

# Supplement—Prem Ashram Boys

WHAT little is known of the lives of the Prem Ashram boys has been gathered from various sources and set forth below. Asterisks in the text indicate a new source, which is identified by a footnote at the bottom of the page.

## PART I\*

**Vasant B. Kimbhavne** is a Brahmin lad aged 14 years. He was the first boy in the Meher Ashram to begin weeping for love, and the last boy who has remained weeping to this day! Of course, it is thereby never meant that he is weeping all the time throughout the 24 hours. Rather the moment he comes before the Master, tears begin to roll down his cheeks. So silent are the throbs of his heart that not the least sign of a sob is perceptible about him when he cries. It is a wonderful sight to see him crying! Standing like a statue, without any sign of emotion on his face or mark of restlessness about his body, he seems to be looking towards the Master with dreamy and moist eyes, that go on shedding pearls one after the other, until the Master goes away from him. And this peculiar manifestation of divine love about him is not an occasional affair. It has almost become his second nature. Be he walking, sitting, eating or engaged in any other way, he has only to cast his eyes on the Master and they begin to fill with tears instantly.

Ali once cried because others did not obey the Master, but Vasant surpasses him in this respect, as once he was found smacking himself vigorously till he was actually forced to stop it, for

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\* Ramjoo Abdulla, *Sobs and Throbs* (1929)

the weeping Vasant could not bear the sight of one of the boys behaving rudely with the Master. Of all the things he likes, the best is to be allowed to remain with his head pressed against the lotus feet of the Master for hours together. When once he was asked about the most cherished desire of his heart, this great lover replied, "I want nothing. I want to give, and I want to give my life to Baba. When this is done, I shall desire for another life to be laid at his feet again!" This is all the more wonderful, since he is not of a docile nature. He is as fiery as a tiger. During the period of "inevitable reaction," he once made a grown-up overseer in the Prem Ashram roll in the dust with a single push. He is no less intelligent and has a passion for poetry, which he can remember after hearing but once or twice; nay, he is a poet himself, and at times can compose fine lines in the style of Tukaram Baba and Gnyaneshwari Maharaj. His profound consideration for the Master may well be judged by the fact that in spite of passing 30 stools, Vasant managed to conceal his malady till his condition was actually detected by one of the overseers, in order not to cause any trouble to the Master, who, he knew too well, would personally involve himself in the matter of treatment and nursing.

His love-restlessness is matchless, and none of the others can surpass him in this respect. But in spite of having the greatest restlessness, in appearance he looks exceptionally calm and composed. Generally he looks the very picture of seriousness, as he is continuously deeply engrossed in meditation about the Master. He remained thus even when sent home, where he used to look as if he were almost dumb, since he would generally speak in monosyllables with his parents and relatives. In short, in the words of the Master, "He is almost a saint already!"

**Aspandiar Sarosh Irani** [Esphandiar Vesali] may well be congratulated on having advanced on the path that directly leads to God-realization. Generally, the different religious practices are believed to be the paths that lead to Truth. But, in fact, these various ways only lead one to the real path which is one and the same, whether it is reached by this or that means. It is only when one reaches this real path that one is supposed to have really taken a birth from the spiritual viewpoint. In the case of this lucky boy it happened all of a sudden.

On New Year's Day 1929, Aspandiar became unconscious. But it was not an ordinary unconsciousness, since when he lost consciousness of the gross plane, he became conscious of the subtle

plane. This came to be known generally when shortly the Master restored him to gross-consciousness to a certain extent, and since then, to quote his own words, he sees "unimaginable light, hears wonderful sounds, smells indescribably sweet odors, and experiences different phenomena including that of floating in space and so on." These are but poor terms to bring within imagination that which is beyond intellect. To give another illustration of his state, when he was asked to describe what happened to him when he became unconscious, he replied, "Baba broke my skull, and the light began to manifest out of it!" He did not look in any way concerned when he was told that he was to be sent back to Persia. Not a single tear was found in his eyes when he departed from Meherabad. On the contrary, he looked much amused and smiling while looking here and there through half-closed eyes.

**Suryabhan**, belonging to the so-called depressed class, is another lucky lad to have achieved almost permanent concentration on the Master. He is seen neither smiling nor weeping, but is conspicuous for his great silence and indifference towards his surroundings. He is the least talkative in the lot and continued to manifest this silent aspect of love even when he was at home, which often provoked the mischievous boys of his village to go to the length of stoning him for the sheer fun of it! Once he actually remained indoors for six days to avoid being disturbed by such mischief-makers. Grown-up villagers, including the leader of the village, for whom, naturally enough, the spiritual state of the boy was a sealed book, also caused no small annoyance to the boy in trying to bring him round to their own vulgar way of thinking. The great control **Suryabhan** has achieved over his mind can be easily gauged from the fact that when, on the seventh day, he came out of the house, he was again stoned, but instead of protesting or retaliating in the least, he calmly withdrew. Silent submission seems to be his watchword.

Then, **Duttoo Mehendergi**, a Brahmin youngster, provides yet a new phase of the divine feelings. He was the last to leave the Ashram at the time of the temporary close-up. On coming to know of the separation, he began to weep and wail, and continued crying for three successive days, without being able to check himself in spite of his best attempts to do so. "If you don't return soon," he said to the Master amidst soul-stirring sobs, "I will start wandering all over the world crying out your name. I don't

mind if I am not elevated on the path. Only keep me with you." Formerly he was very fond of studies and sports, but now he is so very full of feeling for the Master that he simply abhors all studies and games. The depth of his feelings may well be imagined from the fact that all thoughts of home and relatives are now foreign to his mind.

**Shahu Mahar** and **Hormuzd** provide the finest pair of meditators in the Meher Ashram. The former once asserted, "If there is happiness in the world, it is only found in meditation." And true to his words, when sent home, Shahu had set up a little hut for himself in a quiet little corner outside the house, wherein he used to remain absorbed in meditation for nearly 18 hours every day!

The name of **Ali Akbar** the "Majnun" of the Meher Ashram, has already been mentioned in previous chapters. The intensity of his love towards the Master is unique. None can come to the level of his highly active love, which always keeps him on the stir. He is seldom seen in one place or sitting calmly. When he first joined the Meher Ashram, he used to feel quite disinterested in discussions about love and spirituality. He would not only show open disinclination for divinity, but used to fight shy of all such subjects, and would remain as aloof as possible from meditation and concentration. But all the same, at the first exit of Ali, the hero, Ali Akbar became all of a sudden surcharged with the divine grace of the Master. He began to roll and reel in the dust, quite literally, as a fish just out of water, till he would come into the Master's contact, whom he would try to enfold in his little arms as furiously as a moth tries to devour the lamp. After some months he became a little cooler, but to this day he remains as active as a top. Even a stranger would not fail to notice the great twinges on his face and twitches about his limbs when he is in the presence of the Master. The moment the Master shows an inclination to receive him, Ali Akbar literally takes a bound towards the Master, and begins to fondle him in a very violent way. It is not enough for him to embrace or kiss the person of the Master a number of times, but invariably he would bite and scratch him all over the body. It is always an effort for the Master to free himself from Ali Akbar's hugging caresses, once he allows this intense lover to clasp him. The violent throbs of his heart are too thrilling to allow Ali Akbar to meditate. He never meditates, and has never meditated. All that he does is hard labour that demands

intense activity. He generally passes his time in wrestling with the mother earth, with the help of spades and pickaxes in trying to grow flowers, fruits and vegetables for his Baba, and consequently both at Toka and Arangaon small patches of shrubberies have come to be a part and parcel of the Meher Ashram.

There is yet one more little lover of the Master of this violent type, although not so very intense as Ali Akbar. **Khuda Bux** can be said to be next to Ali Akbar in all the other details of his feelings for the Master.

Quite in contrast to the above two is **Maruti Kamble**. He is almost an automaton. He carries out the Master's instructions with mechanical precision, and knows no restlessness, no emotion, save that of enjoying the proximity of the Master.

**James Titus** is another sincere aspirant, and one who meditates from the bottom of his heart. His one longing is to see the Master internally, so that he can always have him before his eyes even when he is separated. He is so sincere that he has frequently followed the Master's instructions to the letter. For instance, once in the course of a lecture, the Master conveyed that they all should know themselves to be "spirits," and should forget that they were "bodies." And the next day James was marked to be silently but actually arguing with himself the same point through frequent gestures towards his own body.

**Tukaram** is very emotional, and the reader would remember how keen he has once been at Toka in insisting that the Master transfer his sufferings to his own little shoulders. He is also very resolute and decisive.

**Chaboo Sona** is no less remarkable, inasmuch as he can be called without the least fear of exaggeration the personification of humility, submission and surrender.

**Jamshed** and **Babu Sona**, although keen meditators, are rather of a desperate type. Their impatience for quick results knows no limits and keeps them wavering like the waves, which never get separated from the ocean in spite of all their tossings and struggle.

To sum up all the above attributes, more or less, is to introduce **Daulat Padir**, who well represents an admixture of all the above feelings, emotions and tendencies in his character and conduct.

There are many more who are equally warm in their feelings for the Master, but I will close the chapter with a few lines about **Pundit**, an eight-year-old lover of the Master whose feelings have also a humour about them. Perchance this day the Master would not embrace or pat him, and the mischievous little Pundit was sure to commit a breach of some discipline. Why? Simply because thereby he was sure to be conducted into the presence of the Master for punishment, and thus attract the attention of Baba for himself. Whenever he is threatened by the Master with expulsion from the Prem Ashram, or some other punishment for his innocent but mischievous conduct, Pundit is ready with an appeal for "a last chance" which is never really meant to be the last. At such moments, he would begin crying as loudly as his little lungs would allow him and go on yelling out his pet phrases, "Please give me the last, last chance. You are God, and I am but a little boy. Oh, why do you become so harsh with me? Lord God, I will never do it again!" and so on. The result, of course, would be a free pardon and an embrace from the Master.

## PART II

### **Abdulla Pakrawan (Chota Baba)**

#### Childhood\*

My name is Abdulla. I was born towards the end of Ramadan of 1327 A.H., corresponding to 1909 A.D., in the city of Bastak in the feudal territory of Jahungirieh. It is said that at my elder brother's (Muhammad's) wedding, my father, Haj Rokneldin, spoke the following in a loud voice: "I am looking forward to that day when, after much anticipation, I may behold my noble son, Abdulla." All in the gathering were bewildered that at his old age Haj Rokneldin wished to have another son! He answered: "Yes, although I am eighty years old, I am still awaiting that noble son of mine. One night in a dream I saw a man with a

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\* K. A. Afseri, *Kashful Heqayeq* (1929). Translated from the Persian by Dr. Farhad Shafa.

white robe and long hair who had a radiant face. He told me that a boy will be born from my seed who will be raised and educated in his company. Call him Abdulla (Slave of God), for he shall be a true slave and worshipper of God."

A year later when all this was forgotten, I was born. My parents were quite elderly, and I soon lost my pious and noble parents to God's beckoning. My loving parents raised me with all their affection and in all comfort. While alive they never allowed the slightest harm, whether bodily or in the heart, ever to come to me.

Although they did not die together, it was not long before one followed the other. Thus I became an orphan at a young age. Being too young and immature to earn my own livelihood, some relatives took me in, raised me, and with each other's help we made our living. When I was ten, along with a relative, we would occupy ourselves with a variety of jobs like plowing, harvesting, riding camels, gardening, etc., and we lived a happy and simple life together.

#### Education

Although I studied hard in the traditional Muslim schools, I was not satisfied, for I was seeking a higher level of education. I discontinued this type of schooling for a while, and in 1919 travelled to the port of Lingeh, where my brother Muhammad lived. After settling in Lingeh, I joined the primary school there which had been opened in 1917 by the previous governor of that port with the help of some businessmen. After taking the usual tests, I was admitted and began the first grade of that school. Because of my great fondness for my studies and my continual eagerness to learn something new, I would study even on my way from school to home. I would also study foreign languages and topics which were taught in higher grades. Both the teachers and other students would praise how well I learned my lessons, and in the semi-annual and yearly examinations I always ranked first. In a short time I completed the different levels of the school, advancing rapidly from first to second to third grades, etc. The subjects taught in that school were Persian, Arabic, English, mathematics and some others.

#### Earning My Livelihood

During childhood and during my studies I was always very weak and often ill. Despite lacking sufficient means to continue

school, with much enthusiasm and zeal I still managed to bring my education to completion. After finishing the sixth grade, I received my elementary school diploma in 1923. I began work at a business firm for a notable businessman called Esmail. As I had no experience in business, I was truly a novice in my job, but I had decided to focus on gaining all the experience that I could, so that in the future I could put to use all the knowledge that I had gained. Therefore I made do with a small salary, establishing the start of my work and duties on a correct basis. I spent a year thus with a salary of ten rupees a month, amounting to one hundred twenty rupees a year. It was agreed that my salary should be raised, but since each person is destined and is bound to pursue his own distinct future according to the universal law (the law of Love), I was not inclined to stay any longer in that port. I asked for a vacation and shortly afterward terminated my work there. After a short trip to Bastak for an urgent matter, I set out for Amman and from there went to the important port of Dubai, situated on the coast of the Arabian peninsula. There I continued my previous occupation and started to work in a business firm, earning twenty-five rupees a month.

#### Joining the School as Teacher

Here again, after six months I terminated this period of activity. He who turns the wheel of life and rules and attracts the glowing hearts of the wayfarers, He who reigns supreme over all Creation and all the universe, has each one and each thing go its own distinct way. Then after passing through the different stages and much hardship and suffering, He gathers them all around Himself. Thus, after leaving my job and travelling for some time in the ports and villages of Saudi Arabia, once again I returned to my previous abode, the port of Lingeh. There, after spending a month without a job, I applied as a teacher in the same school where I had gained my elementary education, had enjoyed love and had gained worldly knowledge from my teachers. In their first session they all reviewed my case and unanimously hired me to be a teacher for the first, second and third grades.

For a period of more or less one year I served these youngsters of today, who are to be parents to the children of tomorrow, and did not shirk the slightest from my responsibility towards them. Since my real purpose was helping mankind and serving

innocent children, I had renounced making money and would make do with seven tomans a month. Thus I would help, not pressure, the school, which was in a sad financial condition, satisfying myself with little, bearing the hardships with content and without complaint.

During those early days of my teaching at the school, many of the people—some of the parents, but mostly their relatives (although there were some against them, as well)—would call me an "infidel" and "one without a religion." They criticized me for having stopped the Muslim prayers and fasting and for having cut my hair English style, and accused me of having abandoned all faith. In short, I was enveloped in much superstition and ignorance. But they only saw the externals, while internally and in His presence I would be worshipping my Creator in the temple of my heart, where that compassionate Beloved abides.

My faith and my religion were God. I was after Truth, and I was searching for my true Self. Now and then during the night, I would wake up and with outstretched arms would plead to the all-powerful absolute God, the Creator, the Master and the Teacher of mankind. I would plead: "O Thou, the all-knowing, the all-seeing, the all-hearing, guide me to a Master where the flower of my heart may blossom and where my soul may be scented and refreshed in the flower garden of his Truth; guide this lost soul to a path where it might find rescue from this deep well of darkness and ignorance, where it might scale the heights of salvation."

In reality, my soul and my heart were drunk from the wine of His love, and my purpose was to reach the throne of the King of Heaven. Mayhap that the all-hearing, the all-seeing, the all-wise, He who answers every prayer and knows all our needs, may accept my plea and grant me my desire. But the real work was in progress internally and in secret, and that which I had sought for such a long time was about to be granted.

### Trip to India

Towards the end of my stay at the above-mentioned school, where I taught the children whom I considered as my dear brethren, regarding their lives as my own, one day while reading a newspaper published in Calcutta, I saw an announcement about the opening of a charity school and dormitory called Meher Ashram in the vicinity of Ahmednagar. Upon reading

that announcement and learning about the regulations and arrangements of that school, it was as if I was all of a sudden set on fire. I lost all patience, eagerly wishing to go to India and enter that school to further my education. Therefore I wrote my letter of resignation at my teaching job and asked for leave from the honourable staff of the school. After my resignation was accepted, I left my job and began to gather all necessary prerequisites for my trip to India. This included a health certificate from a local doctor (one of the requirements for the children in the Meherabad dormitory). Also, after much trouble I acquired a passport. In less than four or five days after reading that announcement in the newspaper, I wrote a note to the principal of that school, and upon receiving a favourable reply, I said farewell to all friends, relatives, students and teachers and sailed on the *Baroja* for India.

After eight days on the sea, on August 3, 1927, while the Indian Ocean was in a storm we anchored in Bombay. I spent four days there with three or four friends, then I took the train for Ahmednagar. This was my first trip on the train and my first visit to India, and although I had heard much about India, I had not seen it with my own eyes. I enjoyed the green fields and the lush dales and valleys as we tore through the heart of the mountains. But as I was unfamiliar with the local dialects of that land, I did not speak with anyone, neither did I ask for help from anyone.

### Entering Meherabad

Anyway, after a 16-hour train ride, in a cool morning when there was a delightful chill in the air, I descended from the train in the Ahmednagar station and immediately rented a carriage, which took me for three or four miles on a road with trees on both sides to Meherabad. I walked up the hill, on top of which Meher Ashram was located. After meeting the principal, Mr. Behramji (nicknamed Bua Saheb), and chatting with him, I was sent, accompanied by a man named Rustom, known as Aga Baidul, to another building located at the foot of the hill. There I removed my shoes and entered a room, where I found myself in the presence of a radiant person with a rosy face and beautiful hair. Truly from that very moment I felt a small portion of his greatness in my heart. After some questions about my home, the reason for my travel to India, my age and a minor test in mathematics, again I was sent with Aga Baidul to the Meher Ashram, which was on top of the hill. There Bua

Saheb (the principal of the school and dormitory, whom, after a short talk, I found to be a noble, sweet and kind person) invited me to have breakfast. I had some food and tea, then I visited all the rooms and buildings of the dormitory. I saw the equipment and noticed the ways of the children, one by one, and became acquainted with the daily programme (24 hour) at Meher Ashram.

Then they noticed the signs of weariness and lack of sleep which were due to my trip, so they took me to a clean house where I could rest and recover. There I lay on my bed for three or four hours. When I got up, I found myself completely refreshed, with all signs of the trip having disappeared. After lunch, once again I toured the institution, specially attentive to the manner in which the children studied.

My second day in Meherabad was a Sunday, the 9th of August, 1927. I was then 17 years old. The day after, the school was open and I joined the rest of the children in class. After inspecting my school diploma they were satisfied with my educational background and I was admitted to the school named Hazrat Babajan High School. Since I had arrived late, I felt unfamiliar and wanted to have more time to study than was possible according to Meher Ashram regulations. I asked the principal if it were possible for me to have a private room so that I could spend more time at my studies. As the founder of the institution sought the content and happiness of the members, and could not see anyone of those who lived around him and depended on him to be sad or disappointed, he ordered the people working at the institution to do as I wished.

### Life at Meherabad

Thus the following day, just as I wished, I took all my belongings from the dormitory down to a room where two other Iranians lived. That was where I was placed. Here (in my own room) no strict rules or regulations were in effect; therefore I would spend most of my time studying and preparing my lessons for school, and after a month or two I began to prepare myself for the yearly examination, getting up at 2 or 3 A.M. to study. Life here was totally free and very comfortable, without a single expense. I found all the people at Meherabad to be kind and with a good and pure character.

During my stay at Meherabad, all the people from the vicinity and also from far away would come, group by group, to kiss the feet and hands of that Master (even an Iranian brother who

arrived some time after my arrival). But since I was caught in religious fanaticism and I had not understood the truth of the matter, although I was growing in the lap of that great world teacher and I was benefiting from his benign mercy, still it was rare that I should go to visit him. Even when I went, I completely refrained from kissing his feet. But as kissing a person's hand is somewhat prevalent among Muslims and I called myself a Muslim, I kissed the blessed hand of that exalted one, the beloved of all mankind and the teacher of all the world, Hazrat Meher Baba, and once or twice put his hand on my eyes. This I did, knowing well that neither would it add anything to his great state, nor that avoiding it would do any harm to his Truth and spirituality.

During this first two or three months of my stay in Meherabad, his mercy and infinite kindness would often bring him personally to the room where four of us from Iran used to live. He inspected our cleanliness and observed whether we obeyed the principles of hygiene. If he would find the slightest faltering, he would become disgusted with our negligence and would do his utmost to remedy the situation.

#### Transfer to Meher Ashram

As that Beloved of the world knew of my life and future and as my destiny was already visible to his all-seeing eyes, and as he knew of all that had to happen, many times he advised and encouraged me to enter the Meher Ashram. Finally, since I had managed to catch up in my studies with my classmates, although I did not know of the good fortune that awaited me in Meher Ashram, I agreed to this request and listened to the useful advice of my beloved, that unequalled being, Hazrat Meher Baba, and with content moved to Meher Ashram. There I became a roommate of a newcomer from Iran. I was familiar with the boys from before and knew their way of life, and gradually I became acquainted with the rules and regulations of life there. Thus living there was not difficult for me. The date of transfer from Meherabad to Meher Ashram was the 25th of October, 1927. It might be proper to say a few words about the way of life at the Meher Ashram.

#### Meher Ashram

Meher Ashram is a building and an institution on top of a hill opposite the railroad, three or four miles from Ahmednagar,

with delightful meadows. It is very beautiful, with a good climate, and complies with all the requirements of good hygiene. In summer the temperature rises above the level of comfort, but the rest of the year the air is fresh and pleasant. Most important of all, it is an institution founded by the beloved Perfect Master of the Age, the lover of all mankind, the master of the universe and the king of all the holy beings, Shri Meher Baba, which was established and opened to all in May of 1927. Children from every group and caste, and following any faith or religion, were accepted there. Life in this dormitory called Meher Ashram was completely free, with all comforts and ease for the children. The parents had to read the regulations of Meher Ashram, and after being completely satisfied, could leave their children and go away. Neither tuition nor any other fees for clothes, books, etc., were demanded from them as they were all provided free of charge for the children. The length of stay was five years, during which they could study up to seventh English grade. It was mandatory that the children should stay for this period, and none could leave until the termination of this five years (except if the founder and the staff should decide to send a child to his home after six months, ten months, one year or three years). All the children lived like brothers together, and all were like children of one father and slaves of one God. They spent night and day acquiring knowledge, courtesy, good behaviour and good character. Prevalent games in that institution were hockey, cricket, ping-pong and some of the local Indian games for children. When they had finished school and prepared their lessons, the children would gather in groups to participate in these games. Each in his turn was required to bathe once every other day with hot water.

After entering Meher Ashram on the aforementioned date, I spent a long time studying with diligence and enthusiasm among my friends and brethren (Persian, Indian and Muslim), who exceeded 120. We passed our lives in the grace of that unequalled beloved and under the eyes of the staff.

### Spiritual Teachings

In addition to the regular studies at school such as reading and writing, and preparing for the lessons in the dormitory, it was customary that children from different language groups gathered in different rooms and listened to spiritual discussions and lectures delivered by the teachers in the native lan-

guages of the children. These included episodes from the lives of saints and holy personalities, life stories of prophets and tales concerning their deeds. These the children kept in their memories.

After a short period it was time for the birds who had gathered the seeds of infinite Truth and had collected fruits from the garden of Union, to benefit from the precious results of the eternal trees of Truth. The time had come for those thirsting after the elixir of life to join the saints and the blessed ones on the high heavens, and be satiated from the wine-filled fountain of divine love. That is to say, the time had come for those children under the mercy and guidance of that perfect guide and master to hear from his silent lips about divine secrets and the divine path—it was time for them to enjoy the fragrance of his infinite wisdom.

During these sessions when the teachers discussed spiritual matters, our beloved Baba would personally come and brighten the holy gathering of the class with his radiance, clarifying points and details about states and stages. The attraction, the spiritual Truth and the exalted state of the master of all the holies, the king of all wayfarers and the Perfect Master of the Age, gradually began to have such an effect on the hearts of the children that is truly rare, even in the case of seekers and yogis who have spent years in quest of divine love and who have been treading the path for many years. That is to say, the effulgent soul and exalted state of Baba, that unequalled master, had its effect, and a spark of fire began to appear in the hearts of these young children. It was as if their hearts were boiling over with divine love, and from that hot fire their whole beings were in turmoil. Among those children who were well drunk with the wine of love offered by that beloved of the world, who were thrilled to such an extent that nothing but the sight of the beloved could satisfy or calm their hearts, was the writer, who was trying hard to discover the truth of those secrets.

One day when the discourse on the lives of some of the kings of the mystics like Shams Tabriz and Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, as well as talk about the state of Krishna, Muhammad and Ali, came to an end, my beloved Baba looked deep into the faces of the children, one by one, and said the following: "Those whom I find worthy I shall attract to the mistress of Love, and I shall offer them the elixir of life. Children, only Truth is real—all else is worthless." Although I did not have the strength to look into his radiant countenance and had lowered my eyes, he

glanced at me, addressing me thus: "Try and be diligent—I shall make pure gold from your mixed alloy."

The meeting was over and all the children gathered to have their lunch. The profound effect that this short speech had upon me, put me in a most bewildered state during most of the night, the morning and the next day (which was a holiday). I wish someone who had been present could relate what happened. The truths that Baba explained and demonstrated were of the kind that open one's inner eyes and gradually lead one to God. I was so drowned in that ocean of thought and bewilderment that while playing hockey that Sunday, all the children were astounded and puzzled by my manner of standing, running and by the colour of my face. At any event, when the period for studies was over, lunch time arrived and the special bell was rung. All the children, along with some of the staff who were helping to bring the dishes, had arrived. First we repeated God's names in different languages to a beautiful tune, and then all the children began to eat.

### The First State

After a few morsels I suddenly felt a change overtaking me. I put aside my plate and lost my natural state. My heart felt heavy. I began to feel an extraordinary heat and everything began to get dark around me, nay, I observed how things began to vanish around me. Abruptly and without my volition, a weeping welled up from the depth of my being and I began to wail and cry (which had no apparent reason). Then I lost all consciousness of the children and the staff around me and became insensible to their talk. I do not remember anything else prior to passing out. After a short while, I found myself conscious again and repeating these words: "I am far, I am far. Where is He and where am I?"

The director of the school, Bua Saheb, was sitting next to me, gently comforting me and trying to help me stop crying. He was reminding me of what that exalted one had told and promised to me. But the spontaneous wailing and weeping were getting louder and louder and now it was combined with shivering and shaking of all my muscles, making my breathing deep and fast. Time and again I would quiet down, only to start crying again. I would forget myself and lose consciousness, only to regain it after a short while.

After about an hour I began to calm down a bit. My crying

had somewhat stopped and my shivering was less. At that time, while in a state of limbo between sleep and wakefulness, a feeling of bliss overtook me. I raised my head and found my beloved sitting in front of me. His presence and the sight of his pure face once again moved me to tears, and unthinkingly I fell at his holy feet. He was concerned about my wailing and crying, but I was lost in the ocean of oblivion. (I swear to God that now as I write these lines retelling what happened, my heart is pounding hard and my eyes are about to tear.) After five minutes, I somewhat regained consciousness and sat in front of him, motionless like a statue, gazing with bewilderment at the beauty of that unrivalled beloved. My eyes were wet with tears and my heart was burning in flames, and in my heart I was singing these lines about true love:

O Beloved, I have lost myself, yet I desire to lose myself even more.

I speak to your eyes, telling them, "I want to be as drunk as you are."

I don't want a crown; I don't seek a throne; I only want to be thrown as dust in your service.

Who has ever had such a lovely idol as I have?

Who has ever had a moon, sweet as honey?

The sight of your countenance makes the earth shake as in the day of judgment,

Yet in the paradise of your beauty, who would ever fear the fire of hell?

I pleaded to him thus: "O life of my soul, without you neither does joy make me happy nor does rapture intoxicate me. You are my life, without it I know not how to live. You are my eyes, without you I have no sight."

In any event, as time passed and weeks ended, the love of my beloved, whom I consider with all my heart to be my exalted master, became more apparent and that fire became hotter and more burning. It finally reached such an extent that even when eating, bathing, studying, etc., I would be drowned in thoughts of him and there was not a moment that I could forget him. Days passed and weeks ended, while I was being consumed in the intoxication of his love. Desire for food had left me and I had abandoned the care of my body and clothes, being totally oblivious of my surroundings. I was lost in meditation and in the longing to behold the beauty of my Baba. At this time (De-

ember 1927) Baba, the beloved of the world, the master of the universe, the king of all holy men, had secluded himself, spending day and night in a small area of seclusion. He did not set foot out of this area for six months. During this period he had completely avoided food and fruits, drinking only some tea and milk. What can I say, for it is beyond the power of this pen to speak of that intoxication and oblivion.

### Discontinuation of Studies

Day after day I would sit in the class, turning the pages of my book, trying to study. My eyes were fixed on the pages but my heart was with by beloved. His name was my meditation and thought of him my remembrance. I would answer the teacher's questions while my inner eyes were dazed and fixed on the matchless beauty of that blessed one. Often, involuntary weeping would pour out of my heart, and bedazzled by this, I would begin to cry at my own sudden weeping. Only the sight of his glorious countenance could stop the flow of my tears and could calm my sobbing. Even the shortest period of separation from him was intolerable for me, moving me to tears which would wet all my clothes and bedding. After spending a period in this state, since I could not live without the company of my beloved, and since I could no longer bear to pursue my studies (although the dormitory staff discouraged me), I set aside my studies, burning the books and breaking my pen.

Thus I found relief from education and the distraction of my studies, and thus I was able to live and persist in the company of the beloved of the world. I had a tavern-keeper who dispensed wine for the heart and nurtured my soul. Day and night I desired to gaze at his radiant face and continue to be near him—though it was not possible. But the power of love and the fire of longing destroy the cruelty of the beloved and soften his rock-like heart into wax. I could spend at least 14 hours daily in the company of my only beloved, but still it was not sufficient. In his presence I would often break out into tears and throw myself at his feet. With the song of my wailings, which is the best music for the beloved, I would complain of the ache in my heart.

### The Second State

One night, as usual, all the children and the staff, as well as some others, had gathered around him and were listening to

his discourses about spiritual matters and about treading the path of Truth. In the middle of the discourse, the writer, who was among the children, found his state changed and began to see all around a radiant glow which betrayed the effulgence of the sun, quivering and flowing. I called out the beloved's name and instantly lost consciousness. I was unconscious for about five hours. When I regained it, I was taken to that exalted beloved, who had stayed up till then. He ordered me to go to sleep, so I returned to my bed and slept until the next dawn. When the sun came out to brighten the dales and the hills, I rushed to his presence.

First I kissed his feet (no matter how much I would kiss and press my head and eyes on his feet, it would not soothe my burning heart, neither would it help the turmoil and itch which had overtaken my heart and which cannot be explained). Then I sat in front of him. But today my state was totally different from the previous days, Previously when in his presence, I would habitually begin to meditate and get absorbed and intoxicated with bliss and would drown in the ocean of joy and contentment. But today it was different—from head to toe, all as one unit I was immersed in one thought, the thought of the beloved. Without meditating or contemplating, my soul was enjoying peace and bliss, and my eyes were fixed on his pure and noble face. Gradually, every minute and every hour, my state would change, and every instant I would immerse deeper in the heaven of happiness and joy. Intoxicated and drunk, I would drown ever more deeply in the wine ocean of true Love. If the gist of that joyous and blissful state of love were to be written, the pen would break and the paper would tear in awe. The consequences of the state I enjoyed were measurelessly mysterious.

### The Third State and the Description of the Vision

A short while following the occurrence of the second state, the focus of my concentration was fully established and I was in constant remembrance. I was so immersed in this natural meditation that days would pass while I would have absolutely no appetite to eat or to drink. During this period I did not care for food, didn't care whether I sat in the sun or rain. Due to the love that was given and the states caused which were so blissful, the not caring for heat or wet or hunger was from within and was natural, not for any purpose or any aim. I could

stand it, not trying to stand it, but just passing the hours in this way. Thus I was constantly weeping and I was absorbed in meditation until January 1928 (last year), when at the time of sunset as I was sitting close to my beloved master, immersed in thoughts of him, my state changed drastically. I immediately began to wail and scream and cry. My external eyes closed and my inner eye opened. I saw that my heart, my chest, all my limbs, veins, skin and bones, were overwhelmed and ruled by a Being with such effulgence and glittering radiance that it brightened the most hidden corners of my heart. Awe-struck from the sight of that radiant Being, I forgot the world and all that was in it. Unaware of the apparent world and the people around, I spent five days thus intoxicated and unconscious. During all this time, the continuity of this vision remained unbroken and I saw nothing but the glorious sight of his radiant and blessed Being. I did not see even the smallest particle of the external world. I was in the height of bliss and joy because of this sight of him. I enjoyed the unique vision of my beloved and exalted master, Meher Baba, within my heart and soul throughout this five days. The visions of his glorious face made me hear a voice within me declaring: "Remove your shoes, you are on holy ground." This I heard with my heart's ear.

After that five days in the domain of unconsciousness, with the force of his inner voice I became conscious again. When I opened my external eyes, my inner sight remained simultaneously intact. I enjoyed ineffable joy without a single thought, time and again losing consciousness only to regain it immediately. As a result of this bliss, I still ate and slept as little as before, being intoxicated from a sight which I cannot express or explain. Because of this blissful vision of reality I understood that the world with all its belongings and luxuries is like a dream and an illusion, and that it is truly a binding. I realized that getting hold of a true and perfect master is the cause for eternal freedom and satisfaction. At that time I was told Baba mentioned to the *mandali* that I had progressed to the sixth stage in the spiritual line and I was called Chota Baba, meaning Little Baba. Although some people constantly try to collect worldly belongings with the only purpose of having all the things that the world can offer, considering them the cause of happiness, I understood that in truth collecting them, beholding them and keeping them is the cause of misery and depression, and that beholding the countenance of the Beloved with the inner eye, nay, even with the external eyes, creates an immense joy and in-

creases happiness. Ever since that period up until now I see that blessed Being in myself, in others and all around, continuously and without a break. It is very rare that due to great fortune a Perfect Master, with his infinite grace, mercy and power, raises one to such heights.

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After\* the Prem Ashram was closed, I stayed with Baba and the *mandali*. Then Baba decided to go on tours, journeys and voyages all over the world. The first was up to Kashmir where we stayed at a mountain village about a month and then returned via Bombay.

I accompanied Baba on his second voyage to Iran. We went to Isfahan and spent about two months there. From Isfahan, by Baba's permission and as I desired and requested him, I departed and stayed in Iran.

\* \* \*

In\*\* 1943 when I [Meherjee Karkaria] had my business in Persia, I learned that this boy Abdulla [Chota Baba] was working in Persian Customs in a nearby port. My business was growing very fast at that time and I needed some good Persian fellow who could write the language. We were compelled to keep our accounts and records in Persian, and while I can speak the language, I can neither read nor write it, so I needed an honest, reliable man. I wrote to Baba saying that here was Abdulla working in a Persian customs office, and I could give him more pay and a few other advantages, also, and if Baba would permit, I would employ him. Immediately the reply came, "Not only would I permit you to employ him, but I would be very happy if you get him."

But Abdulla would not come. We had correspondence and I offered him the job, but he would neither say yes nor no. As chance would have it he was transferred to some other port, and since the steamers were not running during war days he

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\* Recorded interview with Abdulla Pakrawan (Chota Baba) by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa in Bandar Abbas, Iran, 1975.

\*\*Account by Meherjee Karkaria, a teacher in the Prem Ashram, in *How A Master Works* by Ivy O. Duce, Walnut Creek, CA: Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 1975, pp. 39-40.

had to take the land route, so he came to my place. I told him, "I won't let you go!"

Then he started telling me his story. He told me how he loved me and would be willing to work for me and be with me, that it was not a matter of fear or any such thing, but other circumstances. He had come to Persia with Baba in 1930 or 1931 when Baba traveled there at that time. Baba had even cabled me to see him if I could, but I was unable to leave the office where I was working so could not go. This boy Abdulla, whom we called Chota Baba (Baba had named him that, "Small Baba"), was with Baba at a farm. At the farm something came into his head and he told Baba that he would like to leave him and go to his own place. Baba told him, "Wait for a while and I will relieve you. But just wait for me—I will send you later."

He would not listen to Baba and when he insisted, Baba embraced him and told him to go. He told me that when Baba embraced him, Baba had tears in his eyes. In my forty-three years with Baba I only twice saw him in tears, and that was not because anyone was leaving or had died, but because of his work, or something. So I said to Abdulla, "Well, if Baba had tears in his eyes, then there was something very serious."

So Abdulla left Baba and got employment with an Anglo-Persian oil company in Abadan, Persia. He had a good job and was happy. But this young boy was sending Persian newspapers to a friend of his in Karachi, and the Karachi friend used to send him Indian newspapers. Abdulla used to write some Persian poetry, perhaps from Hafiz, on the newspapers, and the Karachi boy would reply by writing poetry on the Indian newspapers he mailed to Abdulla. One day the Persian Post Office started reading the writing on the newspapers. They thought it was some code he was sending from there because the British were looked upon as enemies of Persia, and the oil company where Abdulla worked was in the hands of the British. So they thought the boy was a British spy and he was thrown into prison without a trial. This young, innocent boy spent three months in a dark prison. Of course then he repented that he had left Baba. After three months he was released, because nothing had been proven against him, on condition that he go back to the place from where he had come, and he was not to leave that place. So that was the reason that he was not going to work for me and would not join my office.

But I talked with Abdulla and told him that the Persian government was not the same, since now there were so many Americans

and British. I said we had some influence and I would do anything possible. I would not allow him to go, and he worked with me until I left Persia.

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When\* I happened to faint for those five days, Baba had told those around him that I had been raised up to sixth plane. After I recovered and was still staying with Baba, till I left and departed, I was not raised more, and actually I can say that experience was not preserved. Now, I haven't got anything with me. I heard from lectures of Baba that people may have these experiences and spiritual results even in many lives, that they have to come again and again, and in my case, either counting my age, underage, or for any other reason, it was his intention and his decision to stop this state. Maybe in my third life I will begin again to attain the goal that is destined. I hope so, but unfortunately I did not preserve what I had attained in the path, and to some extent, on the whole, I can even say that it disappeared.

But I can say that I got a precious result from the life with Baba during those years and in the Ashram. Even though I departed from him and lost my attaining in the path, I got character for life in the world—the worldly life in trade, in business, in community, with the neighbours, friends, trading—in all that, I have chosen the path of righteousness, truthfulness, sincerity, and even not a liking to material and worldly things as others can say. And I will say the truth, that although I could have land, houses in Bandar Abbas, today I am living in a rental house—I have not an inch of land in Bandar Abbas and no property. Of course I am working hard and there is a result for working hard, but the money is spent on the education of my children and in other ways that do not need description.

I worked free for the Red Lion and Sun [Iranian "Red Cross"], for nearly twenty-seven years without taking a penny as salary or reward or anything like this. And this Red Lion and Sun, as you know, is at the service of humanity and offers the best aid that it can give to the needy at the time of disaster. I am happy that this result that I have is due to the life and due to the love that Baba gave, and he minded this. I am very happy about this.

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\* Recorded interview with Abdulla Pakrawan (Chota Baba) by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa in Bandar Abbas, Iran, 1975.

*Question:* Did you have any communications with Baba afterwards?

*Answer:* No.

*Question:* Do you ever think of those days much?

*Answer:* Of course the story of one's life comes back to one's mind.

*Question:* During all these years, ever since the Prem Ashram days, did you ever have the desire to see Baba again?

*Answer:* . . . No.

*Question:* Did you ever miss him?

*Answer:* It was not just a missing.

*Question:* Did you say that you did not have any desire to see Baba again?

*Answer:* I was so satisfied that I have got much of him.

*Question:* And ever since then you did not have any other experiences, is that true?

*Answer:* Yes.

### **Aspandiar Sarosh Irani (Esphandiar Vesali)\***

I was 16 years old and going to school in Yezd when Meher Baba opened a school near Ahmednagar where children could study free up to seventh English grade. Mr. Baidul, the uncle of my mother, came to us to take me to that school. My father did not want me to leave, but my mother was very anxious for me to go, and made my father agree. I left with Mr. Baidul for Meher Baba's school.

We sailed in June, and as we approached Karachi, the sea was very stormy. I got very ill, in fact so ill they took me to the doctor who gave me two shots. But I didn't get well until, having finally managed to go to sleep in the middle of the night, I dreamt of Baba and I woke up completely refreshed. I remained well till we reached Bombay. With Baidul we went by train to Ahmednagar and on to Meherabad.

The 14 of us who had come from Yezd for Baba's school arrived at seven in the morning. Baidul arranged us according to height in front of Baba—the small ones were in front, and I, who was the tallest, was at the end. Baba came and patted everybody on the head. But as soon as he got to me, he turned away and

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\* Recorded interview with Esphandiar Vesali by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa in Kashanak, Tehran, 1975.

didn't pay any attention to me. This made me very unhappy—I asked myself why Baba hadn't patted me like the rest. There was a big lump in my heart for several days.

During class Mr. Kaikhushru Afseri would read us mystical poems. One day he read from the *Gulistan* of Saadi where it says that man will reach a place where he will see nothing but God. I asked him if that was correct, could man reach a place where he will see nothing but God? He answered yes and continued reading many other poems of Saadi. From that time on, I lost my natural state. I couldn't read or write. A few days passed like this till finally the principal of the school told Baba that I wasn't paying attention to my studies. I kept repeating God's name. I didn't know where I was and I wouldn't pay any attention to anybody or anything. I wasn't aware that I was in school or that people were sitting around me and studying until suddenly I saw Kaikhushru Afseri stand up. As soon as I turned around, I saw Baba standing behind me and I stood up. Baba asked, with gestures, "Why aren't you studying?" And I answered, "I can't." He asked, "Do you want to go back to your father?" I answered no. He asked, "Do you want to return to your mother?" I said no. "To your relatives? To your uncle?" Then he asked, "What is the matter? What is the reason you can't study? Why don't you study?" And so I told him, "I want to go towards God and towards knowing God." He said, "All right, if that is what you really want, I will give that to you, but only if you obey me and listen to what I say." I was just waiting for this word, for I had decided to flee into the woods to seek God there and start praying to God and not pay any attention to food or to clothes or to anything else. This was how Baba solaced and comforted me—he would give me all I wanted, he would show me God under the condition that I listened to what he said and obeyed him. I said, "Okay, I'm ready to obey you. I promise that I will obey you."

At that very moment Baba took my hand and took me into his own room. He had me sit there while he lay on the bed with a sheet over himself for about 20 minutes. Then he got up and he ordered a carriage brought around—the carriage which today you can find in Baba's museum. Baba would sit in this carriage and two people would draw it around the Prem Ashram. They would first take it along the road where the cars go, then over the railway and up the hill towards Meher Ashram. Baba got in and asked me to sit next to him. Since there was no place for me to sit, I stood right next to Baba. When they

started to move the carriage, Baba asked me to hold his arm. I held his arms and two people pulled us in the carriage to Meher Ashram at the top of the hill. There Baba said, "Get down now." I got off. Baba said, "Did you see how bumpy the road was, how terrible the roadway? If you were not holding my arm, you would have fallen off. In the same way when you want to tread the spiritual path, you have to obey the Master completely." I said, "All right." And so Baba told me, "From today on you have to observe silence and from this day on, I am your God, I am your saint and also, I am your prophet. I am your father and mother; all of your worldly belongings, also I am. Everything you must leave for me and you must pay attention only to me. And you must not pay attention to anything else, you must focus on me." At that moment I accepted that. Baba got on the carriage and left me there.

Of course there were other children in the Meher Ashram, but I was absorbed in my own state. The next day I was waiting for Baba to come to Meher Ashram. When I saw Baba's carriage in the distance, the experience of true love, that love which we must have for God, appeared in my heart all of a sudden and all by itself. From then on, I knew what the meaning of real love was, even though in an elementary way. Baba came up the hill and told me, "If mistakenly you ever speak, you should come down to me with somebody accompanying you and sit with me for half an hour or so." Many times it happened that I would mistakenly speak, a word would escape from my mouth. Whenever I would make a mistake and speak, somebody would accompany me and we would go down to Baba. I would speak with Baba there and finally Baba would always say, "I forgive you." Some time passed like this until it was very clear that my aim was only Baba. I came to realize that my everything was Baba, that Baba was God in human form. I had realized that. Not in such a high state as Chota Baba, but from very deep in my heart I really loved Baba.

Gradually, however, I fell into the bumpy road of thoughts; these bumps in the road of thoughts gradually made me lose my path, my direction. Baba was completely aware of what was happening, and he would keep questioning me about what I was thinking. He told me, "You should throw out all these nonsense thoughts from your mind. You have very high fortune. You should pay attention to me, forsake everything for me; whatever happens to you, give it to me and let your attention be constantly on me." I was no more than 16 years old, just a child,

and I couldn't. My efforts were to have my thoughts and imagination completely in my own hand so that whatever thoughts I would want to have, I would have. However, these bumps started to appear in my thoughts, and it finally reached a point that I even hated Baba.

Whenever I would see Baba approaching, I would flee so that Baba may not see me. Baba also would change his path so that he should come in front of me. It continued like this. I thought it was not right for me to think these thoughts about Baba and to think all these terrible insults to him, particularly when I knew that Baba was a great man, that he was not an ordinary man, and that I was in his school and was eating his food. I decided I must disobey Baba so that he would throw me out of his school. I would go into the world for a while and perhaps lose all these thoughts, and then I should be able to return again and continue on a straight path.

And so I disobeyed Baba, and Mr. Baidul went and told Baba that I had disobeyed him. Baba asked me if I wanted to go back home, to Bombay or Yezd. I said, "Yes, I want to go." So he ordered Baidul to go and pack my things in my suitcase, make it ready and then take me and give me to my uncle in Bombay, and to take a receipt from him and return to Baba. It didn't take ten minutes for Baidul to do all of these things. Then he came to Baba and said that he had prepared all of my belongings and everything was ready. Baba said, "All right, take him away." I started to get up, but my legs wouldn't move at all, I was paralyzed up to my waist. I pushed my finger and nail into my thighs, and couldn't feel anything. From my waist up I was all right, and could feel and see and speak, but I could not take one step. Baba gestured that I should get up, but I couldn't. So he gestured to Baidul to bring me to him. Baidul picked me up like a little bird and took me to Baba. (At that time Baba had been in seclusion in a room for six months on a severe fast, one cup of milk and maybe a cup of hot water a day. When after the six months he came out of that room he could not walk. Gradually he would practise till finally he got back to his normal walking. This I remembered while sitting there.) Baba put his hand around my neck. I was sitting right in front of him. He asked me, "Why don't you go? Don't you want to go?" I said, "No, I don't want to go." Then I said, "I wanted to go, but now I say no." And Baba with his gestures said, "You have love," and then all of a sudden embraced me.

As soon as he embraced me, my legs started to come to life again, and I could walk.

It was Baba's wish that I should remain there, and that's why he made my legs have no life in them. It is Baba's continuous grace for me and I will never forget. Whenever Baba saw me he always said, "Think of me, love me, think of me." He told me I should constantly focus on him, that I should think of him and have no other thoughts. Nonetheless these bumps of thoughts and imagination were still bothering me; I had not yet found dominance over them. Finally one day Baba was in hall number two, which is now Baba's museum. Baba asked me in there. I went in, and he asked me to sit down. I sat down and for half an hour Baba was seeking to learn what these thoughts were that I was having. He would be constantly asking me to tell him my thoughts. But I was shy to tell him that I was constantly thinking insults and bad thoughts about him. And I didn't tell him—I was shy. Until finally, Baba himself told me that you think these things and these things. But still I wouldn't let him know, and I would pretend as though I didn't know what he was talking about. I was feeling as if I wanted the ground to open up and swallow me right there and then. I felt so low and so ashamed knowing that Baba was aware of all my thoughts, every single one of my thoughts. Finally Baba told me on the alphabet board the thought that was in my mind. Still I didn't let him know and pretended that I didn't understand. Then Baba gestured that I understood very well and was only pretending as though I didn't understand when I understood very well. He told me, "I have never waited so long for anyone to tell me something. You have very high fortune, very good fortune. You are very lucky. Why are you throwing it all out?" Then he left.

Well, I was in the same bumpy road for a while, but gradually I began to have a little more control over those thoughts. From the very instant that Baba told me my thoughts, gradually I started to begin to have control over my thoughts. Finally it reached a point that as soon as I would sit to think of Baba, no other thought could enter my mind. At that time my thoughts had become completely under my own control. And when I would sit to meditate, no other thoughts could ever enter my mind. It was like a man who sits in a tank and all the bullets which hit the tank fall off. I would feel that thoughts would want to come, but they wouldn't enter, they could not come

and sit in my mind. Sometimes when I was meditating, Baba would come to my side. Whenever Baba would be approaching me from outside the room, I would feel that he was coming. Then I would have such a feeling and I would find Baba next to me. Baba would take my head into his bosom; as I would be meditating Baba would embrace my head into his bosom. He would hold it there, and then he would exit again.

When I was completely absorbed in meditation, I would feel a very subtle and gentle light in myself. I would be absorbed and drowned in that. Then I couldn't sleep—there was no sleep then for me. I was in a state that was a subtle wakefulness. I had such joy and wonderful feeling that I can say with certainty that if such a wonderful feeling would happen to normal people they would immediately have a heart attack and collapse from the shock, because they wouldn't have the capacity to bear it. Once in a while when I was in this sort of a state Baba would ask me, "What are your feelings? What is happening to you?" As soon as I would say a few words, he would say, "Okay, stop, don't say the rest." Then I wouldn't say anything else.

Sometimes Baba would come in the evening in front of hall number two and sit on the ground and on the pebbles. He could sit there just like that and all the children around him; we were all around him. I would approach him to sit right next to him so that my knees were right next to his knees. I just wanted to sit right there and disappear in Baba, in that feeling. Whenever I would sit with Baba, or anywhere, my whole being was filled with anxiousness and longing and loving Baba. I would not feel my own existence at all—not the usual who am I, what am I doing? Only Baba's love was within me. To an extent this subtle longing, this spiritual longing, was in my heart and in my mind in a way I can't explain with words. Whenever I would see Baba from a distance, Baba would make his lips into a kiss and he would approach me. He would approach me and pat me on the head. I would feel my subtle soul, I would completely feel my subtle soul in that time, and it was like perfume and rosewater. It was like my soul was being washed with that perfume and rosewater. As he would put his hand over my head and would bring it down, it was as if he just was cleansing and washing my soul and going down to the depth. It would make me so drunk in such a state that I can't even speak of it in any words. Of course that drunkenness was a spiritual drunkenness, and it didn't feel like the bodily drunkenness which you feel after drinking a cup of wine. It was not like that. It was

very subtle. It was very pleasing, it was very creative, and it was like a wind from paradise had opened over me. I can't explain how that wind from paradise felt or what the subtle music was. This was with me all the time when I was there; I continuously had that. (I had it after that also and of course now I have it in a higher level. It is not like that anymore.)

I was in this state one of those days when Baba asked for me to go to him. All of a sudden I thought to myself that maybe Baba wants to send me back to my home and to my family, meaning, Iran, Yezd. So I went to Baba and as soon as Baba started to tell me, I realized that yes, indeed, that which I had thought, he was going to say. He said, "Whatever I tell you, you have to obey." I had no recourse. I couldn't say no, so I said, "All right." He said, "Okay, you have to go to Iran until I call you back again. Whenever I call for you again, then you can come back." That made me so unhappy, and I was so miserable that all of the thoughts and all of the states that I was thinking and feeling at the time were dominated by this sorrow of leaving. When Baba gave the order for me to go to Iran, my sorrow and my sadness were as much as my happiness and joy had been before. I couldn't think any more about my spiritual work. I didn't know what to do. I was like a madman. I could in no way do my spiritual work. I had lost touch with it.

Finally I obeyed Baba and started towards Iran. But when I got back to Iran, gradually I realized that I still had all the feelings and all the things that I would see and feel when I was with Baba. So I continued my spiritual work. From the time that I saw Baba from a distance after the carriage ride and he gave me that experience of divine love until now, I have not been able to reach fulfillment and completion of this experience. That experience showed me how I should fall in love, how I should love the Beloved. With one look from Baba at that time, that experience was mine. It is not finished yet and I have not yet completely experienced that which Baba showed me once.

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There was a time I used to read Baba Tahir's poetry. He lived on Mount Arvand where there was a lot of snow and ice, but he was in love with his Beloved, with his God, and he wouldn't pay attention to anything else. He had stated that in the middle of winter all the snow and ice around him had melted and spring flowers had grown around him. I couldn't believe that. I thought

it was not possible that one's spiritual love can affect the body. Love is a power that exists in the spirit of man, in his soul; it has nothing to do with the body. The soul's love is separate, and the physical body is separate. I firmly believed that until I myself had the same experience.

My sister was ill and every four weeks in winter and in summer, every season, I would go 24 kilometres away to Yezd to get medicine for my sister, and I would come back. One of those days, I started out for Yezd before dawn to go and get medicine for my sister. After about six kilometres, a very big storm started blowing opposite to my direction. It was so strong that I could hardly walk and take a step. And there was a donkey along with me which I had put my things on. Even though my clothes were quite warm and quite sufficient, the cold still affected me tremendously. After 12 kilometres I could not take another step, I was not able to walk any more. Near there was the house of Khosrow and Khodayar Toos. They also had been with me in Baba's school. So I thought since it was such a big storm maybe I would go to their house for a little while.

I noticed that I could not walk any longer, so I mounted the donkey. The donkey could not go any further either. Sitting on top of the donkey, I felt like a statue made out of ice. Deep to my marrow I was very cold and chilled. I would breathe maybe once every minute, my respiration had slowed that much. My chest could no longer bear the breathing any more. Then all of a sudden I remembered that Baba had promised me that I would see him again, that I would be able to go and visit him and have his blessing again and yet here I was dying. This made me very sad, and I started to cry. This crying sprang out of the depth of my heart. Right then it felt as if a big container of hot water had been poured on my head and it oozed out of my feet. Just in that state where I was almost frozen and ice was all over my face, sweat started to appear on my brow. The snow which would set on my face, I would wipe off mixed with my sweat. Then I turned the donkey towards the direction that I wanted to go, and I found that I had strength and power and went 12 kilometres to Yezd.

Despite this very severe storm, I did not pay any attention to it. It felt as if I were in a spring garden and continuously I would wipe off the sweat from my brow mixed with the snow and throw it down and continue my way. This lasted until I reached Yezd, and I brought the medicine and then returned again; still my underwear was wet from sweat. For a whole

month I coughed up black mucus but not even once did my head hurt. I did not have fever, I did not get a headache, I did not catch pneumonia. I felt very good and very well. Then I realized I had experienced what Baba Tahir had written—namely that when on the mountain in snow and ice while he was busying himself with devotions and meditations, spring flowers had grown around him.

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In 1963 I wanted to go and have Baba's blessing again. But I had no money. Baidul wrote to me and asked me how much I was making and what was the means of my livelihood. I answered him in detail that I had an orchard here, and that most years frost destroyed the blossoms of the trees and there was no crop. My means of livelihood was solely dependent on the fruit from the trees. If I had a good crop, then if there was any left over from what I needed for my living, I could spend that and come to India. Otherwise, I couldn't go to visit Baba. Baidul wrote again that I should go and walk around the trees and tell them that after 35 years I want to go to visit Baba, that I have his permission and so please don't let the frost destroy my crop this year. Then I shouldn't think of anything else and don't worry. I did as Baidul instructed. So I borrowed some money because I was then sure I would not lose my crop and I went towards Zahidan.

First I wanted to go by train but realized that time was short, and so I decided to go by plane. My son, Araj, put me on the plane, and I went to Bombay. From Bombay we immediately boarded a train and went to Poona. When we reached there it was about noon, and I saw the streets filled with people going away from Guruprasad. They said they had all been to visit Meher Baba and that now they have been given leave and they were going away. I was very upset then, because I had only three days to be with Baba and here I had already lost one day. The taxi driver took me into Guruprasad right up to the front steps. Ali Akbar came running to me and took my belongings out of the cab. I asked him if Baba was giving *darshan* and he said yes, that he would give *darshan* in the afternoon. Now the people have gone to have their lunch. That made me happy. It was possible to see Baba in the afternoon.

I was sitting there in the hallway where Ali Akbar told me to, in my own state, for about half an hour. I sat there and

they gave me cool water to drink. When I came to myself I noticed that I was talking to myself asking whether I was asleep or awake, whether it was all a dream or not. After another 15 minutes, Ali Akbar came and said that Baba had come into the hall, but that I should wait just a while longer so that some other people can come. I said all right. But Ali Akbar, who was even less patient than I was, came and took me in. He picked up the pistachio nuts, sweets and honey that I had brought and took them to Baba. Baba immediately distributed each piece of it to someone present. I was standing at the doorway and I wanted to enter, but I thought that I could never enter in front of God with this gross form, this unclean form, that this would be the height of disrespect. As I was thinking this, I saw that Baba had a wonderful and beautiful smile, and he was beckoning me to come close. So I started from the doorway and I entered with a feeling of extreme joy, infinite joy, and with that extreme amount of joy that 35 years of separation immediately vanished. That very instant all the separation that I had was all gone, and I couldn't remember any more what was separation and being away. And I was happy and well.

I went to kiss Baba's feet, but he embraced me. I also embraced him, but very gently because Ali Akbar had told me that Baba's back was hurting. Baba had me sit right next to his feet for the two hours that he was giving *darshan*. Every now and then Baba would ask me whether I was feeling all right, whether I was well. Then I asked Baba how he was feeling. How were his feet? He would answer that he was very, very well. All of a sudden I started to think about Baba being God and how could one ask God how He is, and then I saw that Baba looked as if he were to speak. He separated his lips and I thought to myself that maybe right now Baba was going to break his silence and speak. Baba opened and closed his lips a few times, as if he were speaking, but there was no sound. This was the first day.

The second day there was a long and good play in Guruprasad about Baba's childhood. The third day passed also. On the third day I started to feel very sad. I was feeling so sad that I could not even remain in Baba's presence, because my heart was going to break. I was going to cry and I felt making a sound in the middle of the crowd would bother others. Immediately Ali Akbar gestured to me, when he noticed that I was not feeling well, and took me outside. I was outside for about 15 minutes while I cried and my heart was emptied a bit. Then he brought me

back inside again. Of course it was very, very crowded there, yet people would get up from very close to Baba and would let me sit there near Baba as everybody knew that for 35 years I have been unable to come and visit Baba. Then came the fourth day and Baba said that I should leave. Baba said, "Well, you can't stay here any longer than today, you must return back to Iran." "Baba," I said, "it is 35 years since I've seen you. Please give me permission to remain with you for another 20 days or a month." He said, "No, I am also with you in Iran. You must go back and work for Baba there. Even if you lose your life doing my work, pay no heed to it and just continue working." I said, "All right."

I saw that there was no way that I could change his mind. I was very unhappy, but I couldn't disobey him, so I started towards Bombay. In Bombay when I went to the airline ticket office they told me that I would have to buy my ticket with Persian currency, that I could not buy the ticket with Indian money. I was wondering what I should do. They said the best thing was that I have the ticket sent from Iran. I thought that since I could not get a ticket, I should return to Baba and ask him what to do. So I got on the train again and returned to Poona. When I arrived at Guruprasad, Ali Akbar and the others at the gate questioned my return since Baba had told me to go home. I explained that I couldn't get a plane ticket so I had returned to ask Baba what I should do. Ali Akbar immediately ran to see Baba. In one or two minutes Ali Akbar came out and said that Baba asked me to come in.

I went in and took *darshan* and Baba asked me to sit down. After the rest of the people had left Guruprasad, Baba asked, "Well, what have you done?" I said that I had written to Iran to send me a ticket. Only when I received that ticket could I leave, because without Persian money I couldn't leave by train or ship or plane. Baba said, "All right, remain here until the answer to your letter arrives." After a week Baba asked me to go to Bombay and see whether my answer had arrived or not. I went to Bombay and discovered the answer had not come yet. So I returned and asked Ali Akbar to go and tell Baba that nobody had yet sent me the plane ticket and that the answer to my letter had not come yet. Baba said, "Okay, remain." I stayed another week. Then again Baba asked me to go to Bombay and I went. In this way I remained for 20 days with Baba until finally Baba said, "Go, go to Bombay. Buy a ticket and get on the plane and go to Iran. Even if you can't buy the ticket, remain

there in Bombay. Don't come back here again." I saw that all the doors were closed for me then and I came to Bombay. I was very disappointed. After one day in Bombay I told Mr. Salamati that I would go mad in Bombay and that somehow a plane ticket must be gotten. I begged his help. He had a friend in the government there and somehow they arranged a plane ticket for me. But they said that I have to come in next week to get on the plane and leave. I immediately paid for the ticket and got all the necessary papers, but I couldn't get on the plane until next week. So I returned to Poona.

All the people at Guruprasad were bewildered as to why I had come back again, since Baba had told me not to come back again to him whether I had a ticket or not. But Ali Akbar had written me a letter that when my ticket was ready to let them know in some way. So I went myself to let them know that all my paperwork was in order and that I would leave in one week's time. If Baba would allow me, I would stay there; if not, I would go. Baba gave permission again and I stayed there for another week. Baba told me, "I have given you permission to do whatever you want up to the last minute, but make sure that you don't miss your plane." And that's what I did. After a week I got on the plane and returned to Iran.

The internal experiences that I have achieved from Baba were simply this, that only to love Baba was true. No other than loving him, no amount of meditation or asceticism had any value. When my inside is completely empty of everything else and when I completely love Baba, only when I feel myself to be Baba—in those times, I cannot experience anything else other than Baba. Internally, within myself, I become Baba as long as I remain in that love.

### **Ali Akbar Shapurzaman (Aloha)\***

I was born in Yezd, Iran, in 1916. Yezd is a central city in Iran. It is where Meher Baba's father, Sheriar, came from. My uncle brought me to Bombay in 1923. In Bombay I heard of the Meher Ashram and Hazrat Babajan School through an influential Persian newspaper printed in Calcutta and widely circulated. In 1927 I was placed in the alphabet class, primary class of the Hazrat Babajan School.

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\* Condensed from an interview conducted by Naosherwan Anzar and printed in *The Glow*, August 1976, pp. 16-18.

The school's principal was Mr. K. J. Dastur. The teacher I best remember was Aga Baidul. Kaikhushru Afseri was teacher for a higher class. In primary class we studied alphabets only, no subjects. The English book I remember was MacMillan's Reader I. A curious thing happened which I explain here now. On the day on which my uncle came to Meherabad to take me away with his son, that same morning Baba, while sitting at the tomb, saw me from a distance and through gestures called me to him. I rushed to Baba. Then Baba with his two hands gestured me to bring my books to him. I read Baba's gesture and ran to my room and brought the two books—Persian and English. Baba just took the Persian book, opened it and told me to read. I read that one page and then kept the book down and took the English book, which was MacMillan's Primary Reader I, and the lesson related to railway trains. I read this lesson to Baba and Baba asked me to shut the book and go. Now this gesture has two meanings. One meaning was close your book and go for your studies. But to me the inner meaning which Baba alone knew was that this is the termination of your studies here. That evening I was taken away forcibly from the school by my uncle.

Seven years later I went to Nasik in search of my Master. When I approached the place where I was told Baba would be present, I saw five persons standing in a group and one of them was Meher Baba, but unfortunately I could not recognize him. The reason was that when I left Meher Ashram, Meher Baba was physically thin with a long moustache and he wore a long black woolen coat with sandals torn to pieces, but now here—

One of them asked, "Who are you?" I said, "I was in Meher Baba's Ashram and my name is Ali Akbar, and I have come to see Meher Baba." The important thing was that Meher Baba had no alphabet board in his hand. He had a long beard and was wearing a hat. The five persons were Dr. Abdul Ghani, Rustom, Vishnumaster, Ramjoo, and Meher Baba himself. After I expressed my desire to see Meher Baba one of them said, "All right, keep seated here."

After five minutes they came out. This time Meher Baba had taken off his hat and also had the English alphabet board in his hands. I recognized Meher Baba with the alphabet board. In seven years Baba had physically changed. In the Ashram days Baba had a long moustache, here it was very short. In Ashram

days he was thin. Baba had become stout now. I just dropped myself at his feet on the ground. Someone lifted me up. I could not stand on my feet. I fell down the third time. Then Baba told me, "If you have come to stay with me you have to be awake, not like this, be calm and quiet, listen to me." Baba said, "Now go back to Bombay, stay there for a month and then come to me." At the same time Baba told Vishnumaster to take me to the hotel—Circus Cinema restaurant—and he gave me food consisting of mutton. I ate there because I was hungry. In Baba's car Vishnumaster took me to the railway station, purchased a ticket for me with Baba's money and I came to Bombay.

After I returned to Bombay, I thought I would have to stay here for one month. I just stayed at a friend's shop, counting days, thinking of returning to Meher Baba after a month. But after two to three weeks I received a letter in which it was stated that I should not come to Baba now. I purchased the shop in partnership with another Irani boy and started my business. I think after six or eight months, Baba called me. I went and saw Meher Baba. Baba asked me, "What are you doing?" I said, "Baba, I am doing business." Baba said, "Do business, be in Bombay, but come to see me once every month, that too on the first of every month." Baba told me to come to see him at Rahuri, Meherabad or Nasik and before my departure from Bombay he would inform me where to go.

I would take the night train from Bombay, reach Rahuri the next morning at about 9 or 10. I would go to Baba and after three to four hours with Baba I would take the evening train which would bring me back to Bombay the next day. I would not ask any questions of Baba. Baba would ask me, "How is your health?" I would say, "Fine," and so on.

But one fine day Baba asked me what my income was. "My income is Rs. 30; we get Rs. 60 a month from the shop." Of course, this was in the years 1936-37 when the purchasing power of the rupee was very strong. One day Baba said that our income would increase. Thereafter, it kept on increasing every month and the same shop gave us Rs. 1,300 per month. I did not know from where the customers would flock to the shop. I had to change all the utensils, had to bring more chairs and tables. I also bought a soda-making machine and started supplying aerated water.

I finally joined Baba to stay in the New Life, which was in 1949.

## PART III

**Mr. Khodayar Toos\***

My name is Khodayar, son of Toos. I'm an Iranian who, in the Iranian year 1306, when I was nine (48 years ago) went to India along with 12 or 13 other boys from Yezd to Meher Baba's school. There we studied for one year and eight months. From when I first saw Baba I told myself that he was not like the rest of human beings. All his manner and gestures, everything he did, were such that I had never seen before in the world. He was observing silence, but he would speak with gestures in such a way that even the newcomers could understand. Even while observing silence, Baba would come and play games with us. He was very kind to us—very, very kind to us.

He was so kind to us, and his love and his kindness had affected us so much that when after one year and eight months our parents came to take us away, we did not want to leave. When our parents came and said they wanted us back, he sent us back to our own houses at his own expense. Indeed, during this one year and eight months our entire expenses as well as the trips to and from Iran were paid by Baba. Books and clothes and teachers and everything, he took care of, without taking even a single coin from our parents or having any expectations from them.

Before we left, Baba made all of us from Iran line up. He told each one of us individually: "Don't smoke, don't drink and don't tell lies." He kissed our faces, each one of us, and then sent us away.

When I returned to Iran I could not study any more because I could not find a school that could satisfy me after being in Baba's school. Everywhere else I went was just a place of mischief, but Baba's school was where angels were.

At Baba's school at 5 o'clock in the morning the first call to prayer was sung and they would wake up all the children. There were 160 to 170 of us there from all over the world, from all different religions. Although we were all from different religions and different classes, there was not the slightest enmity between us—we were all so kind and friendly to each other that we all

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\* Recorded interview with Khodayar Toos by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa in Shiraz, Iran, 1975.

felt like brothers of each other living, sleeping and studying in the same place. So in the morning they would wake us up at time of morning prayers. They gave us powder to wash our teeth with, then we would wash our hands and faces and go to breakfast. For breakfast they would bake a bread so fresh and so delicious that I have never tasted anything like it anywhere. They would serve it with tea and milk. Then we would go to school. We were in school till noon. In the afternoon we would go play, and every other day we would have bath and our clothes washed by the clothes washer. Among the 160 or 170 people, not a curse word was heard.

It was a very educational place. Baba gave us so much education during the one year and eight months. In that period I studied equal to four years of English school and six years of Persian school. I don't understand how Baba did it, but he had the power to push all this into our heads. Every three months we would take a new examination and not fail.

But the important thing and the most interesting thing during this period was, aside from Baba's kindness, the spiritual lessons we were taught. We were taught spiritual things in such a manner that if I would open Hafiz's book, I felt that I understood all I read there. One of the discourses that I remember hearing from Baba in this period was concerning the evolution of forms, about how a man dies from inanimate and becomes animate and then dies from animal and becomes man. He explained this to us using a doll. He gathered its limbs all together and bent them inside and also bent the head inside and he explained that this was the state of inanimate. This is the stone form which is the dwelling place of the soul in the beginning. And then gradually he opened the limbs and the head and he stretched the legs up towards the sky and explained that this is what happened in the plant form. So this doll which was all together with all its limbs inside, now had opened the leg which was pointing up. He said that this was the plant and that it was getting nourishment through the head from the ground. Then he brought down the leg and made the doll stand on four legs. By gestures he pointed out that this is the state of animal. He explained that when the plant becomes animal the four limbs extend out and he stands on four legs. Then he made the doll stand on its feet. He said that now this is human form, while even from the beginning it was the human form but that it was all involved into itself—while in the plant form he extended the leg, in animal form it put down the leg and stood on four

legs, and in human form the same human stood up on two legs and became human. He explained all of this very beautifully to us by the use of this doll. And he did all of this while in silence and this was very enjoyable for us. Many other times he told us stories with his gestures; many of them were really very funny. I remember another time the teachers asked us, "Do you know what is higher than these clouds?" We said no, but of course we were children then. How were we to know what was higher than the clouds? Baba explained that a mother's love is higher than that. This is another thing that has impressed me very much, it has remained in my memory.

In all my life, in whatever trouble I was caught, I would ask help from Baba and receive it. I was never left helpless anywhere. What Baba would always ask from me was that I should constantly keep him in mind. When I was 13 or 14 I went to Bombay to work there. One day I saw Baba with two others, one of whom was one of my teachers from school. When they saw me, they gestured to me to approach. I approached. The only thing Baba said was that I should think of him constantly. I would think of him and this has been a great help for my external and internal life.

In short, with this life of mine and with the very little knowledge that I have, the only thing that I have been able to readily gather from Baba is this one thing, that we should try to find God within ourselves. I have been able to understand a little bit that God is indeed within ourselves, and that all of man's activities originate from His will—everything happens under His orders and because of His help. All the wants, all the desires spring from the power that God Himself has put in our being. Man is not his little self, but is God. It is God in man that has all of these attributes, all these deeds and actions and speech. When man begins to feel this way he finds a very close communication with God and doesn't feel himself separate from God. He doesn't even feel separate from the rest of the people in the world.

### **Mr. Khosrow Toos\***

My name is Khosrow. I was nine years old when God granted me His grace and allowed me to go to Meher Baba's school. It

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\* Recorded interview with Khosrow Toos by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa, 1975.

was announced that whoever wanted to send their children to school in India, that Meher Baba would provide their education free of charge. I was fortunate enough along with my brother (Khodayar) and 12 others to leave Iran for Meher Baba's school. The people who accompanied us on the trip were very kind, were good nurses and wonderful caretakers and were very nice to us.

When we reached India, we didn't know what kind of a person Baba was—it is only now we realize what a great person he was and still is. But even in the first instant my gaze fell on him, I thought he was very different from normal people, from regular people. He was very lovable with a very radiant countenance. He always had a smile. Whenever we saw Baba approach from a distance, we were all very happy that he was coming to us and that we would be able to put our eyes and heads at his feet and fill our hearts with that purity and joy. Whenever we would see Baba, we would feel that same peace and joy and purity. That would make us very happy.

At the school Baba had appointed people who were familiar with the path to teach us the sayings of the saints and the prophets. Of course we did not have to be responsible for those lessons, but those lessons were really something for us. We were listening to things about God's truth that we had never heard before. They were very important and interesting. Baba himself would occasionally be present at those presentations. He would draw charts from the other worlds which are beyond this gross world which none of us had ever seen. Some of these charts appeared in *God Speaks*. He would draw them on the board in the manner that he could see because of his own state. Of course we did not understand everything, but a few things we would learn. He constantly emphasized that everything was the one God, that we should keep in mind the oneness of God. He would say that if you can feel that oneness of God within yourself, that is the way you can learn to love others and that is the way that you can reach your destination and your origin, which is none but God. The children would daily sing the song of love of the seven names of God. They would sing it very beautifully from their hearts.

I remember when they opened a new part of the school called the Prem Ashram for those who wanted to spend day and night in thinking of God. Those children who chose to think of God were chosen for the Prem Ashram. Each of them had a separate room. Till late at night, as late as they were able, such children

had the love to sit and think of God and, in thinking of Baba, keep that inner peace. It was not necessary for them to continue their studies because Baba himself had said that love has such a high place that it is much better than any amount of studying. Studies guide one towards the world, while love guides one towards God. Indeed this is a great thing to know. Hafiz also says to wash away all the leaves of your book because the lessons of love you cannot write in books. We find in the books of the saints and the prophets the same things that Baba says. We shouldn't think that no one else has said what Baba has said before. But Baba has now made everything clear. It was not so clear in the other holy men's books—it was veiled—but now Baba has spoken of it very openly. Baba has made known all the secrets of God and of love. So if anybody who is really after union with God and is a true seeker studies Baba's works, he will really get something.

In that school time even when I think of it now that I am getting old, in those periods when Baba really wanted to give a taste of Divine Love to the children, all by itself an inner peace would be created in us. We would reach that inner joy and peace by repeating Baba's name. There were many times when our classmates would become unconscious because of Baba's love in such a way that they did not know themselves anymore. In me also the same joy and peace would appear, though not to the extent that it would make me lose my normal consciousness. For example, Abdulla Pakrawan (Chota Baba) had been affected so much that whenever they would ask him to eat, he would say, "Do you want me to eat Baba?" So, we can see that for him that was a real and true experience. Perhaps his inner eye was seeing that in everybody you can find Baba. Not all of us were lucky to have such a love. But even that inner peace that the rest of us would find within ourselves is a very rare thing in life.

Our life there matched the descriptions of Paradise. I was so happy during that period that when I heard the news that Baba had ordered us to go back home, I cried as I have never cried in my life. I cried from the depths of my heart. I still haven't forgotten it. When we left he asked each one of us to go to him to say good-bye, one by one. He told each of us separately, "I want three things from you and I want you to please obey these three things. They are: don't smoke, don't lie and don't drink. Don't forget these three things." We accepted these three things from the bottom of our hearts. However, the mem-

ory of that hour when we had to depart, which really was very sorrowful, we will never forget either. But Baba himself said that he would always be with us, and in my own experience I have found that to be true. Thank God, I can still remember those days when we had a really great spiritual Master who was God in human form. We had him then and we still have him now and that in itself is a great lesson.

I don't remember what year it was, but a few years after we had left Baba's Prem Ashram, Baba came to Yezd. Of course we were expecting him fervently, and we were very happy when he came. If Baba had not told us when we left that we should not return to India, we would not have been able to bear separation from Baba, and we would have gone to India to see him, probably after only a few days of separation. For about five or six days he remained in Yezd, and we would see him every day. The day that he left, he told us that he would let us know when we could go and see him again. We had to wait until 1962 when Baba sent us a message and we went to see him.

When Baba had come to Yezd I said I wanted to be constantly with him, but that here in Iran I must farm and that there isn't much profit in farming. He told me, stick to it, it is good, but be honest in it. And so I feel that this was an answer; on one hand it answered my plea and let me know that I could stay and, on the other hand, it was an instruction for the future that I should not be dishonest.

Baba was with us even after we left the Ashram; he would help us also. His purpose was to make us not be bound by this world so that we may be able to approach God. That is why whenever we were not thinking of him, Baba would make life very difficult for us. For example, for a while after leaving the Prem Ashram when we returned to Iran I was very greedy after worldly things. I struggled very hard and after a while I found that although I had started with nothing, I had gained three tractors. That made me very happy and feel very important. Little did I know that Baba did not approve of that, so at last he did something that made me forego all of that. Now what was that? I am a mechanic and when I would fix other people's tractors they would work well, but my own tractor was always out of order. Whenever I would fix some place, another place would always go wrong. This was all in Baba's hands. He wanted to let me know that I should not be attached to the world, but I didn't know. I continued until that day when I had to let go of all.

That day we were driving one of the tractors when it turned over and my son and I were caught underneath. But as it was his own will, he sent someone, who came as if from nowhere. They straightened the tractor, we got out, and although I was hurting all over and I couldn't walk, somehow we managed to reach the road. There we got a cab and we came home. I was very, very unhappy because I was wondering what I had done that Baba was doing this to me. I didn't know what he meant. When I got home, they told me that a few books have come for me from Meher Baba. Since he did not have my address, he had sent the books to Ardeshirmaster and now he had said that we could go and collect the books. The books were gotten right away. I started to read the book immediately and one of the sentences really impressed me and made me understand what Baba's purpose had been. He had written that his will is such that he should empty us from all our wants, and all of what we have, and make us naked, and that he should cut out the root of all of our wants and desires; even though those very desires and wants might have once been a source of comfort to us. When I read this, I thanked God. I said to myself that it was His love that had caused this trouble. At another place in the same book Baba had written that hardships and discomforts, sorrows and miseries were nothing but the signs of Baba's love for us, that they were nothing but for our ultimate and final good. So I was very happy and from that moment on, I never worked to gain anything worldly. I did not seek to acquire tractors. If anybody asked me to work for him, I would accept as much as he would offer, not as much as I wanted. I would accept whatever I was given. It so happened that from that time on, it was very good for me. Everybody liked me and everybody wanted me to work for them. If I would agree to work for anyone, I would not think that I was working for him, I would think that I was working for God. And whenever anybody would thank me, I would tell them not to thank me, but thank God, for I'm working for Him.

Everything was working out so well that when 1962 came and Baba had given permission for me to go to India for *darshan*, I had enough money to go. That visit with Baba was very, very good, very happy and very wonderful. In the ship on our way over there was a loud sound. People said there had been a bomb and everybody got very frightened. Everybody put on life jackets. Although I had tied my life jacket also, I felt very, very secure as if leaning against a mountain. Everybody had gotten

out their holy books—one was reading the Koran, another the Bible, and everybody, young and old, were all facing God, praying to God and pleading to God. All of a sudden I thought to myself that maybe I should repeat Baba's name. After repeating Baba's name three or four times, there came the tidings that nothing was wrong and that the bomb had hit the inner wall only, so that the ship wouldn't go down and everybody should be happy. And so even in the trip over, Baba showed his mastery.

I would like to stress again that Baba has always been with me. From the time we left the Ashram we entered the world of sorrows, but with Baba's help I have not had the sorrows others have had. He helps me, he has helped me many, many times. For example, once a driver, just as we were stopped by an officer, told me that he did not have a driver's license. I was sitting right next to him. I had a driver's license, but it was not with me then. So I told him to sit aside that I would sit in his place. My heart was pounding, because if the officer asked me for my driver's license, what could I tell him? It so happened that Baba's locket was on my coat. When the officer asked us to stop and called me to approach him, I thought of Baba, because I knew well that if the police wanted to detain us, we would have to spend the night there outside of the city and it would be very uncomfortable. But since I was wearing Baba's locket on my coat when the officer looked at me, instead of asking for my driver's license, he asked, "Who is this man on the locket?" I said, "Well, he is one of the people who has reached God. He lives in India and his name is Hazrat Meher Baba." He asked me, "What can he do?" I answered, "He can do everything." He said, "For example?" I told him that Baba himself says that even if lustful thoughts attack one, to start repeating his name and that this will relieve the person. I told him, "If you don't believe me, you can try for yourself to repeat Baba's name." As soon as I said that, he liked that very much. He stood up, he shook my hands, said good-bye, and let me go. This episode affected me so much that for two hours my heart was shivering in joy.

There are many things like this, it's not only this incident. He has made many situations very, very easy for me. But I won't bother you with them and just tell you what happened in 1962. We were going to tell Baba in 1962 at the *darshan* that since he had allowed us to come to him after so many years, he should please allow us to stay with him from then on. But it was as if

he had read our hearts. As soon as we arrived there, he told us immediately that we would be there four days and after the four days we would have to leave. What he said was like a seal that you put on an envelope; it stuck to our hearts and it made our will his will, and we had no recourse. When we left Baba to come back to Iran, we felt that the joy of being with him had been so overpowering that leaving him was as though we had left Paradise and had entered hell. But there was nothing we could do. Nevertheless we are always thankful to him. We thank him because that joy and peace which enters our heart when we begin to repeat his name destroys all sorrows. I am very happy. I repeat that I am very grateful for his grace, his mercy. I can say that as far as I'm concerned, he has showered his grace over me tremendously. I am very grateful to him and there's no way that I can thank him. Jai Baba!

### **Mr. Khodadad Toos\***

Before I got to know or see Baba, an incident happened to me. I used to work with tractors in lands which were around Shiraz. There were a few people who were against me and I didn't know this. One of these days a fight started between us. Those two who were fighting with me were really very big and strong. One of them picked me up from the ground and threw me down like you would a lamb. I had long hair then. He took my hair and started to bang my head against the ground. He would tell me, "You are not a Muslim, you are Zoroastrian. Therefore we must kill you." I had heard from my mother that whenever you are helpless, and there is nobody around to help you, that you should ask for help from God and the saints and the prophets. I pleaded with him to let me go. He wouldn't listen and continued to bang my head on the ground. When I saw that none of my pleas were effective, I thought it wouldn't hurt to do what my mother asked, and I started calling on all the names of all the prophets and saints and God and Muhammad and Zarathustra, and all the holy people, but it had no effect. I was very disappointed. God, the prophets and the saints were supposed to help in these times, but they weren't paying any attention to me and they weren't helping me. All of a sudden

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\* Recorded interview with Khodadad Toos by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa, 1975.

I started thinking that maybe there was one of them I should have called on but hadn't—either I have to call his name as well as the others or perhaps he himself alone is the only one whom I should have called and I didn't call. Suddenly I remembered the name of Meher Baba. (At that time I had just heard Baba's name.) But as soon as I started to think of Baba and Baba thoughts came to my mind, I felt such a strength in me that I got out from behind this big man who was over me and I threw him aside. When I got up, the two others, who a minute before were after my blood to kill me, started to have fondness and love for me. The one who was ordering the other to beat me and kill me, also stopped and said, "Let him go, let him go."

I couldn't believe how it could be that this man in India could help me while God and the saints and the prophets couldn't do anything for me. But today I know who Baba is. I realize what Baba says when he says that he is God. I know that then, in that predicament, it was Baba who had come to my help. After that incident I started to look for Baba to try to find him.

In 1962 Baba gave permission for all those who wanted to come for his *darshan* to go to him at Guruprasad in Poona. With my two brothers (Khodayar and Khosrow) and some others we started out for Poona. Four days before Baba's *darshan* began, Baba accepted us. Although Baba would allow us to go and see him, he told us that we could only see him during the four days that he had designated for the meeting. All these four days before the meeting it was raining. It was raining very heavily, and we were thinking to ourselves that we had paid all that money to come from Iran to India and if it continued to rain, we wouldn't be able to come to see Baba in this open garden or to have Baba's *darshan* under the rain.

But it so happened that the day that Baba had designated for the beginning of the meeting, the clouds went away and the sun started to shine. After the rain it was so fresh and so beautiful that it looked as if we were in heaven. All the leaves were washed and all the flowers were out. It was very beautiful. When Baba had asked for people to come at that very hour, all the people gathered from all over the place. That day it also rained for one hour. Those who had love even enjoyed this hour of rain. But as for us who didn't have that much love, we went and took shelter somewhere from the rain. After an hour of this rain, the clouds went away and it was a clear day.

The four days of *darshan* were very beautiful and clear and everybody enjoyed it tremendously.

One incident happened to me. I noticed that Baba was very loving and very kind to a certain Hindu. I was thinking to myself that here we are Zoroastrians and Baba is Zoroastrian, and we have come all the way from Iran to India, and why doesn't Baba express the same love to us, and why is it that this Hindu is getting all the attention. This would make me jealous. It happened that I was sitting on a chair next to my uncle's wife. She got up to go to the toilet so I placed my purse over that chair so that nobody else should come and take that seat because all the seats were designated. But at that time a lady who had been with us at the hotel where we were staying entered the gathering. Since we had become acquainted with her, I took the purse from that chair and she came and sat there. In a little while the wife of my uncle arrived, so I was wondering what I should do because the wife of my uncle had come and she is an elderly lady, and on the other hand, I couldn't ask this other lady to get up. So I got up myself and asked my uncle's wife to sit. I started to go towards the back of the hall to find a place to sit there. But I heard a very, very beautiful song being sung by someone, and it was so beautiful that I don't think I have ever heard anything that beautiful. I really liked that song. So I went to see who it might be who can sing so well. Lo and behold, I saw it was the same Hindu man whom I was jealous about and whom Baba was paying so much attention and love to. So I thought to myself how powerful and knowing Baba is. Knowing what was going on within my heart, he brought about this circumstance so that this bitterness and jealousy might leave my heart and I might know why Baba was paying so much attention to him.

Again in 1965 there was permission for public *darshan* and we went to see Baba. When we arrived, Ali Akbar (Aloba) took us to Baba. When we entered Baba's presence, we noticed that there were some westerners, Americans, sitting around Baba. In introducing us to Baba, Ali Akbar started to tell Baba how wonderfully we were working for Baba, and how Khosrow was spreading Baba's message with his cab to people, and how Khodayar was doing a lot of Baba work. At that time Baba started to smile and I felt that what was transpiring was that Baba was telling the others that since we were Ali Akbar's countrymen, he was saying all those good things about us to Baba, and

that Baba was making a note of it and making a joke of it. And it was truly such because we weren't really worth what Ali Akbar was saying and all the praises that he was claiming for us.

As far as correspondence is concerned, all the letter writing would go through Ali Akbar and he would read it for Baba. The most significant letter which I exchanged with Baba concerned the time we had just translated the first Baba book into Persian. The police service in Tehran was after me because of that. They asked me to go to court. So I went for the trial and I took the book. They asked me who had published the book, and I said myself. Then they told us to go and they would study that book and then we were to come back in a week. I returned after a week but there was no answer. They asked me to come after another week. So I went back after another week. They told me that I had a little book with them, that it didn't cost more than 15 rials, so if I could forego that 15 rials then I could go free. So I wrote to Baba and I asked him whether I should sue them since they had taken a lot of my time. I told Baba about the whole affair and asked whether this was a good idea or not. Ali Akbar wrote back no. He said members of the government are like sleeping lions. If you play with their tails, they will wake up. Let them sleep and don't trouble them, don't bother them. Baba had dictated this letter, and Ali Akbar sent it to me.

The way that I feel about myself is that I am a little puppet in front of Baba and that he plays with me and makes me dance the way that he wants. Of myself I have no power. If I've done anything, or if I've given Baba's message to anyone, it has been Baba's spiritual hand which guided mine to do so. Of myself I have done nothing. I have been like a puppet.

### **Jamshide\***

My name is Jamshide. I was nine years old when there was a man named Rustom (Aga Baidul) who came to Mazrah. He took our names to go to India. About 20 people wrote their names to go to India. The next day we were supposed to be delivered to Yezd so that from there we could go to Bombay.

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\* Recorded interview with Jamshide by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa, 1975.

However, none of the others had the courage to send their children. Only my mother took me to Yezd.

There we met other children from elsewhere in Iran who were going. We got in a car to go to Shiraz. We were all crying because we were children and we were afraid. When the car got outside the city gate it came to a group of camels. The car honked and the camels got frightened and ran into each other. This amused us and we started to laugh and forgot our fear.

The road to Shiraz was really very bad. It was not really a road. From Shiraz we went to Bushire where we took a ship to India. It took us five days on the waters. We reached India and after a day we took the train to Ahmednagar and to school.

There were 14 of us from Iran. We didn't know where we were going. We went to the school and joined the children already going there. Only people connected with the school were allowed inside. It was exclusively for the students. We wore a uniform different from everyone else. If a stranger entered the school, we would not speak with him unless we had permission from Baba.

We studied there for about two years. The time we were there was very good for us and we were very happy. We would go to sleep at 8 o'clock. There were two people who would watch over us during the night in the dormitory. They would take care of us—if we had to go to the bathroom they would take us to the toilet and back. In the morning, when it was time to get up, these two people would ring handbells and we would get up. If someone did not wake up, they wouldn't call out, but would go over and ring their bells next to him till he would get up.

After we got up they put dental powder in our hands and we brushed our teeth with our fingers. Then we would wash our hands and faces and go to the dining hall. The dining hall was a big hall. We each had a plate, a cup and a bowl. Everything was numbered, even the plates were numbered. Even our suitcases and our clothes were numbered. We would take our cups and put them in front of us. There was one man who had a kettle full of tea and milk. He would go around and pour into the cups. Somebody after him would serve bread. Whoever wanted bread could have it, whoever wanted milk could have it and whoever didn't want anything could eat nothing. We would eat our breakfast, then we would get up and go to the classroom. First we would go to our dormitory and pick up our

books and bags. Then we would go to the classroom, where we stayed till lunch time. There were four languages taught in that school: English, Gujarati, Marathi and Persian. There were four teachers for that.

At lunch time we would go to the dining hall. We would get our plates and our bowls and our cups and put them in front of us, and the servers would come and take the cups and the plates out into the kitchen. In the kitchen they would serve rice and *dal*. They would put the *dal* into the cup and rice on the plate and they would bring them and put them in front of us. There was one who would go around putting water in the cups. After lunch, if the weather was not good, we would just leave the dishes on the tables as they were and the cooks themselves would wash the dishes. But if the weather was good, we would go out and wash the dishes ourselves. Then we would go to the dormitory. That was a place where we would sleep and where we would study also. We would study there until the afternoon. In the afternoon we had a few hours of play. We played all kinds of games including football and cricket. The elder boys would play a different game than the younger ones. After the game was over, we would go back to the school and start our studying until the evening. At evening we would go to the dining hall again. We would take our plates and things and put them in front of us. At night we had bread and different kinds of stews to go over it with vegetables of different kinds and greens. After that we would go to sleep. We would not eat meat.

Sometimes Meher Baba himself would come and sit in the middle. All the children would gather around him. We would fall all over him and play with him and hold his hands and feet. One time when my father was there visiting, one of his children had gotten ill in Iran. Baba knew that my father's child had become ill. He told my father that his son had died. Two days later a letter came saying that yes, indeed, this had happened. There were very many things like this which would happen. They were like miracles. You couldn't believe them. For example, somebody would come to the gate. There was a boundary beyond which they couldn't come. From that distance Baba would know what business the newcomer had at the gate. If he wanted him to come in, he would give him permission to come; otherwise, he would send him away. For example, if any of the children was sad or unhappy, he would go and sit next to him and embrace him and ask him what was wrong with

him and what was making him sad. Of course he knew what was the cause of his unhappiness.

He would encourage us to get up during the night and rub a cloth around our eyes and then sit during the night and repeat God's name. There was one child that I remember having seen myself, who would sit up at night, and he would repeat God's name so much that he could not sleep at night anymore and he would continue to sit up and repeat God's name until finally he could not eat or he could not do anything else. At this time Baba would go and try to feed him, spoonful by spoonful by himself. After a while this boy left and went into the desert somewhere. What happened to him and where he went I don't know. For the rest of us also we would try to get up earlier each day. For example, one day we would get up at eight, the next day we would try to get up at 7 o'clock. We would try to get up earlier and earlier. There were times that we would get up at one in the morning. Some of the boys would sit up during the night. Those who didn't want to would sleep.

There was another man there who was a little older than the others, and he looked like he was mad. He would play with the ball and sometimes he would scream. We asked Baba what was wrong with him. He said, "This man has practised asceticism for a long time. He has tried a great deal to reach God, but since he has performed a miracle, and was not one who was allowed to perform miracles, he has become like this and he is mad." Now he had come to take shelter in Baba so that he may help him to come out of this state. I don't know what happened to him either.

When I was sent to Bombay to school, my father was away. When he returned he asked my mother where I was. My mother told him that I had been sent to India, so he came and followed me there. When he came there, he started to work in Baba's outfit. He would take his salary there and work for Baba. He would be a watchman during the night. We were all mad for Baba. When it was time for us to leave, we fell at Baba's feet and we cried and we cried. Finally he said that we had to go, then he would send for us. Since our suitcases were there, we would come back there. That satisfied us. Otherwise we wouldn't go that easily. We all fell at his feet and we cried and we cried that we didn't want to leave him. There was nothing else we could do, so we left. Baba instructed them to bring us directly back to our parents. and take a receipt from them, and then come back. We took the boat from Bombay to Bushire and from

Bushire to Yezd. In Yezd there were no cars. There were no roads to our village either. But somehow they managed to get a car only for me, and with myself only in the car, they drove me to my village. They took a receipt from my mother. They returned, and I remained there.

Baba was constantly with us. We were always together with Baba. Whenever we had anything, he would come and be with us and sit with us. Sometimes he would do very strange things and his food was also very strange. In spite of it all, I still have faith in Meher Baba and I believe in Baba because I know that his spirit is still over us, that his spirit is free.

### **Mr. Shahriar Mehrabanpur\***

I first heard of Baba's name when Mr. Baidul came to Iran to take the children for Baba's school. After hearing Baba's name, I could not keep myself in Iran. All I wanted was to go to Baba. I had no money, so I borrowed some and went to Bombay. There I ran out of money and didn't have enough to take the train to Baba. I borrowed five rupees, and when I got to Ahmednagar that money also ran out. I was so hungry when I got there, and yet there were two or three kilometres still to reach Baba. I walked and finally arrived at a sign saying Babajan High School.

I started to walk around Meherabad. Finally a Hindu boy came and asked me what I wanted. I told him I had come to visit Baba. So he went and told Baba and Baba told him to ask me to go and see him. So I went in Baba's presence and I bowed down. Baba asked me, "Have you eaten anything?" I said, "No, I am very hungry." The first thing Baba directed was to give me something to eat and to fetch Mr. Afseri. So I ate something.

When Afseri arrived, Baba asked me to tell all of what I had done. I told him all of what I had done in my life, of the *murshid* whom I had been with for a little while, and of the hypnotism and mesmerism that I had started to learn. After all this, Baba told me that all of this was zero, was nothing, and was a cause of misfortune. He said I should do something that would make me become the owner of everything; then he told me to go and follow Afseri. With Afseri I went to Arangaon and at night

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\* Recorded interview with Shahriar Mehrabanpur by Irwin Luck and Dr. Farhad Shafa, 1975.

came back to Meherabad and had dinner. He told me that in the morning at 8 o'clock I should go to see Baba. So I slept at night and then next morning at eight I went to see Baba. When I went there, there was a boy called Behramji or Bua Saheb, who had come down also to Lower Meherabad. He was in charge of the rest of the people there. Baba told me that I should go after Bua Saheb and do whatever he would tell me.

Baba told me that from that day on I had to observe silence, complete silence. From that moment I started to observe silence and went to Upper Meherabad. My job was to sit at the gate there, to mince vegetables, and to stop the cars which would reach there, because they had to have permission to go any further. So that was my work there. Whenever anybody would come to the gate, I would go and tell Bua Saheb that somebody has come. I worked there till finally Baba himself came to Upper Meherabad. Baba gradually started to give love to the children in the school and these children were absorbed in that love. Then gradually Baba started to open the Prem Ashram. There were six of us Baba put together. We were older than the others. One was Muslim. Three were Hindus, of which one was a doctor. I was from Iran and another was a Parsi. We were in seclusion for six months.

We had practised reading and writing for six months. For two months we would have food only once a day, two months water once a day and two months milk once a day. After two months three left our group. They had acquired some love and after that they left. Finally only Dr. Ghaneker and myself were left.

When I had first arrived at Meherabad, I didn't have faith that Baba was God Himself. Baba knew that I did not have this faith. His orders were that I should sit in a corner and for two hours think of God and meditate on God, repeating, "You are Yazdan, Ahuramazd." He told me to repeat this *mantra* every morning for two hours from five to seven in the morning. Finally I recognized that Baba himself is everything, that he is all. Baba had told Bua Saheb that at 7 o'clock he should come and fetch me. One day I was sitting and meditating under the tree when it started to rain and pour very hard. Behramji forgot to come and tell me that it was 7 o'clock. Two hours passed, then four hours, but I did not get up. After a while Behramji saw there was somebody sitting in the rain under the tree. All of a sudden he remembered and he came and called me. Then I got up and left that place. He told Baba about this, though

of course Baba knew all about it. Baba called me. He told me, "You did well. You listened to me and you did not disobey my words. Even if it were not rain but fire, you should not have gotten up and you should have continued to sit there."

After the three in our group left, Baba said that was enough and that we should come out of seclusion also. This whole period of silence and seclusion lasted for six months.

One of the Prem Ashram boys was called Ali Akbar. Baba had given him so much love that he was a little out of control. Baba asked me to follow this Ali Akbar around so that he may not harm himself. [This Ali Akbar is neither Aloha who resides at Meherabad nor Syed Ali of *Sobs and Throbs*.] I should follow him but I should never touch him. So I went with him so that he might not harm himself. The first day he smashed me in the nose and my nose started to bleed all over the place, but I couldn't touch him. I couldn't hold his hand to stop him. He could come and beat me and do whatever he wanted to do. For six months I was with this Ali Akbar wherever he would go from morning till noon. He had so much love that wherever he would find a stretch of water he would put his stomach in the water so that he may cool it. He would tell me, "Oh, Shahriar, I am burning, I am burning." He would keep saying, "I'm burning, I'm burning." Every day from morning till noon this was what we did. I would tell Ali Akbar, "Oh, sir, it is lunch time, it is noon now, everybody has gone for lunch. We are hungry. When will we go back and reach home?" Finally he would say, "Okay, let's return." When we would start back, in just a few minutes we would reach the Ashram. This was all Baba's help—it was as if we were flying, we would get back in such a short time. It would feel like a car or a train that goes so fast. When we would get there, we would see that the children had just started to have lunch so we would join them and have our lunch.

After six months of being with him, I was at the end of my rope. I came to Baba and I said, "Baba, I can't go on with him anymore. I'm fed up and I won't go with him anymore." Baba said, "All right, you don't do it anymore. I, myself, will take care of him. I will look after him." Another one of my chores was to sit and take care of the 33 boys in the Prem Ashram, to look over them and make sure that they didn't hurt each other and they were kind to each other. For six months we went to Toka. There appeared Mr. Leik from Germany. He had spent 25 years in Vivekananda's *ashram* in Calcutta. He was in the world of light, but Baba took it away from him and

sent him all around India to spread Baba's message. This Mr. Leik was to travel on foot, but if anybody offered him a ride, he should take the ride. If anybody gave him any food, he should take the food, he should go all around India, asking for nothing.

One time we (some 20 or 30 of the elder ones) went to Happy Valley. We climbed up the mountain to visit the abode of an ancient king. We came slowly down the slope. But one Baban Shabniz, an Indian athlete, tried to come straight down the mountain. In doing so he got caught between two stones and couldn't get past. He called out to Baba and suddenly found himself freed and on the ground. At that moment Baba was constantly giving everybody a hard time about that boy, asking, "What happened to him? Where is that boy? Where is that man?" But we didn't know what had happened then.

Baba gave an order that nobody should speak in the dining hall. So a few of the children who wanted to speak would take their lunches outside of the dining hall and they would eat it there and speak there. Sidhu and I were in charge of serving luncheon. We would speak also; we had to speak because we had to ask the children what they wanted to eat, whether rice or *dal* or vegetables. Baba was away on a trip. He came back one evening at 11 o'clock. We all went and greeted him and had his *darshan*. Then he came and sat with us and asked who it was who had spoken in the dining hall. A Parsi boy named Nadir said that Sidhu and I had spoken. Baba called us and said, "Why did you speak?" We didn't say anything. What could we say—we had spoken. Finally Baba said, "You have to leave now." He told Baidul, "Give them money for their way and for their tickets and have them leave." I told Baba, "I will go by myself. I don't need any money for the tickets. Now that I must go, I will go." Finally Baba said, "No, don't leave now, leave at four in the morning." Then we went to bed. But how could we sleep? We started to cry and cry. We cried so much that there was nothing left but tears. We couldn't see anything else but the tears. Then Kaikhushru Afseri went to Baba and spoke with him about us. He told Baba we were workers, that we had to serve lunch and that while serving we had asked what to serve. He said we were servers and not eaters there. Finally Baba called us in and told us, "I have forgiven you this time, but don't speak again in the dining hall." Up to this day at meal times as much as I can, I keep silence and don't speak.

Concerning Chota Baba, Baba once came to a gathering of the boys and asked, "Who wants love?" Chota Baba—Abdulla—

said, "I do." Then Baba took Chota Baba's hat and put it on his own head. From that day on, this boy who was such a good student, changed. He could not play, he would not play. He could not eat, for even the food would appear to him as Baba. He would say, "I won't eat Baba." Bua Saheb brought him to the Ashram. He thought the boy was ill. He had him sleep there, and we covered him with blankets. We say that he was really saying, "What is this world? What are studies? What is money? What is food?" After dinner they took Chota Baba to the hospital. There were six beds in that hospital so that whenever there were any sick people among the children, they could go and rest there. They took Chota Baba there and had him hospitalized. Bua Saheb went and told Baba what had transpired. Baba came to Upper Meherabad. I was with him when he went into the hospital. Baba said, "He is not ill. Only a tip of a hair of love has affected his heart. This is love. It's not illness."

It was in this period of time that he had given to all the children in the school, more or less, some love. The Hindu boys had a Hindu teacher who would teach them spiritual lessons. Dadachanji, who was the principal of the school, was in charge of Gujarati. He would teach the spiritual lessons to them. For Iranians it was Kaikhushru Afseri who would teach them spiritual lessons. Ramjoo, who also has printed some books, would be in charge of Urdu and would be teaching spiritual lessons in Urdu. Baba would also come up the hill. He would tell the boys, "If like the clock which goes 24 hours, you too can constantly and continuously think of me, then I will make gold out of you."

Every day Baba would be coming up the hill and he would dispense his love to the children. He would pat them on the head and shoulders. He would embrace them. There were many of the children who could not eat because they had so much love. He would feed them with his own hands. The boys would gather around him. He would feed this boy or that boy or all the boys who were around him and who had much love. Morsel by morsel he would try to feed them, and they would refuse to eat. He had given them love—one was Syed Ali, another was Lobhaji. One was Ramoo. There was another called Gamu, who just before dying, Baba took to God and made him one with himself. Baba would tell us, "I will make you God. I will make the King of kings out of you." Another one was James, who was a Christian. Just before he passed away, Baba also made him one with himself. There were many like him. Another one was Hormuzian. He had come first to take away his two brothers

from Baba. He was a Baha'i. Finally he ended up staying with Baba for a month. Then he left everything and he lost everything. Also before he passed away, Baba made him one with himself. When we were in Bijapur, Baba told his brother, "I have made your brother one with himself."

Baba himself would give me love and would keep me warm in his love. When Baba was on a trip, I could not sleep at night. Baba had given me love and when he would return from his trips, we would go for a whole kilometre to greet him. When he could come back, we would sit with him for an hour and listen to him. But I have never wanted anything from Baba. When Baba had asked me to be with this Ali Akbar (who is in love and had a lot of love for Baba) so that he might not hurt himself, this Ali Akbar who had so much love that wherever there was water, he would put his stomach into the water and would tell me that he was burning—whenever he would get near Baba he would go under Baba's garment, and wouldn't want to come out, like a child who wanted to have milk—I, who was along with this Ali Akbar, also was drunk. I was drunk and didn't know myself, and didn't know where I was going, where we were, what we were doing, until we got back to the Ashram.

The first time Baba went to America, Syed Ali went with him. Baba took all of us elders to himself. He pricked our fingers with a needle and blood came out. He rubbed it in the palm of his own hand. He said, "This is your signature you have given me. You should not smoke, you should not drink, and you should not go after other people's wives and daughters. You shouldn't say lies and you shouldn't cheat anybody and you should be honest." We went to see them off when their boat was leaving for America. Baba had given us orders to go back to Iran then. He told me to be with my old father and mother and with my wife and children.

There was a time when Baba himself came to Iran. I don't quite remember when—1931, more or less. At first he went to Khorramshahr, then to Qum and Isfahan and finally Yezd. When he came to Yezd, we went to Mubarak to visit the man called Bua Saheb who is in Baba's Ashram in Meherabad. There Syed Ali's uncle takes a gun, puts it in his shoe, and goes to see Baba to kill Baba. But when he reaches Baba and gets in front of Baba, he forgets completely what he had come to do. Then he returns, sending big, huge peaches for Baba. In Yezd many people came to see Baba, including many of the clergymen and

Muslim religious people. There were many of Baba's disciples with him, both from India and also from Iran. There were 14 people altogether accompanying Baba in this trip. They rented a bus to go from Kerman to Zahidan and then to India.

When Syed Ali had to come to Iran, to Yezd, his uncle wouldn't allow him to go back to Baba. Baba had asked me and Adi Shirajamast to pick up Syed Ali and take him back. According to Baba's written instruction, we were to take Syed Ali to India. We went and prepared everything and we brought Syed Ali to Yezd. The day that we came to Yezd, Baba had also sent Baidul to Yezd. And so Baidul and I and Syed Ali started on our way to Kerman and Zahidan and to Quetta where the Iranian consulate gave us a lot of trouble. There was a Parsi lawyer who confronted this Persian consulate and then there was peace. Then we could go to see Baba.

From Quetta we went to Nasik and we were there for a while. Then we went to Bijapur. In Bijapur all the singers and all the eminent people and all the knowledgeable people would come and fall at Baba's feet. They wouldn't do anything but cry there. As soon as they would get there, they would start to cry and cry, and they would leave with tears in their eyes. Every day it was like this. These great ones would ask no questions, they would just fall at Baba's feet and cry there and then kiss his feet and then leave. We came again with Baba to Nasik. They had rented a building in Nasik and Baba was staying in the third story of that building. Every day all of us Baba lovers would go and sit in front of Baba. One day a man from Khorasan and a companion came there to see Baba. He said that for 14 years he had practised asceticism in the Himalayas and he had eaten the leaves and fruits of the trees and had meditated there, and had just come back to the world. He had come to Baba to ask whether he should marry or not. Baba said, "If you want to marry, then go ahead and marry." Baba told us to look at this man, that after 14 years of asceticism he had come back, and what does he want?—he wants the world, and he wants a wife. There were others who would come to Baba who had practised asceticism for 20, 30 or 40 years, and they would come to Baba to ask what they should do, and then Baba would tell them what to do.

Baidul first wrote me about having a Baba meeting and center in Iran, saying that all over the world they have Baba's center and meeting and that they should also in Iran have a Baba meeting. There were four of us who first started to have Baba's meet-

ings: Esphandiar Vesali, Khodadad Toos, Shapur Merdadi and me. And so for two or three years we would have the meetings at Esphandiar's house. Nobody would come and nobody would go to the meetings. I wrote to Baba that nobody comes or goes to the meetings. Baba said, "Even if there are only two of you, that is enough. I'm there with you. I do my own work. Don't get into an argument with anyone. I don't need any propaganda for anyone but only that you should spread my message to people."

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