
PARSI OPPOSITION TO BABA

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10:01

MANI: You know we have such a lovely number of our Zoroastrian Baba lovers here today. And it makes me think of how once Baba said. Because you know this is not a small thing, has not been a small thing for us right from the start because Baba was born in a Zoroastrian community. And the Zoroastrian community have been very aggressive about Him at the time. So, my poor mother and even my father I guess. But my poor mother because she felt, she was a woman. She used to be a belle of the society. Middle class society of our time in Pune. She used to grace every function of weddings, parties, engagements and this. But then because of Baba, when He left home and then now He's in Meherabad. Who does He think He is? So when she would still go not knowing she was exiled in a way. It was a silent exile for her. When they would leave her out of everything. So, when she would enter a place there would be complete silence. And then they would say, "She, her son." [Mani whispers] You know. Things that would go on like that.

And so, we have seen that band of Zoroastrians, mostly Iranis. Those that had migrated from Persia the same time as my family had, ancestors and all. But you know they were very, very strong about it. And they even. I have a letter from mother to Baba, her son, dated 1926-28 in which she addresses Baba so respectfully. You know this is a revelation. Finding these old letters that are a particular year. When mother used to write to her son Merog, Meherwan, Baba as they call, was in Meherabad. And she would address Him as 'tamay' [Gujarati - respectful]. Not 'tu' [Gujarati - casual]. With such respect as a child would address his mother. But not a mother addressing the child. And then she would put before Him any suggestions or problems or conversation or whatever. And then she would end up with saying, "But of course, whatever you want to do." And in one letter she says, that means she has accepted Him long before we knew that she had accepted Him. She said, "Like You said, I have given up all meditation now. I only apply Your udi." Which means the ashes from the Dhuni.

And I just can't believe it. But in one letter she said that, "...our enemies." We used to call them 'the opposition group.' And you see you have to know our times. Our ways of living. Our mode of life. You don't change houses, you don't change town. I mean we were in that same house, that same alley, in that same area for years. So that you know we're right there. So, and these people were harassing mother. They're a community that they somehow congregate together so they were in our neighbourhood. Not in the alley but on the Dastur Meher Road. And at the end of the alley. Later on they were on. So they were there all the time. So, in one letter she says to Baba, to her son, she says, "You know the

other day they [means those, this community] plied the inspector who lives in our mullah [means alley] with drink. Although he's not a drunkard as such but they plied him with a lot of drink and they let him loose in our house. They, you know, pushed him into our house. And he went straight up to your old father. Went straight up to your poor father and to beat him." But obviously he didn't touch because my father wouldn't. Knowing my father he'd probably didn't even blink an eye. And probably just looked at him. "But he stopped but then he showered him with the vilest abuse." And she said in her letter, "How long am I to endure this? How long are we to suffer this?"

I was very happy to know that because when I had been talking about those times I thought maybe over the years my mind has magnified. Maybe I am exaggerating or whatever. Anyway ultimately the children of these people, most of their daughters-in-law, sons-in-law, nephews, nieces all became Baba lovers. Such staunch Baba lovers. They are there among the volunteers in Guruprasad and the banners. Anytime there's a Baba programme. But my mother just missed them. It was not in her destiny to see that.

But to see that my mother you know acknowledged. I thought it all began from 1937. Because that's the time in Nasik when Baba's birthday was celebrated publicly. There were thousands before Him. In front of them all my mother washed Baba's feet. Her son's feet. Others followed then but she first led it. With milk and rose water and honey. That kind of traditional washing of the feet. But if you declare in public who your son is. It's doing that.

PILGRIM 1: So word got back from Nasik? To the community in Pune? You said that Nasik.

MANI: Yes. No, no that community was much later.

PILGRIM 1: No, but I mean word got back of your mother's-?

MANI: Oh yes, yes. You see what they would say was, "We have seen Him go to school. We have seen Him play cricket in the alley. We have seen Him fly kites. We have seen Him." And then they would say, "It's true He's different. But that." And His voice. They would immediately say, "Oh His voice. His voice was so beautiful." And this, the one who was the head of the opposition group. We have known. We have heard of her saying, not directly, but I've heard that she has said that when Baba would sing the monaja [foreign]. Just like my father used to sing in the house. His singing voice would come through the little window of her kitchen. The little transom that was there. So she said when she was cooking, making breakfast. It was early morning. She would stop. And the milk would sometimes boil over. The egg would be harder than she had planned. And things like that. And then when the singing voice stopped she would suddenly realize and she would grumble and she would you know. She would think of Him a lot but she was mad at Him.

So, they said, "How can He be that?" You know. "Who does He think He is? Zoroaster or something?" [pilgrims laughing]

But then you see my father, my uncles, my father's brother. All of them had seen Baba go to school. All of them had seen Him play cricket in the alley. You know impromptu game. All of them have seen what they had seen. And they all accepted Baba. The relatives this time, this advent. I feel very happy about that. But these, these they were so, so. But then my thinking that not long ago. That was every time when a Zoroastrian has come to Baba. Not so much now as in the earlier years. It's been a great you know feeling of joy for Him. So, one day Baba was seated in His room on the bed with His feet on that little cushion and Baba said. It was not only just His bedroom. It's His room whatever. And some talk came up about Parsis, Zoroastrians, Iranis. And Baba said, "Don't worry. They'll all come. They'll all come." And He went. He made room like from every corner. They will all come. And now this is. In fact when Baba dropped His body. The 7 days when Baba was resting in the crypt. And they would come. We would only go once or twice a day. To be with Baba when everybody would stop. Because now He was for the world. We could not, we could not just have Him to ourselves. So, we went twice and we allowed all the others.

But once when we were going I saw someone bowing down at the threshold. When he got up I couldn't believe it. He was one of the Iranis himself. That old one who was so aggressive towards Baba. And there to see his head on the threshold of Baba's samadhi was something.