



Gurudev wore many hats. An office worker who had to earn his keep. A Mahaguru who had obligations to help and mentor. A practising spiritualist who had to indulge in astral travel, mantra vidya, *kriyas*, healing. And a family man who had to support, nurture and indulge in the upbringing of his dependants.

The Family Man

Gurudev became a firm believer in the *Grihastha ashram* which means living as a householder while on the spiritual path.

After marriage, but before his advent as a Mahaguru, he left his wife at her parent's home in order to practise intense meditation and other spiritual practises.

While on one of his advanced meditations at Santoksar, a lake in Amritsar, he heard a voice from the atmosphere tell him that his spiritual pursuits or sadhna would find completion only when he returned to his wife and practised family life. The *akashvani* he heard could have been the manipulation of Buddhe Baba, his future mentor and guide.

His evolved self existed in the future, but at this stage, he was unable to foresee the events or status of his being that the future had already predetermined. So, he went back to his wife and established their home, first in Delhi and then later at Shivpuri in Gurgaon.

By having five children, he gave five spirits an opportunity to take birth and fulfil their purpose. Simultaneously, he repaid his debt to his grandfather, father, and aunts, who had obliged his physical self in his childhood, by giving them birth as his children.

By investing in their nurturing and upbringing, his obligations towards them were nullified.

As a husband, he was a lot of fun but also the cause of great disturbance to his wife. Ill-mannered people like us would not leave his side till 1.30 or 2 am and Mataji would have to sleep in our midst.

Sometimes, he would awaken her and ask her to make tea for his disciples. At such times, I would consider him to be mahaguru to us but *maha* troublesome to her!

I suppose he believed that by amusing her, he would compensate her for the loss of sleep. But Mataji was very sporting, and though she did complain once in a while, she would oblige him and us!

I believe he was very fortunate to have a wife like her. Hard-working, innocent and someone who even laughed at his jokes.

I travelled to Ludhiana to meet Mataji's brother, and Gurudev's brother-in-law, Rudra Saab. The conversation that follows is nothing short of cute.

Q: So, when you met him for the first time, what was your first reaction? It must have been physical?

Rudra ji: As far as the physical is concerned, he was not bad to look at. You can tell that in one look. The intention of having a conversation is to see and understand how the person thinks, talks, and to form a basic understanding of his concepts of life, his character, feelings, thinking. Thereafter, I wrote a long letter. In those days there were no telephones. The only mode of communication was by post. So, I wrote a letter mentioning that the boy seemed very nice, was good to talk to, and my impressions of him.

Q: What were your impressions of him?

Rudra ji: My impressions were that the boy was a suitable match.

Q: When you went to meet the boy (Gurudev), did he know the purpose of your visit?

Rudra ji: Yes. I told him why I was there.

Q: So, had Gurudev met Mataji before marriage or did they meet at the time of the wedding?

Rudra ji: At the time of the wedding. He had not seen her before.

Q: You mean he married her without even seeing her?

Rudra ji: Yes. In those days, if a boy said that he wanted to meet the girl before the wedding then it wasn't considered as pious or good etiquette. Nobody liked it

Q: Your sister, what was her nature? Was she simple or clever?

Rudra ji: No, she was not clever. She was simple.

Q: Any naughtiness?

Rudra ji: No, she wasn't naughty, she was simple. She wasn't good at studies either. She was a mediocre student.

Q: How big is your family?

Rudra ji: We were four sisters and four brothers.

Cute and candid is how you could describe him.

We switch from brother to sister for her opinion on the man she married. Rather on the evolved being she wed.

The husband, who looked so sweet, was a man who gave her many shocks. The first was when, some weeks after their wedding, he went into deep meditation while lying on the bed. She panicked because he wasn't visibly breathing. "Something drastic must have happened to him," she thought, and rushed to her sister-in-law who said that he was in a state of *dhyaan*, so there was no cause for concern.

Q. So did you know when you were getting married that you were marrying a spiritual man?

Mata ji: I didn't know anything. A month or so into the marriage, he laid down in *dhyaan* (meditation). I didn't know anything about *dhyaan*. I went to call him for some work. He didn't reply. I felt as if he wasn't breathing. I shook his feet. I shook his body. But he didn't move. I became worried and wondered what had happened. I rushed to my sister-in-law, and asked her to come see what had happened to him. She told me this was nothing new. She told me not to worry as this was how he meditated. So, I never thought too much about it.

Later, I discovered that he meditated a lot, especially near water bodies or *bodiyas* which are concrete areas on the side of water bodies where bathing houses are constructed. He used to practise a lot of austerities sitting under trees. He would do this through the day and then return home. The nights would also be spent in *bhakti*. He performed a lot of austerities before the wedding, did a lot of *bhakti*. He never ate food made by anyone. He used to cook his own food, take a little bit of *sabzi* (vegetable dish) and a little bit of jaggery and eat *roti* (Indian bread) with it. He would even make *rotis* with his own hands and eat only that.

Q: Even at his own place?

Mata ji: Yes, even at his own place. He didn't wear clothes sometimes and used to roam in a loincloth. He used to live in the same loincloth and perform austerities before the wedding. He also spoke to many saints and holy men and shared his thoughts and ideas with them. That is how he increased his knowledge.

The young lady from Bilga, her native village in Punjab, married a man but lived with a being. Contrary to what we would have expected, her spiritual pursuits were on a do-it-yourself basis. He never motivated her into the subject of spiritualism. But then, destiny had to.

Let's continue.

Q. Did Gururji ever instruct you on how to practise *bhakti*?

Mata ji: No, he never instructed me on anything. My *bhakti* is of my making. *(laughs)*

Someone in the background asks—Did he instruct you to do any *paath*?

Mata ji: No, I did the *paath* on my own. He never gave me any instructions. I kept doing all these *paaths* and *mantras*, and eventually started reciting the *Gayatri mantra*. I told him that I felt very good chanting the *Gayatri mantra*. He replied, "How can you not feel good when I am a practitioner of the mantra? It's natural for you to feel good while chanting it." Still, even then, he didn't give me any other instructions. So, I continued doing the *gayatri* mantra. Then, after a long time, he said, "Come, I will give you the *Mahagayatri* mantra." After that, I started doing the *Mahagayatri*. In fact, he used to tell me that I didn't have to do anything *(laughs)*. He used to say, "You get half of everything I do. If you continue doing the *paath*, you would become more powerful than me." He said, "Where is the need for you to do it, when I'm doing it?"

He pulled her leg after finally giving her the *Mahagayatri* mantra and said, "You will get half the benefit of everything I do, and the full benefit of everything you do. So, then you will have 150% of the benefit that I do. So where is the need for you to chant that mantra?"

Was this competition at home you think? Ha ha, I don't think so! He just liked to make people feel on top of the world. Mataji continues.

Q. Did you notice anything spiritual in him after his disciples started coming into the fold? What changes did you notice in him? After all, he was your husband, and it must

not have been easy to see something spiritual in a husband much like a queen cannot see any royalty in her husband who is a king.

Mataji: Son, he used to tell me, “Master, wait and see what I become when I turn 35.”

Q: Tell us.

Mataji: I used to think he would get an increment at work; he would get a promotion (*laughs*). At that time, I couldn't even imagine that he would become a Guru.

Q. Ji.

A Mahatma who had visited Gurudev's home in Haryana when he was just 5 or 6 years old had predicted that little Gurudev would one day become very well-known and the world would know him as someone like *Shiv*. Naturally, Mataji had no clue about this prophecy.

I'm not sure if it was his nature or his spiritual strategy to not disclose too much about his powers and capabilities. He remained a master of underplay!

To get to know him better, you had to have a keen eye and investigative skills like Sherlock. Baroness Orczy probably wrote the bestseller 'The Scarlet Pimpernel' inspired by the future him.

His family could hardly figure him out till years after his passing, and even then, maybe only partially. He showcased his reality only to those he chose to. He discarded the idea of being a public figure and shunned publicity.

I suppose it was his mission to touch the lives of those he was meant to inspire, so he kept others from becoming aware of his true nature.

Mataji has more to add.

Q. You said that he used to meditate for a long time. Did he share any experiences that he had with you? Be it something that happened to him or something that he saw?

Mataji: No, he never told me about anything. Maybe, sometimes, if he was in the mood, he would tell me, but otherwise he never told me about his daily experiences.

Q. So whenever he was in the mood, did he tell you about his visions of deities?

Mataji: No, never.

Q. So, he didn't tell you anything? Didn't you ask him what benefit he derived from all the *paath* he did daily? Didn't you ever wonder why he was doing all this?

Mataji: No, I always told him that taking God's name and praying was a good thing.

Q. But all day and all night long?

Mataji: He never prayed all day and all night long. He used to do other work, he used to play pranks, he used to go to office. He used to do everything else as well.

(Some speaking in the background—He was like an ordinary man.)

Mataji: He used to do things like an ordinary man.

Q. As a husband, did he ever take you out?

Mataji: He did.

Q. Where?

Mataji: To a lot of places *(laughs)*. We've gone to a lot of places. We've gone to watch movies as well. We've visited many other places too. Our ride was a scooter *(laughs)*. Sometimes, we travelled by car. We've gone to watch movies during the day and also at night. We used to live like ordinary people.

Q. So as a husband, was he serious or did he make you laugh? What was his nature like?

Mataji: He was good natured. He used to make me laugh. He used to stay happy. And sometimes, he used to complain on purpose. He would say, "There should be some spice in life. *(laughs)*" We would fight as well.

We spoke to Gurudev's youngest daughter, Alka, affectionately called *Chutki*.

Q. You've mentioned that whenever Gurudev spent time with you, he would joke or enquire about your time at school. According to his disciples, he had a great sense of humour. Was he good humoured with you kids as well?

Alka ji: Yes, he was. In fact, he used joke with my paternal aunts too. When my mother and father returned from their trip abroad, he spoke about the trip for an hour or two. He spoke about the experience, the people he met and their culture, and made us laugh. So, my mother had to intervene with the words, "Enough now. What are you doing? You need to stop making us laugh." But he really made us laugh.

People often become nervous when they come under scrutiny of the income tax department or the I.R.S or an equivalent agency. Here was a being who was under constant scrutiny of the powers of the universe. He couldn't fall short.

His daughter, Renu, remembers.

Renu ji: We belonged to a normal family where both parents were working their respective jobs. We attended ordinary schools. My father's job involved going on tours and my mother would handle everything on her own. The place we shifted to was like a forest. It was called Shivpuri. It was a deserted area. We had shifted there from Delhi. Guruji would often be at home only in the winter time and that too for a short while. So, we spent very little time with him. Our interactions were mainly with our mother. Even the time he was around, was spent working or travelling. As we grew up, the image that we formed of our father was similar to other kids- basically, if you don't listen to or obey your mother, she will complain to your father. So, we would be frightened of him because of his disciplinary behaviour. When we were mature enough to understand things, we realized that our father was a simple man. He didn't have any fixed beliefs or notions about anything. I later realised that my father was far more open minded than my mother.

Q: Meaning?

Renu ji: He didn't believe that something must be done only in a particular manner. He was not rigid like I had incorrectly assumed as a child. However, it took me some time to understand this. When I was in college, I would wonder how to talk to him or open up about things with him. So, I once told him, "We can't share anything with you." Also, he didn't have time in those days. I would rarely get to meet him. Sometimes, we would not meet for 10-15 days at a stretch as there were crowds of people he had to attend to.

Q: You mean you used to stay in the same house but would not meet him for 10-15 days?

Renu ji: Yes, it would be 10-15 days and sometimes, even a month. I used to think that our life was not normal. I always believed that our life was quite different compared to other kids who would get to speak to their fathers every day. However, in our case, we'd never know when he left for work as he would leave home early to avoid the morning rush while we woke up later. When I finally spoke to him about this, using the few words I could find, I told him that he didn't have time for us. For us, our mother had become our world. I had even begun to believe that if it weren't for mother, we would have no life per se. I just told him, "Daddy, you don't have time for us." When he heard this, he took a few minutes to digest what I had said. I thought he would definitely scold me. However, he paused for a moment, and said, "Dear daughter, I don't know how to show love like your

mother. May be one day you will understand. When you understand, you will realize I don't express myself through words of love or physical forms of affection. When you grow up you will realize what true love is."

People would come to meet him in large numbers, but it never really mattered to us because we had no understanding of the subject. There were some things that we knew about him—like he used to make *jal*, he could heal people and that he could even read thoughts.

Q: You knew this as well?

Renu ji: These were small things. We knew that he would do his *paath*, so we knew we had to do our *paath*. But we were not aware of the *paath* he did. We were taught the *Gayatri mantra* which was supposed to be recited before going to sleep just like it is in any family. We didn't read the Ramayan in the house or do anything like that.

Q: How would he show his love towards you all?

Renu ji: He used to ask, "Ok tell me, where do you all want to go today?" However, he would only ask this question to make us happy as he didn't have time. When we had a break in the summer, he would say, "I'll take you all wherever you want to go." So, sometimes, we would make few plans of going out. But I knew whenever he would be in a good mood, he would take us out. Coming back to the question that you asked me, "What kind of love was it?" It is what I feel it today, something that I never felt when he was alive. Now I think that if he was present physically then I would not have understood the power of the Guru's *kripa*, how a Guru explains things to you. I wouldn't have realised how expansive the Guru's role is.

It was a major handicap to be in his shoes. As a family man, the equation was office + seva + astral travel + disciples = No time for family.

His kids got to see very little of him, and even though he put on his best act while talking to them about holidays etc., it was not often that he succeeded. Renu, being the eldest, naturally felt a greater sense of entitlement than the younger siblings. Being in his shoes as I am today, I realise how they must have pinched. I find myself inadequate to be the juggler that he was.

For those of you who are not exactly expressive and demonstrative, here is a lesson you can leverage to justify your robotic behaviour. Emotionally detached people are advanced in mind but also greatly misunderstood. Often, Gurudev had to put on an act to

show emotions that he hardly felt. It was enactment à la Spollywood - a new name for the spiritual version of Bollywood!

Gurudev's younger son, Nitu, supposed to be Gurudev's father re-incarnate, reflects on the man he called 'Dad'.

Nitu ji: He would ask us for an update regarding our studies. It so happened that once or twice after we returned after appearing for our exams, he would check our question paper and ask us about the answers we gave to the questions. He used to call me 'Pandit ji'. So, he would ask, "Pandit ji, how did you answer this question?" So, I had to tell him.

When Humsa asked Nitu how Gurudev educated him, he had a few interesting things to share.

Nitu ji: There was no specific subject that daddy would teach us. For example, the English paper, he would ask me questions like, "Pandit ji, what is this you that have written?" I would reply "This is the answer to that question." He would say, "No, No, Pandit ji this is the wrong answer. Cancel this question." We were at an age where we were not able to figure out which is left and which is right (*laughs*). Once he asked me, "Pandit ji tell me one thing, if we are riding a bike or a cycle and we want to ride on the left side, then tell me which is your left side?" So, I raised my right hand. Then, he asked, "Pandit ji, is this your left side?" I replied, "This is my left side at the moment." He laughed upon hearing this and said, "Pandit ji, always remember that the *kada* (bracelet) you wear is worn on the right hand." So, these are the things that he had taught me.

There was one incident when we had gone along with Guruji on a tour to Himachal Pradesh. Guruji was sitting in his room at the camp while all of us, kids, were playing on the road. A drove of donkeys was passing by. To give them way, I stood aside. There is a plant named *Bichoo Booti* which is a common plant of Himachal. Its roots touched my finger. At the time, I didn't know what had touched me. The pain was very strong, and the more I rubbed the area, the more it spread. I was crying out in pain and my hand had turned red. All my friends asked me, "What happened?" I didn't know what exactly had happened, and whether it was a mosquito bite or something else. My friends took me to Guruji. I stood in front of him, crying. He asked, "Pandit ji, what happened?" I replied "I don't know. My hand is hurting a lot." He asked me to show him my hand. It had turned red. He was calm. He asked me how it happened. I was crying out in pain and thinking, "Why is daddy asking me such silly questions? I'm dying of pain!" But I had to tell him. When I told him what had transpired, he said, "Ok let's go to the place where this

happened.” I kept on crying, held his hand and took him there. I kept thinking that instead of helping ease my pain, he is taking me to that place again. He asked me to point to the exact place where the incident took place. So, I showed him. He said, “You have been pricked by *bichoo booti* and the medicine is in its roots.” He rubbed it on my hand and I felt instant relief and was absolutely comfortable within 2 or 3 seconds. You can say that perhaps he taught us these things as a Guru. He said to me, “Son, nature has the cure for everything. You only need to know where to find it.” This is what he told me.

Chutki or Alka responds to our next question.

Q: You are 3 sisters and 2 brothers, so have you ever seen any distinction between a girl and a boy in your family like is common in a typical Punjab family?

Alka ji: No, never. Maybe the extended family may have lamented the birth of daughters. Although, Babba *bhaiya* (elder brother) is elder to me but our parents never differentiated between us. If you see it from another perspective then daddy loved Renu *didi* the most as she was the eldest child in the family. He would give her a lot of respect. So, he never, ever differentiated between us.

He treated femininity with a lot of respect. He believed and explained that women were a form of *shakti*, and that *shakti* was a game changer. Most of my Guru bhais would add their red flags to mine and testify that he always took the *paksh* or side of our wives. Here, he practiced discrimination. I would have loved to say ‘*Inquilab Zindabad*’ but who would have listened?

Sailing on two boats? Never an easy proposition.

Families require indulgence and children generally have a sense of entitlement. His children had to accept the fact that they had to share their father with lakhs of people. Though he tried to do as best as he could, that best was regulated by extreme limitations of time. Another handicap was that he was a man on a mission. The mission included the upbringing of hundreds of downlines who also looked upon him as their father. Divisible dad? Wow! Not an easy act to perform!

Younger son, Nitu, is a diplomat. And in the next few sentences he showcases that skill.

Q: How was Gurudev as a father?

Nitu ji: I have heard people say that Guruji took time away from his family to give them time. But I have never seen it like that. Whenever Guruji would meet people, he would

also attend to our needs. If I entered his room, he would never ask me to leave. He never made us feel that if he was discussing something important with someone, then we should not be in the room. Never. We would be standing there while the conversation took place. We never felt that he is not attending to our needs. In the middle of meeting people, he would attend to us too. Sometimes, he would ask us, “Pandit ji, how is school going on? How are your studies coming along?” And he would come upstairs and try to give us as much time as he could. During our summer vacation, he would take us on a tour for a month. He would even make sure that we don’t get bored during this time. He made all the arrangements. He would take as many video cassettes as possible, maybe 50-100, so we could watch movies during our trip. As there weren’t many activities to do during the night in Himachal, we would sit and watch movies together.

Alka swings to the tunes of nostalgia and continues her walk down memory lane.

Q: Alka ji, can you tell me your first conscious memory of Gurudev?

Alka ji: As a father?

Q: Any distinct memory that you remember? Your distinct memories of him as a father?

Alka ji: We didn’t meet every day. But we have memories of him returning from trips and sharing his experiences and spending time with us. One thing about him that stood out was that if he wanted to explain something complex to us, then he could break it down beautifully in 1 or 2 sentences. We also have memories where he would take us on tours. We have those memories of him as a father. I remember one instance when we all had travelled to Nepal. This was in the year, 1982, maybe. I guess Renu *didi* must have complained that he took us for short trips where we had to do a lot of walking. While leaving for the trip, everything was fine but when we returned, I remember Renu *didi* complaining, “You said you’ll take us to Agra and show us the Taj Mahal. But you didn’t take us anywhere.” So Guruji replied, “I have taken you all to Agra.” Renu *didi* asked “When?” He said “We crossed Agra on our way from Delhi.” (*laughs*) So, he joked with her but Renu *didi* was very angry.

It is not easy to explain to a set of school kids that true love is beyond the laws of limitation. For love is not an emotion, it is a radiation. It is not exclusive and cannot be contained. It has to spread like fragrance and envelop not some, but all.

This understanding did manifest in his kids but over a period of time after he had passed on.

We continue with Gen 2 – Back to Alka.

Alka ji: Renu *didi* told Guruji that she wanted a drawing room and a dining room added to our house as we were growing up and needed space to study. To this, Guruji said, “How does it matter? The rooms we have are good enough for you all to study.” But she wouldn’t listen. We only had two rooms. After this, Guruji started construction of the first and second floors, where he constructed a drawing room. We were standing with him when, after seeing the size of the drawing room, he remarked, “This is the perfect size. This room can easily accommodate 20 to 25 people who can sleep here at night.” Hearing this, Renu *didi* got upset that while she thought that Guruji had made this drawing room for them, in fact Guruji had made the room for the public. Later, Renu *didi* realised that Guruji is here to serve people. And if anything was made or constructed for any specific purpose then it would be used for that purpose only. Our father also said, “Child, we are *fakir’s* (ascetics). What use are sofas and beds to us?” Renu *didi* did not argue with him after this. However, whenever Renu *didi* asked for something, Guruji gave her those things. Sometimes, she would also fight on our behalf. She would tell Guruji, “You should take us on a trip. You don’t even know the names of your kids!” So, Guruji would good-humouredly reply, “Do you think that I don’t know the names of my children? Let me tell you.” I am not sure if he would learn our names from someone who lived on the ground floor but he would call our names correctly and then Renu *didi* would be satisfied. *(laughs)*

To forget your children’s names is certainly cause for embarrassment. But then the Mahaguru lived beyond his body and coming to terms with his physical reality was sometimes a challenge.

The person who bailed him out of these tough situations was Mataji. She was like the rudder of the kite. Uma Prabhu pays a relevant tribute to her.

Uma ji: More than Gurudev, it was Mataji who must have led a very difficult life because he was a very driven person. And that is the reason her quiet simplicity and her quiet spirituality were a big anchor to the spirituality of Gurudev. That is why the Shiv and Shakti you see is apt in their case.

Q: Yes, absolutely. And she was quiet...

Uma ji: Her quietness, quiet fortitude, her simplicity, and the spirituality that oozed out of her. That is why she did not have to give any *aashirwad* (blessing). You just had to be in her presence and that aura that radiated from her was so soothing that it comforted you.

Mataji was much taller than she measured physically. She would look after the backend operations at their home cum sthaan and perform a lot of hard labour. I remember how every morning she would take the curd and use an ancient apparatus called *madhani* to churn it and separate the butter. Gurudev would insist that the ghee that was used at the sthaan temple should be pure.

One day, I acted heroically and offered to help do the churning, and boy, did I almost collapse half way through! She had to finish the job and I was left embarrassed. Thereafter, she went to school to teach, and when she returned home hours later, there was always a huge pile of work waiting for her.

A lot of people do work hard no doubt, but then they are not the Queen of Queens!

*Apne maazi se na sharminda raho
Roz suraj banke tabinda raho
Maut se bachne ki ek tarkeeb hai
Dusro ke zehen mein zinda raho
Dusro ke zehen mein zinda raho*

Be not embarrassed by your past.

To others, be a shining spark.

The way to live beyond your life

Is to live in others hearts and minds.