

2018 SPRING SAHAVAS GUESTS



Dara Irani



Shireen and Jay Bonner

This year our Spring Sahavas guests are Baba's nephew and niece, Dara Irani and Shireen Bonner. Shireen is visiting us with her husband Jay and Dara is visiting with long-time friends Dell and Elliot Rubin.

Dara and his wife Amrit, both of whom have visited Avatar's Abode previously, now live in Meherabad near Baba's Samadhi.

Dara is the son of Baba's youngest brother Adi Jnr. and his wife Gulu. Gulu died in childbirth but to her good fortune Baba was by her bed side when she breathed her last. Baba saw baby Dara soon after he was born.

Dara was raised by Viloo and Sarosh Irani in Ahmednagar, India till he was 13. Then in 1958 he moved to England to join his father Adi and Adi's second wife Franey. While living in India Dara had several opportunities to be in Baba's company. Dara completed his education in England and worked there for nine years. His marriage with Amrit was arranged by Baba and took place in December 1968 at Meherazad, India. For the first four years of their marriage Dara and Amrit lived in England, before returning to India with their two sons Meherwan and Jamshed.

Shireen first met Baba in 1958 as a three-month old baby when Adi and Franey visited India from London. Then in 1964 the family returned to India for Shireen's Navjote ceremony, an important milestone in the Zoroastrian religion. There was a formal ceremony and reception to celebrate this event, but the morning of that ceremony Baba Himself performed Shireen's true, very simple Navjote at Meherazad.

This was a lengthy stay for the family during which time they had almost daily visits with Beloved Baba. For Shireen this visit was also the opportunity to get to know her very special aunts, Mehera, Mani and Goher, with whom she always remained extremely close. The third and final time that Shireen and her family saw Baba was in 1968/1969 when Shireen was 11 years old, for the occasion of Dara and Amrit's wedding. A few weeks after the family returned to England from this visit Baba dropped His physical form.

Very soon after this, Shireen's parents started to hold monthly meetings at their home in London, named Meher Manzil, for the early "new wave" of young Baba lovers. The Irani's very close family friend and long-time disciple of Baba's, Delia de Leon, played an important role in these early meetings.

From 1969/1970 onwards, many American followers, who were keen to meet Baba's brother Adi Jnr., stopped off in London en route to their first ever pilgrimage to Baba's Tomb in Meherabad, India. There was an influx of people over the course of several years, and many close friends were made in this way. This is how Shireen first met her husband Jay.

Shireen and Jay married at Meherazad in 1980 with Mehera, Mani and other mandali and family members arranging every detail of their wedding. In 1986, their daughter Mehera was born. At this time Shireen and Jay were living in Kew in the flat above Delia de Leon's, opposite the famous Royal Botanical Gardens which Baba visited in the 1930s.

As per Baba's wish Shireen attended St. Paul's Girls' School in London. Kitty Davy, a close family friend and one of Baba's early Western disciples had also been a student at St. Paul's. It is where Kitty met Gustav Holst, who was head of music during that early period, and who in turn interested Kitty in Eastern mysticism.

After school, Shireen read Italian at the University of London and then embarked on a career initially, and briefly, in children's book publishing followed by magazine production and writing.

In 1991, Franey, Shireen, Jay and Mehera moved to America. Shireen cares for her 95 year old mother, and Jay and she are doting grandparents to Mehera's two children.

Jay is a graduate of the Royal College of Art in London, and has worked on a widely diverse range of international architectural projects, including the expansion of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina, Saudi Arabia (the burial place of the Prophet Mohammad), and the expansion of the Grand Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. Meher Baba's teachings can be a source of inspiration for artists and designers alike. Jay will show examples of his work as an international designer of Islamic architectural ornament, and will discuss how his work is informed by Meher Baba's teachings. He is also a recognized authority of Islamic geometric patterns, and will be including examples of his own original geometric designs in this discussion. An advance preview of his ornamental work can be seen on his website: www.bonner-design.com.

We look forward to an intimate sharing of stories with Dara and Shireen at the Sahavas.

Jai Meher Baba!