
Remembrances of The Beloved: USA & India, 1 of 2

Leatrice Johnson

Place Unknown

September 6, 1985

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Leatrice: Smiling so broadly and uh it was just, just His delight to invite us to present this special moment of intimate bliss with Him. I mean it was one-to-one with Him, just for a minute or not even a minute, just a quick look. [inaudible] and then we blissed out of the cabin, [laughter] and everybody was really lit up and that's kind of the way things went. We were always in first prize one way or another. Another day we were called in in the same way by queues and Jane Haynes was in the line in front of me and I saw what was happening. Baba was allowing each one to kiss His hand and as Jane kissed His hand. I thought, "My gosh I don't want to kiss His hand. I don't know what that's all about."

And I went to embrace Him and my turn came and He turned to me just like He knew what I wanted and He gave me what I wanted and He gave this wonderful, loving embrace. And I thought, "How wonderful. Baba gave me what I wanted and then I walked out of the cabin very happy. And I didn't get more than ten feet when I said, "Wait a minute. I bet I missed out on [inaudible]." [laughter] "There must be something to this because the hand isn't. Darned if I know what that's all about but maybe I would like to know what it's all about."

And I said to myself, "I wish I could know what it means and I wish I could have appreciated it." But I was still happy, the thought left me. I never thought of it again.

Because Baba doesn't, "Too bad you missed out, you didn't know." He doesn't do that, I mean He just uh [inaudible] really. One day, somewhere and it seemed like a private moment. I don't even know if other people were around or any of the circumstances. All I do remember is that I was with Baba and it seemed like we were alone, He held out His hand and I kissed it and I knew what it meant and I was grateful. Just like that. There was no explanation, He knew what was in my heart; He knew that I really wanted to know and He gave it to me. I didn't make any effort. I couldn't. But I had the wish to know and the wish to be capable. I think that's interesting because sometimes we do feel that we're not capable to understand or to appreciate or to love in the way that maybe Baba wants us to and that by, I found out for me anyway the mere wishing and wanting to be able to somehow creates the possibility to have it happen. Any way that's worked out for me.

Then still at Myrtle Beach there's another little incident. We knew a family in town who came to meet Baba and they brought their three children and we had known the children too. Then this middle child I think had baked some cookies for Baba and either she forgot to give them to Baba or didn't have the chance or what. It seemed like her opportunity was gone. And somehow she connected with me with this and so I thought, "Well what are we going to do about this?" And Baba was finished

with the interviews or activities at the moment at the Lagoon Cabin. So I knew that sometimes Baba would go to the Guest House, at some time He would be coming. I forget quite the details of what time of day it was but I thought, "We'll go down the stairs across the bridge up the stairs and over to the Guest House and meet Baba over there when He comes in through the gates." And it's as though Baba knew that that's what we were going to do because sure enough He came along in the car and got out of the car and came in the gates. And then we were waiting for Him. We were keeping an appointment, an unspoken appointment and she, the little girl, was, had the chance to present these cookies to Baba. And He gave her a nice embrace and it was a very special private intimate moment for this little girl. And that's kinda the way, little things like that happened along the way. And I think those were the same cookies that Baba gave out to us in San Francisco at the Holiday Lodge and one of our last days.

He was standing out in front of His door of His room and He called us together and we knew this was going to be one of the last times, either the next morning, I think the next morning was when He was going to be leaving and He was helping us get adjusted to this idea and having and having a few more moments with Him and a time for Him to be a little bit amusing with us and He would hand out a cookie and almost drop it [laughter] and different little things like that and with Beryl Williams, the black girl, he took the white powder from the cookies and plastered her face with the powder and with Margaret Craske, he played His usual "gotcha" game. When she wasn't looking he'd grab her elbow or something and she'd look back. They had this game going on. So

there were these little amusing touches to the very sweet moments of being with Him. Now let's get back to Myrtle Beach. I don't know which story to tell first, where to start again. Well one story leads into another. Where this story ends or is a part of a story that continued into 1956. Oh first I was going to tell this one. In 1956 fifty of us traveled from Myrtle Beach to Washington, D.C. to Los Angeles to San Francisco. And I think it was in Los Angeles, we were all gathered in a room together with Baba and Baba was talking about India and He said to so and so, "You must come to India." And He'd go [a motion Baba made] like that. "Oh I must come to India." He pointed to these people like uh Kitty, you know you'd expect Him to do that too. And various others, well I thought, "Of course he's going to point to them and invite them to India. That's fine." OK. I didn't have any interest in going to India and I was just watching what was going on that He was making sure certain people were going to India, so what's that to me?

And to each one he points to them and names and He's go like that [another motion]. And after awhile He got past five, ten people and I began to think, "There must be something to this going to India business." Well two more people went by and I thought, "Maybe that's not a bad idea." [laughter] And a few more people went by and I thought, "Well it's probably a good idea after all." A few more people went by and, "Gee I would like to go to India." A few more people went by, "Hey I really want to go to India." And we're getting down to the end of the line here, and I would say, "Hey I really want to go to India!" [laughter] And so finally He got to me [laughter]. Of course we did go to India in 1962 and it was wonderful. Um,

we also wondered with our mental blocks. Since I've just mentioned going to India. I'll jump right over there now. We did go to India for the East-West Gathering and most of the people went with obstacles, one thing or another stood in their way to going, all kinds of dreadful things. We traveled from Schenectady down to New York by car, I had a flat tire, it was snowing. My mother had had a slight heart attack. My name wasn't even on the manifest, you know, just odd things, "Are we going or we aren't going?" And we said, "We'll believe when we're on the airplane." We actually did get to India and so we stayed at various places in Poona, it was only four days, the East-West Gathering. And um we were called to meet Baba first, first the women were called in the morning at Guruprasad and it was by small groups sort of. And I was linked up with Billie Eaton again and she and I rode to Guruprasad in a car together. And we mounted the steps and entered the hall. It's a large hall that accommodated two hundred people or more and Baba was at the end of the hall seated on a beautiful green sofa and only women were there.

The Eastern ladies were there to one side and Mehera was uh, Baba was sitting here and Mehera was draped on the arm of the chair near Baba like that. Each one was being introduced to Baba and several women were already there -of the Western group and as we entered, Billie and I entered the hall, I saw Mani standing there in a beautiful green sari and I knew she was going to call one of us first and I thought, "Oh I want to be first!" And she did call my name first and I feel like I must have run to Baba. I don't know whether I walked or whether I ran but my heart just leaped out to be near Baba and to greet

Him. And He just looked at me like, "Oh He's so glad to see me [a sound], it was an audible sound and I was just ecstatic. I just, tears and everything. And though my blind tears, I just found a place to sit down. It was just you know absolutely so filled with love. So each one came and was greeted by Baba and each time one was greeted by Baba, it was though you were being greeted by Baba again and again in the flow of His love keep pouring on you. And while Mehera was sitting like that, she was so much a part of it, she was with Baba giving that love too. It was just so very beautiful and this one of those occasions when only women were Baba. And it was a very special feeling being only women with Baba. Baba was never effeminate but I felt a feeling of all the finest attributes of womanhood were heightened, all the loveliness, all the beauty, everything that a woman stands for was being accentuated so that we could be more aware of it and enjoy being what we are. And I had that impression, I don't know if Baba was doing that deliberately but that's how I have always felt on the few occasions when Baba had only women. He was absolutely delightful and He was so sweet and more sweet and more tender and just more beautiful and so precious. Later, when the men had their time with Baba, I wonder what Baba was like with the men?

Attendee: Who interpreted Baba's gestures when He was with the women?

Leatrice: Mani. And so I asked my father and he said, "Oh he was camaraderie, slap you on the back kinda thing us guys together." [laughter] I can't imitate it [her laughter]. So I guess it was the same thing, men being men. I don't know the significance but that's how I felt each time.

And I think there's something special about it really. So for four days, we spent four mornings together as Westerners inside of Guruprasad, and Baba pouring out His love to us. But it was different in India from what it was in the United States. We were expected to be a little more grown up and I think we saw Baba a little differently. Uh there were stories and there were songs and things like that. Um but it was mainly this love flow that was always characteristic of being with Baba. Baba would ask if anyone has questions and things of that sort. You were there Wendy.

And then in the afternoons we would spend outside in the back where they had this huge pandal, tent. And the western women were in the front on one side and the eastern women behind them; and the western women on the other side in the front and eastern women behind them. And we were about 5000 strong, seated there like for 2 o'clock to 6 o'clock. And Baba was sitting up on the dais continuously pouring out His love, and He was using these kinds of hand motion and He would make, well, at the beginning the easterners were taking turns. First the women for a certain span of time, going up on the dais and embracing Him slightly or garlanding Him and having His Darshan and then coming down. And then the men would take their turn and go up.

And that's how the afternoon went for the most part, each afternoon went with that. And over here in the background, there were Indian men with their Indian music and it was our first introduction to Indian music. "Ah, this is far out." First, and then later these men came up on the platform and did a musical program and then some other actors did a program. There were

various other things like that but one of the things was that when Baba up there, He would have eye contact with different ones. And He was telling Ben Hayman, "Don't fall asleep", and He was telling different other people different other little things. So there was a little humor in there too. Harry Kenmore was asked to recite the Parvardigar Prayer and you've heard that when he said the Parvardigar Prayer, you can hear it all the way back in the 5000 people. [laughter] And that's the place to say it. And so that's where our afternoons were spent and at the end of the day arti was being done. And to me, that was the most precious time cause it was our chance to sing to Baba and to give Him our love more fully. Um what it, to me being in India was seeing Baba more as God. In Myrtle Beach and in the United States, Baba was a more personal, human God, but in India

He seemed more the universal God. I'll just go back to Myrtle Beach for a minute here and that is um, in Myrtle Beach when they had the men's program, the comedy program which you probably heard about, at the close of it the band struck up Begin the Beguine. And Baba went into a mood of deep inner working, and He was brought out from the Barn and onto the porch, then down the stairs and then later over to the main part of the Center and was placed in front of the Lagoon Cabin.

We all walked over and stood at a respectful distance around Him and were just standing there in awe of nature which was also participating – the frogs and crickets and birds stopped still. And we were all somehow participating in what was going on. Baba was doing His deep inner work and we didn't know what was happening but there was still hush over

nature and in our nature. And at this time I was behind some people and once in a while I kinda stood up like that a little higher so that I could look at Baba more. One of these times when I stretched up to see Baba, from all of that mood, He looked up at me and flashed His glance at me like that. I was shocked! I went into a state of shock because while I knew Baba was God intellectually and accept Baba as God intellectually, all of a sudden the fact that He was God reverberated through my whole being.

My gosh! "Whoever God is, whatever God is, Baba is God." Really. And I was just in this, "I know! I know !" And nothing mattered, nothing seemed to, nothing was there but Baba. After that I went to my room and sat down and I was just completely in a daze, completely wiped out with this utter, complete conditioning that Baba is God. And my sister found me and said, "Why aren't coming to lunch?" And so I made an attempt to be normal and went to lunch cause that's what Baba would have wanted me to do. But getting back to India, it was seeing God as a universal God as well as personal God and during the uh day it rained, One afternoon it rained, And we know about that and there was pandemonia.

And there was kind of a rough, people didn't think they'd get their chance to be with Baba. And the western women were supposed to go up on the platform and that was more of a rush and I managed to get up on the platform and then my mother asked me to find my sister and I couldn't find her. And I was, for a moment I found myself standing behind Baba on the platform during this rush of excitement and there was a tremendous power of Baba, the dynamic of power that was there

embodied in Baba was stupendous. And here He is sitting there, just calm as could be, holding this infinite power and giving it out in divine love. The lord of the universe sitting there giving divine love. In command of the universe, giving divine love. It was just magnificent. But then I didn't move on, I don't know why. I did move into Guruprasad and I decided to ask where the ladies room is, had a call of nature. Rano came out from where the women's bedrooms were and so I asked her. You see Baba gives you these really powerful moments and then all of a sudden back into normality. It's the way He does things so you don't lose your balance.

So there I was in Guruprasad and Rano says, "Come right over here", went into the women's bedrooms and there were all these clothes all over the beds. The Eastern women were emptying the closets and we learned later that before going to Guruprasad Baba had asked the women to "Bring all your clothes, bring everything." And they were emptying their closets and the western women, whose dresses were sopping wet, were changing clothes. And that [inaudible], "Yeah my dress is wet too." Kinda good idea. So I found a blouse and it seemed like everything there was too large for me; and so I went into the next room looking for something to wear with this blouse and I saw Mehera come from her closet with an armload of clothes on her arm and she was making sure somebody over her got just the right thing; and then she looked at me and uh she's very particular about looks and everything. She doesn't miss a thing.

And she looks at me and she looked at this blouse and she was sure that that wouldn't do. [laughter] And um she picked up this

dress of hers and she said, "Here." And it was a beautiful dress and it fit me perfectly, and Mani gave me a slip for it. And I was one of the last ones in there. So I finally went to the bathroom too. And so I came back out, I was one of the few wearing something that fit them. [laughter] And looked nice. The western women with all their nice clothes and their western hair-dos and everything, had wet hair and were wearing things that didn't fit them and so on and so [inaudible] looked out the window because here they are in front of 5000 people and Baba called them back up on [laughter] the platform, one by one [laughter] [inaudible] [laughter]. He's working on all levels at all times. As I was going down, I had my beautiful new red sandals that I didn't want to get full of mud, So I took them off, and before I took them off. I just, "Oh I'm going to get all these germs in my feet." And I thought, "Heck I'm with Baba, if that's the way it's going to be, that's the way it's going to be."

And also just as I was stepping down, there was this little Indian woman who externally had a very unattractive face and if I were in my normal western mode I would have just ignored her. That's the person I was I guess. But she looked at me and her eyes were so bright with Baba's love and she said, "Jai Baba." And I just turned to her and said, "Jai Baba" and had a love exchange. It got me past some of my limitations. So Baba's just, one lesson here, one lesson there. Just like that. And uh another thing that impressed me about the East West Gathering that I'll come back to. First I'll go into another story about the Shaw family in the Delmonico Hotel in 1956 when we were um, a group of us. Schenectady group had been in the hotel in Baba's room meeting Baba and then it was lunch time and all but our family left

the room and we were detained. And Baba moved over and sat in a chair. And we just kinda naturally, the five of us, sat down in a semi circle in front of Baba. It was over the lunch hour, we didn't even think about lunch. We sat down there just so happy to have a few private moments with Baba. And we didn't even think, none of us were speaking and Baba wasn't conveying any message to us. He was sitting there pouring His love out to us. Just, "Ok, here goes." And it was like we were all ready for it.

And you see He had, it seems like um, Baba the master at all things. Who knows when anyone's ready to receive His love and to what depth? And He even engineers or maneuvers if you wouldn't want to call it that. People, so they can be in position to be able to receive Him. And I feel that that's what He did with the five of us spontaneously at that time. So that we were all prepared and ready His rush and flow of love as He poured it into our hearts. And we were ready to open our hearts, receive that love and empty our hearts, return with full measure all the love that He gave to us. And to hold it. As soon as He poured it into us we [inaudible] all our love and all His love and offered it back.

And it became a rhythm of the give and take of love. And it was a deep breathing, physical breathing of love. And there were, I read somewhere that Baba said, "I am the very breath." See this is a demonstration of His rhythm and breath of love. We lost track of time as we were so enrapt at this total giving of love, filled in the fulfillment of it. Nothing held back, no barriers, just the, and Baba was very, very happy and He said, "This is my food." And we had some more and then after we stopped, you

know we didn't stop but then He started having conversation saying, "This is my food" and asking some questions about what we were doing and what were to do and other comments. And then at the close of this time, He gave us each a chocolate as lunch. It was just one of those unforgettable times. But I wanted to draw the parallel between that and the East West Gathering because here at the East West Gathering were 5,000 people whose hearts were simultaneously prepared to receive His love and open up. And hour after hour share in the give and the take of love. To me that was spectacular. I mean, who else but God could do that? And you know how people in an audience will fidget and do this and do that but there were times when, specially at arti when we really were united in the oneness of love as we had this opportunity of pouring our hearts out in arti. It was to me the glory of God. It was more beautiful than anything I've ever experienced was that chance to be with God and be with a mass of people and give that unity in pouring out our love to Him. It's so beautiful.

Um, another time at the East West Gathering was the last day that was so important to all of us because it was probably the last time we were to see Him. We were all to say goodbye and come up for our last embrace and we took our turns as we all, each one just followed when they were ready; they came up and took their turn.

And I had decided that I was going to bow down to Baba because the day before was the day the whole public was allowed to pass by Baba and bow down. He was sitting at the edge of the platform and they could come by; the platform was so high that they didn't even have to bend down,

they just put their head down and first the mandali had this opportunity to bow down to Baba. And seeing them bow down because they had not been allowed to do this for this time and they knew what a precious moment this was. And it was very touching to see how each one did it. And then the general public had this opportunity to give and bow down to Baba. And Baba, I, on that day the seating arrangement was reversed. Women were allowed to sit on that side and men were on that side. And I was I second row front center and it was like Baba was doing this and He'd look up at me every once and awhile. Like, "Yeah know you could do it too. You've had your chance." And so when it came time so say goodbye to Baba, the last [inaudible], I did bow down and I found myself keeping His foot and it was just uh pure ecstasy. I wasn't really a goodbye, it was more of a hello. Because it was that much closer, that much more of being with Baba. He was revealing Himself and His love for us, and we surrendered in His love, not knowing we were surrendering. We were just loving Him.

So I made my way back to my chair. It was ecstasy state and once again, Baba doesn't allow you to enjoy it for very long. He turns around again and someone who I knew, not too well, but was one of the westerners, came up to me and I know it was obvious what a wonderful state I was in all that; and why he said this, it was just startling. He said to me, "Will you quit worrying about money?" [laughter]

It was one of the most ridiculous things that anybody could say. All I could conclude was that was Baba's last words to me. [laughter] There are occasions when I need to remember that. So I think that was

a special bonus. But that wasn't really the last time I saw Baba. Most of the westerners had to go home but we were traveling with Charles Purdom and were obligated to stay on a few days because Charles was working on *The God-Man* and to consult with Baba some more. So we stayed a few days more and that gave us the chance to see Baba at Bund Gardens and a few westerners were there, mostly easterners were there at Bund Gardens - around that big tree near the river. And they stretched out a big carpet and Baba sat in that carpet. And that picture you may have where Baba's going like this, that's "Don't worry be happy." That's where that picture was taken at that time. And we knew we weren't seeing Baba, but as usual Baba never let us cry when He was saying goodbye or we were saying goodbye. It was a chance to really come closer and really take in Baba for all time.

And we sat there with Baba, that was what was happening. And when it was time to go, it seemed like it shouldn't be happening but He did get into the car and the crowd gathered in front of the car and wouldn't let the car move. And the car inched along. It was a great crowd around and they all wanted to have a last touch or a last contact with Baba. And I wanted to have a last eye-to-eye contact with Baba and I asked, "How am I going to do this? Everybody's over there and I'm way over here. He'll never see me. I'll never be able to do that."

So I crossed the ravine in front of the road thinking I could get in there and get closer. And I was in the worst position, it was even more impossible. And my heart, I was just beside myself because I was so desperately wanting His; as usual Baba gives us what our hearts desire, whether a

touch or a glance, whatever. And He looked out and He looked up and He smiled at me. That was it. So I didn't know then that would be the last time. But it's not the last time for feeling Baba, not the last time for feeling his presence and being with Him. That's the best part. He does live in our hearts and His love is stronger than ever and always with us. I have uh other stories but I'll pause now for any kinds of questions.

Attendee: I'd like to add one thing. You mentioned that when you were going to see Baba, you ran into obstacles and you mentioned that one of the things that happened was Jean had a slight heart attack? How did you still make the trip? How did you know it was a heart attack and what was that about?

Leatrice: Well I don't think I can really go into very much detail about it but we didn't know if she was going to make it but we decided to go ahead and a cable was sent to Baba, um and I packed up the bags for her. And she decided she could get up and go somehow, that she was going to tough it out and she did. She didn't get a cable back from Baba until we got down to New York City. And at the airport she was paged and she received a cable from Baba. He didn't say don't come, He didn't say come. He said, now she knows the exact words so I don't want to misquote it, but it was something like, "Let my love run through your veins." And that gave her the strength to carry on and to go.