
MANI'S LOLLIPOP STORY

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05:46

MANI: No, watch it, it's lovely.
[general laughter]

It makes me think of how when I would read out to Baba aloud, story books and one of His favourites was Wodehouse. They were also detective stories, mysteries. But Wodehouse. A famous tactic in the Wodehouse stories would be that this man walks down the street. And he sees somebody else going by. And you pass by very close and whisper in his ears like you were doing now. He'd say, "I know your secret. [pilgrims laughing] I know all about it."

And it's amazing how everybody's got something. Everybody's got something they don't want anybody to know. And then of course that person innocently goes by. This one is frantic. Chasing trying to catch him. Find out how did you know? What's it you know? And the whole story would revolve around and Baba would be [inaudible].

DEVANA: But you know Mani that makes me think how you would share. How something would be going on and Baba would make you run through it without anyone else knowing. Like that incident when you were a young girl and had the sucker in your mouth. And walked in and you had that thought. And then Baba knew your secret. And you know.

MANI: That's a nice story.

DEVANA: Yeah.

MANI: I learnt at a very early age that you can't have both things at the same time. One or the other. At least in my role it had to be the one and always would be the one. But you know as a child when I was with Baba in Meherabad. I may have just started school in Pune. Mother had brought me over to be with Baba, herself and me. And so Baba was having a Qawwali programme somewhere. And in Meherabad. I think it was in Sai Darbar. Next to the post office near by the railway thing. And His people, His mandali were gathered before Him and some lovers from Ahmednagar were there and you know quite a nice group as usual. And the men were always as usual on one side and the women were on one side. And between them would be this aisle of sheets. This white sheets tied together so that the men didn't see the women, women didn't see the men.

And Baba would be at the end there on a gaadi. Everybody could enjoy Baba. Now I would sit with the women mostly but I would be wherever Baba was you know. Anything to do with Baba I mean generally. I would be with the men or I would be with the women you know. I could choose and I could pick because I was a child. So, I'd come from Poona and among my things that I had brought that big.

DEVANA: Jaw breakers, is that what you call it?

MANI: We would call it peppermint. But sucker. What you call it the sucker. Sweet sucker. And in British times we had big suckers like those big marbles with the stripes. Black and white or blue and white or red and white. And they last. I mean they're quite big and they last quite a while. So, I said, "Yes, I'll sit before Baba. I'll enjoy the Qawwali programme. I'll have Baba's company as well and why not before I go in put one sucker in my mouth so I can have that as well." All this and heaven as well too, you see.

So, I put that in my mouth and I went up as usual straight to Baba. All everybody's seated. The hall is full. The space is filled up. And I go straight up to Baba and I was a little modest about what I received from Baba. I received a lot of cuddling, lots of love, lot of petting and I told myself, "I hope they're all watching. My, they're not getting that." So, I went straight up to Baba. Baba cuddled me and everything. And then He said, "Sit down." Gaadi is that high so the others were all seated on the floor like we are doing now. He made me sit on the floor next to Him. Couldn't believe it. Here I was sitting next to Baba and I was facing them all. And I could imagine or hear this sigh of envy from everyone.

[general laughter]

"Look at Mani, look what she's getting, aah." So, there I was. And then there was another. Baba went a step further. He put His hand on my head and eased it onto His lap. Wow now, it's absolute heaven. I was in ecstasy. So my head was on Baba's lap and His hand was on my head so I couldn't lift my head. After a while when that sucker was melting and all the sweet saliva was gathering down. I felt like I was at the dentist you know. You couldn't squirm, you couldn't lift your head. So now my whole concentration is on that sucker and how am I going to swallow this? Baba, Baba, Baba.

At last what a relief. Now after the next time again. [clock chimes] After half a minute again the same problem. This went on till the sucker was sucked up. Then Baba removed His hand. [general laughter] And everybody, "How, what?" But none of them knew the agony that I was in. The ecstasy yes.

[Mani and pilgrims laugh]

I've never forgot that. I said, "Baba, it's a good lesson." Can't have both with both hands. Sucker and Baba.

[Mani laughs]