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## BABA DURING BRITISH RULE

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**Eruch Jessawala**

Mandali Hall, Meherazad, India

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12:40

**ERUCH:** So at the time of the Britishers you know Ken, we had to be very. It was very difficult for us you see. Yeah. Especially the Indians because they ruled with a harsh hand and all that.

**KEN:** Yeah.

**ERUCH:** So much so you know this photo that you see here. With Baba's dress that you see here. Here see this. This, this picture.

**KEN:** Okay.

**ERUCH:** With felt hat and pump shoes and all that [crosstalk]. That was the fashion at the time. How the Britishers dressed you know.

**KEN:** Aha.

**ERUCH:** Yeah. With the bow tie, yeah and all that. So but when He came to Ahmednagar first He looked like that you see.

**PILGRIM 1:** The first photograph.

**ERUCH:** The first picture that you see there.

**KEN:** Hmm.

**ERUCH:** With hair loose and beard and moustache and all that sort of thing. And nothing but simple cloak and all that sort of thing. And He would move about like lion you see and all that. And then whenever He would go to villages He

would dress like that. And all this. And here won them over through His love and His what do you call? Concern for them.

**PILGRIM 2:** The Indians?

**ERUCH:** Yeah. He would bathe their children, feed them, give them education, tell them stories. Every evening He would sit with them. Means with the villagers. Where you are staying now there's a village.

**PILGRIM 2:** Arangaon.

**ERUCH:** Arangaon village. So there all the-- This village is now something different. Formerly there were real good people around there you see. Farmers, poor farmers, very poor. So there are some children of the great grandfathers and all that. So who had been with Baba they are there. Children are there, grandchildren are there.

So what happened is that these villagers when they heard whispers in 1931 that Meher Baba is going to England, London, London. And they had heard about London being the capital of the British empire and this and that and all. So they were very skeptical about it and very apprehensive as to what is going to happen. So they came to Baba and said to cut the story short. Says, "Baba we have been hearing that you are going to London?" He says, "Yeah. Everything is ready here see. I am about to sail now." Because there were ships at the time. He

says, "You're going to London but will they allow you to come back?" He says, "Why not?" "No but will they [Clock chimes] imprison you there?" You see such was the fright.

**KEN:** Hmm.

**ERUCH:** The temperament was such. He says, "No," Baba says, "Why I'll go there speak their language." "But you don't speak." He says, "Well I speak with you in Marathi but I speak in their language in English I will speak with them. And I will dress like them." "You will dress like them too?" So they were surprised as to how will He dress like them. He says, "Yeah. All the dress is stitched and all." "How will you look in that?" So in order to please them so He's sitting in prop the picture is taken there. That's an old picture of Baba. In that He wears the dress, wears the tie, bow tie, wears the pump shoes and all that sort of thing to just give them an idea as to how He would look when He would leave from Bombay.

So all this is kept there in the museum. Have you been to museum there at Meherabad?

**KEN:** Um, Yeah. I've been to it once [crosstalk].

**ERUCH:** This is on the hill. Meherabad.

**PILGRIM 2:** Yeah.

**ERUCH:** Baba's, Yeah.

**KEN:** Yeah we saw one of His, one of His gadgets that He had.

**PILGRIM 2:** Right [inaudible][crosstalk]

**ERUCH:** Felt hat and shoes and all this is there. That coat and Baba's sandals. The old sandals are there. Everything is there.

It's all preserved yeah. So what was I saying, yeah. So that's how. Such was the mentality of the villagers at that time about Baba and all. But He did go and He did come again. And He did go and did come. But then what happened Ken when He went there in the first. The first visit. It's a beautiful account over there is there.

So He had said that He comes for all but He is for the few. Whenever I come in your midst I come for all but I am for the few. You see there's a little difference He makes. We used to take it for granted what He said you see. Well, He said that I have come for all and I am for the few, so what? Yeah. That's how it is [pilgrims laughing]. But what it implied was something quite different. What it implied was that He is for all of course. For any Tom, Dick and Harry or anybody you see, anyone. He comes for all but He is for the few. And who were the few when He went first to England? Very few selected group was there. Nobody had told about Him you see. Just one or two people had come to know about Him. Had heard His name and had contacted Him in India and there they had invited Him there and Baba had gone there.

But there was a group of people over there. Hardly about 15 you may say. So that's how they got themselves lost while He was with them. Men and women completely forgot about the whole thing. After Baba left them you see then they began to realize what had happened you see. So they go and tell their parents or wives or children or husbands like that. That we had been here. Says, "But why didn't you tell? If such a thing was there you should have at least shared with us." Says, "We completely forgot about you all." All the more when they said that we completely forgot about you they got very frantic. "What are you talking? You forgot us also?" So says, "I tell you we

didn't even remember the days, we didn't even remember the dates." So that was the what do you call? That was the atmosphere at that time. These were all Westerners mind you.

To give you an example, an idea from their early diaries where it is mentioned there. The one who was with Meher Baba at the time writes in his diary that there was one by name Watson?

**KEN:** Thomas Watson.

**ERUCH:** Thomas Watson. Have you heard of Thomas Watson? Sir Graham Bell the one who invented the telephone.

**PILGRIM 1:** The telephone [crosstalk]

**PILGRIM 2:** Oh yeah [inaudible] His assistant.

**ERUCH:** What? [crosstalk]. Watson and Graham they were both companions you see. Helped each other.

**PILGRIM 1:** Partners.

**ERUCH:** Partners yeah. So what happened was Watson was there at the time. Yet accidentally coincidence. So Watson when he came to know that there is a group of some Indian coming. You know how Indians attract people and so forth. So like snake charmers [general laughter]. You see a snake charmer all the Westerners will flock around him. Likewise an Indian from India has come.

**PILGRIM 2:** In England.

**ERUCH:** In England that too, yeah. So what happened is this man goes. So He's also. So Baba gives him an interview. He sits and he hears and all that. Fine. An hour Baba spent on him and then now he. Baba says, "Now you can go." So he. There is an upper story to the building.

We haven't got a picture of it [inaudible]? We should have asked you see Harjeev we should have asked him. He must be having it.

**PILGRIM 2:** Oh yes that's right he would have.

**ERUCH:** So what happened. There's an upper story to it. So it so happened after the interview that Baba's secretary Chanji and this man, this Watson are both going up the staircase. So they're chatting. The one who was interpreting while Watson was having interview. He was reading the board. Chanji was reading the board. Baba's secretary was reading the board while Watson was with Baba, interpreting. So they are again chatting and going up.

And he says, "Well it's a unique experience for me today to have come across such a person," And this and that and all that sort of thing. So Chanji says, "Yeah it is there. How blessed you are, how fortunate you are." And you know how all that little things are. And they land on the first floor there. So Watson looks and says, "What's this?" Chanji says, "It's the library of the place it seems because of all the shelves here." And Watson laughs and smiles and says, "Well it's a baby library. I have got a huge library and mind you I've read each book. Every book has been read by me. But you know, Chanji you have no idea what has happened today." "What happened?"

Says, "All that was there was gathered by me was stored here. Whatever I read. But from after the moment I sat with Him, the hour I spent it has started percolating from head to heart now." That was the remark. So Chanji was very happy to hear that. He said, "Yeah fine. I'm happy." And then after sometime Chanji is leaving so he says, "But by the way

would you please. Can you arrange another interview?" "Another interview why? You had just now your time. Baba spent one hour with you. Over an hour with you." "Yeah but I would like to." "What is it?" So in the diary it is mentioned that he is the one, first one who has invited Baba to the shores of America. So Watson. Thomas.

**PILGRIM 2:** Thomas Watson.

**ERUCH:** Thomas Watson yeah.

**PILGRIM 2:** Invited Him to America?

**ERUCH:** America yeah.

So and he said that, "Will it be possible for you and whosoever comes with you. We will see to the fare and please do come." Baba says, "I'm very happy to hear this but when the time comes I will come." Unfortunately it was not in his lot because Kitty Davy's brother and Kitty had to finance the trip. Kitty mind you. The Britisher finances trip to America for Baba for the first time. Have you met Kitty Ken? No.

**KEN:** No.

**ERUCH:** In Myrtle beach you haven't?

**KEN:** No.

**ERUCH:** She's hundred and how many years, how many days old now? [general laughter].

**PILGRIM 2:** She's moving into the hundred and one now [crosstalk]. On the 28th.

**ERUCH:** On 28th was her 100th birthday.

**PILGRIM 2:** Yeah.

**ERUCH:** Take him one day.

**PILGRIM 2:** I will.

**ERUCH:** When will you take? When he'll get old? When he gets 100 years old? [general laughter]

**PILGRIM 2:** Maybe at thanksgiving. My family is going to be in Myrtle Beach for thanksgiving.

**ERUCH:** That's good.

**PILGRIM 2:** Yeah.

**ERUCH:** Go and see that specimen of ancient times [Eruch laughs]. If you don't want to see anything just go and see the lady who is a 100 years old [pilgrims laughing]. She was the one who first made it possible for Baba to go to the States. Although the invitation was given by Thomas Watson. Yeah.

**PILGRIM 2:** Did the government ever get upset with Baba's activities? I mean if hundred thousand people were showing up in a town did they ever get upset?

**ERUCH:** Yeah. Not only that. Then we had to go. Well we were at the time of new life really speaking. But it was not a British regime at that time. At British time nothing upsetting, nothing was there. But there was that little [inaudible] you know. CID's had their own reports and this and that and. Because then cosmopolitan crowd started coming. So naturally they had to give a report, what's the matter? Why is He calling? Who is He? At that time Rajnish was not here and all. Nothing was here. Now it's so open you see. After Baba started this East-West gathering you know where East and West were brought together.