
Mani – Animal Stories

Mani Irani

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MANI: I loved it most when Baba would cheat [general laughter] and we couldn't catch Him out. So He knew that we knew He was cheating at a game, and He would again and again say, "Alright, I'll do it again, catch me out", but we never could—and we'd say, "Yes, yes do it again!"

And you know Gustadji. I remember the time Baba came home to Baba House in Pune. I was very little. I think that was the first time Mehera came. She told me Baba gave her a toy and said, "Give this to My little sister when we get home." I think from Manzil-e-Meem, from the first earlier times. So Gustadji was there, Baba played checkers with them and then Gustadji, the one who was silent for so many years by Baba's order, he played checkers with me and I won. Of course years later I realized he allowed me to win but I won—and I'd catch him by the hand and take him to each one and say, [Mani mimicking a child's voice] "Gustadji and me played checkers—I won—I beat him!". [general laughter] I'd take him to somebody else, [Mani mimicking a child's voice] "You know, Gustadji lost. We played checkers, he lost, I won." Gustadji would say, "Yes, yes we played checkers." [Mani and pilgrims laughing]

Something I forgot to tell you about a turtle that Baba brought when I was little. And when I was home and Baba came one day—came home from the jhopdi and He came with Sadashiv Patel. This is before going to Bombay for Manzil-e-Meem. He came with His old disciple I was just mentioning. They both came and He had a pail in his hand. Baba had a pail in His hand and in it was a turtle, Happy. There was water in the pail, and in it was a turtle, and Baba came and put that turtle into the well in Baba House - that well that you see now [audible sighing in agreement].

Yeah, and He tied a rope to it and He put it down and sure, then the turtle swam out of the pail and then He pulled in the—hey—and that turtle is still there [pilgrims sighing]. 50 years whatever yes, it's still there. It was there when my brother Behram said so, it's over, it's about 57 years old now.

PILGRIM 1: Mani, is that the well? [crosstalk]

MANI: In the well—and you know one day, you know one day, my sister-in-law later had—because my brother Behram, his wife, twin nephews, the niece they were all living there. They were all, those children were small then and they had this doggie. This doggie's name was Mickey. He was a little one, little thing, little like an Australian terrier. Very sharp, very smart. One day he fell into the well by mistake, he must have jumped after a sparrow, he fell in. My sister-in-law was frantic, and no matter what happens to anybody, she would say, "Everything will be

alright [bell ringing], just say, 'Baba, Baba, Baba.'" And she would bring the oodi from the Dhuni and put it all over you, and you'd get alright. Even if it's an accident on the road with complete strangers, she'll run up with that box of hers, put oodi, "Say, 'Baba', say, 'Meher Baba, Meher Baba'".

So when Mickey fell in the well, my sister-in-law's plump you know, she went round and round the well saying, "Mickey Baba bol, Mickey, say, 'Baba', Mickey, say, 'Baba'" [general laughter] and the boys kept saying, "Mama, Mickey can't say, 'Baba', you please, if you could only get out of the way we'd get Mickey out." "No, no, no, you be quiet, Mickey, 'Say Baba, Mickey'". [general laughter].

Now that Mickey was really quite connected with Baba in some ways. Mickey didn't like meat. Mickey was a great ratter, so the neighbors would borrow him just to kill these big rats, but he didn't eat meat—he didn't like meat, he didn't like fish, he liked sweet things. So you know we have these little ladoos, the sweet things of boondi, my brother would eat that because for supper he didn't like anything else, but he had to keep it away from Mickey. The moment Mickey knew Behram was going to have ladoos, what barely one Behram could have because you know Mickey kept begging, begging.

We knew that, but what happened one day was Baba had visited the house, was there at the house and it was the engagement of my niece [bell clangs]. Whenever Baba visited Baba House - home, Perin would inform all the Iranis, all our community who are such Baba lovers now, not like the time when my mother was there, so they'd all rush to get a chance to be with Baba, have his darshan, bring flowers. At that time, she thought because of the engagement, my sister-in-law had this huge tray full of the sweets penda - it's condensed milk sweets which you always give out on auspicious occasions or for celebrations. So it was absolutely full. Baba was sitting on a chair opposite His room, Baba's room there and each one was coming by, and Baba with His own hands gave prasad. Gave those pendas, two to this one, two to that one, they were all fine.

Now I, because they were so many, I was pushed way back near the door and I was just watching. And I thought something very strange was happening because Baba gave this way, this way and then He just bent you know, like you're bowing, you just do this and then He gave two more, two more and then He'd bend. I said why is Baba doing that, what does this gesture mean? I mean why? Suddenly I thought maybe something under the chair, [muted laughter] so I managed to sit down, somehow sit down and look under the chair, and there was Mickey all trembling with excitement right in the center so that nobody could see him you know and Baba was giving those sweets to Mickey. [general laughter]

After giving two of His lovers some of the prasad He'd just swing His hand down and Mickey would go pop pop. I alone counted nine. That little dog had nine pendas, god knows how much he had before that and ah something so—between Baba and that little doggie. You know, we hadn't told Baba he likes sweets. Mickey hadn't come out and begged to Baba. There was Mickey sitting under that chair, he knew this is the place and Baba kept giving him sweet after sweet. Nine candies right in front of my eyes he ate. And the last—last when he died years later when

Mickey died, Behram my brother who was working in the dark room all day long making pictures, photographs of Baba. He was an amateur photographer but he was so good he did all those pictures of Baba for all those years. So he kept Mickey near him on a rug because Mickey wasn't well. He'd been taken to the vet and they said, they gave him milk, they did everything. Here he was resting while Behram was working on Baba's photos and then suddenly he saw Mickey drag himself out, and Behram watched, does he want to go out, what is it let me see. Went up to Baba's room which is next to the room that Behram works in. The dog Mickey went up to the threshold of Baba's room, put his head on the threshold and died.
[pilgrims sighing audibly]