time when Nilkanth was coming, that time Nilkanth was sent back with Baidul. That time he very pathetically said this, "Please Baba call me." Baba signed that Baba had said that He would call him.

Tape ends