
HIS LIFE WITH BABA, 6 of 6

Eruch Jessawala

Mandali Hall, Meherazad, India

November 22, 1975

29:30

ERUCH: So now 5 years have passed so I think I'm 14 or 15 years old now. And I am happy with my friends, I am happy with my family, I'm happy with everything you see around. The world is a pleasant place you see to live. Everything is as it should be. Everything is as one can desire for and long for. It was a paradise at our place. Perfect, nothing wrong, nothing abnormal but everything was so perfect. So there was no thought for God or anything of the sort. Although at our place you see we were taught. My mother would teach me to wake up at 4 'o clock in the morning. I had to take my sisters for a walk in the morning at 4:30. And then twice a week we had to fast for our health purposes. Soon after food we had not to take drink water. So I did all the things you see that my mother wanted me not to do.

So what I would do is simply go there and from the bucket I would drink water like an animal you know [pilgrims laugh]. Instead of having the bearer serve me you know. We had very good place. My father was very well to do. So we had chef and attendants that helped and servers to serve and everything was perfect. In spite of it we lived that sort of a life because of my, this old lady, mother you know [Eruch and pilgrims laugh]. She would give you some sort of some idea of how she trained me. She loved me very much. I was the only son at the time. Only in 1930 another brother was born. So by the time I was very well, not pampered but well trained.

In the sense that at the time I didn't like it at all. Because my friends would take me out you see for to the tuck shops in the street and stands some [foreign] papdi or something. I had no money. So I had not to keep any money with me. Anything wanted you have from the house. Bring the friends, you have a party spread for them. Anytime, any number of times, everyday if you wanted. That was the order of the day. So I had no pocket money. And my father would give out alms every Sunday. So when he would be on tour, the bag would be given to me so I used to steal from that. [pilgrims laughing] Yeah, a wealthy person's son had to steal money from him. that was for the purpose of the beggars. And that's usual. That's how it is. So I remember all those things you know the little things that I did. So that why? Why did I steal that? Not that I needed anything but my friends would spend for me and I had no money to spend for them. So it looked bad. So I must stand something as against their hospitality. That was the only thing.

So such things I did. Then we would go to picture, theatres. Those were the days when they were silent pictures. So what happened you see my mother would give me money to go there. And then well we would all go there. I could take my friends also. Many of them [inaudible]. Best of seats. Friends would also stand. The next time I would go with the friends. That was my. My mother encouraged that. We had that relationship. The next time my turn

came she would pay me the least, very little. And she would count how many friends are going there. So I would say about four of them. [inaudible] the lowest means that would be absolutely on the bench you see unheard of. From our society nobody would go there. So I would remonstrate. I said, "Mother what are you doing? I'm not all alone. I have to go with these people." Says, "Who, which people? What do you mean? Who? Friends? Oh they are your friends?" She'd say. "That's good if they are your friends they will sit wherever you sit." You see that how she trained me.

I thought, "Yes that's true. What she's saying is right. Right now let us see how good friends they are." [general laughter] That's how she trained me. Any lavish, straight away restrained me. Under all conditions I was moving at the time. I belonged to the best of society at the time. Very big circle there but yet my mother would see that I would see to the welfare of the servants. There were plenty of them that were there, 15 of them working on the estate, our place and if anybody were to fall ill or anything I had to get up in the night and enquire how they are? What they are? Then I had to even massage their bodies. Because they are old people you know in the night when they are ailing and all that then mother would want me to do all these things. So this so how she trained me.

And well that's good on one side. All of a sudden one day what I find is Baba comes into our home to Nagpur. And I was in the school. I came by cycle I was there. And at the gate I find Him standing there. [inaudible] He's come here. I remembered that day. That was the time when I met Him. And in between He had been there

twice during the course of five years. So I greeted Him. I bowed down, I threw my cycle on one side, I prostrated, I bowed down and all that. And Baba was very happy. He lifted me, He caressed me and well with His arm around my shoulder we walked taking the cycle. He said, "Good I'm waiting for long time. What time do you get free?" I said, "This is the time I get free."

So when He came to my place He wanted me to play with Him. And well first day I obliged. I should try, I obliged. Second day well, some guest has come I'll oblige. Third day what is this nonsense? Well He's so old how can I play with Him you see? And my games are very vigorous games you see. And well I would like to play football, hockey and cricket and tug of war and all sort of things and wrestling and this and that. What is this sort of thing? So what I did was, knowing fully well that He'll be again at the gate, He would be waiting there. So I looked from a distance you see. And came from the wicket gate. I refreshed myself, changed my clothes and went back to school. And He was waiting there.

My mother asked me in the night, "Why did I not turn up?" I said, "Yes, I was here. I took a bath and everything and I went for play." "How is it that Baba didn't see you? He was there." I said, "No I came by the other." "Why did you do that?" My mother said. I said, "Well it's alright. I saw Him there and I said that if I were to see Him and He were to catch hold of me then He would ask me to play with Him which I didn't like." "Do you realise what you are saying? You naughty boy," And this and that. "He's our Zoroaster do you know that?" I said, "Zoroaster, So what? [inaudible]. So then she just didn't say

anything and said, "Be careful how you behave. It doesn't look good. Do you even know who He is?" "Why?" I said, "So what about Zoroaster?" That I was kept in the best school there in Nagpur. It was a missionary school, St. Francis de Sales High School.

I liked that school very much. But the only trouble with me was, with us there. Few of them. It was a Roman Catholic School and there were a lot of non-Catholic students there. Like me, I was a Zoroastrian by birth. So these non-Catholics were termed as heathens there and they were not given the seats you see according to their merit. They were also-so they also were people you see in the class. Day scholars. No boarder was taken there who was not a Catholic.

So it so happened that as years passed by and we went from one higher grade to another grade, it so happened that our turn was to sit at the back benches there when there were scripture classes. You know there was the Old Testament, the New Testament and there was the catechism classes and all sort of thing. According to the Roman Catholic curriculum. So we were not supposed to take turns there, not supposed to study those subjects. And it so happened that because we were not studying those subjects then we used to lose 200 marks from our grades. So many marks less. What to do? In spite of our being bright and brilliant in class our rank would be lower. And we missed that. Moreover we had to be very careful you see. And we had not to play mischief, we had not do anything of the sort. Any little noise we'd be called and admonished and caned. So that's how well one day some teacher came there who was taking some catechism classes and he said, "Who

played the mischief?" And he blamed me for it. And when he blamed me I was called. They used to do caning at the time. They thrashed me. The teachers would.

Of course I was very healthy I didn't care for that but I had not played the mischief that day. So I was very much upset. I mustered all the non-Catholic there in the school and said, "This is not, no justice whatsoever. What we should do is to go and approach the, go to the principal and approach him for some regress. How long are we going to be called heathens like that? How long are we going to miss our marks and ranks like this in this class? We are supposed to play at the time when they are having their catechism classes or scripture classes. Or we should be allowed to sit for the classes. Why are we debarred from these things?" So we went there.

The next day I took all the non-Catholics over there to the principal. Well the principal was nice. He knew my father because they had a technical department over there and my father was an engineer of repute there. So they had those connections there. So he says, he knew me. So he says, "What is it Jessawala?" I said, 'Well this was there. That's injustice' And I was excited. he said, "Calm down, calm down." His name was Father [inaudible]. French Father. So I said, "Alright Father but this is our grievance." So he says, "Alright. We'll see about it next time. We'll call a meeting for it. We'll decide one way or the other." In short the decision was given in our favour.

That those who wanted to attend the classes may do so. Those who wanted to go out to play may do so. So there was a general meeting of all the students in school, the high school and middle school.

And in that he declared the decision. And he called me out and says, "Now what do you decide?" He tells me. So I was caught there. I didn't know what to do. So all of a sudden I blurted out, naturally taking upon myself the responsibility that I as a [inaudible] would be. It won't be proper if I say I would like to go and play. I said, "I would like to take the classes." So he was very happy about it. [Bell rings].

When he was happy, I was happy too [inaudible]. So now what happened? When the classes were taken and when we were called we felt very happy about it and all that. And I picked up the lessons and all that. Next exam I stood first. I was very happy. And I was just showing off my merit you see and all that. And the Christians and the fathers there who taught us the classes they thought that well he is keen in this so if he wants to become a Catholic from a heathen [general laughter]. So he took special interest and all that. And I was very happy and I had such questions and they would answer me and all that.

Now here Baba has left the place and He would come again when He would have work [inaudible]. Yes sir? Only 5 minutes. One day it so happened that [inaudible]. I've passed the class and went to next class. Some difficult questions were there. So I stood up and asked the questions. He said, "Sit down." He just curtly told me that, he insulted me so to say. "Sit down. It's a mystery you can't know it." Then, I didn't know it was very embarrassing there in the class. I wondered what is the mystery about the whole thing? Question is asked. Well some other question I put next day or after that. He answered. Another question, "Sit down. It's a mystery." Another question, "Sit down."

[pilgrims laugh]. So it repeated like that half a dozen times. So it touched me very deeply.

And at the time I had grown up also. And I started feeling very bad and very sad and attracted towards Jesus [Bell ringing for tea time]. I said, "Anything here He has come [inaudible]." His life there, it's so hard to come back. I didn't hear how easy it could have been. How nice it is to follow him, how nice it would be. And that was the first little incline, that longing was there. Purely innocent longing was there. And in answer to that longing He would come there and wait for me at the gate. See that now? That's why when my mother said, "Zoroaster," I said, "So what's there?" Because I was in love with Jesus. Zoroaster maybe there what's in it? Nobody told me that Zoroaster and Jesus are one and the same. Nobody told me that Meher Baba is the same One at the time. So Baba in answer to my longing, it was genuine longing, so much so I still remember that on several occasions I shed tears in class. [crosstalk] longing to be with Him. And I used to always [inaudible]. And He was with us at our home wanting to play with me.

DEVANA: And you were asking questions [inaudible]

ERUCH: Yes I was asking questions [Eruch laughs][crosstalk]

MANI: When Baba was in Manzil-e-Meem in Bombay and so I could [inaudible] [crosstalk]

And I was in Manzil-e-Meem where Baba was. First He came around and then Baba called us in 1922. So we were there and Baba was there. And my mother had taken me to Manzil-e-Meem. I remember to

[inaudible]. And I remember one of the old mandali, a Mohommadan. And he, I think it was Khak Saheb. And he took me to the bazaar and got me a bottle of attar, perfume, Indian perfume. And I still remember [inaudible] Yes.

And well the Baba story I remember is I was sitting on Baba's lap and He was cuddling me and hugging me and playing with me you know. And then being a woman even at that age you know. One's a woman even long before you know you're a woman you're always a woman. And so Baba was playing with me and talking and the usual thing and I said, "Well it's my birthday next month." And Baba said, "It's your birthday next month. Oh that's wonderful." Another cuddle, another hug and then Baba said, "What is it that you want Me to send you for your birthday?" What I had was already in my mind. Because I used to see. In our alley I used to see couple of the kids who had a tricycle. It was a new thing. And I thought it was a wonderful thing. And how wonderful it would be if I could have a tricycle you see.

So when Baba said, "And what is it that I can send you for your birthday?" I said, "A tricycle." Baba said, "A tricycle, of course I'll send you a tricycle." And immediately I said, "Oh no you won't." Baba said, "Of course I will." I said, "You'll forget, you'll forget." Baba said, "How can I forget? How can I forget your birthday? I love you so how can I forget to send you this?" And I said, "Well, You'll forget." [general laughter]. Oh I could have [inaudible] all talking like this.

I didn't really think He'd forget but I wanted to make absolutely sure that He was going to send that tricycle.

PILGRIM 1: Was Baba talking then?

MANI: Yes. So then Baba said, He said, "I swear I won't forget." And in the Indian, you catch the skin of your throats, of your neck like that and you pull it out and you swear by something very precious to you. You swear by your beard or you swear by your child or your parent or anything very precious to you. Baba said, "I swear I won't forget. I swear by a hen." [General laughter]. A hen. That completely satisfied me. Baba swore, [foreign] Kasam. Kasam means swearing. [Mani clears her throat] Excuse me.

So Baba has you know taken kasam so of course he won't forget. Oh after that I was happy. I don't remember the next thing. The next thing I remember is I was home with mother in Pune and in a few days it was my birthday. And the next month would be my birthday. And every time when I saw people were coming and I said, "Ah, ah. There's the tricycle Baba has sent." So I'd rush first to the door and I found no, it was the milkman or the vegetable man or some friend or some this or some that, or the. And every day I waited for that tricycle. And the tricycle never arrived. And by the time my birthday came I was so miserable. Not because of the tricycle anymore but, "Baba doesn't love me. Baba forgot. Forgotten, He'd forgot my birthday. He said He wouldn't forget." And what was worst of all, He had even taken kasam. He had sworn.

So I. When you're a 4 year old and in a Parsi household, in a Zoroastrian household up to the time you are 7 years old each birthday is celebrated very, very nicely. You know pompously almost. You're made to stand up on this wooden seat on

which they put these chalk designs and your best dress is on. And of course first of all you're made to take a bath very early in the morning which is terrible. And then they give you presents and they give you a lot of money which they take away from you to put in the bank you know in your name. [general laughter]. They'll leave you with 8 annas or 4 annas or something. But all the time I was just miserable.

I remember that misery, I remember that feeling. No tricycle even on my birthday. Then again the scene shifts. We are back in Meherabad or Nasik I don't remember where Baba was at the time. So my mother took me over again to be with Baba. And there again as usual. Usually I would run to Baba and I knew I would be petted and cuddled and played with and I just loved it. But this time it was Baba who had to come to me and you know gather me in His arms. And there again I was sitting on His lap and He was. It's the usual thing. But I was as stiff as anything you know I wasn't moving, I wasn't giving any response. And Baba said, "What's the matter?" Nothing, I didn't answer. So Baba says, "What's happened?" And then He said, "Ah, somebody has said something to you?" No. I wasn't [inaudible]. "Is it mother? Did mother say, scold you? Did somebody scold you? Did mother scold you?" Sort of Baba made a gesture and said, "I'll show mother if she's done that." [Pilgrims laugh]. And I said, "No, not mother, no." "Did so and so do this?" "No." "Did so and so do that?" "No." All that was exhausted. Then Baba said, "Then who?" And I turned around and said, "You." [general laughter]. Baba said, "Me?" He looked so innocent, so surprised when He said, "Me." I said, "Yes." "But what?" And then of course I just blurted out everything. I said, "You said you

wouldn't forget, you don't love me anymore. You didn't even send me the tricycle. You said You'd send me a tricycle for my birthday." And Baba just listened. "Tricycle?" I said, "Yes, tricycle. You said you'd send it for my birthday." And then I added, "You even swore. You swore by a hen you wouldn't forget."

Then Baba had the clue and He said, "I remember. I didn't forget. Of course I love you and I didn't forget your birthday. I was going to send you the tricycle. I swore by a hen. But what can I do? The hen died." [Pilgrims laughing]. "Oohhh." My world was well again. Everything was right and [inaudible]. It wasn't Baba's fault. Baba hadn't forgotten [crosstalk]. Baba loved me. He hadn't forgotten me. Everything was alright. What could Baba do if that wretched hen went up and died? So what could Baba do? He swore by a hen, it's all the hen's fault. Everything was the hen's fault [pilgrims laughing]. Oh I was so happy and [inaudible]. I never had that tricycle and I never thought about it [Mani and pilgrims laugh].

PILGRIM 2: I had one more. You were there with Baba has [inaudible].

MANI: And its very strange because this house, this house with the well, it was as if it were built for us. For the family. Because you know that Baba room where there. That was where Gustadji also. I mean I have letters and things that show how Gustadji was there. Bua Saheb was there. And Baba used to be in that room in that divine agony when He used to bang His head. But it was, nobody else had stayed there before. And the history is that first there was no house. There was just land and there was this well. This well was supposed to be a sort of a holy well in the

sense that people would come and make a wish and it would be fulfilled. And in the joy of the fulfilment they would come and place flowers, a lace rack of flowers. What they call [foreign] jalli. A net of flowers is strung together. They would put that on the. Even after the house was built, I remember as a child every now and then someone would ask permission to please come in and place this flower jalli, phool-jalli on the well and we would say, "Yes."

There was this Zoroastrian lady who was so much in love with the well that she wanted to have it, to own it. So she bought the land that had the well. The plot, she had bought the plot that already had the well on it. And there were no houses around it. Around this well. So then she built this house in such a way that it enclosed the well in her courtyard as it were. She really loved that well. So she built that. Had this house built. Now her husband obviously had to take out a big debt in order to build this or something. Because when it was completed, before they could live in it the lady went to Bombay for some time, for some work. And the husband tried to sell it off. So that, I don't know the details as to the reasons and all but he didn't, he wanted to sell it off and she wanted to keep it. So he approached my father who had just the toddy shop thing was going on. We had that little house in front of it, the Pumpkin House.

So my father said, "Yes, I can buy that." And so it was, the deal was gone through and the house was ours. Then the lady came back and found out. Oh she was furious, absolutely furious. My father said, "Had I known that she would be unhappy and it is not that we approached but it's your husband." So anyway that. I wasn't

born and the family moved over to Baba House. And that's where mother had a dream about the well. You'll must have read it. Yeah.

PILGRIM 3: The well?

MANI: Yeah. How. I don't remember very accurately or correctly but this much I know that in the dream mother was standing with Baba, Merwan, little Merwan in her hand, baby. Baby Baba in her hand and out of the well came these beautiful little women. In green saris and green bangles. And you know beautiful like goddesses or the Indian version of goddesses would be. That's my take. These beautiful green clad sari, little women. And this women came. She put out her hands. She was the main one. She put out her hand and wanted to take Merwan. And mother said, "No, no, no. No, no I won't give you." And she what? You remember?

PILGRIM 3: I've read. No not reading it.

MANI: Yeah. But somehow that story is so that everything fitted in so, in little, little ways so perfectly. Like the time when Baba was to be born. He was born in the David Sassoon Hospital which is a Jewish hospital. And the nurses who delivered the baby were Catholic nuns and she of course. My father was Persian born. All my family were all from Persia. And it's such a universe for when he was in Pune, India. This is the way it is. But what was I saying?

Yes and then before Baba was born my mother had this dream that she saw these enormous processions of people, all coming of all castes, all religions, all colors, all dresses. You know different. All just coming and processions just going by her while she stands there with her child.

Just this long procession, endless and then growing. More numbers growing, the people going. And so in the morning she told her mother, my grandmother that, "Mummy this is the dream I had." She was very young then, 16 or something. And she said it was a very auspicious dream and she told my father. My granny told my father. My father said to my mother, he said, "Shireen, you don't know who's to be born to us." My father knew, my father always knew.

Also at the time when he turned back from his [foreign] banish. Turned back then the voice said, "What you seek you will find in your son." That's the time when he had to turn back. But my father knew.

PILGRIM 4: Did he ever say anything to you? Did he ever say anything about Baba? You remember him saying anything?

MANI: No. it was just an understanding. I just knew that he knew. You see I. And so did my mother in a way. Because to. I didn't have to acquire anything. I just knew from the first. From far back as I could remember anything. Baba is, He's God, He's my brother. There was no room for anything else. So I never thought even of anything else.