

In the Moment She Was in His Company

There is a physical aspect to loving one who is dear to us; it is a part of what makes love so precious to behold. There is no doubt— Love can be “touched”! Because of our love for each other, I believe we never lose the ability to touch the special people in our lives no matter where we are—no matter the physical distance between us.

The Mandali, especially Mehera, showed us through their daily lives that one who is loved does not need to be physically present to experience the love between them. Meher Baba Himself proved this during the New Life! Although physically absent from His lovers during this period of His Advent, His Presence was palpable, pervasive, and could be felt by those who did not accompany Him on that walking journey across India. What a Divine Gift this is for us all to know! We are not denied His Presence even when He is not present in physical form! And by His Grace, we can also experience this tender side of love with others and ‘touch’ them when separated by distance, even in death.

I witnessed this newly discovered dimension of love the first time I stayed overnight at Meherazad in mid-to-late 1974. I slept on a mat rolled out at the edge of the carpet on the living room floor; my head faced Baba’s Room and Goher’s bed. Goher was not feeling well due to a severe kink in her back that made sitting and walking difficult and painful for her. Mehera suggested I stay at Meherazad to help Goher; she said my sleeping in the living room would allow me to tend to Goher’s’ needs during the night, while providing me a place to rest during the day. It was during these first nights I witnessed the unbreakable bond of love between two people that was ‘present’ even when one person’s physical form was absent. In a state of awe and in the quietude of my repose, I shyly watched Mehera’s nightly routine. She was absorbed in love for her Beloved Baba, so tender and vulnerable in its purity. As I gazed up at Mehera from the floor, I came to understand the Lover and the Beloved are never truly separated! Even if one person is not ‘physically’ present, it does not mean the other person cannot touch the presence of the loved one who is ‘absent’.

Before retiring at the end of the day, Mehera would spend private time in Baba’s Room. When she was done, she would quietly step out and close the door. After sliding her feet back into her slippers, she would then walk around the house and lovingly gaze upon His Images and converse with Him. Mehera would also sit at the dining table and talk with Baba in the present tense. I always sensed Mehera knew He was sitting to her left at the head of the table. I felt such warmth and comfort believing Baba was just a few feet away from me as well. I sensed He revealed Himself to her in these tender moments of Innocent Love. It occurred to me if all is an illusion, why not the illusion of Baba just around the corner from where I slept, instead of the illusion of separation?

That first night, I watched in reverential wonderment as Mehera circled the inner sanctum of His Home, spending the last moments of her day with Him. She would fold her hands and bow before His Images. She would reach out her hand to touch Him, seemingly

delighted by the warmth of this contact. I could smell the fragrance of tuberose and sometimes sandalwood, and never questioned the fragrance that filled the room. Suddenly, with the grace of a ballerina, she turned and walked over to the living room where I lay. On my stomach on the mat, chin resting on clasped hands, I watched as she stepped out of her slippers at the carpet's edge, leaving them mere feet from my head. Their deep maroon-color took on the aura of a Kashmiri Queen's Regal Ruby Ring! She walked to the divan where He used to sit with the women at the end of the day, her bare feet gliding across the carpet sounding like peacock feathers rustling as they opened into a magnificent half-circle. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Mehera bow to the beautifully framed image that hung on the wall above the divan. The pink curtains covering the windows that opened out to the garden shimmered in the moonlight, flickering in the soft, golden hues of the lantern burning in the main room. They, too, were moved by such devotion between the Lover and the Beloved.

Tears welled up in my eyes as it struck me that Mehera now accepted that Baba looked at her through a photograph and she must hold her desire to see His 'living' face at bay. It was her surrender to His Pleasure that she not become overwhelmed with grief and sadness that touched me deeply. Mehera spoke so tenderly with Baba, telling Him He needed His mustache trimmed and that she would tend to it in the morning after breakfast. Other times she told Baba it was time for a 'head bath' and she would oil His hair and plait it, tying a pink ribbon at the end. "Baba!" she exclaimed, "tomorrow after your nap and afternoon tea, I will soak your hands and clean under your nails." She continued, "Then I'll clip and file them to perfection." Mehera saw herself tending to Baba in the present time, experiencing her recollections with renewed intimacy—breathing life into these tender and sweet memories. In the moment, *she was in His Company*. I am certain His Heartbeat danced in her own heart as a fairy does on the head of a pin gently, bringing her comfort.

It was caring for the physical needs of His Human Form Mehera missed so much, the day-to-day needs of the Man who was God. However, by reliving and recalling tender moments, she could still 'touch' or 'see' Him, and she always seemed to sense the warmth of His Humanity, His living flesh! She described to Baba the sweet aroma of His kerchief and the scent of His Sadhra, both of which she would hold up to her face and breathe in deeply before washing. She recalled how she would soften the leather of his chappals or would repair them during their many walks across India, especially mending them during the New Life. She had memorized the shape of Baba's ears and earlobes, the wave and curl of his hair that wound around them both. And the curve of His eyebrows! Mehera could practically recall how many hairs were in each. She would describe to Him the small tuft of hair on His Chest that would peek out of the neckline of His Sadhra; she recalled how each strand curled up off His Skin or would be caught in a rivulet of sweat that trickled down His Chest in the heat. She told Him how after brushing His Hair she would take out a linen cloth and remove the hair from the brush with great care, saving each curl and strand for Lovers who would come for Darshan. In the moment, she *was in His Company*.

And His feet! His Holy Feet! How Mehera so reverentially spoke of soaking Baba's Feet in warm, sudsy water, of trimming His Toenails and using a soft cloth to dry them. With tenderness in her voice, she would tell Him, "Baba, Darling, I am going to now gently massage your feet and make certain I dry between each toe." At times, her eyes were closed, and her hands would move in the motion she must have used as she engaged in this sacred duty. She recalled how carefully she would capture the trimmings in a kerchief to keep safe; at times she told her Beloved she was going to make a brooch or use them in picture frames. She remembered that while living on Meherabad Hill in those early days, she had made backdrops for photographs, brooches, and artistic designs from the nail trimmings. With meticulous detail, she described to Baba how she would stitch His Nails into satin fabric using beads, pearls, and silk thread. And then, with outstretched hands before her Beloved, while actually in her mind's eye holding His Feet in her hands, Mehera told Baba how beautiful His Ankles were, so thin, so perfectly formed. She knew the curve of each toenail; His Big Toe ran long and gently curved at the edges. She would recall the next toenail lay flat and dipped at the corners, and the next nail curved like a crescent moon. In a whispered voice she described the smooth texture of the skin on the upper side of both feet, rubbing her hand over each with a gentle caress. In such moments, the Master cannot resist the love of His servant—no greater power than this. The Lord comes when beckoned by love. I knew Meher Baba had become the Slave of Mehera's Love for Him in these moments. In these moments, He had chosen her company.

Over the years, whenever I slept in the living room, I waited in eager anticipation to watch this tender display of Mehera's love for Baba. I remembered Baba saying, "I will never leave you!" This became my mantra as I watched her stand before Baba, speaking to Him with such tenderness, love, and affection. Although Mehera's voice was barely above a whisper, I knew it echoed throughout all the Universes in every corner of His Realm and His Kingdom was being purified just because Mehera was at His Side. Pure Love filled the room, bathing it in a rich golden glow from the kerosene lantern which was placed every night on a stand in the middle of the room. The Lord's Lantern cast its glimmers of flame on the walls for His Beloved in a special dance of ecstasy. Over time, the lantern was no longer an inanimate object in my mind—it had life. I saw the Lantern cast Mehera's shadow as she moved around the room, hands clasped by her chin. Sometimes her head faced heavenward; at times bowed in surrender. *In these moments, she was in His Company.*

Mehera would not lament the lack of His Love or say Baba was not present with her; she lived knowing she was always in His Presence. Although she missed His physical form and His physical touch, she seemed to keep Baba ever-present by breathing life into her memories. Mehera remembered His scent and recalled how His hair danced like a living crown on His head as the sun shone through, each hair lifted in the breeze. Love can be ever-present because of our deep connection and ties with each other. Meher Baba has told us, "Love begets love". I saw this Truth as I watched Mehera move from one image of her Beloved to another in unhurried meditation. Mehera was always, and in all

ways, in His Presence. She embraced Him. She touched Him in the photos, placing tender kisses in her hands at the end of her fingers, lightly pressing the tips to His Lips. At times she would pick up a framed photo and kiss Baba, a kiss so tender, it gently caressed the image as it converged in love's joy and intimacy. *In the moment, she was in His Company.* A few times I heard glass shatter as her lips touched the frame and sparks flew in the room. Yet when she retired to her room, I would get up to look at the framed image and it was whole, not even a crack. I remember thinking it was her Divine Kiss that made that framed photograph truly 'whole'.

Baba's Grace and Compassion allow us to be captured by the Warden of 'Love's Penitentiary', to be held prisoner for eternity. Vow to never seek a reprieve from this 'sentence' but ask to be granted strength to burrow deeper into its recesses! Seek asylum in this sweet-and-savory confinement. Become an unrepentant captive, love's inmate. His close ones did! As I watched Mehera, I remember thinking this must be the promised Rapture I was witnessing; I was being bathed in milk and honey infused with exotic spices. After a while and when done recalling her day and expressing her Love for Baba, Mehera bowed, both hands cradling her face. She bade Him a good and restful night. After kissing her hands, she offered these tender gestures to Baba, blowing them gently in His direction. The sound of the shuffle of her slippers on the stone as she retired to her room and to bed told me all was right in the Universe and day was now done.

I have come to terms that we may never get over missing the physical presence of someone we love when they are no longer in our daily lives or no longer earth-bound. As time passes, we come to experience that special bond in different ways. People who have loved and have been loved by us have shared in a 'give-and-take' during their time in our lives; it helped shape and form the persons we have now become. I no longer feel like I 'lost' someone who has moved on, but I do admit I miss reaching out and touching them, holding them, and being held. At times I miss their scent, hearing their footsteps, their voice, their breathing at night. These are difficult things to replace as they are so tactile. We can, however, keep them securely in our hearts when we remember how we locked gazes, shared mischievous grins, and wide-eyed smiles, and enjoyed each other's laughter or wiped away tears. Hugs. We can envision and relive hugs. We can recall from memory the sweetness of leaning on each other while sitting on the couch. Or the beauty of sharing a sunrise on a day filled with promise or the setting sun when a day has anointed our hearts, spilling over the brim with all that is divine. This is what Mehera did with her Beloved, keeping memories alive and occasionally revisiting special moments in the present time. It gave her comfort when her heart was so terribly aching.

Those first nights I lay in complete silence and utter stillness on that thin mat in the living room. My heart beating wildly in my chest, blood rushing through my being as I captured every beautiful movement Mehera made in the Divine, Romantic Dance she had with her Beloved before retiring for the day. Oh! The Celestial Orchestra that played in my mind, the graceful movements she made, the shy tone of her voice as she spoke with Him. My life force echoed in my ears like a river flowing down a mountainside from high up in

the Himalayas. Mesmerized by what I was witnessing, I began to understand there is a 'oneness' with divine love and it grows when nurtured. Love is an 'active' exercise, an obligation and duty—its beauty a gift to be shared with each other. Arnavaz would always remind me that, "All love comes from Him and returns to the Source." I knew this to be true as I listened to Mehera's longing being put into intimately whispered words. The Mandali, especially Mehera, showed us all that we are in His Presence every moment. I bear witness to this Divine Truth, this Sacrament at His Altar in our hearts, this Covenant with the Lord.

Many times, a lesson learned long ago takes on new meaning when remembered with a newfound understanding of life's intricate prism-refractions and its subtle nuances. And because of Beloved Meher Baba's Mandali, especially His Mehera, we know in any given moment that our Beloved is ever-present in our lives. He is our True and Constant Companion. He showed us this during the New Life.

It is through Love's touch and God's Providence that His Holy Scripture can be written in Heavenly Calligraphy on our soul forevermore. How great our fortune to live our lives blessed by Meher Baba's Nazar which He bestows on each of His lovers. He has framed our life in 'spiritual knowing'—*in each moment we are in His Company!* "I will never abandon you!" Constant Companionship is Meher Baba's covenant with each of us. As Mehera would say, "Enjoy to the fullest!"