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## MY LIFE WITH MEHER BABA

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**Digambar Gadekar**

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**DIGAMBAR:** Beloved Baba, and His dear ones in Washington DC. I'm very thankful to Ned for the kind words he has said about me, which I really do not deserve.

**NED:** Well I have my fingers crossed.

**DIGAMBAR:** [laughing] And for me, it is a very wonderful experience to be able to come back to United States, and to share Baba's love with all of you. The experiences of Baba are many, and all of you who have come in Baba's contact, must have had Baba's experiences at one time or the other. But as far as I am concerned, Baba was very kind to me and to my father, who came in in His contact in the 1924, when Baba was speaking. So I will tell some of the experiences of Baba, and from that we can —Because that will give us an opportunity of how Baba's working was, and how the things are.

It is mostly experiences of my father, my mother and our family. So, I would apologize to you if I sound like being very persona, at times. But I would request you to bear in mind that it is only —Whatever I'll be telling regarding my family, that's my father or mother, or myself would be just to highlight Baba's love, and Baba's way of working. And Baba's way of getting along or getting people close to Him.

My father came from a very poor family. He belonged to Ahmednagar, and he had his schooling in Ahmednagar, and went to college. And during His sophomore, this, his parents, that means my grandparents were so poor, that my father had to, he got education in the American mission school, which was a charitable school, run by the Christian missionaries in Ahmednagar, where education was free for the children.

**NED:** Is that Catholic?

**DIGAMBAR:** Yes, Catholic school. And those days, this is 1920 in India. So those days in our house there was not even electricity. And he had to study in a public place or maybe go to the library or like that read under the lamp there. So with great hardship, he was continuing his studies. And when he was in college, means sophomore, he was young. He had developed this pain in the stomach and he was suffering a lot because of that. He saw many doctors and allopaths, and homeopaths and Ayurvedic treatment, but couldn't get any relief. And one of his friends one day told him that, "When you have tried all these doctors and you couldn't get relief, why not go and meet one saintly person is there in Arangaon."

At that time Meherabad was not established. Baba was staying near Arangaon. But the name Meherabad was given afterwards as you all know, and Baba established the ashram and started His silence.

So with this friend, my father went to Arangaon to have darshan of Baba. And they went on bicycle. They took some flowers to offer to Baba, as a mark of reverence, and when they were cycling, my father was thinking that he would go to Baba and tell Baba about his stomach ailment, and see if Baba will be of any help to give him relief. And this he was thinking as he was riding the bike from Ahmednagar to Arangaon. That's about 5 miles or so— 5, 6 miles distance. And when he reached Arangaon, Baba was sitting with the Mandali. Early Mandali, at that time. And He was speaking at that time. Baba started His silence since 1925, 10th of July. So this was a year before. And then Baba was there, His Mandali were sitting around, and He called my father. There were other people also. So father went and offered the flowers. Then Baba said, "Who are you? What's your name? Where are you coming from?" These preliminaries. And afterwards Baba asked him, "What have you come for? What do you want?"

Then forgetting all what he had in mind, my father spontaneously said that, "Baba, I want God Realization. I want to see God." Then Baba was amused at these words, and He looked at the Mandali and told them, told the Mandali, " See what this fellow is asking." Then Baba said that, "It is very difficult question you have asked and it's very difficult thing to get also. But if you have got enough love and faith in Me, one day I'll see that you get God Realization." Then after this, my father remembered regarding the stomach ailment and he said that this is what I had come for. Then Baba enquired and gave him some medicines to take, which he took and after a few days, his stomach ailment vanished. And that brought him to Baba. And he would go to Baba every weekend or every vacation. Because after his sophomore, he transferred to Pune, and started his studies in Ferguson college. But even he was studying in Ferguson college he would come to Ahmednagar, and meet Baba. And bring people to Baba, tell other people about Baba. Because he had, by the time he had got acquainted with Baba's activities and literature.

So it was in Pune that my father met my mother. And they talked about Baba, and my father encouraged her to come to Ahmednagar, and have Baba's darshan. So by the time Baba had started his silence. This was after 1925. Then Baba opened a school. This Prem Ashram school and also this Meherabad school. Public charitable school was there. And in that school, my father used to teach during the vacation.

**PILGRIM 1:** This is what year?

**DIGAMBAR:** 1925-1926. Whenever he would come in vacation, he would teach. Then, my father appeared for his final graduation examination and came in vacation to Baba. And when the result was declared, my father was in Meherabad, with Baba. And Baba knew that it was the day of the declaration of the result. So when this —There you know this result is declared in newspaper. All the names, numbers of the successful candidates, they are printed. So Baba got the newspaper and asked that, "Today is your result for examination?" "Yes Baba," my father said. Then Baba looked at this newspaper and my father was sitting there. And then Baba

made a face and He said, "I'm sorry to tell you that you have failed. You have failed in the exam. Your number is not there." So, my father said, "Whatever is your wish will happen." Then Baba called him, "You come near me," and showed Him, "See this is your number, you have passed," He said. [general laughter]

And embraced him and kissed him and said, "You don't worry, My nazar is there," like that. Then later on in 1927, I think in '29 or so, my mother and father went to Baba's darshan. My father took my mother and her friends for Baba's darshan from Pune. And, my mother was studying at that time in Pune, in the high school. She started her studies late because you know in India, girls went to school very late at that time. And when she came before Baba and bowed down, my father introduced as you know, in the Sahavas darshan program, as people would come, and somebody would introduce them to Baba, that this is the name, this is the name, like that. So then Baba remarked to my father and the Mandali also that these two will make a good pair. That means, my mother and my father. That is how this marriage was arranged. And it was in 1930 that this marriage took place in Ahmednagar. My father's place, it's a very poor locality in Ahmednagar. And Baba came personally to the marriage, with the Mandali. And He distributed sweets after the marriage to the Mandali and went away. After blessing both of them.

So they began their married life. And, later on after, my father joined the government service in the education department, he was a teacher. From teacher he became this, educational officer. And he would go from places to places. So it was in 1931 or '32 that my father went to Sakori, to have darshan of Upasani Maharaj. 1931, maybe '32, my father and mother, both. At that time, they had a child. Very young child. And Baba had given instructions to all people that, and even now, later on He gave that when you come to me, means you should stick to me as far as possible. No need to go to other people, different people. But somehow during this vacation in 1931 or so, my father and mother with this small child, they went to have darshan of Upasani Maharaj at Sakori. And there Upasani Maharaj was there. Then he enquired, who are you? What have you come from? Then my father said that we are disciples of Meher Baba. Then, he said that, "If you are disciples of Meher Baba, why are you coming here? You go." Upasani Maharaj said. He was a little annoyed. You see these ways of Masters of Baba are very strange, and they would behave in different way in different times. Then but still, my father stayed in the ashram, and it was cold winter. And every morning they would get up and have bath with cold water. They have to draw water from the well. And in the process, this small child got pneumonia and after it, there was a lot of difficulty and trouble for my father and mother. And when they came back, within a week or so the child died. Then later on, my father remembered Baba's words. This, not to go to different people and to stick to Me. So it was again with His grace that he was brought back to Baba.

And then in 1936 when I was born, he got a chance to go to Scotland, my father. He got a scholarship from the government of India, to go to study education, in the University of Edinburgh. Now we come from a, at least my father was a very poor, modest family. So didn't have any funds. So my mother, she sold her jewelry. I mean, some gold and paid for the passage. And the scholarship was there from government. And when this offer came, my mother went to Baba with my father

and said that, "He's going to Scotland." This is 1937. Baba said, "Alright, it's very good he's going, let him go." Then she said, "Who will run the house?" my mother said. "You have to run the house. The children are there, you take their care and I will be there to help you, don't worry." So my father finally prepared his plans for going. The ticket was purchased. At that time, they would go by the ship. This PNO's company's liner. And Baba said to my mother that, "Don't worry, I will be with him when He goes to Scotland." And then, my mother and our other relatives and friends—We were small, I was hardly one year or so, elder sister about three years. So we went to Bombay to see my father off. And to the port, to the docks. And when we went to the ship, what did my — And got into the ship and the cabin, what did she see? Baba was on the same boat. Baba was going to England. [pilgrims laughing]

Then my mother realized the words that, "Don't worry, I'll be with him." [general laughter]

And so they travelled together to Scotland. Then, when he came back again, he was given regular job, and there also in England and Scotland, Baba met — My father met all Baba lovers. At that time, this very old Baba lovers in London, Will Backett and Mary Backett. He stayed with them. And then proceeded to Edinburgh and did his schooling and came back. Then later on, during the later period, means, he started his work.

And in 1942, this Quit India Movement was there. British, Indians against the British and there was a lot of turmoil in the country. And at that time, we were in Solapur. That is a place south of Pune. Solapur, it's a district headquarters. And there he was the district educational officer and my mother was teaching in the school. Big school, about 500 girl students. She was the headmistress of the girls school. And since about 1940 or so, since after his return, we used to have Baba programs in our house. So in 1941, and especially Baba's birthday celebration. And in 1941 this, 1941, '42, and this was in '43. So in 1943, I'm sorry, there is Baba's birthday celebrations were celebrated. And at that time, there were different centers like Solapur, and Pune, and Bangalore, and Madras and so many places. Baba said, "I want to see that which centers are celebrating Baba's birthday in a nice and organized manner and in a good scale, big scale." Or where it is celebrated with more joy. So what Baba did, He deputed His Mandali to different centers during those birthday celebrations. As His reporters or correspondents so to say, who would go back and tell Him. So Dr. Ghani, Abdul Ghani Munsiff, he came to Solapur. And that birthday celebration was in, was arranged with great pain by my father and his Baba friends in Solapur. There was a singer, special Qawwal who used to sing Qawwali. He was brought and elaborate, this lighting arrangement and big hall was taken and Baba's literature printed and distributed. This was in 1942.

Then Dr. Ghani went and reported the whole thing to Baba. That in Solapur, this was the birthday celebration. Then Baba wrote to my father that, My dear Gadekar, I am very happy about this celebration and it has been done very nicely, and I intend to come to Solapur for a darshan program. So in May of 1943, one darshan program was arranged in Solapur. We were living in a small house. Baba's program is one thing and Baba personally coming and giving darshan program is another thing. It's a big botheration. It's a big — We had to arrange in a very large scale,

all of you know, Ned knows very well. So a big bungalow was rented. One big bungalow, with a big compound was rented, and a two storied bungalow with big halls and rooms on the 1st floor for Baba and the Mandali. And Baba said that, "I'll be coming with 40 Mandali members." So all the arrangement was made. Regarding food also. My mother took the job of cooking for Baba and Mandali. And Baba came with the Mandali and He, the whole house was specially made up for Baba. New beds, and everything new for Baba. So Baba came and Baba saw all the arrangement. He was very happy. We were very small, I'm just going in school, that time. And this was open darshan program, so hundreds and thousands of people came from Solapur to have darshan. There was open darshan program in the evening. And Baba distributed prasad also. You must have seen, there's one big picture. It has come in Glow also. Baba's group photo in Solapur, 1943, in which I am that small.

So Baba stayed for 2-3 days in Solapur. And during this time, all the food was cooked by my mother, and Baba used to like it very much. Then He went to the temple of Shiva in Solapur. That is Siddheshwar Temple. And there He performed puja of Shiva also. And at that time He told also that, "Lord Shiva is performing puja of Shiva." Then He went to small places nearby, Akhalkot and others. And very big, big programs were arranged.

Then Baba went back, and He wrote a letter that he was very happy about the arrangements, and sends His love, and like that. Then he was transferred to Pune. But before that, from Solapur again we went to Ahmednagar. That was in '44 in Ahmednagar. And we were staying on the station road. There's a big bungalow on station road. Muthas Bungalow, it is still there. And that was on way of Baba, for going to Meherabad. So anytime going to Meherabad or coming to Ahmednagar and Meherabad, Baba would have to pass through that road. And He would just come inside, in our house, and just enter the house, whenever He pleased; with the Mandali He would come. Sometimes 1-2, sometimes many. And we were small. And all of us were very happy when Baba would come and, come in the house and then sit and then go around in the house. And many times, you see our house — houses in India are not as tidy as they are here. Our house was in mess many times. The beds were not prepared and these things were helter skelter. And my father was a very loving person, but my mother was a very practical person. She told Baba that, "We don't mind coming you in our house, but at least you should tell us in advance, so that we can set up the house for you. Because everything is in the mess. See these beds and with the small children." Then Baba looked at my mother and said that, "Do I have to inform before, when I have to come to my own house? What's the need for me to inform when I am coming in my own house?"

But He did come later on, with previous intimation. And at that time, my father, he informed some school nearby. And Baba came with the Mandali, drove right into the compound and into the house. And my mother got up early in the morning and prepared some things for Baba. And some prasad also, because the other people were coming, so that Baba could distribute. So about 40, Baba said about 40 people will be coming with Him. So my mother prepared about 40, prasad for 40 people or so. But this principal of the school, who was told about Baba and Baba's visit, he came from the school. One Mr. Gomaganesh, and he brought 400 children

of the school with him for Baba's darshan. And the whole compound was filled, and then all the boys were very happy. Then Baba called them, and then gave them prasad and then embraced them. And enquired lovingly about the children. And my mother was shocked, that now all this — with all the children and with so little prasad, how it is going to go around? But she was equally shocked to find that, even after all this prasad was distributed to the 400 children and Mandali, still some was left, which was being distributed by Baba. Nobody knew how it happened.

Then we moved to Pune. And not to Pune, again we went back to Solapur from Ahmednagar. And at that time, my father was in charge of examinations for high school graduation. So it is responsibility. So he used to go to different centers of examination and conduct the examination. Collect the papers, sealed papers and seal them and bring them and like that. It was sort of security job or so. So we went to Pandharpur once, and there's 3-4 days we had to stay there, till the examinations over. On the last day — And this arrangement for our staying was made on the banks of the river [inaudible] river bank, there is a bungalow on the river bank. And after, on the last day when the examination was over, everybody was free and happy and relaxed. And it was hot in summer, so we slept outside. And my mother had jewelry here, bangles, gold bangles. So, she was just resting like that.

Then at midnight, one thief came, and he, and this gold bangles, gold bracelets they were open. They had a mouth, so they just bent it and took them away. And then, when this bangles he couldn't take, so he wanted to cut at that time. So my mother got up early and she looked around and shouted, and she saw somebody running. So she got up and she shouted and she ran after the person, that thief. And she ran — it was pitch dark on the river bank, and she ran and about 15-20 feet and then there was barbed wire and this thief jumped over and disappeared. And she chased that thief till there. And by the time all other people had got up also. And some people were so frightened, that instead of running after the thief, they were shouting and they were frightened, and they hugged each other, "Thief, thief, thief!" [general laughter] And some wouldn't know what to do.

Then next day, everybody became very cautious and with big stones, we were sleeping and fully [inaudible] and all that. When this incidence was told to Baba, because my father would write to Baba frequently, whatever is happening. Baba wrote back that, "Don't worry about the loss of this gold bangles or this bracelets. It's alright. Something worse was destined, but only it has, only this has happened, because of my grace. Something worse was destined." Who knows, the thief may have stabbed my mother or anything, anything might have happened. So this what Baba told.

Then we shifted to Pune. And '47, from '47 onwards, we were in Pune. And wherever my father went, as I was telling Alan, he would devote his time for Baba's activities. By that time he had become big officer. He was the director of social worker. Assistant director of social worker. And though he was educated in London and highly qualified, he was very simple by habit. Even you will see him in the films or pictures of Baba, and Ned remembers, he would have baggy pants and uncreased clothes. And he would forget about his personal life, and would talk

about Baba, and move from places to places, door to door, and distributing Baba's literature. All his time, except office, he would devote for Baba's activities. And at home, my mother and we will worry that where is our father? He has gone in the morning, he has not come back. Where will he be? Then my mother would say, "Oh he would be doing Baba's work somewhere. He would come back." She would say.

But she was also having great love for Baba. And even in Pune, Baba would visit our house. Once we were staying in a house on the Bombay road. And it was a — it was in this house that Baba met one of His disciples. A Wing Commander Sakhare was there. I don't know, his reference is there sometime in one of this Baba's books. Wing Commander Sakhare and his wife Mona. Both became very ardent Baba lovers later on. Their first meeting with Baba was in our house. And Baba said that I will be glad to meet Sakhare in Gadekar's house, but on condition. Then my father asked that, "What is that condition?" Then Baba said that, "I'll come to your house, but nobody from your house should see me, when I am in your house. Nobody should see me. They may be, they may remain in the house, but they are not supposed to see me meeting these people, or see me come in the house. They have to be in the back room there, behind the curtain." So my father agreed, and on that day, this couple came and they waited for Baba, and Baba with Eruch and Mandali, they came. And my mother had prepared meals for Baba, food. And she had kept it ready. And there was the curtain. And in the bedroom, we were there and we heard Baba's car, or this honk of Baba's car and we just rushed inside. And the curtain was drawn, and Baba came and met these young people. They were young at that time. And after this meeting was over, He came to the curtain and just lifted it little bit, and peeped through. To make sure if somebody just hiding around. And He was very happy that none was there. And then hurriedly He went back, and He didn't even listen to my father that we had prepared something. Even Eruch, my mother told later on. Baba went back to the car and just went on. Went back to His place. And my mother was in tears, because she had, with so much love, she had prepared all this things for Baba, and Baba had just gone away. Without even looking at it or touching it.

Then this was told to Baba by Eruch later on. Then Baba said, "Don't worry. You bring all those things to me, where I'm staying." So, they were taken there, and they were distributed to the Mandali and eaten there. Baba said that, "My purpose of coming to your house was to meet these people. And I was happy that none of you were there." Though for all of us it was a — you can imagine the mental strain, that Baba coming into your house, and you are not being able to even have a look at Him. Apart from having His darshan.

Similar thing happened in 1943 in Ahmednagar. That one fine morning, Baba just came in the house and my mother, of all the things, she had got up very early. And she had prepared. So she had started work in the kitchen. And she had cooked something, and Baba came, and He went right into the kitchen. And asked my mother, "What are you cooking?" She said, "I'm preparing these things." Then Baba even helped in the cooking of that particular dish. And then He afterwards, He took and even to all the Baba's Mandali. Eruch and Adi, Adi was there at that time. So that's the love He had for my father and my mother. And I remember when I was a

child, I used to go in Baba's lap and then He would play with fingers with me. Different games with fingers or even this marbles. And then I would hug very strongly and say that, "You want to wrestle with me?" And things like that.

Later on this Pune center was started, in 19—. Pune meetings and then gradually the — As our house was small, then other bigger house was taken, hall was taken and eventually the hall was built. Then in 19—, this bhajan party was also built up in Pune. Madhusudan, you must have heard. Madhusudan and his songs. They were composed. All the prominent people in Pune, Ramakrishnan, then Madhusudan, [inaudible] party, all these people were taken to Baba by my father. And I remember once, we were just building up the bhajan party. And Baba was in seclusion at that time. And Baba, the women Mandali told Baba that, "You are hearing the bhajans of Pune bhajan party, but there is no chance for us to hear the bhajans of Pune Bhajan party. And it secluded in a way and we are not supposed to go out of Meherazad. So we request that you call these people to Meherazad, for one day or so." Then Baba graciously agreed to that. And He wrote to my father, that on such and such day, the whole bhajan party from Pune should hire a bus and come to Meherazad, for singing before Baba. And we were so excited and thrilled that this is a message from Baba, that we have to go and sing before Him. And we started practicing, and getting ready, and which song to sing, and choosing of various sing, and so on. And it's such a thrill to get ready for Baba. Some even gave new clothes for stitching so that they can wear them on that particular day. The bus was hired and all that.

Then we started early morning. Baba had given time, that you should be in Meherazad at that particular time, 9 o'clock or so. My father of course had preceded. He had gone about a week ahead, and was staying with Baba. Then this, we gathered early morning, got ready. With all the instruments and things and about 40 of us. Baba lovers also, and bhajan party from Pune. And it was this bus service, state bus service had started recently at that time. So with a brand new bus, new bus. And we were very happy and we left Pune. Sakhare was also there, Wing Commander Sakhare. And we were singing bhajans. Hardly we had come 10 miles from Ahmednagar, the bus broke down. It was a brand new bus, and the driver got out and he said, "Let me see what has happened." He opened the bonnet, and looked around and fiddled about little bit. He came back and said, "I don't know what has happened, but it is just, it is not starting. I guess it is beyond me, so he'll have to get a mechanic." So somebody was sent back to Pune and got something, and then again the bus started. Then hardly we had come half way from Ahmednagar, there's a place called Ghodnadi Shirur. You must be knowing Shirur. When you are travelling from Nagar to Pune, halfway is Shirur. So near that Shirur, again the bus broke down. And we were getting panicky. That Baba's time of appointment is coming and Baba is very particular. And, what is happened. Because it was reaching — that time was reaching, 9'o clock.

And then this driver said that some part has to be brought from Pune. It's not available in that place. Somebody would have to be sent to Pune by a special car which is going in that direction. And then brought. So we were just praying to Baba. And here is Meherazad, Baba told my father and some other person, [inaudible] to go to the bus station in Nagar. So that this bus will be received and



they can escort them to Meherazad. And there, they were also waiting. And this bus got failed. There was no, time was passing by. It was passed the appointment time, 10, 11. It was mid-day, and still this bus was not repaired. Then with great difficulty this part was brought and fixed and like that. And the bus eventually started and we reached Ahmednagar in the afternoon, about 2 o'clock or so. By that time, Baba had called my father and He said that, "Look Gadekar, I want to tell you something. This bus was to come from Pune no? Bhajan party." "Yes," "And you had been to the bus station to receive." "Yes." "And your son was there also?" "Yes Baba." "Let me tell you," Baba said that, "That bus has got accident. It is involved in accident. It has turned turtle, and your son Digambar had died." Baba told him.  
[general laughter]

Then my father said, "Whatever will be your will, will be there. It's alright. It is yours and you have taken him to you, it's alright. It is your wish." Then Baba said, "You come here." He called my father and embraced and He said, "Now you go to the — Now don't worry, they are safe. They are coming." And then we eventually reached Meherazad. It was past afternoon, and we went to Baba, because Baba said that, "You will be there in Meherazad only up to 5 'o clock. At 5 'o clock you are going to leave Meherazad, in any case." And we reached Meherazad at about 2:30 or 3:00. Then when we went there, in the bus, we got down from the bus sheepishly. And Baba was standing there and the Mandali and my father. Then Baba said that, "See he's your son, getting down from the bus." He told my father. And then we were seated before Baba, and then Baba enquired, "What happened?" As if He was not knowing. He was knowing everything, but He just wanted from us. So we gave our version. This has happened and that happened. Baba said, "Don't worry, now that you are with me, you forget your worries and you sing." And then the Mandali were also — the ladies were, the women Mandali were on the adjacent room. They were to listen. Which is for them we had gone for that matter.

Then Baba said — then this Madhusudan, he said that, "But Baba, we are here only up to 5 'o clock, that's what you had told." Then these women Mandali, this Mani and Mehera, they also are getting rather this thing — because what would Baba say? Then Baba said that, "I have not allowed anybody, but for you I make exception that, you can stay little longer and take out your book for songs and sing. Whatever songs you want to your hearts content. And sing them to me." So we sang and sang before Baba. And it went on till sunset or so. Or 6 'o clock or so. You see Baba doesn't make any exception. That was exceptional at that time, allowing us to stay. And by sunset His Arti was performed. Then Baba called each of us and embraced, and then He took us out. He said that, "You get into the bus." We got into the bus. Baba said, "Don't worry." Then He went around the bus in which we were seated. The He said, "You go. Now there won't be any difficulty."