



Eruch Jessawala

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Meher Baba Australia
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Eruch Jessawala, Meherazad, Dec '76-Jan '77. (Photo Bernard Bruford)

A day of sweet farewell

Irene Holt, for Tavern Talk

At 2:31am on Friday, August 31st, Baba reclaimed his disciple Eruch. It was a day of sweet farewell for those privileged to be present at Meherabad and Meherazad. A full account of Eruch's departure from our midst is being prepared, but for now we want to briefly share with all of you something of the beauty of that day of celebration for Eruch.

In the first minutes and hours, the word got out quickly, both locally and abroad. It wasn't long before hundreds of Baba lovers and friends of Eruch knew that his long-awaited appointment had been met. A little later telegrams and email messages were sent to a list of contacts around the world (and to Tavern Talk), who in turn spread the message to others.

In those early morning hours, Eruch's body was placed on a stretcher and laid before Baba's

chair in Mandali Hall. All the mandali and residents of Meherazad had their chance to say goodbye in the intimate atmosphere of home, in front of Baba's chair where Eruch and the other mandali had spent so many hours with Baba. Gradually lovers from Meherabad and Ahmednagar also came to Meherazad to pay their respects to the much-loved friend of our Lord. The atmosphere was calm and intimate, our emotions a mixture of awe at the incredible event of Eruch's union with Baba, the poignancy of personal memories of Eruch, reverence for the soul of such a man, joy for him, sorrow for ourselves, and many more - all of them imbued with Baba's wonderful Presence and Power.

At 9:30 am, after arti and prayers, Eruch's body was lifted on the

stretcher and carried into Swanee, the white van, and driven to Meherabad, followed by a small procession of cars. In Ahmednagar, Swanee and the procession turned into Meher Nazar, right at the time the office would normally open, and Eruch was given one last turn through the Trust Compound, registering his final attendance at the place where he had spent so many working days over the years since Baba dropped His body. At Meherabad the procession first went up the hill, where Eruch was taken inside Baba's Samadhi and briefly placed at His feet. The Master's Prayer and Beloved God Prayer were recited and the Gujarati arti was sung. Following this, his body was placed on a raised platform on the Sabha Mandap, the shade structure opposite the Samadhi, so

Baba lovers could come at this stage and pay their respects. A queue formed and people filed by, moved perhaps to touch his feet, bow their heads to him, or give him a last kiss.

After about an hour, he was taken again in Swanee to lower Meherabad and was kept there in the Main Bungalow Mandali Hall, in front of Baba's chair, for the rest of the day until the burial time. Now was the time for the arrival of more and more lovers, from Pune, Mumbai and other cities, even as far away as Hyderabad and Navsari. The crowd was full by late afternoon. Flowers adorned Eruch's reclining body, tokens of the love of many hearts. Eruch's brother Meherwan had been at his side since morning, and as he now recalls, "I had a hard time convincing several people to keep cheerful as Eruch would want." Bhau sat near Eruch's feet. Goher, Meheru, Katie, Aloba and Bal Natu arrived from Meherazad and sat near Eruch's body for some time. Song after song was offered by

The main pillar of Men Mandali, dear Eruch, has bowed down finally for all time at the feet of Beloved Avatar Meher Baba at 2:31am today in Meherazad in his final obedience, surrenderence, sacrifice and love to the Beloved.

eastern and western Baba-singers and players.

At about 5:15 pm Eruch was carried in his coffin to the nearby burial site of the men mandali at lower Meherabad. Eruch's grave there is next to other stalwarts of the men mandali, in fulfillment of Baba's instructions. With the crowd of lovers pressing in from all sides, and amid choruses of Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai, the coffin was closed and decked with garlands, then lowered into the grave. Baba's prayers were recited by the whole

group and a last arti sung. The women mandali were given the first handfuls of earth to throw in, and the grave was filled in. Garlands of fresh flowers are kept there now on the mounded soil. (After some time, Eruch's grave will be permanently covered, as has been done with the graves of the other men mandali buried at Meherabad).

We have received many messages of love and tribute to Eruch from Baba lovers from all corners of our world, and many more thoughts and prayers we know you all are sending. We are united in our remembrance of our elder brother Eruch and of Baba, through him.

Rick and Sheryl Chapman wrote the following in their message sent that morning, which may reflect what is felt by many Baba lovers: "Just as the Avatar always has a Divine Counterpart, as Mehera was to Baba, so it is the Beloved's Wish to have one of His male disciples so closely identified with Him, despite the inimitable perfection of all the

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Eruch's body in front of Baba's chair in the Main Bungalow Mandali Hall, lower Meherabad (left) and being lowered into the grave at lower Meherabad (right). (Photos by James Cox)

The passing of one of His great ones

Roy Hayes

Rosalind and I arrived in Meherabad on Wednesday 29th August 2001 for nine days of pilgrimage at our Beloved Lord's Samadhi and to be with His dear ones at Meherazad. It was an unusual time for us as we usually go to India in February. We felt very fortunate to be there at that time and staying with our close friends Jal and Dolly Dastoor.

We went to Meherazad on the Thursday. We had heard Eruch was very unwell and did not expect to see him. We later found that he was feeling very well that day and had insisted in going to the Trust Office on a day that he usually was at Meherazad. A fellow Indian pilgrim told us a story of how he did see Eruch at the Trust Office that day. His mother had instructed him to give her love and a jar of cookies. He had forgotten the cookies in the rush. He found Eruch in good spirits and after conveying his mother's love and the big Eruch Baba hug, he was about to leave when Eruch said

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other disciples in His Circle. In the Age of Meher Baba, that disciple is Eruch, and he will be remembered as such for Advents to come.

"But Eruch's role in the Advent is one thing; meeting and knowing him was another. Could it be that being a true slave of The Friend makes one a true friend to all? Eruch opened the door of his heart to everyone who came for the Beloved, and few could resist the invitation to accept his friendship in the love of the Lord. For many, that friendship would become the touchstone of their relationship with Baba, a pole star in the universe of their learning to know and love the Divine Beloved."

Thank you, Eruch!
Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!

'Where are the cookies?' He said Eruch had no way of knowing about the cookies.

That night our sleep was restless. About 1am the phone rang and after Jal banged on our door saying, 'Get dressed brother, we are going to Meherazad. Eruch is having trouble breathing and will not last long.' We got dressed when another call came telling us not to come Eruch had stabilised and they were calling Dr Gus and Dr Anne. We got undressed and went back to bed, we couldn't sleep, the atmosphere was very charged.

At about 2.35 am Jal called again 'Eruch has passed on ... get dressed we are going to Meherazad' (Eruch died at 2.31 am). There was a flurry of phone calls by Jal going out all over India. We picked up Perviz, Shridhar, Sam and Roshan, Dadi etc in the cars at lower Meherabad. I phoned Bernard Bruford at about 3am to tell him of the important event and to let Australia know. It was the first time I had taken a mobile to India and I was very grateful when it connected.

Alighting from the car when we arrived at Meherazad, we went straight to the verandah where Bal and Aloba were sitting. An overpowering and intoxicating smell of sandalwood filled our nostrils. Eruch had been placed on a stretcher in front of Baba's chair in Mandali hall. Sitting around him were Meheru, Goher, Katie, Arnavaz, Manu, Merwan, Steve, Gary, Davana, Flint and Shelley (I have probably missed some). Those with us were taking darshan at Eruch's feet. I felt out of league among the grand mandali and relatives. I guess our passport was the fact that we loved Eruch and those around him. We felt that Baba had invited us.

On entering the hall and bowing at this great man's feet my tears were

unstoppable. (I know Baba says not to waste them and I hope He will forgive me on this rare occasion). I then sat beside him and saw how beautiful he looked. For all of you who have met him - imagine the look on his face and the feel of his cuddle as he made you feel loved and very special. That was the look and the feeling.

Memories of Eruch flooded my mind - having us sit around the walls of Mandali hall and yelling out Jai Baba as loud as we could, trips to Ellora caves with him as our guide, stopping at the mosque where Baba spent the last night of the New Life, singing at the top of our lungs in the back seat of a bus, climbing Seclusion Hill many times, being lovingly nursed by him and fed electrolytes to recover from dysentery, being counselled by him in difficult times, the inspiring consolation when my father died this year and stories, stories, stories and more stories where you felt him disappear and Baba's love fill mandali hall.

Bhau, Ted, Janet and Allan arrived. Allan read a most beautiful email from Riek and Cheryl Chapman which was a tribute to Eruch.

One of the cars was going back at 5.30 am to Meherabad and Ahmednagar flower market to collect heaps of roses, so we went back to Jal and Dolly's. We thought we might get a bit of a rest but phone calls were coming from all over. English, broken English and many other languages - people trying to delay the funeral and wanting information. Somehow I managed to convey the details of the day's events.

Eruch was due to come to Baba's Samadhi at 9.30 am, he arrived at 10.15 am. We carried him in his stretcher into the samadhi and placed him in front of Baba. I put some flowers onto Eruch for all Australian Baba lovers whose hearts Eruch had



Arriving in Australia at Sydney airport, Meher Baba with Eruch, June 1958. (Press photo)

touched. We then said a resounding Master's Prayer, Beloved God Prayer and sang the Gujarati Arti. Sam Kerawala then gave a great talk on Eruch encompassing the recent Avatars' unparalleled right hand men. We then placed Eruch in the Mandap opposite Baba's samadhi. There were about eighty people by this time including Bhau, Aloba and Bal. Baba lovers again took darshan and put flowers onto Eruch. It was a chance to place a last kiss onto that wonderful cheek.

About 11.30 Eruch was taken to lower Meherabad. We placed him in front of Baba's chair in Mandali hall. People had started to arrive from other parts in India. A day of bhajans, ghazals, guitar, song and readings started. We went away for a few hours in the afternoon and returned to find the building pulsing with Baba in song and music. About

300 - 400 hundred Baba lovers (from as far as Hyderabad -12 hours away) were now present. At 4pm the women mandali came. Bhau also came and placed a seven colour flag onto Eruch's chest upon which flowers were placed. Darshan took place with many hundreds paying their respects to a man whom they all clearly loved.

At 5 pm as planned, Baba's twins, Rustom and Sorab, Steve, Gary, Jal, Arsenio, Ted, myself and some other strong men lifted Eruch to our shoulders to go to the grave site. Many people had a chance to share carrying him. Because the crowd was pushing in close I had to bend and lift at a strange angle which twisted my back out, it was a strong, sweet pain that would bring the image of his face whenever my back caught over the next week.

At the grave site there was songs and prayers. At 5.30 he was lowered into the grave which is next to Meherjee's. The finality at this moment was very moving for many, there was a tear in Goher's and many others' eyes. People then had a chance to throw in flowers and earth before a chain of people was formed to fill in the grave with earth and rocks. A mound now stands over him which is garlanded daily.

The day was an intensely beautiful one which contained joy at his release, grief for our loss and memories upon memories. Eruch is the most wonderful example of how a life can be lived.

Rosalind and I feel immensely privileged to have met and had close contact with such a man over the last 30 years. We hope we are around when Baba moulds another like him in 700 years.

Baba's Eruch

Davana Brown for Tavern Talk, Meherazad, 17th September 2001

"Beloved Avatar Meher Baba fulfilled His promise to Eruch B Jessawala on 31st August 2001 at 2:31 am when He gave Eruch His hand and pulled him out of the muck of illusion to live eternally in Him."

For those of the Baba-family who have been blessed to visit Meherazad in the past thirty-two years since Beloved Avatar Meher Baba dropped His physical form, the above message sent out to the worldwide Baba family will need no explanation. But for those who have not been able to make the pilgrimage to Meherabad and Meherazad and meet Eruch personally, the story behind this message perhaps needs telling.

In the 32 years since Baba dropped His physical form, not a pilgrim season would pass without Eruch sharing with the Baba-lovers gathered in Mandali Hall how he was waiting for that day when Baba would give him His hand and lift him out of the muck of illusion. He would then regale the crowd with the story behind his statement.

The year was 1949, before the commencement of the New Life. Baba wanted a period of relaxation, so He asked Eruch to think of a place where He could go and relax. Eruch knew that there were two requirements to be met in finding a place for Baba: first, that it was secluded, and secondly that there would be a good mast contact. Eruch suggested a place on the coast, not far from Bombay, called Vengurla; it had long stretches of beautiful secluded beaches and he knew that there was a mast staying in the vicinity whom Baba could contact. Baba agreed and plans were made for Baba and a few of the mandali to stay in the Government rest house there.

One day shortly after their arrival, Baba directed the women mandali to proceed to the beach, go swimming for as long as they wished, and when they were finished, to return to the rest house alone. He and Eruch would continue further along the beach, as Baba wanted to contact the mast.

It was midday and the sun was beating down upon them. Eruch explained to Baba they would have to walk about three miles to reach the distant town across the stretch of backwaters, but Baba wouldn't hear of it. Baba gestured to Eruch that it was too far and too hot and why couldn't they cross the inlet waters in one of the dug-out canoes that the fisher boys used to haul the catch.

Vengurla was a fishing community and, for as far as Baba and Eruch could see, the waters were dotted with peculiar makeshift fishing boats. These canoes were really huge tree trunks which had their centers carved out to form a hold for the fish and the boys would swim alongside, guiding the boats to the far shore. Eruch didn't like the idea at all and told Baba that it was very dangerous because the boats couldn't hold their weight - they were made for fish not people. But Baba was adamant that everything would be fine and that He was not about to walk the distance in the hot sun, so Eruch had no choice but to acquiesce to Baba's wish, dangerous as he felt it might be.

Eruch called a couple of the young boys aside and told them that if they ferried them safely to the other side he would give the boys a good tip. Of course, the boys assured Eruch that they would be careful. Then Baba climbed into the makeshift boat and Eruch followed.

Eruch would describe how he and Baba could hardly move for fear that

the boat would tip over, and how, halfway across this backwater bay one of the boys from another fishing boat saw these two strange figures in the boat and swam over to play some mischief on his friends. He dove under the water and pulled the feet of one of the boys ferrying them across, toppling the boat into the murky depths within seconds.

When Eruch would describe this incident in Mandali Hall, he would emphasize how filthy and black these waters were. The moment the boat capsized, he lost sight of Baba and frantically flailed his arms everywhere in the waters trying to catch hold of Baba by feel as he could not see anything. Suddenly, he caught hold of Baba's arm and as they sank to the bottom, with a tight kick, Eruch pushed off with his feet and in a few moments Baba and Eruch shot up to the surface. With one hand holding on to Baba and the other holding Baba's satchel, all Eruch could do was kick with his feet and direct Baba to paddle with His hands. They finally reached the shore, exhausted but safe.

Baba told Eruch to run back to the guesthouse and get Him some fresh clothes. This posed a problem as it would leave Baba unattended for some time, but there was no choice. This was one of the few times in Baba's ministry when He was left alone.

Eruch ran back to the bungalow to get the fresh clothes, while Baba remained seated under a nearby tree. However, when he got to the bungalow he found it locked, as the women had not yet returned. With Baba waiting alone under a tree there was no time to lose, so he broke into the quarters through a bathroom window, retrieved some clean clothes for Baba and ran all the way back as fast as he could,



Eruch in attendance at Baba's side at the East-West Gathering, November 1962, Pune.

Eruch found Baba where he had left Him and quickly helped Him to wash with water from a nearby well and change into a clean sadra. Baba then contacted the mast in the town.

As Eruch would often explain when he told this story, a good mast contact for Baba was His real relaxation, and after such a contact Baba would be in an especially good mood, with even His stride reflecting His happiness. As they stood together, Eruch said to Baba, "I told you it was dangerous Baba. What would the world have thought if you had drowned? It would have been a terrible thing, Baba."

Baba then turned to Eruch and said, "Just as today you have given Me your hand and pulled Me out of these murky waters, a day will come when I will lend you My hand and pull you out of the muck of illusion." Eruch would then sigh and say, "I am waiting for that day."



There had been many recent signs that the time was drawing near, with Eruch's increasing breathlessness, difficulty in walking and profound weakness shaping his last hours and

days. But there were also many earlier hints that the last chapter was about to commence.

On a quiet Wednesday morning in October 2000, Eruch decided he would like to go to Meherabad unannounced so that he could take darshan. After having Baba's darshan, he turned to those of us accompanying him and said very seriously, "I think this is my last pilgrimage." And although Eruch came to Meherabad three more times - on Mehera's Birthday, for Amartithi on January 30th and for Baba's birthday, the quality of those visits was different, for he had to hurry in and out before the huge crowds pressed in upon him. That quiet Wednesday in October was, as Eruch foretold, his last personal pilgrimage.

Where to begin this account of his last days depends surely upon the teller of the tale, but for myself I shall always remember 8th November 2000 as the date from which Eruch took his final plunge to swim the last laps of the race.

As most of the Baba world knew, Eruch's health had been failing for a number of years. His battle with myasthenia gravis, a rare auto-immune neuro-muscular disease,

and the ensuing congestive heart failure, never deterred him from carrying out his duties. He was determined not to pamper his body but remain active in Baba's work till his last breath. Often Eruch would joke half seriously, when he was asked about his condition, that he was suffering from "my sins," his own name for the myasthenia.

That morning on the 8th of November, Eruch felt unusually low and extremely weak, yet in spite of this, he attended the Trust Office as usual. As he walked slowly towards Bhauji's office at the other end of the long verandah, I heard him say so fervently and in a tone he was not wont to use, "Baba I can't bear any more. Baba please take me now, please, Baba I just can't bear any more." And within myself, I felt that Baba heard his plea and responded, for from that day forward Eruch's health took a steep and rapid decline from which there was no return.

In the following months, Eruch continued on in spite of infection after infection, increasing problems with his circulation and blood pressure which would cause him to experience fainting episodes and increasing weakness, especially in

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his legs. His energy decreased until it became apparent that greeting the many pilgrims who would visit Meherabad on each pilgrim day was taking a serious toll on his reserves. Even the energy required to speak and engage with others was becoming more tenuous, difficult and tiring. So in his inimitable fashion Eruch began to switch gears, sharing his love in various ways that did not require his verbal exchange or physical touch. At tea time, Eruch began to personally give out biscuits to those who were with him - including Meherabad's pet dog Moti who loved Eruch and never failed to sit nearby during these little sessions.

The biscuits were anointed with the name "puppy biscuits" - as we all became eager puppies wanting to receive one of these love-packed cookies from Eruch's hand. But even that finally became too much of a chore for Eruch to attend to personally and he delegated the giving out to one of the men residents who were always by his side during the tea times at Meherabad.

During this period, Eruch would enjoy watching videos of the saints and Perfect Masters, particularly the life stories of Tukaram and Dyaneshwar and the Indian Epics, Mahabharat and the Ramayana. In his ever loving way, he would invite those close to him to watch these movies with him, and so we would sit together in silence, enjoying his proximity and the rare and only chance it gave him to relax and feel free from the cares of the day. In the TV room Eruch could be in his own thoughts, enjoy the stories of the great saints, and have a few moments where he could remain undisturbed.

Throughout the years, Eruch would occasionally tell the story of Tukaram to pilgrims in Mandali Hall. As a result of his fondness for the story of this Perfect Master from Maharashtra, Heather Nadel

and Alan Wagner chose this story for the annual play performed on Baba's Birthday. Although Eruch had been quite ill in the weeks before Baba's Birthday, he was intent on going to Meherabad on 25th February to see the play, based on the old 1937 film Tukaram which he loved watching at Meherabad.



When the new season opened, Eruch's health was so precarious that he only managed to sit in the hall on his usual Thursday a few times. Although the old days of telling stories nonstop had come to an end, he did share with the pilgrims on each of those Thursdays what he felt compelled to share. The Vengurla story related above was told by Eruch on his first day back in the hall, but the main thrust this season revolved around one particular incident in his life with Meher Baba.

It so happened that Baba one day asked the mandali, "Who do you take Me to be?" There were many answers the mandali offered in reply, Eruch said, from "You are the Avatar, the God-man, the Highest of the High" to "You are the Eternal Beloved and the Ancient One." But none of these answers were satisfactory to Baba. Finally, Baba himself gave the mandali the answer. "Who is Meher Baba? He is the One who provokes this question in you. The Being of all Beings."

On the last Sunday, Mandali Hall was packed with a large group of Indian and western pilgrims. Before the films began, Eruch spoke to the crowd. "Do you know what it means to hold on to Baba's daaman?" he asked. Eruch paused for a long moment. Then he continued, relating how he used to think when Baba gestured "Hold on to My Daaman" that it meant literally to hold on to His sadra, to

the hem of His garment. But years later he realized that it was not that - not the physical garment that Baba wanted His lovers to hold on to, but rather His Form - that Form which housed Reality. "And how do we do that?" Eruch emphasized, "We hold on to His Feet."

After the program was over, Eruch stood up to leave Mandali Hall for his room. As he approached Baba's Seat, he stopped before it, bowed his head momentarily, and then he turned back to the pilgrims still seated in the hall. "If anyone were to ask you, Who is Meher Baba? the answer is, He is the One who provokes this question in you. The Being of all Beings." And in a final gesture of emphasis he raised both hands as he repeated - "The Being of all Beings." Then with great effort and assistance, he left Mandali Hall to rest in his room. It was to be the last time Eruch spoke in Mandali Hall.

During the last week, Eruch was watching the Indian Epic The Ramayana - the story of Ram and Sita. He loved this series as it depicts quite beautifully the story of the Avatar's Advent as Ram, the Upholder of Righteousness.

On the 30th of August, Eruch as usual wanted to watch the video after tea. With two residents on either side of him, lovingly helping to support his steps, Eruch traversed the distance from the verandah to the TV room situated behind the Blue Bus. Although the distance is just a few feet, even this much walking had become increasingly difficult for him in the last week. This episode enacted Sita and Ram and Laxman's crossing of the Sharayu river and the beginning of their fourteen year exile from Ayodhya.

The episode opens with the boatman slyly telling Ram that he cannot allow Ram's feet to touch his boat for fear that His very touch might destroy the boat. This is a



Eruch in Mandali Hall, Meherabad, 1999. (Photos Morgan Bowling)

well-known reference to how the touch of Ram's foot freed a soul that had been incarcerated in a rock by a rishi's curse.

Ram smiles and the boatman tells him that only if he is allowed to wash Ram's feet, by cooling them first with the river water, can Ram be ferried across in his boat. Ram agrees and the boatman and his wife wash Ram's feet and then, overjoyed, drink the water. When they reach the other shore, Ram tries to give the boatman Sita's ring in payment. But the boatman refuses, telling Ram, "You think you can pay me merely with a ring? Just as today I have ferried you across these waters, let the day come when you, Ram, ferry me across the waters of illusion."

Every day our video sessions would end at 5:00 o'clock exactly. This would be the time when Dr. Goher would drive over in her "Duckie", a motorized little scooter-chair. Eruch's brother Meherwan, sister Manu and other close ones would all sit together on the men mandali's verandah and share news of the day or reminisce about the golden years of life with Baba. It also became their time to just be with Eruch.

When the hour was up, Meherwan would lovingly assist Eruch in walking the distance from his chair in front of the Blue Bus to Baba's Mandali Hall, where he would be with Baba on his own for some minutes before retiring to his room for dinner and his night rest.

But that day as we sat together watching the Ramayana, Eruch did not make a move to get up even when it was 5:00 pm. He would always want me to tell him the time and so as usual I leaned towards him and asked if he wanted me to stop the video as it was 5 pm. With a gesture of his hand he indicated that it should continue. He looked so entranced by the scene being portrayed on the screen that I can only now in retrospect wonder whether Eruch was himself silently reliving the event in his life that drew such a sharp parallel to what we were witnessing in the story.

It felt as though Eruch, on some unspoken level, knew that the hour was approaching when His Beloved Baba would finally give him His hand and lift him from the muck of illusion. But whatever he may have felt only he knows, and this is merely my own conjecture. Nevertheless, the air was filled with an indefinable

completion as the scene ended and Eruch announced "enough." I turned off the video and helped him out of his chair to begin the "long" walk back to the verandah.

With Stephen Edelman and Gary Kleiner lending him their arms for support, Eruch would walk slowly to his seat on the verandah. Gary and Stephen became Eruch's walking sticks and he enjoyed their company tremendously. As the days drew to a close, his own unique team of helpers remained close at hand, never wanting to miss a moment in his company. For Eruch's companionship remained as dynamic in his fragility, as commanding in his silence and as overwhelming in his humility as it had always been. He accepted whatever Baba gave him with an equanimity and graciousness that was more than just inspiring; it was a glimpse of 'Mastery in Servitude'. A glimpse, perhaps, of what made Eruch so dearly beloved of Baba that Baba once commented that if He could be said to enjoy the company of any man, He enjoyed the company of Eruch.



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Eruch continued to attend the Trust Office up until the end. That last week, he came to the Trust Office on Monday and Tuesday although he was too weak to attend on Wednesday. When Thursday rolled around, he surprised everyone by announcing he was going to the Trust Office. When reminded it was his day to be in Mandali Hall with the pilgrims, he quipped that morning, "Those days are over now." He insisted that he must go to the Office as he had important work to do and he must greet Bhauji who had just returned from his trip to France. "Be ready at 9:30 am sharp," he announced to those of us who accompanied him to the Office.

Eruch was so determined to go that day that there was nothing more to be said. Again, in retrospect, it marked the final tying up of loose ends; it was in his meticulous nature to see that nothing was left unattended, that Baba's work came first ...

That evening appeared to be like any other of the last few days. It was only later, when we all came together in Mandali Hall to remember Eruch, that Manu revealed that his goodnight hugs to the family came with a special message that last night. Manu said Eruch told them, "Be brave, be united, and remain harmonious with all your brothers and sisters."

It was around 12 midnight when the watchman knocked on Meherwan's door to inform him of Eruch's suddenly worsening condition. Then the watchman rushed to the women's side to inform Dr. Goher and Shelley Marrich that Eruch needed urgent medical help.

By 12:30 am he was having difficulty breathing. He was given oxygen but he felt extremely restless and would remove the oxygen tube over and over again. During this time, Dr. Goher Irami was by

Eruch's side as were Meherwan, Manu and a few others. At 1:30 am Goher's sister Katie came by his room and he turned his face and saw her standing in the doorway. With a strong, clear voice, he greeted Katie as he would do each evening when they saw each other. "Jai Baba, Katie!" Eruch said.

The Meherazad mandali by now had gathered within the Manonash cabin. The hands of the clock were moving towards the hour of his release and Eruch, still breathing with difficulty, was helped to sit up in his bed to facilitate his breathing.

As Eruch's breathing became more and more laboured, a barely audible "O Baba . . . O Baba" gently slipped out of his lips. He was now facing a framed photo of Baba that had hung for many years from a nail hammered into one of the original beams of the Manonash cabin. With his last breath, Eruch's head fell to his chest, in a final bow of salutation and surrender to his Eternal Beloved. The time was 2:31am and twenty seconds. He had finally crossed the finish line and all present shouted out in unison "Avatar Meher Baba ki Jai!"



Eruch with Tadaaki Jimura, Meherazad, Christmas 1995.

Many years ago Eruch shared with those of us gathered in Mandali Hall, a prayer that Baba had asked him to recite:

I am not the body
 I am not the mind
 I am not this and
 I am not that
 I am nothing but a living lie
 Of that Truth that is Me
 And unless the lie is dead
 The Truth cannot be.

For all those who aspire to the Truth, for all those who believe in the glory of Love, and for all those who long to efface themselves in total surrender to the Eternal Beloved, Eruch will ever be a shining example of a true slave. He took great pains to ensure that everyone who came in his contact never forgot who was the Beloved and who the slave. He stressed time and again that one's focus should be directed on Avatar Meher Baba and no one else.

Eruch's passing

Gusi Carpenter

I arrived in India on 22nd August having felt a compelling urge to go, although it wasn't particularly convenient and part of me would have preferred to stay in Australia. I saw Eruch on my first visit to Meherazad. He was sitting outside the Blue Bus and I got a brief stroking of the hand in greeting before he moved on to greeting the Hamirpur group that were there. Then I saw him from a distance in Mandali Hall on the Sunday that Davana talks about. He was chuckling and enjoying the man from Hamirpur who gave an enthusiastic singing performance.

I rarely sleep through the night in Meherabad - probably those late dinners - and when I got up at about 12.30 on the morning of the 31st August, there was no light except from the almost full moon. The power was off and the generator had been turned off from 10.30 or 11 at night and didn't go on again till 5 am. This was the day the team that had been working on moving the Kamli coat from its old and now cracked display case were ready to move it to a new improved case. The preparations had been elaborate and involved much work and discussion. I was waking early and usually went to clean the tomb at just after 6, but on that morning I was later and walked up the hill with Arsenio. We met Ward at the top of the hill by the parking area and he said, "Have you heard about Eruch? He died at 1.30 in the morning." (Yes, it was 2.30, but at that point 1.30 was close enough.) It was one of those moments when the world seems to stop and I felt great joy for Eruch that he had

been released at last. His suffering had been so apparent. The atmosphere at the tomb was quiet and intense, a small crowd only for arti. Some people were weeping, but very quietly. As I stood in line Arsenio told me of the time Mani was with a group of maybe 13 or 15 people in mandali hall. He said that she told the story of the Salvation Army ambulance that brought Baba to the samadhi and how, after that day, it "died". She had said that they too had died that day and were seemingly in motion to continue Baba's work and carry his love to his lovers. Arsenio remembered her being quite adamant about us not building shrines to them when they died. After arti an American man read the story about Eruch saving Baba from the mucky water and Baba telling him that one day he

would pull him out of the muck of illusion.

Irene and Roy's accounts talk about Eruch's body being brought in the Swanee to the tomb. Being there was a very personal experience. And it was very special. The Pilgrim Centre had been quite empty and the night of 31st only 13 people were booked in. Yvonne from Kentucky was leaving that morning and was able to delay her trip several hours so she could stay for the burial. It was her second trip to India. Another young man had come from Mumbai a few days before. He wasn't a Baba lover and was only giving a friend a lift, but Baba ensnared him so he had an amazing introduction. When Eruch was on the mandap there was a huge basket of red roses at his feet and people were taking them and covering him as they said their farewells in their own ways.

As I watched I was struck by how small he looked. His arms were folded over his chest, but then his body seemed to fade away almost to nothing. He had a scarf around his head, which was on a small pillow which Davana had made for him some time before. His face had been quite puffy from the medication, but all this had melted away, and he looked unbelievably sweet and happy and like the Eruch I like to remember. The presence around him was pretty intense, but a sweet sort of happy and quiet intensity. Apart from the colour of his skin, he looked so much like the photo of Baba and I swear he was smiling.

There was talking among the residents and pilgrims



*Eruch, Meherazad, Dec '80-Jan '81.
(Photo Bernard Bruford)*

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about the day before - how Eruch had insisted on his visit to the Trust office on Thursday that the calendar be changed to September otherwise who would do it, how the dog that had grown up in the Trust compound had howled from 1.30 to 2.30 am on 31st, how Ram Das, the servant at Meherazad had been told by Eruch on Thursday that he was "going" tomorrow.

After lunch, old Mandali Hall at lower Meherabad was still very quiet, then around 3 pm more and more people began to arrive. The queue was building to go and say one's farewells. The singing began and as I looked around the hall occasionally I would see someone's body shake with sobs, just for a moment, then stop again. There was a real mixture of joy for Eruch, yet sadness that an old and special friend was gone. Meherwan said later that it was a very stressful day for him.

There was quite a crush by the time all the big and strong men carried Eruch in his open coffin out the door. Many rushed forward wanting to have one last touch.

And as Roy said, we all had a chance to throw a rose and a handful of dirt into the grave. The whole process of filling in the grave and then smoothing off the mounded dirt was all over at 10 to 7, just in time for evening arti.

Before I left people were regularly quietly visiting Eruch's grave, some with garlands, others with a single flower, so while there is no ritual of garlanding him, he is constantly remembered and I heard more than one person say that now they felt his presence was at Meherabad as well as at Meherazad.

A mighty yet humble man who has given so many of us a taste of Baba.

When in Meherabad I wanted to give a small thank you to Eruch, and thought I would on the last day we were there. Unfortunately Eruch was ill. My father was Eric and his qualities I always felt were echoed to me through Eruch and I have felt since meeting him all those years ago in Meherazad that here was again an example of a parallel, or echo through our separate lives, that means we really are so much of each other.

POEM FOR ERUCH / ERIC

I came here 25 years ago,
And came now at almost 50.
I have brought with me my daughter Ruby,
Who at seven and a half,
Is just eight months past the death of her mother, Linda.
I don't expect that in 25 years time
That either you or I will be here then.
My hope is that Ruby might bring a child of her own to here,
And learn again that love is universal,
And exists beyond the death of those we love.
Thank you Eruch, for being a loving father to us all.

Alan Owen

THE PUNCH LINE

My little story of Eruch will take you as long to read as it took to happen. I saw Eruch only twice, and had just one 'conversation' with him, lasting less than one minute. Having had little prior connection with Australian Baba Lovers, I had no conception of the role or the reality of the mandali before we went to Meherabad first in 1997: a few names on paper, that's all.

Arriving at the Trust Office we were tired, anxious and disoriented. While standing about an old man passed us, guided by a younger woman. It was, of course Eruch with Davana, though I didn't know it. He stopped and I introduced myself, "Hello, I'm Eric." He replied, and I remember it as a booming voice, "I'm Eric too!", and he punched me hard in the chest or, as I now think of it, in the heart. There may have been a couple more comments. I don't remember. That's it.

Eric Kiernan

Jai Baba! When I went to India on 1 February to 10 March 2001, with my parents, Paul and Ann; my son, Daniel and my fiancé, Garry; we all had such a lovely time over there. Being there on Baba's Birthday was set out beautifully for Him. ... I feel we were very fortunate to meet Eruch once more. ... I remember the time in the Mandali Hall at Meherazad, Eruch had asked me to share my story of "How I came to Baba?" I was sitting near Eruch, and wasn't expecting him to ask me a question. There were quite a lot of Baba lovers in the Hall. I looked at my dad, Paul, and was hoping he could do the talking for me as I get quite nervous when I have to speak in front of a crowd, especially my story to everyone. Eruch told me, "Don't look at him" meaning to Paul. I then told a bit about my story.

After I'd heard the news from my parents that Eruch had passed away I felt a sudden sadness and loss of my very dearest Uncle and friend, who I think is now reunited with our Beloved Meher Baba. I will certainly miss Eruch ... Not long after Eruch passed away, I had this dream that I was calling out aloud to Baba and I said, "I... miss Eruch." Then Baba's face appeared in the dream, and then I woke up. I'm sure, everyone will miss Eruch's presence and his stories about Baba and the big tight hugs very, very much; just like me. I will always be grateful to have met Eruch and I treasure my memories and letters as always.

Chanthan Smith

Eruch - Baba's Peter

Submitted by Bill le Page from a conversation with Eruch's brother, Meherwan Jessawala

It was 1959 and Baba's stay in Guruprasad came to a close. As usual the preparations for the return to Meherazad were, to say the least, hectic and intense.

Meherwan, Gaimai, Manu, Roshan and others were very involved with the move from early morning. Everything, crockery, furniture, utensils, etc had to be accounted for, packed, put away or returned to the place where they had been hired. In the midst of all the activity was Eruch, responsible to see to every minute thing and every order of Baba's was properly handled. He was, in short, under great pressure. Baba was sitting in His chair in the big side room off the main reception hall and called Gaimai and others of the family to Him. He embraced Gaimai and gestured 'Don't worry'. At that she burst into tears and then continued weeping, kneeling with her head in Baba's lap. Baba lovingly caressed her gesturing 'What is it? What is on your mind?' In between

sobs she said, 'Baba, Eruch is behaving strangely, he is so brusque with you. I can't bear to see that. I feel he will become your Judas!' Baba looked askance. 'What are you saying?!' and He called Eruch. But Eruch was impatient at being called and then exasperated and even more impatient as his mother continued to weep and wail about him to Baba. Eruch flared up; 'Baba, this is not the time for such things! There is so much to do! I don't know what has come over Mama.' But Baba stopped him, saying 'No, stay here, light a match to those other things, this is more important than all that.' So then Eruch grumpily stayed in obedience to Baba's orders and Baba gestured to Gaimai to repeat her wail 'Baba, Eruch behaves very rudely with you these days and I cannot bear it!' She was, said Meherwan, very flustered and depressed. He thought that she was probably affected by Papa's passing and now by Baba's departure from Pune. All this, and

Eruch's intense preoccupation with Baba's wishes and needs, was too much for her and triggered her outburst. 'Baba I fear that Eruch will become your Judas and what will happen!' 'No, no' said Baba, 'He is My Peter, My right hand! Have no doubt or worry about that. You are most fortunate to have such a son'. In the midst of the hurry and scurry going on around him, this little, yet powerful, drama was being enacted. Gaimai was thus consoled by Baba, and as she calmed down He said 'You must not feel in that way. Be brave. I am always with you, and now I have in mind to call you to Meherazad very soon'. That quietened her down even more and Eruch was thankfully able to return to his chores. He knew that if anything was not done, or not done properly, there would be trouble for him later. Added to these responsibilities was the constant flow of correspondence and telegrams always awaiting his attention.

ERUCH

He seems so frail
this lion of God
but when he speaks
... all the angels nod.

He is Your slave
and You are his,
his love for You
turns pink to blue.

How much more time
he has with us...
is in Your hands, it's true:
it's obvious... he's You.

Thank you Dear Baba
for Your Eruch dear,
for the stories... true, true blue:
we love you! O, we love You!

Feb. 20th 2001
Paul Smith

SAM KERAWALA'S TRIBUTE TO ERUCH

It is a common practice to offer a tribute to the dead. But in the case of our dear brother Eruch any such tribute so offered would fall far, far, short of the reality that he was.

The only tribute that we can offer to him are the words of Kabir -
"When you first came into this world you cried whilst all around you
laughed with joy.

You lived such an exemplary life that at this moment it is we who cried
whilst you are laughing for joy."

Eruch no longer has any relatives, now he belongs to the ages and from now onwards his name shall be recorded with those of:

Rayomard of Zoroaster

Laxman of Rama

Arjuna of Krishna

Anand of Lord Buddha

Peter of Jesus

Abu Bakkar of Mohammed

And now,

Eruch Jessawala of Meher Baba.

The bird in the mosque

a story from the last day of the New Life journey

Wendy Borthwick

During the seventies, many of us had the good fortune to visit the Ellora Caves and various other places along the way with a strong and vigorous Eruch Jessawala as our guide and companion. The day was always strenuous ... start at 6am sharp, all pile into the bus, then off to visit [among others] the Fort at Daulatabad, the Valley of the Saints, the mosque of Zar Zari Zar Baksh, Sai Baba's cave, the mini Taj Mahal, the vast complex of the Ellora Cave temples and then home arriving after dark. The first stop of the day, just a short while past Meherazad, was the tiny semi-ruin of a mosque in fields at Imampur. All day Eruch urged us on, rounding up stragglers, keen for us to see all these places connected with Baba. We had to rush to keep up with him as he strode ahead with his sturdy walking stick, then cluster eagerly about as he told the story of the place we were visiting. Eruch was ever attentive to his ragtag little band of Westerners, most of us young and ignorant in the ways of the East. Proper headgear to ward off the fierce [even in winter] midday sun was always an issue and usually there would be a few people making do with handkerchiefs knotted on their heads, toilet stops en route were off to the side of the road, the ladies' side involving a blanket held up for privacy. At the mosque of Zar Zari Zar Baksh, Eruch had to tell us that the caretaker would not allow women with their period to enter, so there would always be a little group of females sitting out the front, waiting. I remember being admonished by Eruch as to my foolishness in drinking a soft drink to quench my thirst...

"it will only increase your thirst".

How lucky we were and we knew it, even then.

A couple of years ago, I returned with a small group to the Imampur mosque. It was closed up and there were signs that it is being restored. Years ago with Eruch we could walk right in to the little stone building, abandoned by all but local farmers who stored hay there. Eruch would be in a serious, almost sombre frame of mind as we surrounded him in the chill early hours of a January morning; some people recall that at times he wept while recounting this incident. This is the story Eruch told us [taken from "Darshan Hours"]:

"There's a place about eight miles away called Imampur where Baba halted the night before reaching Meherazad. We were all tired as we had walked a distance of about fifteen miles that day, and, in

addition, on the way Baba had continued to do His work, meeting people, the masts, the mad, the poor and so on. There had been a lot of detours, and only when it was dark, at about eight thirty, had we reached Imampur.

Baba pointed out to us what looked like a home, and we recalled that it was an old mosque used as a rest house. He said we would stay there for the night ...

When we entered it was unused and unkempt, with a lot of dirty trappings. I had to clean it out so Baba could rest there for the night. As usual I had to attend to Baba's meal, after which He assigned us turns to keep watch and told the mandali to sleep outside as was customary. I shut the door from the outside, and kept watch near the door.

After some time, perhaps half an hour or so, Baba clapped, and I entered the room and asked what was the matter. All this was going on at first in the dark as we had no lamps or flashlights. Then I found some matches which I had to use to observe Baba's reply ... "What's the snoring going on? Are the mandali sleeping near by?" I told Him yes, although they were not too close. But Baba told me to wake them up and tell them to go further away. So I had to wake the tired mandali. There were three besides myself: Baidul, Gustadji and Pendu. I told them to move away from Baba's room, so they moved and I continued to keep watch.

After some time Baba called me again, and as I lighted matches to see his gestures He complained that there was a worse noise inside the room. I



Eruch (far right) and straggling pilgrims, at the New Life mosque, Feb 1973. (Photo Judith Garbett)

wondered, because there was nobody there, how there could be any disturbance? Baba told me to wait inside and find the cause of it. All of a sudden I heard the flapping of the wings of birds, so I told Baba, "There are some birds over there." I tried to find out where they were. "There is a bird nesting", I said.

Then again I had to bend down to see Baba's gestures, because Baba was lying on a rug placed directly on the floor, not the usual carpet that is in vogue now, but a very coarse rug that the shepherds use. We carried one for Baba and one for each of us. I had spread my rug for Baba to lie on, and Baba's was used to cover His body because it was a wintry month - December. After I had told Baba about the bird nesting in the room, I waited for His orders. He gestured that I should throw the bird out, so I went to the nest, trying in the darkness to touch the bird and to get it out.

Suddenly Baba clapped, insistently. There were different types of clapping by which Baba denoted different sorts of messages. There was a leisurely clapping, there was a clapping for applause, and there was another clapping that meant immediate attention to leave everything and come at once.

When I heard that signal, I had to leave the bird and come to Him instantly. Again, with the help of a matchstick, I started deciphering His gestures. He said, "Leave the bird as it is. We committed a great mistake." Then Baba started telling me through gestures that it was not proper for Him to have given this order, and He reminded me about the standing instructions that He had given during His New Life. One of these instructions was that those of us who were on duty had to remind Him if He gave any orders which conflicted with the very basis of the New Life, such as not expressing cruelty, anger and so forth.

Now it was my turn on duty, and I was one of the persons who had



Francis Brabazon and Eruch, Meherazad verandah, January 1973. (Photo Gusi Carpenter)

been told to recall these rules to Him, but I hadn't done so. I had paid more attention to carrying out His orders and had forgotten my responsibility to remind Him. It was a great mistake on my part.

All this had happened in the dead of the night, and now Baba was gesturing to try to bring home to me that this was a very serious mistake that we had committed in the New Life. I simply said, yes, that I agreed, and Baba said with His gestures that the next morning I should remind Him of the incident.

Early in the morning we were to reach Meherazad ... Baba told me to collect the other mandali ... and Baba told me to narrate the whole story of the previous night. After I had done this, Baba then gestured that it was a very serious mistake on Eruch's part. Eruch was supposed to remind Baba of the important rule that Baba shouldn't give any order which would result in cruelty to anyone or anything, and this had been sheer cruelty. The bird was nesting in the night and had little birds there. It had made some

noise. After all, what is wrong with this? Why should Baba behave so cruelly towards these little creatures? Eruch should have reminded Him about the rule, but Eruch forgot and Baba would have had him throw the bird out and it would have been the worst thing that had happened in the New Life.

"Luckily," Baba said, "I reminded Eruch in time about it, because Eruch had completely forgotten." With all that, of course, I said it was my mistake. Baba said, "Now the only thing to do is that you - the four of you - must remove your sandals and slap Me on the body with them. It's My order to you." So we had to carry out that order." [end of Darshan Hours quote].

There are several accounts of this story to be found and undoubtedly Eruch's emphasis changed at times over the years as he repeated the events at Imampur. In my memory and from notes taken at that time, Baba said that, had Eruch thrown the bird out, the purpose of the New

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Life would have been wasted. Eruch also emphasized that it was a real beating that he, Pendu, Baidul and Gustadji were ordered to give Baba. Following the beating, Baba expressed His satisfaction with their obedience and then ordered them to spit upon Him. It is quite impossible to describe the atmosphere as Eruch described this incident but his pain in the telling was apparent.

A play we put on in Australia sometime in the seventies about the bird in the mosque, ended with Pendu saying: "That was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do in my life. Why do you think Baba made us carry out such acts on His person?"

Eruch answers, "I think Pendu, that is His way of giving an example. I think this whole episode of the nesting bird was just an excuse, Baba's way of telling humanity as a whole to be humble, not to be angry, not to be cruel".

I don't specifically remember Eruch giving us this interpretation of the event but with Eruch at that time very much alive and with Francis Brabazon overlooking the content, I can't imagine we made it up, it must have come from Eruch himself at some point.



*Eruch, Meherazad, Dec '80-Jan '81.
(Photo Bernard Bruford)*

FOR ERUCH

Words run everywhere, but when they came to you they settled. They rested easy in you for you were their meaning and they willingly became your servants. They energetically flung themselves from your hands held out in pleading gestures and their force burrowed deep into our hearts. I have carbonised in my flesh the simple words: "Be determined to be His, make Him your constant companion, be simple, be natural, be childlike". Whenever I hear these words they speak with your voice, your silent admonishment, and your certainty.

You were the quintessential gentle giant; a bear of a man. You even walked like a bear, arms held down, hands swinging low – ready to serve, ready to pick up anything your Lord may have dropped behind Him; bear physique built to carry any burden, to take the strain during those brief moments while your Beloved rested somewhere on some road in the middle of nowhere. And you even hugged like a bear: to come to Meherazad and receive your embrace was to be enveloped in your strength and to inwardly melt and be invigorated at the same time.

How can anyone take your place now you have gone? Around you we were like crumbling stones, bits of rubble, while you were a steadfast rock. Who can sit in your seat by the window and face Baba's changing moods, head-on, as you did; have the God-Man look straight at and through them? Who can bear the searing glance of that torch and live to tell the tale? God may have made Adam in the beginning, but this present God-Man shaped you, Eruch, and put a sign over your head for all of us to see: "Here is My man who will be a measure for My lovers for ages to come".

Once in Mandali Hall, I heard you express anger when someone asked if you were comfortable. You had just finished relating a story of Baba's compassion, one of the many that filled your enormous memory. It was a moment of heightened attention, of drinking in His Presence, and then the innocent question came, "Are you comfortable Eruch?" You didn't even turn to the person, but cried out to us all – "Who am I, that I should be comforted in the Presence of the Lord; this is the thing – we should remember Him more and more and ourselves less and less – do you know what I mean, do you understand!"

Like thousands of my generation, it was not my fate to meet Baba this lifetime but I heard His voice speaking through you, the same voice in which Baba spoke to His lovers while He was in His Body. I never had Baba's embrace, but I felt its shadow touch me in your loving gestures towards me and my family. I never saw Baba's effulgence but I saw, shining from your face, a trace of the infinite light of His Being and I felt called and nourished.

Ross Keating

Following are extracts from
Ward Parks' contribution to Tavern
Talk on 8th September, 2001

Last Thursday, September 6, ... the Meherabad pilgrims and Meherazad mandali met together in Mandali Hall (Meherazad) for a morning session of commemorating that disciple whom Baba called His Peter. While a number of episodes and stories were recollected, the one that I would like to record here ... was narrated by Eruch's younger brother, Meherwan. The story dates back to the mid-40s, during a period when Eruch was staying with his family in Bindra House in Pune and would frequently be called by Baba to be with Him at Meherazad.

As Meherwan continued: On one of these visits, a wealthy man came to have Baba's darshan. Before leaving, while bowing down to Baba, the man placed a packet at Baba's feet. "What is it?" Baba asked. "A small token of love offering," the man replied. "There is no need for it," Baba gestured, and asked him to take it away. But the man insisted that Baba keep it, and departed. Baba then told Eruch to take the packet, keep the money, and give it to a deserving person. "But how will I find such a person?" Eruch asked. "Don't worry," Baba assured him, "you will know." Baba then washed Eruch's feet with His own hands and bowed down to him. "Before you give the packet," Baba instructed him, "wash the feet of the one you give it to and bow down to that person, just as I have done to you." Over the years I often noticed that, whenever Baba gave Eruch an assignment, Eruch would always be most anxious to execute that work, lest he might die with the work unfinished! Now in this case, the packet of money and the charge Baba had given to him weighed heavily on him. So when he returned to Pune, he would pay visits to pan and betel leaf shops, sugar cane juice stalls, and other wayside centres of gossip and small



Eruch in front of the Blue Bus, Meherazad. (Photographer and date unknown)

talk, trying to catch word of some needy person matching Baba's description.

One day, while passing by a vendor of sugar cane juice, Eruch happened to hear a customer say, "I really pity that honest and truthful man: formerly he was in such happy circumstances, until he was accused by his corrupt seniors under some fabricated charge. He has been completely ruined and now lives in penury. What a plight the poor fellow is in!"

Eruch approached the speaker and asked, "Who are you talking about?" "What is that to you?" the

man fired back, looking at him suspiciously. "My elder brother likes to give help to people who are in dire straits," Eruch replied. "I think he would be interested in the man you are speaking of."

Eruch got all the information and immediately set off by S.T. bus for the village of Bhor, some 40 miles to the south-west of Pune on the Pune-Satara highway. The road to Bhor branched off the main road and led across a large dam, the famous Bhatgur Dam, at that time the largest masonry dam in the world. Reaching the village beyond, Eruch

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Eruch and Francis, Guruprasad, May 1969. (Photo Judith Garbett)

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inquired, and was duly led to a small ramshackle hovel on a run-down, filthy by-lane. "This is the place," he was told.

He knocked on the door. A woman opened it. She was very beautiful, but wore a haggard look on her face, and was dressed in rags. "Where is the man of the house?" Eruch asked her. "He has gone out," she answered, looking very alarmed. "Why do you want him? My husband has done no wrong!" For Eruch in his khaki clothes seemed like some official who had come to harass her or her husband in some way. What else would induce a stranger to visit such a remote outpost?

Eruch tried to pacify her and said that he had come to offer some help to her husband. At that she said, "No, no, please go away, as we will never be able to repay any loan." Eruch reassured her on this point and was able to win her confidence. Then she explained to him that her husband was out at work. In fact, he was a toll-gate attendant on the very road over the dam that Eruch had crossed on the way to the village. "He will be coming back home this evening," she said. "Very well," Eruch answered, "I'll return tomorrow, bringing help, as I've assured you. Will your husband be here then? Ask him not to go before I come and see him."

She promised him that he would be there, and Eruch departed for Pune. At Bindra House that night, he asked me, "Would you like to come with me on a picnic tomorrow at the site of the world's largest dam?" Still just a boy at the time, this idea was appealing to me, and this is where I came into and became a witness to the rest of the story.

That next morning, packed lunch in hand, the two of us caught an early bus to Bhor. When we reached the hut, we found the man waiting for us. "What can I do for you?" he asked. "My elder brother sent me," Eruch told him. "He wishes to give you some help in your predicament."

"I can't accept a loan," the man said. "I wouldn't be able to pay it back."

"There is no question of repayment. This is a gift of love from my elder brother. Please accept it, and he will be obliged to you. "But there is a condition," Eruch went on. "I have to wash your feet and bow down to you. Please allow me to do this, so that I may give you this gift."

Very reluctantly the man agreed. Eruch washed his feet, bowed down before him, and gave him the packet which contained quite a substantial sum. The man was rendered stunned and speechless by this whole turn of events. Immediately

Eruch turned to me and said, "The work is done. Let's go now." But before we had gone more than a few steps back down the road, the man came running after us. "Who are you?" he said. "Who has given me this gift?"

"It is from my elder brother," Eruch answered. "It is an expression of love for you and your family. Don't ask any more about it." "But did you know," the man went on, "that if you had sought for me tomorrow you would not have found me here? And do you know why not? Do you know what I was planning to do?"

"What is that?" "This very day I was planning to kill myself, to commit suicide by jumping over the dam wall. I had reached such desperate straits, such a dead end in my life, that there seemed to be no other way out for me. It is thanks to you that I am living on past this day."

"Don't give your thanks to me," Eruch said. "Give your thanks to God. Great is His mercy and compassion. All praise to Him!"

With this, Eruch and I left quickly and hurried back along the road to the dam. There, as Eruch had promised, I got to enjoy a pleasant picnic and outing; and that evening we caught the bus back to Pune.

As Meherwan so beautifully said at the beginning of his story, "what would most please Eruch would be if, when we commemorate him, what we remember is the painstaking years of effort that Baba spent in training Eruch, so as to bring him up to the standard of what we see today. In my 70 years association with Eruch, there was hardly a chance to be close to Eruch, since he was all the while so close to Baba. So attuned was Eruch to Baba's ways that he actually lived his life as if living out Baba's wishes and commands. Eruch was so focused on Baba that his life was truly and totally His."



*Eruch with pilgrims on top of Seclusion Hill, Dec '73-Jan '74.
(Photos Liz Gaskin)*

ERUCH

In India an old fellow dies at night.
The world noise is unabated
Metal babbles, tongues clang
But in distant Australia hundreds of God's lovers
Feel their hearts miss a beat
And know the reality of silence.

This man so human
It is impossible not to weep at his passing.
He bore big burden
He climbed
 the tortuous rockface of obedience
O so high
But always one of us
 (except in his humility)
Was ever any man so stout and true?
Bearing great burden lightsome
For love bending low, and yes,
We clung.

Eruch,
Old honoured donkey pulling, pulling, head down, soft eyed -
What was it like playing Jeeves to God?
So tired as we think God too must be,
For us he left you lingering so long
Giving treasure from empty hands
Like your Master, pouring out the last drops.
Now your state is beyond utterance or imaging.

We wait outside the gate
Time and space fracture us
But in the shards
We glimpse both rainbow and face,
Remembering your embrace of love.

Geoff Gunther

The following story was published in
"Is That So?" by Bill Le Page

INTIMACY

Eruch: "I can recall two especially intimate moments with Meher Baba. The one occurred one day at lunchtime. All the other mandali had gone to have their meal. It has been my habit since long to not have lunch, and this proved most useful in giving me more time for my work for Baba. On this particular occasion, Baba was sitting in the hall and I was standing in my usual place, facing him. Baba gestured for me to get a chair. So I did and Baba gestured for me to put it near his chair.

I thought that Baba must be tired of sitting in his chair. This was after the accident and Baba's hip gave him a lot of pain. I thought that Baba wanted to switch chairs for a while. But when I went to help Baba he gestured, "No, you sit." So I sat there, near Baba's chair, looking at Baba. Not a word was said. I just sat gazing at Baba and he looked at me."

MY LAST MEMORY OF ERUCH

Lorraine Brown

When? 2nd week of this year 2001, last day at Meherazad before returning home
 Where? Mandali Hall, Meherazad
 Who with? Just Eruch by himself
 What doing? Waiting for the others to come into the Hall

For some reason I'd brought my song book into the Hall with me, though I knew there'd be no opportunity to sing. Eruch gestured to me to give him the song book. He held it, looked through it and came to the song, Tug-O-War, which is in large print. He peered at it for a while and then said, "Who wrote this?" I replied that I had. And he chuckled. Then he closed the song book and held it close for a minute or so. Then gave it back to me. Now, whenever I see, or use that song book I have the beautiful gift of that memory and Eruch's company in my singing.

Tug-O-War

You're playing tug-o-war with my heart
 And yet I know you'll win
 right from the start
 Why do I pull away
 I know I haven't got a chance
 I could give in today
 But I don't want to end the dance - our romance.
 chorus: You're playing tug-o-war with my heart (x 4)
 And while I pull with all of my might
 I know I'm not going to let you out of my sight
 You're on the other end of this rope
 We're tied together Friend,
 There's very little scope - for escape.
 Because this game is one I can't lose.
 Against the All-Powerful why should I choose to
 pull away -
 It's mischief on my part
 With You I like to play
 Because I've known right from the start -
 You've won my heart.

This song also reminds me of Eruch's story about the Beloved playing tug of war - but it's not a rope, but a very fine hair that the game is played with.

Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai! Eruch had the knack of knowing exactly what one needed to know. He would time and again tell a story that revealed what I needed to know in language that could make something really complex finally understandable. How fortunate I feel to have known Eruch ... one of the great souls of our time. I will always cherish the memory of his mighty Baba hugs... when you've been hugged by Eruch ... you've REALLY been hugged!

Ann Smith

OBITUARIES

THE WEDNESDAY
 THE AUSTRALIAN



Eruch Jessawalla

The above Obituary on Eruch Jessawalla was in the London newspaper The Independent on 12th September 2001. The paper also carried headlines and stories of the New York tragedy. It was sent by Jane Seegar who is in England at the moment. - Roy Hayes

The words which come to my mind when I think of dear Eruch are: strength, gentleness and humility, but above all, a living example of absolute devotion to Beloved Baba. Apart from wonderfully fond memories of sitting in Mandali Hall, listening to Eruch speak of his life with Baba and relate the most wonderful stories I have ever heard or read, I have one personal memory of Eruch which I shall always treasure.

In December, 1976, I was standing on the verandah of the Trust Office in Ahmednagar, having just arrived on my second pilgrimage, and having only been "with Baba" for two and a half years. Eruch greeted me with his usual quiet warmth, and I enquired about his health. He had not been very well some time before. He replied that it was very much improved, and said how wonderful it was of me to remember that he had not been well and thanked me for asking. He made me feel so very special. Maybe it is egotistical of me to treasure this memory so preciously, but I shall never forget the warmth and humility of his reaction.

In Beloved Avatar Meher Baba,
 Marilyn Hopkins

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