

**GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN
MEHER BABA
Volume III
(February 1952 - February 1953)**

By

Bal Natu

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GLIMPSES of the GOD-MAN
MEHER BABA



Meher Baba at Meher Center, Myrtle Beach, S. C., 1952.

GLIMPSES
of the
GOD-MAN
MEHER BABA

VOLUME III
(FEBRUARY 1952 – FEBRUARY 1953)

BAL NATU

Sheriar Press

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INDIA

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*To the Loving
and Abiding Presence
of the God-Man,
Meher Baba*

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Bal Natu

September, 1981
Meherazad

PREFACE

When the Presence becomes a Person, the Invisible becomes Visible in the form of the God-Man, the *Avatar*. To the people of His Age, the *Avatar's* life, His deeds and declarations, being unconventional and incredibly challenging, bring forth multifarious reactions. But His external and inner work of awakening goes on unabated.

Once while informally sitting with His people, Avatar Meher Baba asked them, "You tell people that I have come not to teach but to awaken. What does that mean?" For a moment there was silence and then someone said, "You have come to awaken humanity." With a meaningful smile, Meher Baba's concise and significant reply was, "I have come to awaken Myself in all." This statement expresses the *Avatar's* gnosis and His mission in this world. He literally experiences Himself in all; delights and suffers Himself in all. That is why, out of His infinite compassion, He comes age after age to give a spiritual push, through Himself, to Himself in all.

In each *Avataric* Age, in spite of the prevailing religious and social influences, some people wholeheartedly accept Him as the Expected One as easily as birds take to air. To them His entire life is a perfect dispensation of divine love and unbounded compassion for one and all.

Whenever the *Avatar* comes amongst mankind, His life is the Story of Love; Love that links lovers to their One Divine Beloved – God. Each time this story is profound, yet simple; not necessarily comprehensible, but definitely heartwarming. The lives of the close ones who lived with Him, and the dear ones who led their lives in the light of His message of love, form a fitting pattern for this Story of stories, to be presented anew during each of the *Avatar's* Advents.

Thus, my chronological account of Avatar Meher Baba's life in *Glimpses* is not primarily intended as a "history," but is

PREFACE

meant to glorify "His story." I am not a scholar or a preacher, but one of the followers of Meher Baba. However, His immense sense of humor and His unlimited compassion have made this writing possible; "one of Baba's *Avataric* jokes!" as I call it.

With the succor of Meher Baba's humor and grace, I have emboldened myself to share with others in the volumes of *Glimpses*, what I was privileged to absorb and gather during my long and short stays with Meher Baba, and also from my association with His close disciples. As a chronicler, I have compiled the external activities (phases) of Avatar Meher Baba's Life and of those who were with Him during those periods.

The inner impact of Meher Baba's spiritual work and personal revelations vouchsafed by Him to others, do not and cannot become the subject of words. However, these outer happenings are like fascinating shells found on the beach of the shoreless Ocean of Meher Baba's Divinity. If these shells prompt someone to take a plunge into the Ocean to find the Pearl—His pure Love—I shall feel really happy about it.

Meher Baba's inner help, guidance and that "something" which is indescribable, kept up my enthusiasm. Sometimes, as I began to write a certain portion, the memories lingering in the subconscious vividly came back to me; some moved me to tears, some to ecstasy. It is a wonderful experience to relive the time spent in Beloved Meher Baba's company.

In this book, on some factual accounts, I have expressed my personal views which are open to correction. For the meaning of the non-English words in *Glimpses*, readers are requested to refer to the Glossary. For errors that have crept in I am responsible.

Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Vol. I ended with Meher Baba's Old Life of Perfect Divinity — the "Old Life" that had placed Him "on the altar of Absolute Godhood and Divine Perfection." In *Glimpses*, Vol. II, I tried to present His incredible New Life of Perfect Humility, a most fascinating and profound phase when the God-Man became an "ordinary man" amongst men.

GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN

Glimpses Vol. III, gives a year's account (Feb. 1952 - Feb. 1953) of Meher Baba's LIFE phase in which Meher Baba's Godhood and Manhood as the God-Man were blended to Perfection. Once Meher Baba stated, "The union of the Old and New Life states has given birth to LIFE; Life that is eternally old and new." To be frank, the literal and real meaning of these three specific terms that Meher Baba used is far beyond my comprehension. But the saving grace is that the God-Man's words have a translucent and humorous quality which helps His people see through His words to understand His ways and grow in His Love.

My heart overflows with gratitude for the gracious opportunity that my Lord and Master Meher Baba gave me to share, through *Glimpses*, His Love, humor, and compassion with people in general and with His dear ones in particular. So, in silence, I wholeheartedly offer my humble, loving salutations, *salaams* and *pranams* to Avatar Meher Baba, the One worthy of all Love.

Jai Avatar! Jai Meher! Jai Baba!

Bal Natu

August, 1981
Meherazad

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"LIFE" THAT IS ETERNALLY OLD AND NEW

1952 - PART 1

Beginning of the "Life Phase"

Meherazad is a quiet spot, with a lovely garden, at the foot of a hill. It is a secluded, private property located fifteen kilometers to the north of Ahmednagar, in Maharashtra State. In 1944, this became Meher Baba's residence. *Meher* means compassion and *azad* means free. And true to its name, Meherazad is, even today, a place where Meher Baba's compassion is freely dispensed. As such it is a focal point for pilgrims who come from all over the world to receive and experience the God-Man's love which radiates from here.

This is the place where His Old Life¹ of perfect Divinity concluded, and the New Life² of perfect Humility commenced. Later, these two aspects were entirely merged in each other in a unique phase which Meher Baba named "LIFE." This momentous development occurred at Meherazad in the first week of February, 1952. The special message dictated by Meher Baba, on this occasion, opened with the following lines:

God is everywhere and does everything.
God is within us and knows everything.
God is without us and sees everything.
God is beyond us and IS everything.³

Manonash (total effacement of mind) was the culminating phase of Meher Baba's New Life. In the message referred to above, Meher Baba further explained that with the accomplishment of *manonash*, "Plurality goes and Unity comes, ignorance goes and Knowledge comes, binding goes and Freedom comes." In relation to the incredible blending of the Old and New Life phases, Meher Baba continued:

I have regained the Knowledge, Strength and Greatness that I had in the Old Life and retained the ignorance, weaknesses and humility of the New Life. This union of

¹ *God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. A phase of work predominantly expressing Meher Baba's Divinity. See: *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. I.

² A phase of "hopelessness and helplessness" wherein Meher Baba, the God-Man, became "man amongst men." See: *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. II.

³ *Life Circular* No. 1, issued on Feb. 6, 1952.

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the Old and the New Life states has given birth to LIFE; Life that is eternally Old and New.

LIFE for me now means:

- 1) Free and obligationless life.
- 2) Life of a Master in giving orders; and that of a Servant in all humility.
- 3) The feeling of absolute conviction that we are all eternally One, Indivisible and Infinite in essence; and with it a feeling of separateness from the real Omnipresent Self, through ignorance.
- 4) Life of God in essence; and that of a man in actions.
- 5) Life of Strength born of inherent Knowledge of Oneness; and of weakness born of binding desires.

During the same sitting, while Meher Baba's long and delicate fingers moved swiftly, in a lovely rhythm, on the alphabet board,¹ He dictated:

Unless and until ignorance is removed and Knowledge is gained—the Knowledge whereby the Divine Life is experienced and lived—everything pertaining to the Spiritual seems paradoxical. God, whom we do not see, we say is real; and the world, that we do see, we say is false. In experience what exists for us does not really exist; and what does not exist for us, really exists.

We must lose ourselves in order to find ourselves: Thus loss itself is gain. We must die to self to live in God: Thus death means Life. We must become completely void inside to be completely possessed by God: Thus complete emptiness means absolute Fullness. We must become naked of selfhood by possessing nothing, so as to be absorbed in the Infinity of God: Thus nothing means Everything.²

In this way, through the language of apparent paradoxes, Meher Baba indicated the profundity of His imminent Life phase in relation to the two earlier aspects of His work. Whenever God assumes human form and lives on Earth as man amongst men, each phase of His life has a specific purpose in His ministry as the *Avatar* of the Age. His

¹ Meher Baba observed silence from July 10, 1925 until He dropped His body on January 31, 1969. Initially, He communicated by means of an alphabet board which He discarded on October 7, 1954. Later, He communicated only by signs. His silence, however, never failed to convey His messages of divine truths and His presence awakened love in the hearts of those who visited Him.

He once conveyed through gestures, "If my silence cannot be heard, of what avail words?" On another occasion He added, "Things that are real are given and received in silence." Throughout the rest of this volume, when a phrase is used such as "Baba said," "commented," "remarked," etc., it is to be understood that Baba had not actually spoken. Such words are used for convenience only.

² *Life Circular* No. 1.

"LIFE" THAT IS ETERNALLY OLD AND NEW

manonash is entirely different in its inception and fruition from the *manonash* of any other individual. It is symbolic of a vicarious crucifixion, an act of the *Avatar's* unbounded compassion for His lovers.

While declaring this blessed consummation of the New Life, Baba offered His companions the choice of obeying His orders and living with Him or apart from Him, or living a completely independent life. Of course, all chose to stay with Him. This trait, of allowing those following Him to decide whether they wished to continue doing so, was one of Baba's ancient habits. Being the God-Man, He expected from His dear ones complete surrender and not an enforced or half-hearted allegiance.

He did not impose His wish on any one against the person's "free will." He gladly accepted any sincere and honest decision, no matter what. However, once one decides to follow Him, the offering of self has to be as complete as is humanly possible. It is a Divine law that such a "binding" leads one towards real freedom and an attempt to "hold back," whether through fear or doubt, chains one to Illusion. To quote Francis Brabazon:

To follow Him, means freedom in bondage;

To serve Him, means to be bound in freedom.³

At the close of the circular Meher Baba stated:

I intend to go, in the beginning of April of this year, to the West for some months. I expect to lead a "complicated free" life from March 21st, a "full free" life from July 10th, and a "fiery free" life from November 15th.

After some days, Meher Baba clarified this tripartite life as follows:

I feel that in my Complicated Free Life, binding will dominate freedom. In my Full Free Life, freedom will dominate binding. In my Fiery Free Life, both freedom and binding will, by the grace of God, be merged into the Divine Life.⁴

At the time, this explanation appeared cryptic, but within a year its meaning and aptness became evident. This period of twelve months formed a fitting introduction to Baba's Life

³ *7 Stars to Morning*, p. 94

⁴ *Life Circular* No. 5, issued on March 21, 1952.

phase.

On February 12th, Baba's birthday was celebrated. Baba declared that it was His first real birthday as "Meher Baba, the Divine and the ordinary, the Master and the Servant,"⁵ and it was celebrated in a jubilant mood. A rare festive atmosphere prevailed in Meherazad. But since Baba declared His Life phase was eternally old and new, no more anniversaries of this particular birthday⁶ were commemorated. On this eventful day, Baba sent God's blessings and His love to His people. In addition, in the presence of the *mandali*, on behalf of Baba the following invocation was read:

O God! Today being my first real birthday, my heart expresses that the declaration of the "Life" by me was entirely Yours and by Your Will; because nothing happens save by Your Will.

All my Knowledge and my ignorance; all my Strength and my weakness; all my Freedom and my bondage are as You have desired and decreed. This Life Eternal will be lived by me in conformity with Your Will and every word of the declaration of the "Life" will come to pass by Your Grace.⁷

Indeed it was a rare occasion of profound significance!

The Avataric Technique

On February 16th, Baba's seclusion ended, linking His incredible New Life phase with the Life phase. With the change in inner spiritual work, Baba shifted His residence from the improvised *manonash* cabin to His former room⁸ on the first floor of the main house, located in a garden, which Baba referred to as the "Garden of Allah." The rigors of the New Life had put a great strain on Baba's physical body. He looked very weak and exhausted, and was obviously in need of rest. But before the *mandali* could suggest a fairly long period of recuperation, Baba unexpectedly declared His intention of visiting the West, beginning the first week of April.

So, instead of having an extended rest, Baba transformed

⁵ *Life Circular* No. 2, issued on February 6, 1952.

⁶ According to the Zoroastrian calendar, Baba's birthday fell on a different date each year. To avoid confusion, Baba eventually declared that His birthday should be celebrated on February 25th, the actual date of His birth.

⁷ *Life Circular* No. 3, issued on February 15, 1952.

⁸ After the second auto accident (December 2, 1956), Baba began staying in a room on the ground floor, now known as "Baba's Room" at Meherazad.

"LIFE" THAT IS ETERNALLY OLD AND NEW

Meherazad, which had always been so quiet and secluded, into a place bustling with activity. He had the *mandali* coming and going to discuss, plan and work out the details of the many projects He was initiating. Typically, even some of the final plans thus evolved were later abandoned entirely or changed considerably.

This was mainly caused by the constant changing of departure dates for America. Donkin,⁹ who usually informed Elizabeth and Norina about Baba's plans, wrote:

Baba had so much work to do and interviews to give when he came out of seclusion on February 16th that I suggested it would be better to give Baba an extra ten days before flying to America—in short, to change Baba's present provisional booking for March 31st to approximately April 10th. Baba thought this might worry you and make you doubt that he meant to come. He, therefore, wants you to cable your approval of April 10th or your disapproval . . .¹⁰

In reply to this letter, the following cable was sent to Donkin at Ahmednagar: "Baba asks whether the 10th of April suits us—anything! Everything suits us as long as he comes."

About this time a short message from Baba was circulated among His dear ones in the West, giving them the following good news:

The necessary arrangements have been completed by Norina and Elizabeth. I shall, if God so wills and if I am alive, come to the West . . . I shall fly first direct to America. Later . . . I shall stay a few weeks in England . . . and Switzerland . . . I must be in seclusion for the first two weeks of my stay in America. I therefore want no publicity of any kind, either when I leave or when I arrive in America. After these first two weeks of seclusion I shall see everyone everywhere, because eventually I shall have to give to the world the results of my four months' work.¹¹

These words of hope and cheer appeased the yearning hearts which had eagerly awaited Meher Baba's arrival for many years.

⁹ Dr. William Donkin, also known as "Don."

¹⁰ "Recollections," *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 25, (1960).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

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Baba's health continued to be erratic however. He was exhausted and intermittently ran a high fever. Again, the date of departure from Bombay to New York was postponed to a later date. Before this, however, Donkin had written to Elinor (Elizabeth and Norina): "Baba tells me to repeat and repeat that his coming is DEFINITE, not only because of the desire of the people in the West that he should come, but also because of what is destined by God." Again, in the middle of March, Donkin cabled them: "Baba's condition is getting worse every day, but he still says that 'unless impossible' will come because if not this time, then will never come."

About this time the news reached Meherazad that Norina, who had played an important role in planning this visit to the States, had had an accident. In reply to this Rano wrote: "Baba is still extremely weak and now we hear of your accident. It seems *Maya* is quite determined to do her utmost to impede Baba in every way. Baba is determined in spite of everything not to let anything interfere with his plans and regardless of his physical condition, is definitely coming . . . Don and dear Elizabeth will see to everything down to the last detail."

Baba had instructed Rano to personally attend to Him and the women *mandali* on their way to the West and back to India. However, in February she was not well herself. Donkin suggested that she should visit the States earlier for treatment. But Baba told her not to worry about it and the treatment given by the local doctors proved effective.

After the completion of the New Life, Baba felt very exhausted and at times had a high fever. On February 26th, He was admitted to the hospital and was operated on for piles and fissures. In fact, this was to have been done prior to the commencement of the *manonash* phase, in October 1951. But owing to the intensity of His spiritual work, Baba could not spare the time for such an operation and the subsequent convalescence in bed. After the operation the doctors advised Baba to have complete rest.

In an earlier circular, Baba-people in India were informed that they would be able to see their Beloved Master from March 21st, onwards. Now Adi¹² had to issue another circular,

¹² Adi K. Irani, also known as "Adi Sr."

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giving them the news of Baba's convalescent period and the respite required for the necessary preparations for His fourth visit to the States. In conclusion the following information was mailed to Baba lovers:

Baba, therefore, desires that no one of His devotees will seek His permission to see Him . . . excepting those who may be called for work. After His return from the West, if God willing, Baba will see people individually and in masses.¹³

Complete Surrender to the God-Man

Baba's tripartite "free" life began on March 21st, the day of the vernal equinox when day and night, the world over, are equal. Perhaps this day was a symbolic choice for the God-Man to start the activities of His Life phase, matching the perfect Divinity with the perfect Humility of His earlier aspects of work. Coincidentally, it was also the yearly festival heralding the Zoroastrian New Year. Baba was with the *mandali*, as usual, in the morning. Though exhausted, He looked radiant. There was a swelling on His arm, but in spite of this suffering He appeared quite happy.

Ten days earlier, while in a communicative mood, Baba had dictated a sublime message for this occasion. His fingers moved gracefully on the alphabet board to clarify the Life phase. Occasionally during this communication, He used hand gestures and facial expressions to enlighten His disciples on this subject. He stated:

Life today finds me both strong and weak. The strength is of the conviction to Knowledge, and the "Old Life Meher Baba state;" while the ordinary human state of weaknesses and binding desires makes me feel utterly weak.

As already declared by me, I have left to God's Decree and Sanction the result of the *Manonash* work, for myself and all concerned. Where, how, and when the Result of this work will be, I leave entirely to the will of God.¹⁴

¹³ *Life Circular* No. 4, issued on March 6, 1952.

¹⁴ *Life Circular* No. 5.

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On this occasion, for those who believed in the proclamation of Baba's Life phase, He gave the following message, which in a few words contains the essence of true spirituality:

My message today, to those who love me and believe in my life, is that in order to escape this cosmic Illusion, and to realize and attain the supreme Reality, we must abide by the following: First and foremost our complete surrender to the God-Man, in whom God reveals Himself in His full Glory, His Infinite Power, His Unfathomable Knowledge, His Inexpressible Bliss, and His Eternal Existence.

These few lines signify the immense profundity of the God-Man's status, and the paramount importance of one's total surrender to Him. A Sufi poet wrote:

Those who are slain every moment, by the sword of their surrender, in compliance to the Will of the Beloved, are born anew each moment.

For those who dare not leap into the "abyss" that lies between the Eternal Beloved and a lover, Baba has offered six alternative paths:

Should this complete surrender not be possible, then one or some of the following, if faithfully carried out, can win the Grace of God.

- 1) Whole-hearted love for God. Thirst for seeing Him, longing for knowing Him and a burning desire for Union with Him constitutes this all-consuming Love, for which the lover forsakes everything, including himself.
- 2) Keeping constant company of saints and lovers of God, and rendering them whole-hearted service.
- 3) Guarding of the mind against temptations of lust, greed, anger, hatred, power, fame and fault-finding.
- 4) Absolute and complete external renunciation whereby one leaves everyone and everything, and in solitude devotes oneself to prayer, fasting and meditation.
- 5) Living in the world and yet practicing complete internal renunciation. This means attending to all worldly duties without attachment, knowing all to be

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an illusion and only God to be Real, carrying out one's worldly affairs with a pure heart and clean mind, and living the life of a recluse in the midst of intense activity.

6) Selfless Service. One who practices this, thinks not of himself but of the happiness of others, serves others, with no thought of gain or reward, never allows the mind to be upset or disappointed; and facing all odds and difficulties cheerfully sacrifices his welfare for the good of others. This is the life of the selfless worker.¹⁵

During His subsequent visit to the States (April-July, 1952), Baba asked Malcolm Schloss to versify this glorious message. Later, in the same year, this message and the verses were published under the title, *Ways to Attain The Supreme Reality*. Malcolm's opening verse, "First and Foremost," begins:

If the sun did not shine,
To whom would the flower turn,
How would the mango grow?

and concludes:

If God came not as man,
How could we really know
That we could love Him so?

This was later put to music and has become one of the favorite songs of the Baba lovers in the West. In February, 1953, I had the good fortune to receive a copy of this book as a present from Beloved Baba. It is one of my precious possessions which often reminds me to try to surrender to Him, more and more.

Eruch's Refusal to Obey Baba

The last part of this special circular contained the unexpected plan of sending Eruch all over India and Pakistan to spread His message of love. This itinerary was quite a surprise to the *mandali*. It had come as quite a surprise to Eruch too

¹⁵ *Life Circular* No. 5.

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when he first heard about it, and an interesting story is contained therein.

It so happened that about this time, when Baba gave the above mentioned message, He was finalizing the names of His men disciples who were to accompany Him during His visit to the States. He had already chosen the women disciples going with Him. Mehera, Mani, Goher, Meheru, Kitty and Rano were to fly with Him in the same plane. During the usual afternoon sitting of the day, Baba casually told Eruch to get ready for a trip to the West; He wanted Eruch to serve Him as His personal attendant.

By the end of the New Life, Eruch, though blessed with a sturdy physique, was as tired as a race horse that has run all the rounds. With Baba's plan of visiting the West, he was looking forward to a long, quiet period of relaxation in India. So he said, "I am completely exhausted. Baba, please excuse me from those going with you."

In spite of Eruch's request, Baba repeated His wish. And Eruch replied, "Baba, I think I will be a drag on your work if I go with you. Allow me to stay back." There was a look of displeasure on Baba's face. A moment or two of silence passed between them and Baba gestured, "If you don't want to obey me, what's the good of staying near me? Better to get out of here (Meherazad)!"

Although it seems unbelievable, given his total surrender to Baba's will, Eruch remained unyielding in his refusal to accompany Baba. This was because he was convinced that in his exhausted state, Baba would have to take care of him rather than the other way around. He immediately left for his room and, closing the door behind him, was confronted with the problem of packing his belongings in order to leave.

He picked up the blanket on his bed, but before he could pack it, he remembered that it had been a gift from Baba. In fact, as he looked around the room, he realized that nothing there was his—it had all been given to him by Baba. Packing was out of the question, it was only a matter now of walking away from Meherazad. But then Eruch realized that even the clothes on his back were Baba's. He would have to leave naked.

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Eruch was prepared to do this, but he wondered if he should at least wait until dark.

As he debated this point he recalled the day (May 21, 1938) that linked him forever in Baba's service. At that time, he was staying in Nagpur with his parents. One afternoon, quite unexpectedly, two telegrams were received in succession summoning Eruch to Panchgani, a hill-station eight hundred kilometers away from Nagpur.

Eruch took the train and went to Baba. After casually inquiring about his journey and his health, Baba straightaway asked, "Is it possible for you to leave everything and stay with me permanently?" Eruch promptly replied, "By Your Grace, anything is possible." Baba didn't ask any other questions. He simply, and in a very natural way, told Eruch to be at Meherabad on August 1, 1938. This was to be the beginning of a life-long stay with Baba.

At Baba's signal, Eruch started to leave but before he reached the door, Baba called him back and asked one more question, "Is it possible for your father, mother, brother and sisters to leave all and permanently stay with me?" Once more Eruch's spontaneous reply was, "By Your Grace, anything is possible." Baba looked pleased and added, "Then settle all the affairs at Nagpur and also ask them to be at Meherabad on August, 1, 1938." "Yes, Baba," said Eruch as he folded his hands to honor Baba's wish.

It was only on the train ride home that the enormity of what he had done struck him. He wondered what it was that had made him answer Baba as he had. It had not been his intention, on going to Baba, to surrender to Him like that, to say nothing of surrendering for the rest of his family. However, with Baba's Grace and internal help, the Jessawala family arrived at Meherabad, bag and baggage, on the date set by Baba, in total surrender to His Divine Will. Since then, Eruch has been leading a life—body, mind and heart—totally dedicated to Baba.

Thirteen long years had passed since this memorable incident. The events of the Blue Bus Tour, the *mast* tours and a few happenings of the New Life flashed through Eruch's

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mind. This upheaval and revival of thoughts led him to question whether he had any right over his own physical body since it had been willingly and totally offered in Baba's service. Such thoughts confounded and confused him; he was at his wit's end. How could he leave if even his own body belonged to Baba?

Just then, there was a knock on the door which interrupted his train of thought. One of the *mandali* had brought special instructions from Baba—the All-Knowing One. Eruch was asked to have his supper and to rest for the night at Meherazad. The next morning Baba would tell him what to do next. Eruch felt greatly relieved and went to sleep as usual. The next morning, according to Baba's instruction, Eruch was given a typed sheet which, by His order, he was to read very carefully. At what time Baba had dictated this elaborate matter—at night or early morning—and who typed out the text, no one now remembers. But this unexpected dictation contained Baba's forthcoming "Fiery" plan of contacting the masses in different parts of India. A part of Baba's dictation is given below:

I am sending Eruch, with specific instructions, all over India and Pakistan for seven months to prepare men and the ground for my work of the Fiery Free Life, which begins from November 15th. The Fiery Free Life will require me and the prepared ones to burn freely in the fire of Divine Love . . .¹⁶

Baba had made provision for Eruch's traveling expenses, but he had to strictly abide by Baba's orders:

Not to accept money from anyone under any circumstances. (However, he was permitted to accept food and journey tickets if willingly offered.)

To abstain from politics and to abide by the laws of the land.

To abstain from any lustful action (as he had been doing all his life).

Neither to feel flattered by praise nor feel disheartened by ridicule or abuse.

¹⁶ *Life Circular* No. 5.

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To face bravely and lovingly all difficulties and to carry out faithfully the work allotted by Baba, in the name of God.

Pendu was ordered by Baba to help Eruch whole-heartedly in his work, and the instructions given to Eruch were equally applicable to him. As an aside, I might mention that these orders given by Baba can also provide guidelines to anyone who wants to visit different parts of the world to spread Baba's message of Love and Truth.

The next morning, Baba asked Eruch if he had carefully read the typed copy of the instruction given to him. Eruch said that he had, and Baba added, "Do you have anything to ask me?"

By this time all thought of leaving Baba had been put aside, and Eruch, fully prepared to obey Baba, said, "I will do my best to follow your instructions. But Baba, from the day I came to Meherabad I have been doing hard labor jobs and in addition I have served as a personal attendant. Now, you expect me to meet people and give talks, with which I am not conversant at all, and you want me to spread your message of Love and Truth. I am not nervous about it, but I am expressing what I feel at the moment."

Baba looked pleased and conveyed, "When you begin to address the people or Baba lovers, inwardly call on me and say, 'Baba, you want me to speak, so speak.' I will help you. I will be with you."

This casual episode launched Eruch into a new field of Baba's service. During his visits all over India and Pakistan, he freely shared Baba's love with hundreds of people through stories illustrating Baba's unbounded love and compassion. Thus, Eruch's incidental refusal to obey the God-Man was used by Him to help many a heart accept Meher Baba as the *Avatar* of the Age. Unfathomable are the ways that the God-Man uses to fulfill His *Avataric* work.

On March 21st after the Iranian New Year's greetings (*Naoroz Mubarak*), Baba made a special visit to Meherabad. Owing to the swelling of His arm which gave Him severe pain, He decided to relax and rest in the *jhopri*, also known as the

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Agrakuti—a place closely connected with His early Old Life activities. Later He spent some time on the Hill—Upper Meherabad.

Adi and Eruch checked the typed copy of Beloved Baba's special message that, according to His order, was to be printed soon in the form of a circular and mailed to Baba-people. Eruch, along with Adi, also prepared a tentative itinerary of his travels throughout India. Whenever any plan was finalized, Baba expected no delay in its execution. Thus began Baba's tripartite life. A busy day from sunrise to sunset—a day of joy, physical suffering and work.

Long Awaited Visit to America

With the beginning of the Life phase, Baba's different external activities were resumed. His physical suffering, however, remained an inseparable part of this phase. Although Baba had established Himself in the Divinity of the "Old Life Meher Baba State," suffering seemed to be the legacy of the New Life, which had placed Baba under the limitations of being an ordinary man.

Baba's disciples and devotees were informed of His messages and activities through the five circulars mentioned earlier; and with the resident *mandali* Baba sometimes discussed His visit to the States.

A period of semi-seclusion continued until February 16th. The next day, Baba went to stay on the first floor of His former residence. Later that day, Baba, with His men and women disciples—especially those who were to go with Him to the West—visited Bombay from the 17th until the 21st. During this stay they visited the American Consulate for the preliminaries for obtaining visas.

One morning during this stay, Baba went to Juhu for a quiet stroll on the beach. Baba also allowed Mehera, Mani and others to visit an aquarium. After the New Life this was their first outing of its kind, a delightful visit.

Owing to the intense pressure of *manonash* work, it was as

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if Baba's bodily ailments had not been allowed to express themselves. But with the end of His semi-seclusion, they suddenly clamored for attention and had to be attended to.

On February 26th, as mentioned earlier, Baba was operated on for piles and fissures. March 1st was an extremely restless night for Baba. The pain was excruciating. He sent a message to Kaikobad Dastur that He felt like returning HOME—retiring to His Eternal Abode! From the second week of March, His arm was swollen, and the inflammation was poignantly painful. The God-Man comes among us as Man to alleviate the sufferings of humanity through his Personal participation, a symbolic sharing and a physical one as well!

In the last week of March, Baba sent a cable to Donkin, who was then in England. He was asked to proceed to the States on April 1st, to help those at Myrtle Beach make the final preparations for Baba's upcoming visit. He also instructed Meherjee to cable Elizabeth that Baba would fly from Bombay on April 18th for the States. Baba and the women *mandali* left Meherazad on April 6, 1952 for Bombay. All stayed at Ashiana—Nariman's flat. During this stay, in one of His good moods, Baba gave a short message on 1 (one) and 0 (zero):

1—the One Real I—is the Ocean of Bliss;
0—zero—is the sea of suffering.
The One Real I (1) does not harass at all;
Zero (0) persecutes all, all the time.
In the forthcoming Fiery Free Life,¹⁷
With the Grace of God,
This zero (0) is to be set on fire.
Fiery Free Life is not a phase to be understood, but witnessed.

Within a day or two, Baba asked Sarosh to rent an apartment in the city which would fulfill certain requirements. Eventually, on April 10th, Baba, with His close ones, left Ashiana for Bandra, a suburb of Bombay. He was to stay there on the first floor of a building near the famous Mount Mary Church, which has a large Christian community around it.

However, the new apartment did not prove satisfactory.

¹⁷ This phase was to begin on November 15, 1952.

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As it was right on the highway, the din and noise of the traffic was very annoying. That night Baba was restless. He would be down in one room for awhile, and then move into another. He slept very little that night. The next morning He looked extremely tired and drawn, and in that mood He instructed the following message to be conveyed by telephone to those staying at Meherabad:

Health is not good. There is much disturbance in and around the building. At night, the traffic caused a lot of disturbance. Although going to the West is a must, visit to the West seems uncertain. Communicate this to all.

Baba did not wish to continue His stay at Bandra. So all moved back to Ashiana. Baba reprimanded Sarosh for not finding a quiet, suitable place for Him. About this time, Sarosh received the heartening news of a cottage of three rooms which was available at Marve, a village more than 25 miles from Bombay. This made Baba happy and He agreed to leave for this new residence which had been newly built for convalescent nurses. Here Baba looked somewhat relaxed and rested. In the mornings He liked to take long, solitary walks on the beach; sometimes He appeared very solemn.

On Good Friday, April 11, while at Bandra, Baba had casually mentioned that the "crucifixion" was unbearable to Him, while on Easter Sunday at Marve He looked rested. Perhaps this could have been a rehearsal of the events that were to happen in the States—the auto accident and the convalescent period at Youpon Dunes, Myrtle Beach.

Three days prior to His flight abroad, the Baba families in Bombay were allowed to have His Darshan at Ashiana.

On April 18th, by late evening, Baba with His disciples drove to Santa Cruz Airport where about 100 people had gathered to give Him a loving send-off. He was profusely garlanded and He looked very radiant. The plane took off at 11:00 P.M., carrying the God-Man on His eventful visit to the States.

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"Welcome to America"

Although spending two days on a plane is always a bit exhausting, their journey was relatively comfortable. The seat in front of Baba was swiveled so it faced Baba, which allowed Him to put His feet up on the seat and stretch out. It was also put in a reclining position to make it even more comfortable for Baba, although the women *mandali* who then sat in the chair in front of this were forced to lean forward the whole time. They all took turns sitting in this cramped position so that Baba could be more comfortable. A small sacrifice and what a reward!

The first stop after Bombay was Cairo. It was cold and they all went out for a cup of tea. At Rome, Baba got off the plane and had a brisk walk about the airport. From Rome they flew to Shannon, Ireland, and then set out across the Atlantic. The crossing was a little rough, but they made it without incident to Gander, Newfoundland, and then to Idlewild, New York.

Baba had insisted that His arrival in America should be kept a secret, so only Elizabeth and Margaret were there to meet Baba. However, there was also a representative of the International Airways who had come to meet Mr. M. S. Irani. Gabriel Pascal had made the arrangements so that Baba would not be bothered with reporters or have any trouble with customs.

The man knew he was helping to facilitate the landing of a V.I.P. from India, but he had no idea it was in fact the *Avatar*—not just an important person, but the most important Person in the world. The women were rather amused when the International Airways representative came up, greeted Mr. Irani, presented Him with his card and shook hands. His being there, however, did help Baba and the others to get through all the red tape expeditiously.

But probably the most memorable event of the flight occurred on board. Baba spent most of the time on the plane, stretched out, with a sheet pulled up over Him, apparently resting. There was nothing to indicate who was under the

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sheet, and yet the women noticed that a small girl kept wandering down the aisle until she was next to Baba and then she would just stand and stare at Him. Perhaps she was just curious about who, or what, could have been under the sheet. But after a stop, when she got off the plane, a new family got on, and their small boy kept finding excuses to wander back to where Baba was resting so he could be near Him, especially so when he caught a glimpse of Baba.

He often stood gazing at Baba, occasionally patting His shoulder. Once Baba lovingly stroked this young one and lightly pinched his cheek in His special tender way. He came back so many times that finally his mother felt compelled to apologize to the women *mandali*. "I don't know what's gotten into him," she explained as she fetched him back for the umpteenth time.

Of course the women knew what had gotten into him, but they weren't able to tell the mother that there was nothing wrong with her son. He was merely illustrating the truth of Jesus' saying that the pure in heart shall see God (even, apparently, when He is hiding under a sheet on a transatlantic flight!).

Elizabeth and Margaret were overjoyed to see Baba again and led the party to a taxi. As Baba got into the cab, the taxi driver greeted Baba and the women with a cheerful "Welcome to America." And for the first time in 16 years Baba was once more blessing the West with His physical presence.

First American to Invite Baba

I think it is justifiable here to make a small digression. The cabbie's formal yet warm greeting to Baba, "Welcome to America," brings to mind an event that happened twenty years earlier in England, when a clear-headed genius, an American, wholeheartedly invited Baba in 1931 to visit the States for the first time.

Thomas A. Watson was a colleague of the eminent scientist, Alexander Graham Bell. He became quite wealthy

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from this work, but found it didn't satisfy him; so in his sixties he took up acting and painting. He visited England and traveled with a Shakespearian company giving performances in rural areas.

One of his proteges was Milo Shattuck, a Harvard graduate and a young poet. Watson helped finance his trip to England to study and, while there, Milo went to a retreat in Devonshire. The retreat was conducted by Meredith Starr, who had recently returned from India, after spending several months with Meher Baba at Toka, near Ahmednagar. On Meredith's return, through the activities of this retreat, he was preparing to receive Meher Baba on His first visit to England.

In September 1931, Meher Baba left India and, after a short stay in London, visited the Devonshire Retreat where there was a group of people anxiously awaiting His arrival. Among them were the Watsons. The night prior to Baba's arrival, all, including Thomas Watson, were devotedly thinking about the Master, Meher Baba. The next morning, when Thomas woke up, he found his pillow wet with tears, owing to a deep experience which had profoundly moved him while asleep. It left him enfolded in indescribable peace.

In the morning, from the balcony of the retreat, Thomas was gazing at the countryside, wondering at the incredible awakening he had just experienced. Just then, Meher Baba came upstairs. He blessed Thomas by placing His hand on his head. He then patted him lightly on the back and without saying anything He went ahead. With Baba's touch, Thomas felt extremely blissful and his heart could not contain the inner welling up of emotions. He began to sob like a child. Chanji, Baba's secretary, who was still standing there, helped him to a room, which happened to be the retreat's library, and made him comfortable.

For about fifteen minutes Thomas sat quietly, shedding tears of joy. Then, with a choked voice, he said to Chanji, "Sonny, for how long have you been with Him (Baba)?" "Seven years," replied Chanji. With fatherly affection, he stroked Chanji's back and said, "Do you know what a blessing it is to

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live with the Master for such a long period?" "Yes, but it is His grace, not my efforts," answered Chanji.

Thomas, with a hoarse voice, continued, "Today I am blessed; I have met Him. What benediction! Now I am seventy-eight. May I tell you that during my life of intense spiritual search, this is the first time that I have met One who has Divine Love, and what a wonder that He can awaken this love in others too." "You are quite right," replied Chanji, who continued, "Blessed are they whose hearts are awakened to His Love."

Thomas felt quite at ease with Chanji and added, "Sonny, for about forty years I was a co-worker of Graham Bell, but those years did not answer my spiritual quest. So I developed an interest in the stage and in painting. However, since my childhood, I yearned for the love of God. This urge led me to purchase hundreds of books on philosophy and religion. These, to some extent, are responsible for bringing me here. The books provided food for my mind, but they didn't move my heart. With Meher Baba's loving and tender touch, however, what I had gathered in my head was poured into my heart. Words seem inadequate to express what I feel."

After a few minutes of silence he continued, "I have a request. If it's not inconvenient to the Master (Meher Baba), I wish to sit quietly every day for a few minutes in His Divine Presence and meditate. I shall feel greatly indebted to you if you could convey my request to Baba." Later, Chanji narrated to Baba the talk he had had with Thomas in the library; Baba graciously agreed to this request.

Some months before Baba's arrival, Meredith Starr had read a book of poems, *Songs to Celebrate the Sun*, by Malcolm Schloss. He liked the poems very much and felt that Malcolm should know about Meher Baba and His Mission. He wrote to Milo Shattuck in the States to contact Malcolm. Milo met Jean and Malcolm, who were overjoyed to hear about Meher Baba and His impending visit to England. In the course of conversation, Milo heard Jean tell about her mystical experiences. Milo mentioned these briefly in his reply to Meredith.

Meredith received Baba's cable about His September

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visit to England. He took this opportunity to ask Jean to write down her spiritual experiences and mail them to him. He wished to relate them to the Master, which he did. Baba looked pleased, and lovingly inquired more about Jean and Malcolm. The same day, Meredith mentioned Baba's interest in Jean and Malcolm to Thomas Watson. He already knew them and, being generous, he sent anonymous bank drafts to them towards their passage to England. The Schlosses were delighted and they began to make preparations to visit England to be with the Perfect Master, Meher Baba.

One day during his stay in the retreat, Baba, with the help of the alphabet board and a simple diagram, explained the "Theme of Creation" to Thomas. Baba's profound yet succinct explanation of evolution and the process of realization made a profound impression on Thomas. Greatly astonished, he said, "Baba, it's marvelous. A subject so profound requires volumes to expound upon, but you have very beautifully presented it to me within a few minutes. I feel that you could do so only because you have realized the truth of it yourself."

After a little pause he continued, "Baba, America is the country for you. You must pay a visit to the States. In case you decide to come, I extend to you a very cordial invitation on behalf of the American people." It was a spontaneous invitation and Baba did not totally refuse it. He answered, "I'll consider it, and I'll let you know." At the end of this interview, Baba conveyed His fond love to Thomas Watson and his wife, and fixed the date of their departure to the States.

In fact, even after reaching England, Baba had no plans to proceed to the States. However, as responsive as always to the love of His lovers, Baba abandoned His previously determined schedule. With no previous preparations, and without anyone personally knowing Him in the States, except for Jean and Malcolm and the Watsons, He decided to lay the cable of His love by paying a visit to America.

Jean and Malcolm were informed of Baba's unexpected decision to visit the States. There was no need for them to sail to England to see Baba as they were now not only going to meet Him, but were to act as His hosts when He came to America!

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At the beginning of October, however, Baba sailed to Constantinople, where He stayed for nine days. Then He went to Genoa, and left from there for New York, which He reached on November 6, 1931—a day for rejoicing, especially for all Baba lovers in the States; the day when the Avatar of the Age set His foot for the first time on American soil.

It seems fitting that Thomas A. Watson, who was the first person to hear words communicated through the telephone, was also the first one to invite the Silent Word—the WORD made flesh—to America; a symbolic coincidence!

Baba Sanctifies Meher Center

After His arrival in New York in 1952, Baba allowed John Bass to see Him for five minutes. He was meeting his Beloved Master after a period of twenty-one years. This short audience had a deep impact on him. He later wrote: "I felt such great Divinity in Baba's presence. I don't know how to describe it. It is something never felt before or afterwards—the feeling of Baba's terrific power and energy. At the same time, a certain peace permeated; so that I remarked to Elizabeth, who was outside the room at that time, 'But, Elizabeth, Baba is tremendous, magnificent.' Elizabeth replied, 'Yes, Baba is what He is.' "

After a short rest in the hotel, Baba and the women left by train for Florence, S.C., from Penn Station. Later, Mani wrote from Myrtle Beach a descriptive letter to "Dear Everybody" at Meherazad and Meherabad. At the end of this long letter she wrote, "I forgot to mention one thing. The American people are the most friendly and warm-hearted people—everywhere. And the service is so efficient and willing! It is a perpetual pleasure."

To portray the first few hours of Baba's first visit to Myrtle Beach, I cannot help quoting Kitty Davy, who was a personal witness:

Arriving late noon at Meher Center on a bright sunny day, April 22nd, Baba and party went first to his own

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house, the "New House" at the far end of Long Lake. Norina was awaiting Baba in the living room. It was a wonderful reunion after four long years of waiting. The room was bright with flowers and sunshine and aglow with Baba's loving presence. We stood whilst Baba sat on the sofa with Norina alongside. We remained a few minutes in silence. Thus Baba, bridging as it were the span of years of separation, got up and motioned us to follow, and led by Norina and Elizabeth, allowed himself and all to go through the different rooms, porches, etc.

In his own bedroom he saw a big surprise, a large bed strung in the Indian fashion, not with box springs, but with strips and strips of wide, strong, interlaced tape which can be tightened when necessary, if you know how!

When we were again assembled in the living room, Baba took his board and spelt out, Mani translating, how happy he was to be there, and most of all how deeply touched he was with the love, devotion and work given by both Norina and Elizabeth throughout the past years in preparing such a unique spot for his work and comfort. No detail, no expense, had been spared to carry out his wishes and all had been the labor of love—love direct from the heart, and as such he accepted the gift.¹⁸

Baba proceeded to walk around the grounds surrounding the house, having us all stand at different viewpoints to appreciate the magnificent view of fresh water lakes with a vista of ocean beyond. We then followed Baba out of the large front gates and walked south to the other cabins situated about half a mile away. We stopped first at the Guest House where the Eastern women were to stay. This house was the only house, except for Baba's, fully equipped with kitchen, dining room, etc.¹⁹

The Indian disciples who were to be with Baba during His visit to America and Europe (Adi, Sarosh, Meherjee, Gustadji²⁰ and Dr. Nilu) left Bombay by a TWA flight on April 20th, Sunday, at 2 P.M. Owing to engine trouble, their flight had several halts. The plane was detained at Iceland. After a day's stay in New York, they finally reached Myrtle Beach on April

¹⁸ Mani, in her first letter from the Center, addressed to "Dear Everybody," related Baba's happiness thus:

"This morning (April 23rd) Elizabeth drove us round the whole of the property and Baba told Elinor at the end of it, 'I am not only extremely happy but also touched by your love which has made you do all this for me.' Really they are a wonderful pair!"

¹⁹ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 28-29, (1960).

²⁰ Also spelled Gustadji.

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24th. They were happy to be at the Center-on-the-Lakes, a property of about 500 acres of virgin land, beautifully situated on the Atlantic Coast. Between the ocean and the grounds there are two fresh water lakes. Winding roads had been constructed through the woods.

Elizabeth and Norina had built a beautiful house for Meher Baba on a bluff overlooking the main lake with the ocean beyond. It is situated on the highest point of the Center—a place befitting Baba—the Highest of the High! It had also been thoughtfully furnished to suit Baba's relaxation and work. And this the men *mandali* appreciated the most.

Off to one side of the main lake is a small lagoon spanned by a bridge that naturally divides the buildings at the Center into two groups. Baba allocated the cabins for everyone to stay in. Mehera, Mani, Meheru, and Goher were already residing in the Guest House on the north side, the side Baba's house is on. The men *mandali* were instructed to lodge in different cabins on the south side of the lagoon. Sarosh and Meherjee were lodged in the Cabin on the Hill, Dr. Donkin in the Caretaker's Cabin, Gustadji in the Far Cabin, and Adi with Dr. Nilu in the Near Cabin.

Before resuming the account of Baba's first visit to Myrtle Beach, I wish to quote what Mani said on tape in the late 1970's, as an introduction to a slide documentary on the Meher Spiritual Center:

Baba first visited Myrtle Beach in 1952; we were with him—Mehera, Goher, Meheru, Rano, Kitty and myself. On our arrival I felt that Baba had already been there. His presence was so strong and I realized Baba had blessed the Center long before.

Every nook had so much of His Presence—on the bridges, under the trees, at the beach, in the Barn, by the lake. Naturally, it is the one place in the West Baba had specifically directed to be found—but He had already found it before He sent Elizabeth and Norina to look for it.²¹ He gave the conditions, so that the conditions were like clues to the place Baba already was! He had already

²¹ See: *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. I, p. 86.

"LIFE" THAT IS ETERNALLY OLD AND NEW

Planned it before He sent out to look for it—like a treasure hunt.

And even now, when we think of the Center and its beauty, Baba's beauty, that is reflected there, it is with nostalgia and yet we are there right now in our hearts.

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1952 - PART II

Baba Begins Meeting His Dear Ones

After His arrival in Myrtle Beach, Baba was busy checking the details of His forthcoming programs at the Center, His journey to the West Coast, and His stay in New York. The weather was not good; the days continued to be cloudy and rainy. Owing to the strain of the non-stop flight, He agreed to rest and relax for two weeks. Norina, too, was not in good health, so the atmosphere around Baba was not as lively as it would have been otherwise. On May 8th, Norina was taken to Pinehurst Hospital and was not discharged in time to be present when Baba gave interviews and *darshan*.

New House (sometimes called Baba's house, but later named "Meher Abode" by Baba) where Baba stayed, was far from the men *mandali's* cabins. After Baba's arrival, a young man who was ready to serve as a night watchman was taken to Him. During the day, he wanted to be in town to be with his girlfriend, whom he wished to marry. Baba did not approve of this condition and the boy was not hired. I wonder whether he ever realized the opportunity he had missed—perhaps that of lifetimes—to be close to the Real Beloved. So this duty was entrusted to Adi and Nilu. Adi, in addition to his regular work of cleaning the bathroom and preparing Baba's bed, sometimes also cleaned Baba's room and other parts of New House.

In the first week of May, Donkin, Adi, and Sarosh went to Conway and, after the usual tests, obtained driving licenses for the States. Donkin and Adi were to drive the Plymouth station wagon to the West Coast. Elizabeth would drive Baba, and Sarosh was to follow Baba's car in another station wagon.

At the Myrtle Beach Center, the Lagoon Cabin has a special importance of its own as the *Avatar's* audience chamber, where Baba gave most of His personal interviews. A

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narrow foot path, branching off from the main path, ends at a small set of wooden steps at the front door. The Cabin is a small, single-room building about fifteen feet square. The roar of the ocean is continuously heard in the distance.

During interviews, Baba sat on the far side of the Cabin, directly opposite the main door in a beautiful French armchair. Jeanne and Darwin Shaw were fortunate to meet with Baba there on May 6th, three days before the official schedule of interviews was to begin. Darwin had been at the Center-on-the-Lakes as a caretaker for a period of time. Kitty Davy writes:

Though various persons were the caretakers of the Center during the years 1945-1952, the overall planning was done by Elizabeth and Norina on numberless visits to Myrtle Beach from New York. In fact, Baba's house was built entirely by Mr. Truman Moore whilst they were in New York. As early as 1947, when the two women were with Baba in Satara, India (1947-1949), cables and letters were flying back and forth between the two continents with directions concerning Baba's forthcoming promised visit to Myrtle Beach.

On July 17th, 1947, a message was sent to John Bass and Darwin Shaw, then in Myrtle Beach, as follows: "Today Baba went over maps, pictures and data about Myrtle Beach . . . Baba is definitely coming in the near future, so take care of Myrtle Beach properties as you would take care of Baba and work hard to get rid of mosquitoes"

And again on July 30th, to Darwin Shaw, who was supervising the Center daily: "The two works for Baba are to supervise on his behalf the building of a house for Baba on the Lake, and the mosquito problem . . . that Darwin should think of Baba in all he does and that it is for his eventual coming to America that we are preparing."²⁵

Apart from those who came with Baba from India, Elizabeth, Norina, Margaret, Delia and Ruano stayed at the Center. Darwin and Jeanne Shaw, Malcolm Schloss, Ivy and Charmian Duce, Francis Brabazon, Filis Frederick, Adele

²⁵ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 24, (1960).

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Wolkin, Fred and Ella Winterfeldt and a few others stayed either as Baba's guests or as visitors.

For the first two weeks Baba followed a relaxed schedule with the *mandali*—walking, playing or discussing the rest of His program in the States. Although the arrangements in the New House were perfect, Adi and Nilu, who were on night watch, reported that Baba slept very little owing to His inner spiritual work. His day generally began at 4:30 with a mouth wash, a shave and sometimes a bath. At about 5:30, Adi would drive Him to the Guest House where He would have His breakfast and tea. Then He would cross the bridge over the Lagoon and reach the Original Kitchen where the Westerners gathered for their breakfast, arranged for them by Ruano Bogislav.

After breakfast, Baba generally took a walk to the beach, using the winding path along the lake, down below the Original Kitchen. By 9:30 Baba would return and, after May 9th, He was busy in the Lagoon Cabin meeting those whose appointments had been confirmed in advance. Most of the interviews which Baba gave were scheduled for the 9th to the 11th and also the 16th; these were held in the Lagoon Cabin. Usually, Adi read Baba's board while Meherjee took notes in longhand.

After a period of twenty-five years, an attempt was made to carefully go through these notebooks. It was found that at some places a word or two has either been missed, mutilated, or smudged. I have tried my best to reproduce a few portions of these notes in the subsequent accounts of the interviews.

"God Loves Truth and Honesty"

Ivy Duce and her daughter Charmian saw Baba at 8 A.M. on May 9th. Both of them broke into tears, for they grieved to see Baba so weak and tired. Baba, however, comforted them and inquired about their health. Then His fingers started moving on the board and He asked:

"Ivy, do you love me? Will you stick to me to the end, at whatever cost?"

"Yes, Baba."

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"Will you do my work?"

"Yes, Baba."²⁶

This interview and Ivy Duce's subsequent interviews with Baba were mostly in connection with Sufism Reoriented. A little later Francis Brabazon was called into the cabin.

Baba: (To Francis) I have known you for ages; you will come to know it. (To all) Listen to what I say carefully. The foremost point to remember is that God loves truth and honesty. And if we are to work for God and Baba, we must be honest to God—to Baba, to others and to ourselves. That means, unless we experience what we preach and teach, we are not honest, not only of Sufism but of life itself. To be an atheist, not to believe in God, to be bad even, is better than to be a hypocrite. So we must work on that basis. Is it clear? I *know* what I say; I *feel* what I say.

During the interview, Baba asked Francis Brabazon to return to Australia before July 10th, and added, "Blindly do as I tell you, and you will not be following the blind. Do as I tell you; I KNOW." Afterwards, Baba gave them some personal instructions and the interview ended. Francis later booked his passage on a steamer which happened to be the last one to reach Australia before the specified time limit.

In this and subsequent interviews that Ivy Duce had with Baba, He elucidated various points connected with Sufism. Once Baba stated:

Listen very carefully, because for the first time, I am taking personal interest in Sufism. I am very serious about the reoriented Sufism, and we must be so honest as to have its result appearing all over the world. There are three things that always hinder Truth. First is temptation—very, very few persons can overcome temptation; the temptation of money, fame, power, lust, leadership, are disastrous, very binding and very few escape it. Second, vagueness about things, and third, dishonesty.²⁷

During one of these interviews, Baba casually hinted that He would take Charmian with Him to Europe, and He did.

²⁶ *How A Master Works*, p. 84.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

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"I Want Love, Nothing Else"

Filis Frederick and Adele Wolkin were called for a week's stay at Myrtle Beach. They met Baba on the morning of May 10th.

Baba: (To both) I heard so much about you both, from Elizabeth, Norina, Donkin, and Margaret, and I heard you from within. I feel so happy that at last I have seen you. Are you nervous? (No.) Are you happy? (Very happy.) No more happy than I am in seeing you! When you know me you will love me like a little child. I am the Child—grown up!

I love humor. I love to tease. I work hard here and simultaneously at various places while talking to you. When you love me with pure simple love, there is no barrier. Love: and all doubts go away. Until then, mind gets tempted to doubt; mind goes on working, thinking: "Is this right? Is this wrong?" Love does not bother. Do you love me honestly? (Yes.) What more can you do for Baba? I want love, nothing else! Love me and let God love us. That is what I want. When you love Baba, God will love you, and God's love means everything.

One who is the humblest of the humble is the Greatest of the Great. But it has to be in all honesty, in all truth. Better not to believe in God than to be a hypocrite. So let us love, love, love; all else is illusion.

Before this meeting, Adele and Filis had stolen a glimpse of Baba while He was in New York. Filis, writing of this incident, recalls:

At last, at last, the Beloved came, at 4:30 A.M. at Idlewild Airport, April 20, 1952. None but the few intimate *mandali*—Margaret Craske and Delia DeLeon, who had come from London, and Elizabeth, were allowed to meet Him and His group

After a day's rest they were to take the midnight train to Myrtle Beach out of Penn Station. Of course I knew that, so I proposed to my friend Adele Wolkin that we go

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down to the station and see Baba. We hid behind the big pillars high on the third balcony. Adele looked down: "Oh, there's Baba! And there's Mehera! and Donkin!" Though we were so far away, Baba smiled, gestured upward and we were told later, spelled on the alphabet board what became our Baba signature—"Filadel." Of course He knew we were there. But I suddenly realized I was disobeying Him—none were to contact Him before Myrtle Beach. So I didn't look. I went home feeling very upset by my disobedience.

A letter came from Baba: would "Filadel" like to come to Myrtle Beach as His guests for three weeks? "Yes! Yes!" Another letter changed it to two weeks; then another to one. This is what we had been told Baba did to test you—change plans constantly. But one week seemed heaven—and so it proved.²⁸

The seed of Filis's love for Baba, which eventually brought her to the station, was sown years earlier through an inner experience. She recently shared it in a talk at Myrtle Beach:

One day (1943) I went to the Rama Krishna (Ramakrishna) Center in New York where I had enjoyed the talks by Swami Nicolananda (Nikhilananda) who translated the *Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna*. But this time I looked at the picture of Shri Ramakrishna and it just blanked out. It became a sort of white light, and I heard a voice coming out of the picture say, "He is your Jesus." I turned and looked, and coming on the platform was a figure of a man in a long white garment with flowing auburn hair.

This was just as real as anything. He had very dynamic eyes and was speaking in Aramaic. And I could also understand it in English. It was the Sermon on the Mount Then it was over, and I looked up and the whole congregation was leaving, so it must have lasted an hour. (They usually had hour long talks.) I didn't know what to make of it.

About two weeks later I got an invitation in the mail from Princess Norina Matchabelli to come and hear a talk

²⁸ *The Awakener*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 5, (1972).

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on Meher Baba in the old Hotel Martinique in New York. I went, but at that talk they had no pictures of Baba, but Norina came on stage. Here again was another very interesting thing. I had seen inwardly faces of several people.

One of them was a woman with a turban on, with very black, piercing eyes. The minute I saw Norina, I knew she was that person I'd seen inwardly, maybe a few months before that. Another woman was at the door greeting people and she too was someone I'd seen in a vision or a dream or whatever you want to call it. She had blue eyes and white hair and she had said in this dream, "Attendez le Maitre Parfait," which means, "Wait for the Perfect Master," and there she was. This was Countess Tolstoy.

I didn't see Elizabeth at that meeting, but they invited me to their home. I think it was Nadine who was always the one who talked to newcomers. Her room was filled with Baba pictures, and when I saw one particular picture, still one of my favorites, it was the same man that I had seen on the platform at the Rama Krishna Center.²⁹

In 1948, Adele had written to Baba asking Him to guide her postgraduate education. He approved of her plan to get an M.A. in Philosophy at Columbia University. But she kept on changing the subject of her thesis from one saint to another. This annoyed her faculty advisor so much that he once remarked out of exasperation, "Miss Wolkin, you don't want an M.A., you want salvation."

During this first meeting, Adele recalled her letter to Baba and the words of her faculty advisor. Feeling guilty for not having followed Baba's instruction, she looked dejected. Seeing her worried, Baba gestured, "What's the matter?" Adele replied, "Baba, I did not finish my thesis." Baba knowingly chuckled and, pointing to His heart, gestured, "I am your thesis."

On May 10th, the Shaws had another chance to see Baba with their three children.

Baba: Do you have any idea how happy I feel to see you? I underwent many hardships during the last two

²⁹ *The Meher News Exchange East/West*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (June 1978).

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years. But today I feel so happy to see you dear ones, and you who worked so hard for the Center. You stayed here for one year. Every inch of this place has Norina's, Elizabeth's and Darwin's love in it. I have had no sleep for the last seven nights, yet I feel fresh, because of the love of my dear ones that makes me strong.

God wants love—honest, pure love, uncompromising love with no dishonesty about it. Then God loves us too and then we gain Eternal Bliss. So love is all that matters. It is better not to believe in God, than to be a hypocrite in loving God. So, let's love Him. You love me because I love you, it is My love that makes you love Me.

The Lake of Love

The others who had an audience with Baba on this day, May 10th, were Harry Hartshorne, Margaret Scott, Consuelo Sides, Harry Hetger and Baba's "Fredella." Harry Hartshorne is a nephew of Elizabeth Patterson.

Baba: Harry, I like humor and you have a good sense of humor. One must always try to be happy and make others happy. Otherwise life will be a bore. Honest living is also very important—whereby we know we are not deceiving God, others, ourselves, and the world. All that is expected of us is this honesty and our attempt to make others happy and to be happy.

Elizabeth, when in India, told me so much about you and your chickens! What Elizabeth has done for me through love is beyond imagination.

Margaret Scott had met Baba during His last visit to the States in 1935. She thought that her way of living had caused Baba to suffer. She expressed her apology for her inability to please Him.

Baba: But your love has compensated for the suffering. I know deep down that you do love Baba so much. Baba loves you too.

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M. S.: Sometimes, I am very naughty just because I don't understand. I think I understand now.

Baba: The most important thing to understand is that we must be honest to God, Baba, ourselves and to humanity. Honest in the sense that in loving God there has to be no compromise. Have you anything to ask?

M. S.: I just don't know.

Baba: There is no need to ask. But Baba will help you through His Love. So love God, Baba, and leave the rest to His Divine Will.

She came again the next day and repeated that she had failed Baba and felt grieved because He had to suffer for her. Baba assured her of His love and continued:

As for suffering, I have suffered for myself and for the whole world and mostly for my intimate ones; so, definitely I have suffered for you. But you love me. Hence this suffering has been compensated.

I know exactly how you have tried, what you doubt; how you've tried to overcome this confusion, and how you eventually have come to me. All that means that you have not failed me.

Everyone commits mistakes unless one is Perfect and One with God, but love for Baba wipes away the mistakes. We must remember that God is all Truth, all Beauty. And in our love for God, for Baba, we must be 100% honest. Purity, honesty and love; God wants these three. And you love Baba. So don't bother about anything.

Weaknesses will go; defects will go. Even if they linger on, love will one day consume them. In the Ocean of Love, everything disappears. However dirty one's mind be, the love one has will wipe it out completely. In you, you have a lake of love for Baba. Even if you were to wash your face—all dirt—every day in the lake of Love, the lake would remain clear.

So for every defect, every weakness that persists, you need not bother; it is being washed off. You must love with all your heart and honesty. Love demands that you think

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not of yourself but of the Beloved. So don't worry. Baba loves you; that really matters.

Consuelo Sides was one of Baba's intimate followers. She was not interested in arguments or theories about God.

Baba: Do not dig in many places. Even if it takes long to get water, you should dig in one place. Eventually water will come.

Baba then asked her to follow a few instructions and He continued:

Do this honestly as if your very life depends on it; nothing more and nothing less. If you want to see God as He ought to be seen, do this. And I will help you. But do it very honestly.

Cry! Cry! Cry! God wants us to see Him; He longs for it more than we long for Him. It is the truth.

Harry Hetger came from New York:

Baba: Your visit is good for you and for me because you love me; I love you too. And you love me because I love you. So, just this five minutes' contact will, by God's Grace, last forever. God is Truth and is Eternal and is all Love. That means whatever has been created by love—true Love—never dies. And so this contact will never die.

Evelyn Blackshaw belonged to an orthodox Christian family. In the 40's she was working in a mystically oriented Christian school. She happened to come in contact with Irene Conybeare on whose dresser she saw Baba's picture. She was overjoyed to know that a Christ-like person had come among mankind. She implored Baba inwardly and had a dream of Him as Krishna who gave her such a special smile that she recognized Him as the real Beloved. For the following three days, she continued to see Meher Baba's face in all things, including the keys of her typewriter.

Later, for a year or so, Baba permitted her to write Him a letter each month. Her intense longing to see Baba in person was fulfilled in 1952. About her experience of meeting Baba she writes:

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I stepped into the room . . . and although I found out later that Baba was lying on a sort of chaise lounge in the corner . . . all I saw was the little boy Krishna, beautiful as an angel, . . . brown curls bouncing, brown eyes flashing, sweet smile on His lovely face and little hands outstretched to me in love. So beautiful was He, so lovely, I sat stunned by the wonder of it all and I did not even see Baba until the disciple took me over to Him.³⁰

Evelyn had a good office job in Washington which she had given up to hitch-hike to Baba. She then got an ordinary job in a hotel in Myrtle Beach so that she might have more opportunities to be in the company of the God-Man, Meher Baba.

Baba: What love can do is amply proved by you. I love you and want you to know that all this has been worth the embrace of Love. So, now, unless you wish it, I don't think it is necessary for you to wait here any longer, to take a job in a hotel. Try to love me and don't think I will ever leave you. I will be with you, with love, honest pure love, that is dear to God who is all Purity. So in Baba's love, be brave and face everything. Don't worry about anything.

No Compromise in Loving Him

Fred and Ella Winterfeldt were holding Baba meetings in New York each Monday night. Baba looked extremely pleased to see them.

Baba: I have heard so much about you from Elinor and also from your hearts' voice. I feel very happy—very, very happy indeed. All that you did for Baba, through love, I understand; I know.

F-E: We have nothing to offer you but ourselves. We have surrendered to you, but we have not lived up to it as we should.

Baba: I feel so very touched. What more can one give than wholehearted love? And that you have for me. So all your faults are to me just trifles. In the fire of love, all dirt is

³⁰ *The Awakener*, Vol. 12, No. 2, p. 22 (1968).

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automatically consumed. What we have to do is to be absolutely honest to God, as He is with us. He looks after everything and everyone with Divine Honesty; and we must love Him with heart-felt honesty. In loving Him, there can be no compromise. And as you love me, be sure God will help you love Him and know me in Him.

Baba then referred to the diagram representing the five paths (Vedantism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Sufism and Christian Mysticism) leading to Reality and added:

So, if you love Baba with all your heart and follow His orders, all the five Paths will be included in it Only do as I tell you to do. You know, it is all God, all Truth, all One Reality. When one experiences Reality in one's Self, then all is clear from the beginning to the end and that awakening has *no* beginning or end. Then God as God alone is Real. We are all One.

My love for you and your love for me, and your preparedness to do what I tell you to do will bring you to that Reality. God can do this in a flash. I will tell you tomorrow about my program, so that we can see where you can help.

During Baba's stay in Myrtle Beach, a few had a chance to drive Him around and Fred was one of them. As Baba got in the car, He teasingly asked Fred if he knew the way to the Guest House. It was just a distance of 3/4ths of a mile and Fred smilingly replied, "Yes, Baba," as he knew every inch of the few roads on the Center. But soon, to his amazement, the road he was following ended in a grove of trees in the middle of nowhere. Baba chuckled meaningfully. Maybe, just maybe, He wished to point out that over-confidence in one's self may result in forgetting the One who is behind all selves, our only Guide.

The next day, May 11th, was also a busy day. Mrs. Roothbert, Michael and Ann Kohanow, Enid Corfe, Frank Eaton and a few others were privileged to meet the Master in the Lagoon Cabin.

Mrs. Roothbert expressed her desire to serve people and

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make them happier.

Baba: Life is one long endless chain of existence. Real happiness lies only in loving God and being united with Him. So, the greatest service one can render to humanity is to help people feel this reality. There are many ways of helping people: by charity, giving food, clothes, alms, serving them personally, working in hospitals, etc., etc. But all this help is physical help. It does good to the doer but also places him/her under an obligation, in the process of his/her involution.

That is why Perfect Masters say the only way to help human beings is not just attending to their physical needs, but to give them spiritual upliftment—helping them to see that the purpose of life is knowing God in perfect honesty.

Help others. That is very good indeed but unless you know how to do it, there is always a chance of getting into a mess.

She came again in two days and told Baba that since her childhood she had been in love with Jesus. She added that His words always came to her and she felt that He was in her heart. Then she related to Baba an uplifting spiritual experience she had had with one of His pictures; she also conveyed to Him how very upset she was as it did not last longer.

Baba: I understand all. Even if you had not said anything, I know all.

Mind has the habit of getting exalted and then going down. Sometimes it is full of doubt. So, in one's spirit of trying to seek Truth, one sometimes gets in a mess and feels dry at heart.

God and love for God are not child's play. In love, you have to be ready to drown yourself in the ocean of fire.

Jesus was never serious about anything, except about God, whose incarnation He was. He was serious about Himself and God, with whom He was One. Otherwise, He was so lighthearted that He even got crucified for others, with the same "lightness" of heart. Why? Because He had

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no wants at all. He did not want; He gave. So the only thing that God wants is not ceremony, not *yogas*; He wants love—the love that makes you forget yourself in Him.

Do you know that Jesus told His disciples—"Leave everything and follow Me"? Now, if I were to tell you this, your mind would fluctuate. It will think, "Is it true? Is it like Jesus? Is Baba right or wrong?" So unless and until you are wholeheartedly prepared to follow someone whom you think true—like Jesus—the best thing for you would be not to submit to anyone. Just go on following the inner voice. Can you surrender absolutely to Baba? Just ask yourself. Be honest to the very core. If not, do not bother about it.

Then Mr. and Mrs. Kohanow came in to meet Baba. One of them had seen Him many times in dreams. They opened the subject of genuine feeling, or certainty.

Baba: Most of us long to know God, long to love Him as He ought to be loved. And yet we do not know how to do it. Because the certainty of feeling is not there. When one has conviction, one knows what to do.

The safest way to the Goal is to surrender through love to the One who has attained the Goal. After having seen me and contacted me, aspire to have a burning longing to see God; to become One with God. Sincerely invoke, "Baba, let me see God and then let me give light and happiness to others." Let this thought be constantly with you—wherever you are and whatever you do.

Giving expression to the love and intimacy He felt for Frank Eaton, Baba dictated from His board:

At last Frank has come. Frank, we were talking so much about you; you worked so lovingly at the Center and I wanted to see you so much. I am happy. Very happy.

To Enid Corfe, who had met Baba many times earlier, He joked: "You look just the same, my dear Enid. Now that I see you after many years I feel very happy." The next day she was called again. Enid used to suffer from insomnia. Baba said to her, "Do not worry about your sleeplessness. Less sleep will not

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affect the body as much as worry about it; and never take drugs. Remember me and remain happy."

"When You Go, God Comes"

After the 11th, the main day for the interviews was the 16th. The interview began with Terry and Ivy Duce seeing Baba. At the beginning Baba explained:

God alone is Real. He does everything for every one of us. We cannot escape His Will. He loves us and the goal of life is to love Him, know Him in absolute honesty, and, avoiding all temptations be united with Him.

Then He spoke with them about the buildings to be constructed on the Myrtle Beach Center and the work to be carried out through it. Later, He also discussed with Terry the different routes leading to California. Baba was planning to choose two routes: one for the men disciples and the other for Baba, Sarosh, and the women disciples.

Lud Dimpfl had an appointment with Baba on the 16th. He flew all the way from California at considerable expense to see Baba for just five minutes, even though Baba had arranged to be in California in two weeks. During the flight, Lud's mind kept questioning why he had gone to such extremes to see Baba. He wrote about this:

The sorting-out process continued. I finally decided that it was to make this trip that I had been born. There was nothing else I wanted to do with my life other than to spend it with the Master—to find out *what* the Christ is. And if Baba wasn't the Christ—well, it was worth gambling a lifetime on the chance that he *might* be the Christ.³¹

Lud was beginning an engineering career, but when he met Baba he said that it was of no importance; all he wanted to do was to go and live with Baba in India.

Baba: What you said has touched me. I am very happy. I could give long, long explanations to intellectual giants and make them feel that they know nothing. But to

³¹ *How A Master Works*, p. 88.

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you who said a few words from deep down in your heart, I can only say I feel very happy.

You want to know God. You would like to live with me and give up everything for me. I am pleased. That's the only real thing to do. Now, listen: you go on as you have been doing now, till July, 1953, then join me right here. But you will have to do as I tell you to do. So, till July, do what you have been doing at present.

To a professor, Baba explained:

All understanding is not *knowing*. Everything that can be understood is not God. When you go, God comes. But how to go? Not easy. But unless you experience that, you cannot *know*.

To a nurse who had suffered from a nervous breakdown, He conveyed:

I have repeatedly said for ages that the only thing worth living for and dying for is God. So Love for God is the only Reality. In any form you can love Him. Love has two aspects—Impersonal and Personal. Love Baba or love God within you; it is the same. But the feeling of love must be from within.

To one of His followers regularly attending meetings, Baba very lovingly conveyed:

We must be very honest with each other, with all, and with God. Because, fundamentally, it is honesty that counts. Jesus was divinely honest and so He was crucified for the sake of others. God is infinite honesty and so He loves us all equally.

In our love for God, we must be wholeheartedly honest. That means we must love Him with no selfish ends. You have to work on this basis of love. Make people know that Baba wants one to love others and make others love God, at the cost of one's happiness. So whatever you do, do it honestly for God and Baba.

In loving God, *heart is* essential. But if heart and mind both can be balanced, it is ideal. Do not worry about anything; take me with you.

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The last interview of the day was with Toni Roothbert, who stayed at Briarcliffe Acres. She referred to the impending world catastrophe which seemed inevitable to her. She also expressed her concern about the unspiritual attitude of the younger generation. Baba explained:

America now leads the material side of the world and yet has such potential that she can lead the world spiritually, if awakened. Awakening is love for God in the form of Jesus—God crucified. And God will do it. He can do it. And now the time is near, very near when the spiritual upliftment has to take place. America is destined to lead the world spiritually.

Truth never fails, and lovers of God will soon triumph. In this country at present, unfortunately, the youth is not taught spirituality. Youth is not even given ethical education. But be sure that these very youths who know not of God, but know only to eat, drink, be merry and do lustful actions, will soon get the shock of their lives and know that loving God is life, real life, the Goal of life.

During these interviews, some who saw Baba for the first time had been waiting to meet Him for a long time. However, those who wait for the God-Man never wait in vain; the compensation invariably outweighs the agony of waiting. The short audience each had with Baba provided unforgettable moments of marvelous, uplifting experience in which everyone's spirit soared high.

When Baba gestured, "How are you?" to any of them, it was not a surface inquiry, but something much, much deeper—a compassionate concern for the person's physical and spiritual well-being. As they looked at Him, their smiles often turned into sobs of rare delight, for the dream had become incredibly alive. When they came out of the Lagoon Cabin, it seemed that something sublime had flowed into them and its outer expression was the tears that coursed down their cheeks. A great change and an awakening!

In a general way, it can well be said that after coming in Baba's contact, one's environment does not necessarily change: what changes is one's attitude in evaluating it and one's

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response to life's various situations. The little worries of life are still there but they worry you less and less. After being drawn into Baba's love-orbit, the awareness of your weaknesses surprises you, but it does not scare you or create a sick, nervous feeling. Baba's assurance, "I am with you," helps you to face yourself with a brave heart.

The fact is that you don't find Him; He finds you, for you are basically His. It is this moment of recognition, a moment of attuning yourself to the divine harmony, that sets your heart upon Him. As a result, one begins an intense re-evaluation of one's life. No longer is it completely self-centered; instead of trying only to please yourself, you long to please Him.

During the interviews that Baba gave in the Lagoon Cabin, He often pointed out the guidelines:—honesty of mind, purity of heart, and love for God, Baba, without any compromise—are the beacon lights that will make our lives worthy of living for Him and dying in Him.

First Darshan at the Center

Baba agreed to give *darshan* to one and all who came to visit Him at Myrtle Beach on May 17th, which was appropriately called the Open Day. More than 1,000 people, including the black families helping on the Center, were invited for this occasion. The Lagoon Cabin was too small for so large a crowd, so Elizabeth made the necessary arrangements for this program to be held in the Barn.

The Barn is located in a thick grove of live oak trees about half a mile from the Lagoon Cabin, just off the main road to the beach. It is a beautifully refinished cypress barn that had been moved from the town of Conway, about fifteen miles away. It is a spacious building, about 50 feet long and 30 feet wide, with entrances and porches at each end. Its location in the grove of oak trees provides it with an atmosphere of deep peace and serenity.

Margaret, Delia, Jeanne (Shaw), Filis, Adele and others were given specific duties by Baba for this day. It was a bright morning though it became cloudy later on. Though Baba did

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not feel very strong, He looked wonderfully better. As He took His seat in a straight-backed green upholstered chair, he looked radiant and beautiful with His hair well braided and the plait tucked under His collar.

Those who came for *darshan* were instructed to touch Baba's hand and pass by. The old-time followers of Baba stood in a queue alongside those who had recently heard about Him. The old-timers introduced the new ones to the Master. He greeted each one with a heart-warming smile. Baba invariably rose up from His seat and sometimes also walked halfway to greet the black families. Perhaps this symbolic act was Baba's own way of according dignity to the blacks.

People were continuously coming to see Baba and they would leave after having only a few moments with Him. Elizabeth, sitting at Baba's right, asked, "How can you help each when they pass by so quickly?" Baba answered, "If they linger longer, the mind begins to work and I want to touch the heart." Another time Baba stated that mind works infinitely quicker than heart, hence the one must be slowed down and the other quickened.³²

With the intention of forestalling repetitious and unnecessary questions, a three-page mimeographed pamphlet was handed out to each one of the visitors. It contained the following excerpts from Meher Baba's messages and dissertations:

God is not to be learnt, or discussed or studied or argued about; God is to be contemplated, felt, loved and lived. The purpose of every kind of *Yoga* [search for Truth], *Karma Yoga*, *Raj Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, is to lose the limited self by forgetting the self through selfless service to others, through meditation, through love for God, and to gain the Unlimited Self.

Miracles:

Why should we produce petty imitation illusions in the already created mighty infinite Illusion? Unless absolutely necessary for the spiritual purpose of a general collective drawing of mankind towards Self-realization,

³² *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 34, (1960).

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miracles performed unnaturally or supernaturally can interfere with God's ordained evolutionary process.

Healing:

Real healing is spiritual healing, whereby the soul, becoming free from desires, doubts and hallucinations, enjoys the eternal bliss of God.

Untimely physical healing retards the spiritual healing. If borne willingly, physical and mental suffering can make one worthy of receiving spiritual healing. Consider mental and physical suffering as gifts from God which, if accepted gracefully, lead to everlasting happiness.

Silence:

God has been everlastingly working in silence, unobserved, unheard, except by those who experience His Infinite Silence. If my silence cannot speak, of what avail would be speeches made by the tongue?

"Leave Everything to Me"

Over 500 people visited Baba for *darshan*. Some of them were deeply touched by His presence; a few recognized Him as their Beloved Master. Recounted below is the story of a very sincere black woman, Beryl Williams from New York, which in a way represents the narratives of those who during this visit accepted Meher Baba as the God-Man and longed to commit their lives to Him.

Relating the background of her visit to see Baba in Myrtle Beach, Beryl Williams wrote that she had attended a program held at Carnegie Hall in New York. Beryl had been told about the program by a friend who was unable to come. There, Norina Matchabelli had given a talk: "Divine Love is the Solution." In her speech, she recounted some of her personal experiences with Meher Baba. Beryl felt that if Baba were the One who had Divine Love, she must see Him.

In her impatience to see or at least feel Baba's presence, she began to meditate wholeheartedly on Baba, in the hope of

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having some inner experience. One day, in a vision, she saw the letters W A I T written in gold. This comforted her a little. About her first meeting with Baba, on the Open Day (May 17), Beryl writes:

The day finally came when we received the coveted invitation to spend a week at Myrtle Beach with Baba, but due to gross neglect of practical matters and other imagined difficulties on my part, I found myself faced with the most trying problem of all—how to meet with the expenses adequately?

Meanwhile I attended a group meeting at the Winterfeldts' and John Bass suggested I write to Baba directly and explain this problem of problems. I did and Baba replied that while it would be more practical for me to remain in New York until He came there in July. He, on the other hand, would be happy to see me in Myrtle Beach. In the event I decided to come, I should inform Him of the date and time of my arrival there.

The only decision then was whether to make Baba happy or be practical, because, strangely enough, the mountain of other difficulties had suddenly vanished, leaving me the conviction that if I waited one minute longer than necessary, I would either burst with impatience or the opportunity to see Baba would be taken away from me and by now the question of meeting Baba had become for me a matter of life and death.

I couldn't afford to take chances after Baba had come all the way from India to meet all who wanted to see Him Off I rushed to the bus terminal for the schedule and wrote Baba that I would arrive at 1:30 on May 17th.

The interminable hours of travel were whiled away in wondering what kind of reception I'd receive; would Baba be pleased that I chose to run to Him or would He send me packing because I didn't wait in New York, as He'd suggested? Or, most unbearable of all, would He say that I didn't belong to Him at all, that He's not the Beloved of my heart as I'd come to think of Him and send me in search of some other Master or will I be allowed to follow Him to the

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end of the earth if need be? The one certainty in all this mental clamor was that at the end of this journey, Baba was awaiting me! Baba expected me!

Sarosh met me at the bus terminal and immediately whisked me off to the Center where I stepped onto the porch of the Barn. I spied Baba through the screen door seated with a group of disciples around Him. Delia opened the door for me and said, "Baba, this is Beryl." As I hesitated at the entrance Baba rose from His chair and stood with outstretched, open arms to me. The next thing I knew I was weeping my heart out on the Beloved's shoulder at the joy of having found my home at last. Baba left no room for doubt as to where I belonged in His welcome.

Later, as I sat beside Him, while He inquired about the trip and had I eaten lunch, etc., I received the unmistakable impression that it was Baba who had drawn me to Him in His own way, particularly when in the course of the interview He suddenly turned to Adi and spelled out on His board, "It was worth it," while I happily nodded and babbled foolishly.

After giving me some personal instructions of what He wanted me to do, on His alphabet board, Baba looked deep into my heart before enjoining on me the simple command, ". . . leave everything to Me—leave it to Me." So simple, but oh, how difficult for a willful nature! Yet, I felt a great burden lifted from my heart which until that moment I'd been unaware of even carrying. I knew then what it was to be at peace with oneself. Finally, Baba introduced me to Mrs. Patterson and explained that Mrs. Patterson would make all arrangements concerning my stay and then to return to New York.³³

While at Myrtle Beach, Ivy Duce had a nice opportunity to introduce some of her *mureeds* to Baba. Among them was Edward James, a black, who availed himself of this chance to meet the Master in the Barn. He was a voracious reader of books on spirituality. Knowingly and teasingly, Baba asked him, "Tell me in exactly five words what you have learned

³³ *The Glow*, February 1975.

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from all these books." Unable to condense the vast amount of information he had gathered, Edward kept quiet.

Baba repeated His question, but the young man expressed his inability to answer by a shake of his head. With a smile, Baba spelt on the board an answer for Edward, "I have not learned anything—five words—isn't it so?" Then Baba explained a few profound truths in simple words. To unlearn is not an easy process, but Baba's "five words" lead the way. The best course is to leave everything to Him.

On some days, the interviews continued after lunch, and some afternoons were spent playing croquet on the Guest House lawn. Occasionally Margaret would take the Indian women boating until they learned to handle the boat. Some evenings were spent in the Guest House. Baba would ask Mani to read out English translations of the *ghazals* of Hafiz or lines from Indian Perfect Masters, or lovers of God.

Frequently there would be rounds of jokes told by all. Profundity and fun went hand in hand. Now and then Baba showed interest in hearing the life stories of saints who had suffered in their love for God. Once Adele told a story relating to the life of St. Peter. About Baba's comments on the subject, Filis writes:

Baba, bending His beautiful head, said, "Peter loved Me the Most—but even he denied Me." Delia asked, "Was that a conscious thing or did he do it unconsciously?" Baba replied, "None loved Jesus as Peter did. It had to be. He was conscious." Delia: "I always understood Judas was unconscious when he betrayed Jesus." Baba: "The greatest service was Judas' betrayal. When he kissed Christ on the cheek, he did nothing. God did all. He behaved under a veil. He had the most difficult thing to do for the Master of all the disciples."³⁴

Later Baba indicated that Judas had become God-realized. On another occasion, Baba told this group that Saint Teresa and Saint Catherine of Sienna were His two favorite women saints, and that He especially liked Saint Francis of Assisi and St. Augustine among the men.

³⁴ *The Awakener*, Vol. 14, No. 2, p. 9, (1972).

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Baba's Home in the West

It is difficult to narrate the incredible experiences of those who were drawn to Baba during His first stay at the Center. And it is still more difficult to put into words how this contact, as time passed, intensified the awareness of Baba's divine presence in each one's heart. So here I prefer just to add a few comments about the Center itself. For when Baba stayed there for two months, beginning April 22, 1952, He was inaugurating not just the physical property of 500 acres, but a phase of His Divine Plan which continues to this day.

Even now, the various activities carried out at different parts of the Center are still fresh in the memories of those who were with Baba. But more than that, every structure built on the property, small or big, was endowed with its own outstanding feature and eternal inner importance: the New House, especially built for Baba, retains its unrivalled spiritual importance; the Guest House, where the Indian women *mandali* stayed; the Lagoon Cabin, the *Avatar's* audience chamber; the Barn, where the God-Man dispensed His spiritual bounty; all are still fragrant with the perfume of His presence.

In short, Baba's love and presence, experienced by His dear ones and the visitors during the earlier interviews and *darshan* on the Open Day, still permeate the entire property with a penetrating sublimity. The following quote, from one of Baba's interviews given in the Lagoon Cabin, sheds light on the continuity of this exalting experience. To one of the visitors Baba had conveyed:

I will tell you why you feel happy here. Those who are connected with me ought to feel happy here for two reasons. Ages ago this was a place where Baba visited, moved about and stayed, and the combination of the lake, ocean and the woods gives it a unique atmosphere.

No wonder that in His subsequent visits to Myrtle Beach, Baba referred to the Meher Center-on-the-Lakes as His Home in the West.

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In Cars to California

The first part of Baba's work in the States—the interviews and *darshan* at the Center—was complete. Next Baba was to visit California with some of His Eastern and Western disciples. Gabriel Pascal had informed Baba that he was putting two houses at His disposal in Hollywood. Baba was going to stay there for a day and see some visitors. However, His main intention was to meet His dear ones, including the Sufis, staying on the West Coast.

Just a day or two before Baba started on the journey, He visited Youpon Dunes, Elizabeth's house (that had been her father's) on the ocean. With considerable concern He moved through the various rooms. Perhaps this interest was secretly linked with His forthcoming stay here in this house to recuperate after the auto accident that occurred about a week later.

On May 19th, Adi, Donkin, Gustadji, Nilu and Meherjee left in a Plymouth station wagon for Meher Mount, Ojai, near Los Angeles; they had to drive more than three thousand miles. After their departure that morning, Baba met four of Margaret Craske's ballet students. As Adi and Meherjee had left for California, Rano read Baba's board.

After seeing each of them individually and together, Baba asked them to sit quietly on a sofa. He then silently stood before each, pouring His love into their hearts. I don't know if Baba blessed others at the Center in this way; perhaps this was a special gesture of His compassion, to compensate the dancers for the inconvenience and difficulties—thunder and hail storms—they had faced in their flight to Myrtle Beach. No suffering on one's way to the Beloved goes unnoticed or remains unrewarded. Tex Hightower, one of the dancers and now a ballet teacher, during his visit to Meherazad in 1979, reminisced:

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My memories of Baba at that first meeting have remained very vivid through the years. Although I was quite literally overwhelmed by the immensity of the love He poured upon me I do remember being struck with the power of His physical beauty. His skin was of the most beautiful color and quality, and it possessed a luminescence that was extraordinary.

When He collected the four of us again after having seen us individually, He seated us like a row of pins upon a couch on the south wall of the Lagoon Cabin, and I remember Baba's walk at the time, particularly as it was the only time I saw Him completely free of injury. He strode up and down the opposite wall, sometimes pausing as though to gaze out the window. But I do not think He actually did gaze; there was such an intensity of energy about Him. There was a spring and a remarkable vitality in His stride, and all of His movements were done in the most beautiful and natural rhythm.

Presently He came and sat before us. I do not remember all that He said, but I do remember His saying that we could never know how much He loved us. And finally He gestured, "I was with you in the plane yesterday, now you must take me back with you." He then sent us away.

Many years later, I heard from different people who were with Him on the day before our meeting while we were dealing with the difficulties, frustrations and dangers of the flight from Minneapolis to Myrtle Beach, that He was apparently very agitated throughout the flight time and proceeded to make those about Him quite as uncomfortable as He appeared.

Finally, we arrived safely (about 8 P.M., I think). Ivy Duce was with Baba when He was told that we were at last in Myrtle Beach. She told me that Baba looked very lovingly and turned and conveyed to her, "I was not planning to work tomorrow, but Love enslaves me." As He said this He patted His pocket where He had kept the one telegram we had sent Him along the way.

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Preparations for Baba's journey across America were practically complete. Baba, Mehera, Mani and Meheru were to travel in Elizabeth's Nash, a powerful car, while Sarosh, with Delia, Kitty, Rano and Goher, was to follow Baba's car in a station wagon. In the second week of May, Ivy Duce and others had suggested that instead of a tiring week's drive by car, Baba and His disciples take a 10 hour flight to the West Coast which would be quite comfortable.

On May 21st, the day of their departure, it rained heavily, with loud thunder and lightning flashes, not an unusual happening whenever Baba would launch some important work. Toni Roothbert arrived at the New House in the rain. She had come with a write-up by one of her friends, Anton Baarslag, who had met Baba on the Open Day. Baba was resting, but Delia managed to bring the contents of his article to Baba's notice. He liked the way in which it was presented. Two days later, the article was published in the Myrtle Beach News, under the title "Who are your Neighbors?" About his personal impression of Baba the columnist wrote:

Like many others, we were happy to avail ourselves of the opportunity offered to meet Meher Baba. He is a slender, dark-complexioned, mild mannered and simple man. Besides an extraordinary kindness in his face and bearing, we seem to detect something indefinable in his appearance, which we will call, for the lack of a better word, transcendental.³⁵

I have quoted this short excerpt to show how even those who casually happened to see Baba on that day were impressed with His humanity and simplicity. Their brief contact with Him was a profound experience, so powerful, that they found themselves groping for words to explain the effect of His presence.

Now it was time to go, and all the luggage was being loaded neatly in the two cars. When Elizabeth was ready to drive, Baba asked her if she had taken her insurance policy. She hadn't and so Baba told her to collect it on their way out from Youpon Dunes. She knew exactly where it was and promptly got it. She placed the policy in the top of her bag.

³⁵ *Life Circular* No. 6.

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(And, as it turned out later, this was precisely the document required after the accident.) Thus, the last practical instruction Baba gave before getting into the car—an instruction given so casually—proved to be absolutely essential three days later.

On May 21st, Baba and those with Him stopped at a motel in Columbia. On May 22nd, after visiting a few places of interest, they stayed overnight at Murphy, a small town near the Tennessee border. The next day the women disciples visited Ruby Falls, a very lovely sight at Crystal Rock, Rock City. Elizabeth remarked that if they were to spend their days like this, she wondered if they would reach California in time. To this Baba replied, "This is our last sightseeing!" And so it turned out. On the night of the 23rd Baba rested at the Pond Crest Motor Court in the Ozarks. He did not go out for supper. He had only milk and bread in His room and the following day He wished to have the same for His breakfast.

God-Man Spills His Blood

May 24th was a fateful day in Baba's *Avataric* mission. It was profoundly significant in that it ushered in intense physical suffering for Baba, and a simultaneous release of His Love and compassion for humanity: Crucifixion and Dispensation in one. Baba, Mehera, Mani and Meheru were in the Nash driven by Elizabeth. In the morning, this car met with a terrible accident. Instead of trying to narrate what happened, I prefer to quote the persons who were either directly involved, or close eye witnesses to this frightful event.

Kitty Davy, who was in the station wagon that followed Baba's car, wrote in her article "Recollection, Part II":

We were up early as usual. About 5 A.M. the group stood waiting in front of the motel for Baba's signal to step into the cars. This morning Baba delayed starting, however. He came out of his room and stood quite still for some minutes on the doorstep, withdrawn, sad and unusually still. No last minute questions, no haste to be off. Elizabeth sat at the wheel awaiting his signal. Ten minutes elapsed

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before Baba walked to his car, followed by the women. The rest of us got into Sarosh's car as before. After a short distance, Baba's car stopped suddenly and Baba got out and paced up and down the right side of the road. We too got out and stood by our car. No word was uttered. This happened twice.³⁶

Delia DeLeon, traveling with Kitty in Sarosh's car, recalled:

That morning (the 24th) Baba seemed very depressed and haggard. He impressed on us again that we must not get lost . . . at one of the villages, we stopped to have a cup of coffee and cokes We then put on speed to meet Baba at the appointed place. We could see no sign of his car and were beginning to get worried.

It was about 10:05 A.M. We heard an exclamation of alarm from Sarosh. We turned our heads to the right. At first we could not take in what had happened; we could not see clearly from the car. We saw people standing around Baba, who seemed to be lying on the ground. The women were lying in various directions. Sarosh exclaimed, "O God, there's been an accident!"

With lightning speed we jumped out of the car and rushed forward. The anguish of that moment is unforgettable . . . Baba's face with blood pouring from his head . . . his eyes just staring straight ahead as if into unfathomable distances. He made no sound nor sign . . . just lay there motionless . . . Elizabeth was in the car doubled over the wheel. Her first question had been "Is he alive?" The only one not injured was Mani.³⁷

Elizabeth, who was driving Baba's car, later narrated:

It had rained the night before and Route No. 64 was slippery, oil-slick. The shoulder of the road was not wide and there were ditches on either side. As we came up over the crest of a small hill a car came along driving on the left-hand side of the road, going at a good clip. I started to slow up. This car continued without slowing up right at us on the left hand side of the road.

At any instant I expected him to turn . . . at the last

³⁶ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 40 (1960).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

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instant he saw us and put on the brakes, whirling around to take up the entire side of the road. The point of contact was my bumper which made him whirl all the more. Yet he, and two others with him in the front seat, were not hurt . . . We learned later he was a Korean veteran, a double amputee, who was driving for the very first time that day, a car made especially for him; also he was used to driving on the left hand side, in Japan . . . My one feeling was "Don't go in the ditch!" Just before it happened Baba stretched out his hand and pointed at the oncoming car.³⁸

And to take up Kitty's narrative again: "The first car to pass the scene was a man driving his wife to the Prague Clinic, 7 miles distant, to have a baby; it was they who summoned the ambulances. The victims had been thrown clear of the car into the soft mud." And to continue with Delia's account: "In the meantime we brought our coats and covered them . . . my little pillow³⁹ was put under Baba's head. After what seemed an eternity, the ambulances arrived. Rano, Kitty and Goher went with the injured ones, and I drove with Sarosh to make phone calls and send cables . . . "

Dr. Ned Burlison, surgeon-owner of the small, modern, well equipped Prague Clinic, wrote about his distinguished patient as follows:

As you know, the ambulance brought the victims of the accident into the hospital about 11:00 A.M., May 24th, 1952. As usual, I began attending the first one that was brought in, who happened to be Mrs. Patterson. By the time I had determined the major extent of her injuries, they brought in Mehera Irani . . . I remember (while attending her injuries) Dr. Irani began urging me to come and see about Baba. Of course I had no idea who Baba was and barely heard her because of the concentration on what I was doing

When I finally got around to attending to Baba, I was surprised to see an individual who was injured as badly as he was, still smiling. I was also astounded to find that he did not speak a word or make any sound denoting discomfort. I assumed that he could not speak, but was

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁹ Now preserved at the Center in Myrtle Beach.

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informed soon by Dr. Irani that he did not speak because of a willful act. I knew that we were going to have to give him a general anaesthetic (pentothal) to set his fractures and suspected that he would say something at that time, but he didn't.

The most attractive quality of his personality that first day was the way he would look at me with those big brown eyes as if he were reading my mind. Later I determined that the most astounding quality was that something which made it possible for him to receive such profound devotion and loyalty from so many fine and educated people. That quality cannot be forced. Such devotion can only be possible because he deserved it or earned it.⁴⁰

Dr. Goher Irani, Baba's personal physician gave this description of Baba's facial injuries when He was taken to the clinic:

The septum of beloved Baba's nose was broken. There was profuse bleeding from his nose until the nostrils were plugged at the hospital. Rano sat with Baba and kept mopping up the profusion of blood while I tried to persuade Dr. Burleson to attend to Baba. The doctor was so busy attending to Mehera's head wound that he would not come until that was stitched, so I requested him to let me at least have the material for plugging.

Thus with his permission I was able to plug beloved Baba's nose with gauze strips and so stop further bleeding. Baba had swallowed so much blood that in the night he vomited more than a kidney basin full of blood. The nose bridge being broken was the cause of Baba losing the beautiful shape of his nose.

It happened that Baba only wore the lower denture on that day and the force of his fall from the car caused the denture to cut into his upper gum, . . . which made eating and drinking very difficult and painful.⁴¹

Dr. Burleson referred to Mehera as the beautiful young lady with the "worst" skull fracture he had ever seen—like "an

⁴⁰ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 40-42 (1960).

⁴¹ *How A Master Works*, p. 96.

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egg that you dropped on the floor." "They were all wonderful people and wonderful patients," he later remarked. On May 29th, he sent the following cable to the Jessawalas at Poona:

Irani family all doing well. None will die none will be permanently disabled. We shall send them home to you ultimately as well as when they left except for their unhappy experience.

The accident occurred in Lincoln County, two miles east of Meeker, Oklahoma, which is a few miles west of Prague. This town which is halfway across America was settled by Czechoslovakian immigrants, hence the name.

The accident was a major event in Meher Baba's life and changed the course of His external activities. As He had mentioned in *Life Circular* No. 1, this period was the first part of His tripartite Life, when "bindings dominated freedom": and it reached its crescendo as He met with the auto accident, an occurrence that had never crossed the minds of His lovers. However, as Baba mentioned later, it was ordained that the God-Man spill His blood on American soil.

It seems that He purposely withheld the infinite power He had at His disposal and, through the accident, took on Himself the sufferings of humanity for its spiritual upliftment. Years later, while journeying in a car, Meher Baba conveyed, "Baba got His physical bones broken so as to break the backbone of Machine (Machine Age), keeping intact its spiritual aspect."

The Personal Disaster

Dr. Burleson's hospital was a small, clean, well-equipped place. However, owing to the grave injuries and complex bone and skull fractures, a brain specialist and a bone specialist from Oklahoma City were called in. Baba was accommodated in the doctor's office. He was hemorrhaging internally and while lying on a cot it was hard for Him to spit out blood.

The clinic staff was informed and Baba was given a hospital bed. Mehera and Elizabeth were in one room; Baba had instructed Kitty to stay in the same room and attend to

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their needs. Meheru was lodged in the library. The entire staff of the hospital was busy taking the best possible care of the patients.

With two fractured arms and broken ribs it was hard for Elizabeth to sign either the insurance papers or her travelers checks. During Baba's stay in the hospital, the phase of helplessness and hopelessness seemed to operate intensely. This was in testimony to Baba's statement, "Until July 10, weakness would dominate strength and bindings would dominate freedom."

Delia and Sarosh sent cables about this hellish happening to the men *mandali*, who had reached Meher Mount, Ojai, California, and to others residing in America and India. Donkin was instructed to fly to Oklahoma as soon as possible. Adi was ordered to drive back in the station wagon with Meherjee, Gustadji and Nilu. From New York, Ivy Duce and Charmian rushed to Prague.

On Mrs. Duce's arrival, Baba, with His divine calm and confidence about Him, conveyed to her through His board, "You must understand that this was God's Will and it will result in benefit to the whole world." This was His message to one and all who had already heard, or in the course of time, were to know of His accident.

During her short stay in Prague, Baba told her that under the present circumstances, He had to cancel His visit to the West Coast. Many people, including some Sufis, were expecting to see Baba, so He told Ivy Duce to go to California on an "important mission" to explain to His dear ones, eagerly awaiting for His *darshan*, His inability to be there physically.

Adi, with Nilu, Meherjee and Gustadji, left the West Coast on the morning of May 26th and, driving at great speed, reached Prague on the evening of the 28th. On their arrival, while Sarosh was giving them a vivid account of the tragic incident, Baba sent a message to Adi that he could come and see Him but shouldn't shed tears. However, as soon as Adi saw the Beloved of his heart, helplessly lying in bed with a swollen face, he couldn't control the tears that began to stream down his cheeks. Baba asked Adi and Nilu to attend to Him at night,

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taking turns.

Dr. Donkin's knowledge of orthopedics became very helpful. During Don's first meeting with Baba in London in the early 30's he had expressed a wish to leave England and permanently join Baba in India. Baba asked Donkin to first complete his medical course and even suggested that he study orthopedics. Donkin followed Baba's instructions and the practical skill that he acquired in this subject was of great service to Baba, especially after His second auto accident in India.⁴² In many instances it has been revealed that Baba's casual suggestions had far reaching significance.

After a stay of twelve days or so in Prague, all the patients were discharged from the hospital. On June 4th, Adi drove Mani, Delia, Meheru and Gustadji in the station wagon and reached Myrtle Beach on June 6th. Donkin and Rano flew from Oklahoma, reaching Youpon Dunes before Baba's arrival. Baba's leg was in a plaster cast, so it was inconvenient for Him to fly to Myrtle Beach. Baba, Mehera, Kitty, Goher and Elizabeth traveled in two ambulances.

Baba and most of the women *mandali* stayed in Youpon Dunes, Elizabeth's house. About this time, Mani mailed a letter to the Indian women. She wrote, "To see Baba confined to bed is very sad. We cannot help Him in His suffering and at the moment He has made Himself so helpless that He cannot help Himself."

The God-Man is love personified and the external aspect of His love, out of compassion, expresses itself through suffering. It is beyond human comprehension to fathom the spiritual significance of His suffering, so I prefer to quote Baba's few statements on the subject. In 1937, Meher Baba explained:

A Perfect Master, who has to take upon himself the burdens of the world, to absorb them, must necessarily have physical reactions, and consequently must suffer physically, like ordinary human beings. By submitting themselves to the law of action and reaction, the Perfect Masters establish that law But in spite of subjecting themselves to this law, they stand

⁴² On December 2, 1956 near Satara MS (India).

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above the law, and could have rid themselves from physical reactions. What then could be the meaning and purpose of action and reaction? . . . The Perfect Master absorbs duality in his True Existence in order to sublimate it.

And in the late 1950's, He also stated:

The Avatar does not take upon himself the *karma* of the world nor does he become bound by it. But he takes upon himself the suffering of the world which is the result of its *karma*. His suffering for the world is vicarious. It does not entail entanglement with the *karma* of the world. But humanity finds its redemption from its *karma* through his vicarious sufferings, e.g., illness, humiliation, accidents and the like. In his own ways, the Avatar unfailingly fulfills his incarnation by giving a spiritual push to his age.⁴³

Again, four years later when Baba met with the second auto accident, He disclosed that it was a part of His spiritual work and remarked, "Ordinary man suffers for himself. Perfect Masters suffer for humanity, whereas the *Avatar* suffers for one and all things and beings." On June 13th, a message from Meher Baba was released for all, and especially those who were deeply touched by this unforeseen calamity, in which Baba disclosed the following:

The personal disaster, for some years foretold by me, has at last happened while crossing the American Continent—causing me through facial injuries, a broken leg, and a broken arm, much mental and physical suffering. It was necessary that it should happen in America. God willed it so.

Later in New York, when Fred Winterfeldt met Baba, with reference to the accident, he asked, "Baba, did it have to be?" With a benign smile Baba gestured, "Yes, so it ever was, and so it ever shall be." The suffering of the God-Man is an inseparable aspect of His love for humanity.

⁴³ *Beams from Meher Baba*, p. 32.

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Baba at Youpon Dunes

The ambulances carrying the patients from Prague reached Myrtle Beach on Sunday, June 8th. Rano had made the necessary arrangements for Baba and the others in Elizabeth's house. Baba's room was on the first floor and air conditioned. Mehera, Goher, Mani, Meheru and Rano were to stay upstairs. Elizabeth and Ruano Bogislav were to reside on the ground floor. The men disciples accommodated themselves at the Center. Kitty helped Adi in marketing. The Prague phase was over and the convalescent period at Youpon Dunes had begun.

Baba was still suffering and in pain, but He remembered with love the timely medical help given by Dr. Burleson. In appreciation of his services, Baba gave him a fine cigarette case. Dr. Burleson expressed his thankfulness through a letter; it was addressed to the *mandali* and a part of it is quoted below:

My wife and I thank you, more than we can express, for your wonderful present. It is beautiful and we shall keep it always and remember you every time we see it.

From you and your party, we have seen a demonstration of the teachings of Christ. Many Americans preach these things but we have never observed so close an application of them. The profound devotion to you which is demonstrated by all of your party convinces us that you deserve all of it. Such devotion from so many wonderful people is almost unbelievable.

Myrtle Beach experienced a heat wave during June, 1952. Sometimes the weather was very humid, certainly not a pleasant climate for the patients. Baba's left leg was in a plaster cast and the arm was bandaged to His chest. He often spent restless nights. The swelling on His face subsided and His countenance looked normal; however, He appeared thin and tired.

In a wheel chair He would sometimes visit Mehera's room. Her eyelids were still swollen and she could hardly open them.

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The injuries she sustained in the accident were very serious, and the doctors remarked that it was a miracle that she escaped without any internal head injuries.

Elizabeth was confined to bed with fractured arms and broken ribs. A nurse was hired to look after her during this convalescent period. At Prague, owing to damaged nerves, her fingers had become so numb that when she had to sign papers she would say, "Find my fingers, they have gone so dead." To suffer with the Master is one of the choicest blessings; it indicates closeness with Him and His inner work.

As we look back it seems that Baba had indirectly suggested such an event to Elizabeth during His second visit to the States, in May 1932. During this visit Baba stayed at Harmon-on-Hudson, where He had previously spent three weeks during His first visit to America in November 1931.

Elizabeth recollects:

Vividly I recall the beautiful late Spring morning of May 24th (1932) when Norina and Anita and I motored thirty-five miles from New York where we were living Our hearts were happy and our spirits glad as we reached the retreat near Harmon.

Baba greeted us with a warm embrace and we found a number had gathered there already. After a repast was served by Jean and others, Baba led us outside onto the stone terrace and then along a path to a field with wild flowers. Some went here and there picking the wild flowers, but I stayed close to Baba.

He quietly picked a small pink flower and handed it to me. Then He motioned to Kaka Baria who was ever near with Baba's alphabet board and Baba spelled out slowly that I should always keep the flower and should write down the date, that someday I would know the meaning. When I got home in the evening I pasted it inside the cover of my New Testament and wrote down Baba—May 24, 1932

I do not know fully the meaning and deeper significance of the accident which happened twenty years to the day, May 24, but I do know that Baba knew then and now.

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Through the experience of sharing Baba's suffering to a degree, I feel my life, instead of being nearly cut off, was extended for a purpose. The gift of the little flower was grace from the Master to be treasured in the heart.⁴⁴

In spite of Elizabeth's confinement to bed, Baba would often send her some messages either about the work at the Center or His upcoming programs and she would see that His instructions and directions were perfectly carried out. Baba even visited Elizabeth a few times in her room and it was on one such occasion that He asked Kitty, who had been living with Him in India for the last 15 years, to stay back at Myrtle Beach. In Kitty's words:

Baba gave me two specific tasks. First, to help Elizabeth and Norina, both of whom were convalescing, one from the accident, the other from a severe heart attack and nervous exhaustion. Secondly, I was to help them in the work at the Center, with special care to be given to the cabins . . . Baba reiterated these instructions in 1956 and again in 1958. When following a Perfect Master, be prepared for the unexpected!⁴⁵

About staying with Baba she also added:

Each one of us is as close or as far from Baba, not in measurement of time, land or ocean, but according to the treasure we carry in our hearts, the ever-growing consciousness of Baba's love.⁴⁶

Kitty is still staying in Myrtle Beach carrying out Baba's instructions and actively helping those who visit the Center wishing to find out more about Meher Baba: a unique contribution in Baba's cause.

Baba was not comfortable with His leg in a plaster cast. When in bed, He had to lie on His back, for He could not turn over on either side. Sometimes, Adi and Meherjee sponged Baba's back, arm and leg, but that was only a temporary relief. Margaret massaged all the patients. After His arrival at Youpon Dunes, Baba's health did not improve very much, so Donkin visited Baltimore and tried to arrange for Baba to stay in a hospital there so that His leg could be examined and

⁴⁴ *The Awakener*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 6-7 (1968).

⁴⁵ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 44 (1960).

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.44.

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treated.

On his return, however, Donkin decided to take Baba to Durham, N.C., about 250 miles from Myrtle Beach. On June 20th, Baba was taken in an ambulance with Mehera and Meheru to Duke Hospital in Durham. Each of the three doctors from the *mandali*—Donkin, Nilu and Goher—followed Baba.

Dr. Baker, an eminent orthopedic surgeon, examined Baba. He removed the plaster from Baba's leg and arm. He explained that both the limbs were healing in a natural way. After the change of casts, Baba's general recovery was satisfactory. He decided to visit New York in the third week of July, and He also agreed to visit England and Switzerland *en route* to India, but cancelled His visit to France.

After His visit to Duke Hospital, Baba, under Donkin's instructions, started taking some leg and hand exercises. He would also try to stand and sit down by Himself, unassisted. It was as if He were preparing Himself to bear the strain of meeting people in New York. On July 2nd, Baba visited the Center with the Indian women. He spent some time meeting those staying on the Center. This was, however, His last visit to the Center during this trip to America.

After supper on July 4th—American Independence Day—Baba went with the *mandali* by car to the Lafayette Hotel. There, He sat on the portico with the women *mandali* watching the fireworks and other amusements. In spite of His excruciating suffering, Baba was participating in the joys of the American public, as man amongst men. The men disciples freely moved about and enjoyed the celebration.

On some days, during the latter part of June and early July, Adi read out to Baba a draft received from Ivy Duce, of the Sufism Reoriented Constitution. Afterwards Baba responded that He would send Mrs. Duce the final charter for Sufism Reoriented before the close of the year. On June 17th, He had dictated a special message at Youpon Dunes in which He stated:

Meher Baba is equally connected with Islam and its Sufism, Christianity and its Mysticism, the Orient and its

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Vedantism, broad Buddhism, practical Zoroastrianism, Jainism and many other such "isms" which all speak the same Divine Truth and lead to the same divine Goal. Meher Baba is also detached and above all these divine paths.

In continuation of this, On July 9th, Baba dictated a personal letter to Adi for Ivy Duce. It is given below:

Sufism Reoriented is fundamentally based on enlarging the concept of Sufism and making it all-embracing for the nature of its knowledge and practice—yet maintaining the original value of Sufism Do you not realize that the very assertion that I am connected with all 'isms' and yet detached and above all 'isms' lays bare the truth that Sufism Reoriented, emanating from me to be conceived and practiced, will forge out into one of the few pure channels leading to one God?

As a result, all who will follow any one of the 'isms' reoriented by me, will come eventually to love and realize *me* rather than the 'isms'. . . .⁴⁷

Baba also added the following lines to the letter under a P.S.:

Thus Dear Ivy, I want you to be certain that Sufism Reoriented will be bereft of the Mohammedan aspect to become universal instead and yet keep intact the original Sufism.

On His return to India (at Meherabad), on November 14, 1952, Baba signed and mailed to Ivy Duce the "Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba for the Reorientation of Sufism as the Highway to the Ultimate Universalized."

Uniqueness of the Life Phase

On July 8th, Charmian Duce was called from New York for a short stay at Youpon Dunes; she roomed with Ruano Bogislav on the ground floor. She has recorded an incident revealing one of Baba's unique methods of teaching through natural events.

⁴⁷ *How A Master Works*, p. 105.

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One day after lunch, Ruano was leisurely smoking a cigar. Someone wondered if it was good to do so when staying under the same roof with Baba. Just then Charmian saw Mani descending the stairs. Mani approached Ruano and gave her a rectangular box, saying, "Here is a present to you from Baba. He also wants me to remind you to keep your promise of not smoking more than six a day." How Baba came up with the box of cigars and what made Him send it at that moment to Ruano is an *Avataric* mystery! When anyone comes into the love orbit of the *Avatar* this mystical game comes into play.

A similar incident happened (in the late 30's) during Ruano's stay in India. On one occasion, someone very forcefully expressed his views to Baba about the evil effects of smoking. After giving a patient hearing to this oration, Baba smiled good humoredly and asked the speaker to purchase a box of cigars for Ruano! No other comment was made!

However, with Meherjee, one of the close *mandali*, it was different. In the late 40's, Meherjee accompanied Baba during some of His *mast* tours. Once Baba contacted a high *mast* at Jalgaon (MS) who on his own gave him two cigarettes. Baba never rejected the things offered to Him by the *masts*.

After returning to His residence, to honor the wish of the *mast*, Baba smoked a bit of each and casually asked Meherjee to have two puffs. Meherjee had been brought up in the family of a Zoroastrian priest, so he had never smoked before. However, he obeyed Baba's order. When he was finished, Baba ordered him not to smoke again, even once, for the rest of his life.

I have not narrated these small happenings around Baba either to advocate smoking or non-smoking, but these incidents silently reveal the way we tend to look at things that we like or dislike. Unnecessarily criticizing others is not a good habit; a friendly talk with others, expressing one's views is, however, an entirely different matter. We have to share Baba's love with others without the spirit of finding fault in others. Why justify? Why condemn? Why not understand each other in His love?

On July 10th, Baba visited a paddock for a horse show

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with His Eastern and Western disciples. This visit helped Mehera focus her badly injured eyes, as she loved horses. All liked the show so much that Baba accompanied them all back the next day, even though He had been very restless the night before. Perhaps such outings provided Mehera and the others with a little relief from their suffering. With these visits, Baba's stay at Youpon Dunes came to a close.

Baba's "Life Phase" was a magnificent manifestation of His compassion, His reaching out to humanity. In the form of the *Avatar*, God the Infinite descends as Man so that man can reach Him as God. To bring about this awakening, the *Avatar* Himself goes through intense physical, mental and spiritual suffering. The "personal disaster" in the form of the auto accident made manifest Baba's physical suffering, although suffering in one form or another stayed with Him as an inseparable companion till He dropped His body.

Baba's Life phase seemed to strike a divine balance between His Old Life of Perfect Divinity and the New Life of perfect humility. In the Old Life He mostly lived the life of God as God (the Lord), and in the New Life He lived the life of God as an ordinary man (a seeker/a servant), and in the subsequent Life phase, He truly lived the life of God as the God-Man (the Lord and servant in one).

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1952 - PART IV

Baba at Hartsdale

On July 14th, Baba left Myrtle Beach for Florence, S.C. After reaching the railway station, Baba was carried in a wheelchair to a train leaving that afternoon. The next morning, Baba arrived at Penn Station along with His Eastern and Western disciples. Ivy Duce and Charmian were at the station to receive the Guest. Baba, Mehera, Elizabeth and the other women *mandali* were driven in limousines to Hartsdale. Meherjee and Sarosh were lodged at the Sufi Center, while Adi, Nilu and Gustadji stayed at 101 Moi Guest House, in White Plains, N.Y.

In the beginning of July, Baba had sent certain instructions from Myrtle Beach to Mrs. Duce about securing a house for Him and those accompanying Him. One of the special requirements for Baba's house was that it should be within a radius of fifty miles from New York City. The time at hand was very short, and Baba people were doing their utmost to find this accommodation either in Westchester, Long Island or New Jersey. Their efforts, however, proved unsuccessful.

Filis Frederick had a job in New York at that time. One of her acquaintances, Kate Ferris, owned a nice house in Hartsdale. Filis, a bit hesitantly, phoned her and was pleasantly surprised to find that Kate very gladly consented to loan her residence for Baba's use during His two-week stay in New York. Filis furnished the house for the guests with beds, fans, linens, dishes, etc., and special attention was paid to Baba's needs.

On Baba's arrival at Hartsdale, Kate formally handed over the key of the house to Baba, and to honor His wish for privacy she willingly left her own place to stay with a friend. During the day, Baba was wheeled to the back garden with the women disciples. It turned out that all the neighbors staying in the flats overlooking the garden had coincidentally left, either

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on vacation, or for some work. And so the privacy of the Baba party remained undisturbed.

During Baba's visits to different places it was often found that certain requirements which Baba needed for His work would automatically be met in a very natural way. However, He would give His dear ones opportunities to receive credit for this and to participate in His Divine Plan as well. Kate Ferris's house, No. 14 Cohawney Road, became Baba's residence until July 31.

During this stay, Baba wanted a strong intelligent boy to wheel Him around within the house and at other places during His outdoor visits. He had to be between 16 and 18. Several boys were brought to Baba and sent back. Baba liked one Puerto Rican boy but he looked rather weak. The time limit set by Baba for finding a boy was almost at a close when Filis brought her cousin, Keith MacGaffey, to Baba.

Baba liked Keith and during general conversation, Baba gestured, "Keith, will you obey me even if I ask you to do something 'bad'?" It was a tricky and unusual question. The boy spontaneously replied, "Yes." Baba looked pleased. Perhaps it was a sign that in Baba's presence Keith's heart had overruled his mind. He stayed with Baba during His entire stay in Hartsdale. However, it was not easy for a boy of his age to understand all the subjects that were referred to when others met Baba.

One day, out of curiosity, Keith asked Baba, "What's all this stuff about God-realization?" Baba, with ease and good humor, answered, "Until you have a headache yourself, you cannot understand what it is like!" This was a simple but profound reply. Keith did his job well and this service, in return, has probably registered his "headache" and its cure with the Divine Doctor!

First Day of Darshan

July 18th to July 20th were the three *darshan* days at New York. Those interested in Baba were duly informed of His

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schedule. They were to meet Baba at Mrs. Duce's spacious apartment on West 67th Street. On the morning of the 18th, Charmian drove Baba from Hartsdale to New York City. Adi, Gustadji and Keith accompanied Baba.

The large living room of the apartment was well arranged and decorated. This served as a waiting hall for the visitors. Flowers were placed in all the rooms. Baba was to give *darshan* in the adjacent room where Mrs. Duce had her library. Baba's couch was covered with a peach colored spread. In the hall the following two quotations—Baba's special message, and Malcolm Schloss's poem—were displayed on the wall. Baba's message expressed the universal aspect of the God-Man's authority and guidance. Malcolm's poem had two parts. The first contains a natural, obvious question that might arise over the Master's seeming helplessness; in the second half the poet himself gives an apt reply.

The First Poster:

I am equally approachable to one and all, big and small,
To saints who rise and sinners who fall,
Through all the various Paths that give the Divine Call.
I am approachable alike to saint whom I adore
And to sinner whom I am for,
And equally through Sufism, Vedantism, Christianity
Or Zoroastrianism and Buddhism, and other "isms"
Of any kind and also directly through no medium of "isms" at all.

—Meher Baba

The Second Poster:

Redemption

Wielder of infinite power!
Enjoyer of infinite bliss!
Master of infinite wisdom!
Why dost Thou come like this?

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Seemingly worn and haggard;
Seemingly wracked with pain;
Seemingly utterly puzzled;
Seemingly all in vain?

The woes of the world are heavy:
The faults of the world are great:
I have assumed its burdens:
I will redeem its state.

Then shall My infinite glory,
Which thou hast known in part,
Reign for unnumbered aeons,
Enthroned in every heart.

On His arrival at Mrs. Duce's apartment, Baba conveyed that He hadn't slept well for the past few nights. He really seemed very tired, nonetheless He had the look of a King. When He started seeing people, He appeared as radiant as ever with a ready smile.

The first family to see Baba were the Rosses from New Jersey. Baba had taken His seat in the library and near his couch was a bowl of fruit. He would lovingly offer a grape, a cherry or whatever He felt pleased to give to the *darshanites*, an external sign of an inner contact. To one woman He gave a yellow rose. She later sat for a long time in the living room, tenderly holding it in her hand. The heat spell was still on and as Baba's room was not air-conditioned, fans were kept over buckets of ice to cool the air.

Earlier, the visitors were informed that they should not ask any questions of Baba. However Baba, on His own, lovingly started enquiring about their health and families. This informal chit-chat did more to bring people closer to experiencing the God-Man's presence than asking Him questions on spiritual subjects would have.

During the interviews a simple sentence from Baba, sometimes just a broad smile, a handshake or non-verbal gesture would convey to each visitor His love and personal

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concern. As people came in, the beauty of His presence flowed over them and filled their hearts with the warmth of an incredibly delightful feeling. After lunch, Baba did not rest, but allowed His dear ones to be around Him. The *darshan* continued till six in the evening and then Baba returned to Hartsdale.

Second Day of Darshan

The next day, July 19th, Baba asked Margaret, along with Adi and Gustadji, to accompany Him in the same car. Sarosh, Meherjee, John Bass and Darwin Shaw were already present at Mrs. Duce's apartment before Baba's arrival. Adi later remarked that it was a distinctly memorable day, for he noticed that most of the visitors as they left Baba's room were on the verge of bursting into tears from the tender touch of Baba's love. Baba was also in a good mood and looked very radiant and happy, as if the pains and suffering of the accident had been entirely wiped out.

In the afternoon, Don Stevens came to see Baba. This was his first meeting with the Master. Already there were some people around Baba. While conversing with them Baba was using His board as well as gestures. He was telling them a story of Janak, a Perfect Master.

A sincere, ardent aspirant approached Janak for spiritual discipline and guidance. Instead of warmly welcoming the person, or giving him words of advice, Janak treated him so harshly that his forbearance and sincerity were severely tested. Perhaps through this story, Baba wished to disclose one of the methods that the Masters use, if necessary, to shatter static concepts about spirituality.

Don was greatly fascinated with Baba's gestures and with everything about Him. He felt extremely drawn to Baba—an inner recognition of His divinity. While intently listening to the story of Janak, Don, who was not directly facing Baba, raised his hand and made a circle gesture by putting his index finger to his thumb. Just then, Baba gently turned His gaze on Don and made the identical gesture, and then continued with

other conversation. This surprised Don. In fact, anything that Baba does has a spiritual significance—an unfoldment of His *Avataric* work.

At the end of the day's program, when Baba was about to leave, all gathered around Him. Don, who was standing among the crowd, repeated the same gesture—this time deliberately. Just at that moment, Baba looked him in the face and with elegance and ease repeated the gesture. This impressed Don very much, and he could not brush aside this response as a mere coincidence.

Some time later, as Baba reached the elevator, Don quickly made the same sign again—the third time—and Baba, although engaged with last-minute instructions and goodbyes, gracefully swayed a little towards Don and made the same gesture of perfection—His favorite gesture—of putting His thumb to His index finger.

I do not know whether others were aware of Baba's masterly mime, but to Don this profound affirmation that Baba was aware of everything he thought and did provided the impetus to accept Him as his Master. This archetypal incident is an example of the way in which during big or small gatherings even Baba's simple gestures, the context of which remained unnoticed by others, have awakened the hearts of people to the deeper dimensions of life.

The Last Day of Sahavas

On July 20, in the morning, Baba held a special meeting with Ivy Duce, Don and Charmian about the Sufi Constitution (Charter). Don read out ten questions to Baba, to bring especially to His notice some salient points pertaining to the Sufi Order. After listening attentively to them all, Baba responded to a few and in the process He sketched out general guidelines for reorienting Sufism.

During this discussion, Adi read Baba's board. In reply to one of the questions, Baba dictated, "Intellectual knowledge backed fully by feelings is intellectual conviction (*ilm-ul-yagin*)." It is a simple and direct definition.

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Baba entrusted Ivy Duce and Don Stevens with the work of publishing *God Speaks* in the States. He told them that after reaching India He would send them the manuscript of *God Speaks* and arrange for a payment of \$1,000 towards its publication. At the close of this meeting, Baba agreed to give His *sahavas* in the afternoon to the Sufis and other Baba groups in New York at West 67th Street.

After lunch, Charmian drove Baba from Hartsdale to New York City. Baba reached Mrs. Duce's apartment at 2:00 P.M. Sarosh and Meherjee helped Baba from the car and into the elevator. The Sufis had already assembled in the living room. They greeted Baba warmly as He was wheeled in. Baba also looked very pleased. During the brief *sahavas*, Baba pointed at His message displayed on the wall and dictated from His board:

This poster must have made it very clear to all that I can be directly or indirectly approached. That means through different "isms," sects and different formations; or personally by direct contact. . . .

If you take Baba to be perfect and one with God, Baba is then the Ocean—and these different paths, Sufism, Vedantism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Jainism and Christianity are as rivers to the Ocean. But now the time has arrived and a period has arrived when these rivers have more or less become dry. . . . so the Ocean itself has to go out and flood these rivers. . . .

Now when I send the Charter and the Constitution, and the instructions, it will be applicable to the whole Sufi world—and will, by God's grace, be lasting in its effect and influence.

I give you all my love, including all of those who could not be present here.

Then the members of the Monday Night Group (those who attend Fredella's meetings) and Baba lovers staying in New York—the Winterfeldts, the Shaws, John Bass, Mildred Kyle, Beryl Williams and others—swarmed into the *sahavas* salon. Some sat on chairs, others on low stools, while quite a few remained standing by the walls, with their attention focused

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on Baba's every move and gesture. Baba lovingly inquired of each and no one felt that he or she was left out from His all-embracing love. In His informal discourse, Baba conveyed:

Bliss is the goal of life. That Bliss is continuous, changeless, eternal and divine. That Bliss has in it power, love, knowledge and infinite wisdom, and God is all this in one. . . .

Today I feel happy, but this happiness is personal. To see you who love me so much makes me feel very happy and touched at heart. Norina and Elizabeth have worked for me for all these years and they love me with all their hearts. It was they who made it possible for me to come over here this time. Today their physical presence is not here, but they are in my heart very precious, very sacred. . . .

All I want to say is that the aim of life since the beginningless beginning to the endless end is to love God and be *One with Him*.

I give you all my love. That love, which by the grace of God, will make you love Him as He ought to be loved.

Soon it was evening and time to go, but no one was willing to leave Baba's company. Charged with His love, some were intently looking at Him with speechless joy, not knowing when they would have the next opportunity of His *sahavas*.

Many had come to meet Baba. There were also some people who wanted to come but couldn't. When this subject was brought up, Baba's eyes gleamed and He remarked: "All those came whom I wished to come." There were also a few who were not much interested in meeting the Master, but circumstances led them to the blessed fortune of meeting Baba. With reference to such people, Baba conveyed, "They may not know me but I know them." What a hidden game!

The same drama is being enacted even to this day. When one hears the stories of those who visit Meherabad/Meherazad from distant lands across the seas, one is often reminded of Baba's above-mentioned quotes, revealing the All-knowingness of the *Avatar*.

Without the sanction of the Eternal Beloved, the plans of Baba lovers who want to visit the Meher Country are foiled for

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minor, insignificant reasons, while His inner approval overcomes seemingly insurmountable difficulties with an incredible ease and one's visit subsequently takes place without a hitch, even down to the smallest detail. This is not a hypothetical statement, but has been confirmed by witnessing with complete objectivity the stories recounted by Baba lovers who have come on pilgrimage to pay homage to their Eternal Beloved at Meherabad/Meherazad.

Companionship with the Timeless One

The *darshan* programs at Ivy Duce's apartment on July 18, 19 and 20 offered creative opportunities to the visitors to feel Baba's love. Generally, on such occasions, His presence had a quality of generating spiritual quickening, and the conscious self of each would not be fully aware of what really transpired in that brief contact with the Master. His love blessings flowed silently from heart to heart to reveal their results at the propitious moment.

As the visitors came in to see Baba, His eyes reflected the warmth of love, humor and compassion: an *Avataric* combination. Sometimes, when He felt tired and leaned back on the couch, the agony that He had to bear would be visible on His face. It was an indication of how God has to suffer when He binds Himself in man-form. One of Baba's visitors, Barbara Mahon, narrates her experience as follows:

He (Baba) was reclining on a couch showing the effects of the accident. He clasped my hand with such power—it was incredible. It was as though an electric current was flowing from Him to me. He gave me *darshan* and I left. As I walked away from Mrs. Duce's apartment, I wept in the street and I saw others sitting on benches in Central Park crying. I think it was mainly because we knew we would not see Him again on this trip. When I got home I sat around in a daze for quite a while.⁴⁸

Some mentally disturbed people had also come for Baba's *darshan*. Among these was a young woman who a month later was able to resume her teaching job. To cite another case, a

⁴⁸ *The Awakener*, Vol. 6, No. 4, p. 46, (1960).

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woman was suffering severely from terrible headaches. As she approached Baba, He casually placed His hand on her head. This compassionate response from Baba had a surprising effect. From then on she had no more headaches, even though they had been chronic for years.

One more incident. A sculptress was suffering from arthritis in two fingers, which proved a great handicap in her work. Baba lovingly shook hands with her. After a few weeks she noticed that the trouble with her fingers had completely disappeared. Such cases of healing were as natural as the original complaints. Baba, however, does not want His lovers to come to Him with such expectations. In a way it would be belittling the All-knowingness of the God-Man. In His unbounded compassion He knows best what to give to those who come to Him.

July 20th was a very delightful *sahavas* afternoon. In the midst of His lovers, Baba was in a happy mood, teasing them, comforting them, and also assuring them of His help which had the stamp of divine authority. For most of them it was a farewell day and Baba told them about His intention to visit America the next year, provided that the God-ordained work of the Fiery Free Life did not cause Him to drop His body. In case the Fiery phase consumed His physical form, Baba assured them, He would definitely come back after 700 years. While conveying the proposition, He lovingly touched Mildred Kyle's chin, and conveyed, "Mildred, maybe you will be with me then!" To this Mildred, who was in her 90's, responded, "Gladly, Baba." And a glorious smile flashed over Baba's face.

Some days earlier, Ruano had asked Baba, "Now that you will go back to India will I be able to see you again?" Baba replied, "Maybe." As it turned out later Baba did not visit America until July, 1956. By this time both Ruano and Mildred had left their mortal coils.

Ruano passed away in February, 1954. Baba cabled back to His lovers in the West, "My 'eagle' has not died but ever flies in my kingdom." Ruano was nicknamed "eagle" by Baba because she could imitate the cry of an eagle and this amused Baba immensely. On September 8, 1954, Mildred Kyle died at

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Myrtle Beach. She was cremated there. Under Baba's instruction, half of her ashes were interred on Meherabad Hill. The marble slab on her tomb reads, "Mildred Kyle has come to Baba."

Mildred had a promise from Baba that she would be with Him in His next advent, while to Ruano Baba once disclosed that she had His close contact long, long ago when He was in Egypt. How can anyone fathom the Timeless One, and His interminable game of companionship with His lovers that He plays through His recurring Advents!

Aside from this boundless span of time, it would be impossible to explain why hundreds of people, thousands of miles away, who have never seen Meher Baba physically, are irresistibly drawn to Him for apparently no strong reason—just His picture, or a small message or something similar. And it is also noticed that this contact subsequently flowers into the conviction that He is their Eternal Beloved. What a fantastic sport!

The three-day program at Ivy Duce's apartment offered a good opportunity to many followers of Baba to establish their personal link with the Master. The stronger the bond with Baba the easier it is to let fall the nonsense stuffed in one's mind and heart. During these days Baba was mostly in a good mood and He was very pleased with the arrangements made by Ivy Duce for the visitors.

One afternoon Baba visited the house of Consuelo Sides, to meet her friends interested in spirituality. Another short visit was of a private nature, when He drove to Fred Winterfeldt's residence at East 66th Street for tea. Perhaps Baba wished to charge this place, where the Monday Night Group was holding its meetings, with His presence. Someone remarked, "Ella is an angel." This prompted someone else to ask, "Baba, are there angels?" Baba explained that there are angels, but even they have to be born as humans before becoming God-realized. As it was exclusively an all-women's program, Fred had to stand guard at the door. He did this job happily. To obey Baba's order was of more importance than being in His physical presence.

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After *darshan* days, Baba spared some time to visit physicians. On July 21st, He was taken to a hospital to have His leg examined. His appointment was fixed for 5:00 P.M. Baba arrived one hour early. The doctor, however, came at 5:15 and suggested indifferently that Baba should come the next day. After a little persuasion, he agreed to take Baba to the x-ray room.

Baba, the One for whose glimpse or audience hundreds of people had longed for years, waited patiently in a hospital for medical services that were later offered with reluctance. What an irony! In the life of the God-Man, His glory and humiliation are inexplicably woven to perfection. The next day, Baba visited a dentist and everything went off well.

Some Sidelights

During Baba's stay in Hartsdale, He would sometimes call a few of His dear ones to spend some time with Him. Once He invited Darwin, Fred and John to Kate Ferris's house. During their informal conversation, Fred told Baba of a person who, in order to save himself from the impending world catastrophe, wanted to leave his present house and live in a mountainous area of America. Baba said that it would be better for him to stay where he was and not try to run away. He also added that the effects of the world catastrophe would affect even the peaks of the Himalayas!

Fred then asked Baba whether the calamity would be caused by natural forces or if it would be man-made. Baba gestured, "Both will work for destruction." With the passage of time the truth behind Baba's words is becoming more and more evident.

On another occasion, He invited Filis and Adele to lunch. They felt greatly delighted. After alighting from the train at Hartsdale, instead of proceeding for Baba's residence, they waited a while at the station to weave wreaths of roses for Baba and Mehera. Whenever any of Baba's dear ones were expected, He would be very impatient about their arrival. On

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that day He sent Adi to bring them as soon as possible to Him. By chance Adi found them at the station. They were greatly touched by Baba's concern and love for them.

During their short stay, Baba asked Filis what kind of ice cream she liked most. She replied "Strawberry." After lunch, for dessert Baba ordered her favorite ice cream for everyone. Baba then expressed His happiness with the big and little jobs they had done for Him during His stay in New York. Baba never neglected the practical side of any program and He asked them, "How much money do you owe?" and then called for Rano who gave them the sum needed to pay the bills.

He instructed Adele to go and nurse her ailing mother. This helped her so much that later she led a successful career as a nurse. Baba also told Filis to continue with her job in New York. During Baba's *sahavas* no part of anyone's life that required His attention was excluded.

The same day, when some were relaxing and resting, Filis noticed Charmian checking on some theater tickets. She learned that Baba and some of His women disciples were going to see the film *Charlie's Aunt* at Radio City Music Hall, the largest theater in New York. Filis correctly guessed that Baba would sit in the balcony. On her return to New York she purchased a balcony ticket for herself.

When Baba learned that Filis was in the theater He sent her a message through Charmian saying hello. The film started and Filis, who was sitting between two nuns, had a funny inclination to poke the two nuns in the ribs and break the news to them that Christ in human form was sitting quite close to them. Just then Charmian brought another message for her from Baba, "Fills, pay attention to the picture." Marvelous!

Whenever the *Avatar* comes, He has the same old habit of mixing with people without letting them know of His physical presence. But even during such opportunities, people unconsciously reap the benefit of the *Avatar's* physical proximity which imperceptibly sows the seed of longing in their hearts to seek the real Beloved.

Here I am reminded of a little incident. Once Baba asked

those around Him what they understood by His statement, "I have come not to teach but to awaken." Some of them replied, "Baba, you have come to awaken humanity." A glow appeared in Baba's eyes and He disclosed, "I have come to awaken Myself in all." And this is clearly demonstrated in each Advent of the Ancient One, for we find that the *Avataric* age is materially destructive and spiritually constructive, a spiritual requisite for awakening.

In November, 1949, during His New Life, Baba stayed in an unkempt garden at Najibabad. This place was under litigation. One of the litigants told Adi that Baba and His companions could stay on the premises of the garden, but a day later another person accused Adi and Baba's companions of trespassing. An embarrassing situation developed which, however, had a happy ending.⁴⁹

A minor incident at Hartsdale brought back this "New Life flavor" to Adi when Mr. Ferris, Kate's estranged husband, who was forbidden to enter the house, arrived with a police party and demanded the expulsion of those who were staying there. Kitty phoned Kate Ferris who succeeded in getting the law on her side and dismissing the eviction party.

During these hours of crisis, in spite of His physical handicaps, Baba willingly agreed to move to a New York hotel. For a short period, the feelings of those staying with Baba were considerably stirred up and perhaps He used this energy for His inner spiritual work, as this was one of His ways of working. During Baba's visits and tours, suspense and certainty moved hand in hand.

"The Slippers of a Perfect Master"

On July 25th, a celebrated Hollywood personality, Gabriel Pascal, came to Hartsdale to meet Baba. Gabriel was planning to produce, in his own revolutionary way, a fascinating film on Baba, with a striking title—*The Slippers of a Perfect Master*.⁵⁰

Here I wish to digress briefly and recount the story of Pascal's first visit to Baba, in Zurich. It was in connection with

⁴⁹ *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. II, pp. 180-181.

⁵⁰ Recently I read a very interesting story connected with Pascal's visit to India. During the interview Pascal felt so impressed by Baba's dynamic and divine personality that he asked the Master to give him His pair of sandals as a parting gift. By the time he reached San Francisco he was practically moneyless.

So instead of paying his hotel bill in cash, he gave Baba's sandals to the Italian manager who was somewhat superstitious and accepted them as something that would bring him good fortune. Coincidentally, this person became a millionaire within a short time. He quit his job at the hotel, but Pascal managed to find out where he lived and went to collect the sandals.

By the time Gabriel arrived, the man totally refused to return them. Pascal could only look at them from a distance. They were placed on a golden platter, and the man would not part with them for any price as he felt he owed his complete change of fortune to the slippers. I, however, do not know whether the title of the Baba film, *The Slippers of the Perfect Master*, had any connection with this story, for the film was never completed.

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Baba's interest, in the early 30's, in producing a film based on the spiritual truths of evolution, reincarnation and realization (involution of consciousness). Norina Matchabelli, who had known Gabriel Pascal well, arranged for his interview with Baba at Zurich in 1934. Although skeptical about meeting an Indian Master, Pascal arrived at Hedi Mertens' house at the appointed time.

Elizabeth greeted him warmly and then went upstairs to inform Baba of Gabriel's arrival. To her surprise He was not there and no word had been left with anyone about where He had gone or when He would return. This was really unusual. Although slightly embarrassed, Elizabeth told Pascal that Baba was expected any minute. Baba did not return for some time. This annoyed Pascal so much that he was on the point of leaving the house.

Just then the telephone rang and one of the *mandali* gave Elizabeth Baba's message. She was asked to collect the best peach from the kitchen and to give it to Pascal; Baba was coming soon. A nice peach was offered to Pascal and this had a deep effect on him. He recalled that his dear mother would give him choice peaches as they were his favorite fruit. Through this seemingly simple act, Pascal had a glimpse of Baba's divine knowledge and it calmed him down.

After a little while, Baba arrived and Pascal had his interview with Him. With the touch of Baba's hand, Pascal had a profound personal experience. When he came out of Baba's room he said that he would do anything that Baba wanted him to do. The change in Pascal's attitude was so obvious that one of the *mandali* later remarked, "He went in as a lion and came out as a lamb!" From then on, Pascal corresponded with Baba asking Him for His guidance. At the end of his letters to Baba, Pascal would sign "Phoenix" for his signature.

To resume the story, in 1952 he told Baba that prior to *The Slippers of the Perfect Master*, he was undertaking a film about Gandhiji's life. The shooting of that film was to be arranged in India. He requested that Baba instruct one of the *mandali* to work for him as the distributor for India. Baba listened

patiently to his plans and gave him some guidelines for his film project.

Pascal died in 1954. From his death-bed he wrote a few devotional letters to Baba. Meher Baba, in His unconditional love for Gabriel as well as in His utter disregard for the progress Pascal had made on the film project, never asked anyone to inquire as to what had happened to Pascal's unfinished films. I presume Baba's interest in the 1930's in producing a film based on spiritual truths was a scaffolding through which He worked, in His own incomprehensible ways, for the film world.

An Unusual Meeting at the Airport

Owing to an unforeseen accident, the flight by which Baba and the women *mandali* were to fly to England was cancelled. However, Baba did not agree to change the date of departure. The only other available plane had no sleeping accommodations; but, on request, the airlines agreed to remove the armrests of the first three seats in the front row. This allowed Baba to rest comfortably and to do the exercises that orthopedic surgeons had advised for His legs and arms.

The one alteration He made in plans on His way to India was to cancel His visit to Egypt. King Farouk had been dethroned in a political revolution and had to leave the country. Baba's visits to England and Switzerland, however, remained unchanged.

On July 31, Marion Florsheim drove Baba to the New York International Airport in the afternoon. His visit to the States was ending and now He was bound for England. However, before leaving Hartsdale, He told those around Him that He might meet "someone" at the airport whom they would not know. He also instructed them that in such an event no one should disturb him.

Perhaps in anticipation of this event, He reached the air terminal more than an hour early. His one leg was in a plaster cast; He was helped, however, to sit comfortably in a chair.

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After some time, under some pretext, He sent those who were standing close to Him away.

Just then, to quote John Bass's notes, which are an eyewitness account of this incident, "A man came along about seven feet away and turned around and looked intently at Baba for a few minutes, went along and again turned once more to look at Baba, and finally walked away and disappeared." The special meeting was over; Baba's people, quite naturally, started coming to Him and He continued His usual conversation with them. Who that "someone" was none knew. No one asked Baba about him and He of His own did not disclose anything. Perhaps he was one of His "agents."⁵¹

This reminds me of a similar incident that had happened about eighteen years earlier in the States. I hope it will shed some light on this silent meeting at that crowded airport.

In December, 1934, Baba was in America. He stayed for two days in New York and then proceeded by train to California with a group of His Eastern and Western disciples. On the way, the train had a half-hour stop at Albuquerque, New Mexico. Here Baba got down from the compartment and started walking out of the station. Ruano Bogislav was with Him. He wrote on His palm "Indian." She understood that Baba wished to know if there were any American Indians around. She pointed at an old woman sitting by a shop nearby the station. Baba did not seem interested in her.

He pulled Ruano's arm through His and asked His *mandali* to follow Him. He started walking as if He knew the lanes and by-lanes of the area very well. He looked perfectly confident although He had never been there before.

Ruano feared that Baba might miss the train, but He continued to walk on. Then He abruptly turned and walked two blocks until He approached two Indians at a corner. One was tall and fat with a red band tied around his forehead, the other was short. The tall man was selling bows and arrows. Ruano could not help saying, "Baba, here are two Indians." Just then the short person walked away and Baba went to the tall Indian and they stood face to face, looking intently at each other as if the rest of the world didn't exist. At the close of this

⁵¹ Meher Baba has explained that just as the Christ state (*Nabuwat-e-Mohammedi*) is actually the office held by each *Avatar* (God-Man, *Saheb-e-Zaman*), so also the states of the agents are distinct offices held by certain souls, stationed on the higher planes of consciousness. The agents work under the instructions from and for each *Avatar*. There are three types of agents—direct, indirect, and borrowed. (For details refer to *The Wayfarers*, p. 373.)

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brief, silent meeting, Baba again put Ruano's arm through His and returned to the station just in time to catch the train.

Ruano felt greatly relieved. A little later she asked Baba, "Did you know that the Indians would be there?" Baba nodded His assent and added from His board, "One of my agents." The tall Indian was one of the rare direct agents working for the *Avatar* in America.

Such incidents show how Baba, even during His crowded *darshan* and *sahas* programs, would not miss the opportunity to meet His agents, working for Him on the inner planes.

To resume the narration, it was time for the plane to depart and two of the *mandali* carried Baba in a chair up the stairs and into the tourist section of the plane. He hobbled His way to the front row. Soon the plane took off for London and Baba left America, leaving in the hearts of His lovers the eternity of His timeless presence.

Baba in London

The women *mandali* who flew with Baba from New York to London were Mehera, Mani, Meheru, Dr. Goher, Rano and Kitty. Baba had also asked Charmian to accompany Him. Don (Dr. Donkin, who had flown ahead) and the Backetts were at the airport to receive Him. During His visit to London, Baba stayed in the Rubens Hotel. The rest of the men *mandali* reached London early on the morning of August 1st.

The plane was to arrive at about midnight, but owing to stormy weather it was delayed. Baba had sent Will Backett to the airport to help them arrange for their lodging and to inform them where Baba was staying. Will diligently waited at the airport for two hours, but somehow missed the *mandali* when they passed through the gate.

Sarosh and the others expected someone to meet them at the airport to convey Baba's instructions. But since Will had missed them, it was up to them to discover where Baba was. This was quite a task in a city the size of London. They started visiting and phoning different hotels but in vain. At last they went to Delia DeLeon's house in Richmond where they learned

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that Baba was at the Rubens Hotel. In the meantime, Baba was very upset about the delay in the arrival of His men disciples. He started blaming everyone on the slightest pretext for this turn of events except for Will (who had actually been given the responsibility of meeting the *mandali!*).

When Will Backett arrived he reported how he had stood by the gate until the last passenger had come out. Instead of reprimanding him, Baba had Will and Mary take their seats on either side of Him. He lovingly took their hands and endearingly gestured, "My archangels." But prior to this, Baba had sent Rano and Don to find the *mandali*. So there ensued a hectic search through the hotels in London on the part of each group to find the other. A good joke!

After a little while the men arrived looking very tired from their journey. They confirmed that they had arrived by the expected flight, but added that they had been unable to come sooner because no one had been at the airport to tell them where Baba was. Later, Baba teased his archangel, saying, "Will, I don't understand how on earth you could have missed a sturdy hefty six-footer like Sarosh passing through the gate!"

On August 2nd, Don made an appointment for Baba with the famous bone specialist, Sir R. Mumford-Jones. After careful examination, Dr. Jones decided to remove the cast on Baba's leg. He also told Don that Baba could start weight-bearing exercises after a week. Baba's skin was very delicate. Yet after the removal of the cast it looked quite smooth. The leg was neatly bound in a pinkish elastic bandage.

The women *mandali* had gone to visit the homes of Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway. On their return, Baba asked them if they noticed anything different about Him. They looked but they didn't notice the change, so He pointed to His leg. They were surprised to find Baba without the heavy cast on, especially as the prominent bone surgeon in New York had indicated that it would be at least two more months before it could be removed. They were especially delighted to know that Baba could bend His knee, though not fully. However, the blood circulation was not yet normal and Baba was going through the pains of readjustment.

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The following two days—the 3rd and 4th—were reserved for those who wished to see Baba. The interviews were arranged at the Charing Cross Hotel. Baba saw people in the morning and afternoon. More than 100 availed themselves of this blessed opportunity. In spite of His physical pains, Baba looked radiant. His every gesture, every smile, seemed luminous. His handshake was not a formal act, for His touch awakened something deeper within the hearts of those who met Him. And His simple words, conveyed through the board, or gestures, seemed to emerge shining with profound significance. On both days He returned to the Rubens in a happy mood.

While Baba was at the Charing Cross Hotel, the women disciples were allowed to continue sightseeing. They visited the Tower of London, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, Richmond Park and a few other places. Wherever they went they had to be careful that no man touched Mehera; sometimes they had to move through crowds and then it wasn't an easy task. Here I might mention that there was a time when Mehera was not allowed to hear the voice of any man and during a certain period even the name of a man was not to be mentioned or referred to in her presence. This is enough to indicate the type of discipline that the *mandali* had to pass through, though it varied from person to person.

On the 3rd and 4th, Baba visited two shows in the late evening and special arrangements had to be made for Baba to sit in the aisle where He could stretch His leg. In the life of the God-Man, the moments of delight and suffering overlap each other. After the end of one show, when Baba was waiting in His wheelchair, an incident similar to the one that had happened at the airport when Baba was leaving New York, occurred. Charmian, who was present, wrote this account:

We were waiting once for Dr. Donkin to bring the car up to the side entrance for Baba . . . Suddenly a stocky man of medium height . . . came up the nearly deserted sidewalk toward us, his pace slowing as he approached. He stopped about ten feet away from the group. Baba looked at him and smiled as if they were old friends who

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had not seen each other for a long time. The man stood as if transfixed until we were in the car and on our way back to the hotel.⁵²

This unknown person might well have been one of the *Avatar's* "agents."

"I Will Help You With My Love"

About Baba's London visit, Will Backett, in a letter to one of his relatives, recorded his impressions of what it was like to once again have Baba in their midst. He wrote:

It was an unforgettable time, from the moment we caught sight of Him at the airport, being wheeled to the waiting car, which he entered with the assistance of Dr. Donkin and two ambulance men, for both His left leg and arm were broken, and the leg was in plaster.

Fifteen years had passed since His last visit to England, and the stress and strain of the various seclusions and long journeys in India, as well as the accident in America had taken their toll. But His loving greeting, smile and gentleness embraced everything, and we felt that this was indeed the moment we had been waiting for so long, the moment of reunion.

Crippled though he was physically, Baba's mental activity and mastery of detail in each day's programme were unabated as we were soon to witness at His hotel, where we were to see Him, arranging interviews, and other matters

He is just the same today with everyone, so gently, yet immovably secure in His inner and outer understanding of mankind and a changing world. Silently, His wonderful handshake and smile, greeting young and old alike, brought calm and happiness to many, clearing away uncertainty, and suffusing mind and heart with new hope and fresh assurance.

Some had been waiting for years for this meeting, having missed Baba when He came before, and to one He

⁵² *How A Master Works*, p. 146.

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said, "You have had my love for years—I know, that is why I tell you this and I give you my love. The best way to help is to follow your conscience, and what I am happy about is to see your love for me. Your love is precious to me."

The next day (August 4th) we [Will and Mary] received the following letter:

"The most wonderful thing of my life happened today. I have met Baba personally. It was all so wonderful and so soon . . . I have only just got back to earth.

His gracious radiance enthralled me; I was speechless and yet I can still hear, 'Baba loves you. I know you understand. I will help you.'

What more can life give me? I ask nothing more, but that I may be made more worthy of that Divine Love . . . My heart sings to my Soul in loving gratitude for the Love and Beauty and Wisdom of God, revealed to a tiny little human heart."

We also had this letter from a Labour "Re-establishment" Centre:

"You will understand that it is not possible for me to say all that meeting Baba meant; in fact I am not sure yet that I know all that it implies, but I do know that it was a great and wonderful experience, and that it will be such a help in the work I am trying to do here, work that I know cannot be done except by the grace of God You will understand, therefore, that Baba giving His love to me, was the gift I most needed"

One most touching event was Baba's greeting to two of our friends from Antwerp, who were visiting their mother in London, and had had a long period of suffering, mental and physical. They told Baba how happy they were to see him, and he responded with the smile and handshake we know so well, saying: "But not as happy as I am to see you two dear Souls, and I give you my love." They brought to mind the words of one of Baba's Indian devotees: "Through suffering we understand Baba more and more; sufferings open the heart's doors for Baba to enter."

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Many who saw Baba realized too that He was suffering and in reply to some words of loving sympathy with His broken leg, Baba spelt out on His board: "The accident is of little importance. The only important thing is to see God everywhere, and in everyone, and to become one with Him. The goal of life is to know God the Infinite One in everyday life, and all this existence is to gain that goal."

In his letter Will also compiled the following spiritual gems that Baba gave in intimate conversation with those who met Him on these two days:

I really am happy to see you today. Let me tell you this fact: there is nothing to worry about, nothing to be disheartened about. We are all, each of us, meant to be happy. God who is within us all is to be experienced as Infinite Happiness, and it can be done only through love for Him.

To find the Truth, one not only has to depend upon analysis and intellect but on the heart. Intellectual understanding is not as important as experience through the heart. God is the only Reality and He cannot be analysed. Reason cannot reach Him. When one through love finds Him, one finds Him in everyone.

We must seek God in everyday life. Look for God; God loves those who seek Him, and when we seek Him with all our heart, we find Him in ourselves. The goal of life is to know God the Infinite One in everyday life. Baba gives you His love, that love which will eventually help you to find God.

Don't worry. My love will give you that strength and conviction which makes you feel that you belong to God. Seek Truth with all your heart and Baba will help—I am in this world to help people to love God, to find Him and to see Him.

Do your work selflessly, and you will be doing it for God. I will help you with My Love, that you can do this perfectly.

Will concluded his impressions of Baba's visit with his personal comments:

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Only One who has found the Truth can thus enable another to achieve the same end, for in greeting every person who came before him, Baba was greeting the God within each one, speaking silently to awaken the God within, pouring out his love to feed the God within, touching the hand that he grasped with understanding and love (the hand whose evolution stretches back through the animal and vegetable kingdoms) to thus raise the consciousness nearer the Universal Life which Baba embodies, and dispenses to the whole world.

Many of us realized the great significance of Baba's presence in London on his way to India after the American visit. He had promised to come to London, if a center was found for his work, and that center he founded inwardly and established afresh in the hearts of many here on those two days.

Some friends had come from the North and West of England, Wales, from the Continent by air; one Australian (May Lundquist) landed at Marseilles and arrived here in time via airline

Several had met Baba years ago, as you did, and at their reunion afterwards at tea in the hotel, mingled with new friends who had met Baba for the first time. It was an animated scene, almost like "musical chairs" as people moved around to speak to each other spontaneously having been to Baba beforehand and felt his love.

At mid-day there was an interval for Baba and the *mandali* when some came to report on their work for him in London. Baba enlivened this period with his humour, teasing some and making jokes but giving that divine quality which permeates all he does.

Baba in Locarno, Switzerland

On August 6th, Baba, along with the women *mandali*, left London for Switzerland. The men disciples, who were to leave the following day, went to see Baba off at the airport, some of

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them in Don's sports car. In another car, Charmian was ready to drive Baba and some of the women *mandali*, including Mehera. She turned the ignition key but she couldn't locate the starter as it was an old car that she was driving for the first time. She didn't know what to do. So those who were going in a taxi had to overtake Don and bring him back. Goher, who was in the taxi, shouted to Don, "Stop, stop!" He was the one who knew the car's mechanism.

Don quickly drove back to the hotel, but before he could get closer to Charmian's car, someone held something as a curtain to shield Mehera because the men *mandali* were not allowed to see her. Don immediately pointed out the starter button and dashed off, followed by Charmian.

The trouble with the car, however, did not end there. While Charmian was shifting gears, an old part of the gearshift came off most unexpectedly in her hand. She was more than scared at this occurrence. There were cars behind her and Baba was gesturing to her to drive faster. Somehow she managed to handle the situation by herself and she even reached the airport ahead of time.

In journeys with Baba, the tense and light-hearted moments—panic and relief—quickly alternated. One, however, could not be distracted by this but had to concentrate only on following Baba and carrying out His instructions. Since Baba has dropped His body, His lovers all over the world feel that He is using his double method to an even greater degree in drawing them closer to Him.

Baba reached Zurich on August 7th. Irene Billo had arranged for everyone to drive to Locarno. So, instead of another plane ride, all enjoyed a delightful drive through the Overland Mountains and the countryside of Switzerland. They reached Locarno (Soldurno) that night. Hedi Mertens had put her house, Casa Ronco di Fiori, at Baba's disposal.

The house was "L"-shaped, large and spacious, surrounded by a garden and enclosed by a wall. The other half of the "L" belonged to an architect who was on vacation and who had agreed to let Hedi use his house as well. The most comfortable room was selected and prepared for Baba but when He

arrived He chose one of the smaller rooms on the ground floor which had a door leading to the garden. The men *mandali* were lodged in another house, outside the compound, some five minutes walk away. Hedi and Gisella Hafliger looked extremely happy in welcoming the Master. They had made excellent arrangements for Baba and the *mandali*.

The Hafligers Meet Baba

The Hafligers had first heard of Meher Baba in December, 1941. Max was quite sick at the time and was confined to bed. Gisella, his wife, was busy looking after him and taking care of their two small children. One day, Max felt well enough to get out of bed and start going through the piled-up correspondence. He found a small leaflet with Baba's picture in it, containing an introduction to Baba and some of His sayings. He was struck by the fact that Baba was not "selling" something new, but had restated old truths in a modern way.

At the back of the leaflet was printed Hedi Mertens' name and address and Gisella contacted her. About a year and a half later, Max also met her, but he was very skeptical about Baba and His "spiritual business." At the same time his health deteriorated and he had to stay in a sanatorium. Hedi Mertens had left him a copy of Purdom's *The Perfect Master*, which he now began to read and found increasingly fascinating. When his health became very bad, he decided to send Baba a cable telling Him about his condition and how hopeless his prospects were of providing for his family, just to see how strong this "Master" was. However, since it was wartime (1943) he never received a reply.

Nevertheless, he began to translate *The Perfect Master* into German, thinking it might become a bestseller and produce some income. While working on the translation a nurse came into his room one Sunday evening and remarked that there were many French words in the English language.

She flipped through Purdom's book and picked out three: patience, prudence and coincidence. As soon as she left the

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room the thought flashed through Max's mind with a surprising conviction, that this was Baba's reply. Yet, although he could not dissuade himself from this impression, he treated it as merely an emotional feeling.

As he translated *The Perfect Master*, Max found, however, that none who saw the book were interested in it. Max finished the translation, but it was never printed. But one practical result was achieved: his English improved because of this work, and this turned out to be just what was needed in a new job which he undertook in Zurich in 1947, after his health had improved considerably.

About the same time, Gisella translated Jean Adriel's *Avatar*, which Hedi Mertens had lent her. They also came into closer contact with Hedi and, in 1948, with Irene Billo who had just returned from her eight years stay with Baba in India.

In July, 1950, while staying at Satara (MS) Baba sent Dr. Donkin to Europe and America. On his way to London, Donkin had a short stay in Switzerland. There, Baba's followers, including Max, contributed some money to be used in Baba's cause. Donkin's visit was a God-sent opportunity for the Hafligers to learn more about Baba. This unexpected meeting deepened Max's link with Baba and he felt drawn closer to Baba, the Perfect Master. He was also much impressed by Donkin whom he regarded as a perfect gentleman and a highly cultured Englishman.

Still it was not until August 1952 that they had the chance to meet Baba. After Baba's accident in the States, He wanted to spend two weeks in a quiet place where He could rest and it was arranged with Hedi Mertens that Baba would come to Switzerland and stay with her in Soldurno near Locarno. Hedi invited Gisella to come help prepare the house and to cook for all during Baba's stay. As this was during school vacation, all three children were free to come along and the whole family went.

Gisella saw Baba mostly in the evenings. Having read *The Perfect Master* and *Avatar*, she had expected her meeting with Baba to be a deep emotional experience, but meeting Baba was nothing of the sort. For a long time she worried, "Don't I

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love Baba, why doesn't He awaken my heart?" Years later she realized that to love Baba does not mean to feel overwhelmed by His Love but to live as He wants us to live, being patient and happy, helpful and kind to all, even those whom we do not like.

Max had to wait a day longer to meet Baba in person, for he was sent to meet the men *mandali* and escort them by train to Locarno. These were men who had traveled all over the world, but here they were not permitted even to get down at the railway platform. One of them jokingly complained, "Are we little babies?" But, as it was Baba's order, if they wanted something Max had to get down and get it for them.

When Max did meet Baba he was impressed by Baba's air of authority and His manner, which was commanding, yet also very natural and totally without affectation. Max was impressed that, in spite of His being so natural, Baba's orders had to be obeyed with a military-like discipline.

Once he had to accompany some of the men *mandali* and was surprised at the way they bargained for a watch, as is done in India. Another time Baba put Max in charge of finding a restaurant in Stresa that served good food at a reasonable price. This was not easy, but Max succeeded and later learned that Baba had remarked that He had taught Max how to calculate. In his business he found this to be a most useful skill in ascertaining the "right" price for things.

Another time, during an informal meeting, Baba thanked Max for the money he had given Donkin in 1950. After a while Baba thanked him a second time and once again for a third time. But, perhaps noticing Max's surprise, Baba spelled out on the alphabet board, "I will say no more." Baba always immensely appreciated whatever was offered with love.

For Baba, the two weeks stay in Switzerland was mostly for relaxation and rest, or at least it appeared so. A local masseur visited Baba to massage His arm and leg. Don would give Baba some walking exercises while He would try to use the crutches. Weight-bearing treatment was conducted in a beautiful garden adjoining the house. Sometimes Baba would join the *mandali* in their sightseeing visits around town or to lakeside places.

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For Monika, the Hafliger's eleven year-old daughter, it was a real vacation. It was a time of car rides and a wonderful garden to play in. There were cats to play with and Irene's giant white rabbit. Being a young girl, who was free to visit the men *mandali* and was intrigued by the noises they made in the morning clearing their throats—Indain style. She was also fascinated by the beautiful women *mandali* in their exotic *saris*. And Mani, who had been ordered by Baba to remain silent unless addressing Him, played all sorts of games with her and her sisters Rona and Vreneli. And of course there was Baba himself.

Her parents had told her that Meher Baba was like Jesus. When Baba came, Monika felt very shy and used to stare at Him only from the corner of her eye. But she felt right away, "Yes, this is Jesus," and accepted Him as the Highest (having no conception at that time of God or the God-Man) as if this were the most natural thing in the world. As years rolled by, this conviction of Baba being the Highest went on maturing.

Two memories from these weeks with Baba stand out for Monika. One is having her first taste of ice cream and the other is seeing Baba sitting in the garden in His wheelchair while Mani, who was standing on the upstairs balcony of the house, silently communicated with Him. Not a word was spoken as Baba and Mani gestured to each other. Perhaps it was a joke, for both Baba and Mani, smiled and laughed without a sound. What better experience than to instantly accept Him as the Highest, and what better memory of Baba than His sense of humor, silent communication and endearing love?

Once Baba was in the garden and Don was giving Him weight-bearing exercises. Nilu was also there, and the children were playing in the garden. Irene's rabbit started to hop towards the open gate, heading out to the street. Rona ran after the rabbit and picked it up. The rabbit struggled and succeeded in fighting its way loose, only to fall to the ground where it broke its back and lay paralyzed. The girl, in tears, went to Charmian for help. After placing it on a pillow, Charmian went to Baba and requested that He spare one of the doctors.

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Baba asked the doctors to go and attend to the rabbit. He instructed them to do all that they could. The rabbit was even taken to a veterinary surgeon. On Irene's return from town, Baba tactfully broke the news to her. He also comforted her by saying that she need not worry even if the rabbit died, as He had played with it. Baba had called Rona to be present when He comforted Irene and in this way the sense of guilt she had was erased. This little incident reveals Baba's love for small animals, His concern about those who own them, and His compassion for all.

Teenage Night Watchman

After the auto accident near Prague, Nilu attended to Baba each night. This had continued for over two months and Nilu was exhausted. So, in Switzerland Baba allowed a Swiss boy, in his early teens, to be on *pahra* (watch duty) at night. The boy's mother tongue was German and he did not know English. He could, however, follow Baba's international gestures and readily offered to serve Him. Prior to his duty each day, the boy had a full supper.

Rano had to be on call around six o'clock in the morning. One morning she heard Baba's clap and on going to the room found Baba surprised that she was not up and ready. She said, "Baba, it's only 5 o'clock." Baba pointed to the clock on His table which said six. Rano said that she checked the two clocks every night, so the difference, if any, would be a few minutes at the most. The same thing occurred again a few days later. Rano said the only way the clock could advance at such a pace was if the boy, feeling sleepy, had set the clock one hour ahead. Baba had a hearty laugh over this.

On August 14th, in the early hours of the morning, Meherjee, Adi, Sarosh, Nilu and Gustadji left Locarno (Soldurno) by car for Geneva. The drive through the beautiful towns on the lake was exquisite. They had to catch a direct flight from Geneva to Bombay. They reached India the next day. Baba, with the rest of His people, continued to stay in

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Switzerland. On August 15th—Indian Independence Day—Baba went out with His group to see the fireworks on Lake Lugano, arranged by the Indian Embassy, which were marvelous.

"Here Is Your Old Man"

Baba left Lugano for Geneva on August 18th, where He stayed for the night in the Caravan Hotel. Baba and His group had tickets on Air India from Geneva to Bombay. However, on the 19th, when they were ready with all their things packed, there came a telephone call that Air India had just gone on strike and that their flight was canceled. It wasn't certain when Air India would begin operating again.

Whenever Baba's work was over in a town or city, he would be in a hurry to leave. He now wished to reach India as soon as possible, so He agreed to fly via Cairo and Karachi (Pakistan). He asked Don to get visa permits for Pakistan. As there was enough time, Don also wished to purchase some fine aluminum crutches for Baba on his way to the consulate.

Baba then sent some others to check at different airlines and travel agencies for a direct flight to India and also to inform Don of their efforts. In the meantime the news came that the flight was back on, but Don had not yet returned. Now it was Rano's turn to search for Don. She visited the main orthopedic stores; wherever she went, the reply would be, "He has just left." When she reached the French consulate, and inquired about Don, she heard someone saying in French, "If anyone inquires again about this Dr. Donkin, throw them out!" It was clear that others had been there earlier with the same query and so Rano left in a hurry!

Charmian, who was having tea in the hotel, was also informed about the recent development with the airlines and she set out in search of Don. The game of chase seemed to be in full swing. At last Charmian found Don in the British Consulate. He had not succeeded in getting visas for Pakistan. And by the time Don returned, the flight had again been canceled.

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Later, Baba sent Don and Rano on a fresh attempt to purchase six tickets together on one flight. In Geneva the offices of the airlines were all located on one street that ended at Lake Geneva. Don and Rano went to the first airline office and explained what they wanted. The ticket agent expressed his inability to comply with their request—not even within a week's time. However, he telephoned and inquired of all the other airlines, but they too could not assure such an arrangement.

So Don and Rano went into a cafe to discuss what to do next. Don said, "Well, that's that." He felt that it was not necessary to visit the other offices in person as it would be the same story everywhere. Rano, however, felt that Baba would expect a more thorough effort of her. She left the cafe and visited one office after another unmindful of the identical replies.

Finally, she reached the last airline office on the street which was Air France. In her best French, Rano explained her dilemma of being responsible for a party of Indians who had to get to their country as soon as possible. She also added that as two of them were victims of an auto accident, the party of six had to travel together. The Frenchman said he would try his best and asked her to come back after an hour.

Rano spent the interim by Lake Geneva. While watching the ducks and swans she begged Baba to help her in this final attempt to get tickets. When she walked back to the office she was delighted to see the smiling Frenchman holding out six tickets as he leaned over the counter to give them to her. Perhaps, if the counter hadn't been so wide, she would have leaned over to hug him!

The ticket agent apologized because he could only arrange for their flight from Paris to Karachi and not to Bombay. Rano wholeheartedly thanked him and said, "That is just fine." She happily returned to the hotel, but with no expectation of a pat on the back from Baba. Without a word of praise, He gave her a look expressing that she had done what was expected of her.

The flight was the following day, in the evening from Paris. So Baba left Geneva by the morning shuttle. On

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reaching Paris they found that the only way to reach the international section of the airport was through a long series of stairs. So it was not possible to take Baba, sitting in His wheelchair, by that route.

However, there was a ramp that was used to carry the luggage; the only choice was to wheel Baba via this ramp. This was permitted, but Rano was not allowed to accompany Him. An airport attendant wheeled Him through, and by the time He reached the other side Rano had just arrived to meet Him. The attendant wheeled Baba to Rano and said in French, "Here is your old man!" Poor soul, he did not know how blessed he was to wheel the Ancient One!

Baba on Way to Meherazad

At Rano's request, the airlines provided Baba with a room. Although there was plenty of time for sightseeing in Paris before the flight, Baba decided that no one should go out. During the long wait, Baba kept sending Rano to ask the airlines personnel whether their flight would leave on time. Each time she went to inquire, she tried to ask a different person, and she tactfully invented different excuses to ask the same question. Finally one of the officers offered to inform Rano if there were any change in the time schedule and he suggested that she stop worrying about it.

The repeating of instructions was one of the external methods Baba used while He was engaged in His inner spiritual work. But whoever was given the order was often placed in an embarrassing situation. For instance, one time while returning from one of His earlier visits to the West, Baba constantly ordered Norina to contact the Captain of their ship and ask him if they would reach Bombay on time.

Norina, in her inimitable way, would go to the Captain and each time begin talking with him about various subjects and thus in a round about way work up to asking the same old question! It is a blessing to receive any order from the Master, but it is not always easy to carry it out.

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Finally, the time for departure arrived and the passengers headed out to the runway; Baba was wheeled to the steps to board the plane. The two airport attendants there looked around for a third person to help them lift Baba's chair. Just then, there appeared on the scene an unusually tall, muscular Frenchman. Sensing the situation and without much ado, he gracefully swept Baba out of the chair and gently carried him up the steps in his arms.

This scene, cast against the orange sky of a brilliant sunset, made a deep impression on those who witnessed it. The Frenchman stepped across the plane's threshold, placed Baba in His seat and left. Baba meaningfully smiled and gestured, "He does not know how fortunate he was!"

These incidents are narrated in detail to show how life with Baba was dynamic, and how even simple things were not easy, while the impossible became possible. Everyone who traveled with Baba had to be in readiness to carry out His wishes, although at times this made others doubt one's sanity.

When Baba reached Karachi, He and the women *mandali* were not allowed to leave the airport because they didn't have visas for Pakistan. When passage was finally booked on a flight to Bombay, there was room for only four. So Baba, with Mehera, Mani and Goher went together while Rano and Meheru followed them on another flight the next day. Baba and party reached Santa Cruz Airport on August 23rd and, without waiting in Bombay, drove straight through the night in Nariman's car to Meherazad (Pimpalgaon-Malvi) arriving there at 1:30 in the morning.

Baba thus returned to India after a period of almost four months. Once one of those who had accompanied Him during this visit was pressed by some of us to tell Baba's special message to the West. He simply answered, "Love. Love and love." Love the God-Man, the only One worthy of love.

THRESHOLD OF THE FIERY FREE LIFE 1952 - PART V

Eruch and Pendu Set Out on Tour

To pick up the story of Eruch and Pendu's tour, it is necessary to go back a few months. On March 21st, Adi had issued a circular informing Meher Baba's followers of Eruch's and Pendu's impending tour. A tentative itinerary was prepared. Eruch sent letters to some people telling them about his intention to share information about Meher Baba's "Life Phase" as well as to give a few specific instructions from Baba, "wholly in the interest of spiritual life."

One of the conditions of their journey was that Eruch and Pendu were not allowed to accept money from anyone. However, they were allowed to accept meals and refreshments from Baba lovers and train fare for their next stop, if offered. During this tour they visited 35 towns and cities of which only one—Karachi—was in Pakistan. They began their journey on April 7th and their first stay was at Amravati. Here Dr. Deshmukh arranged the programs. A meeting was held in the local college building under the auspices of the philosophical society.

In this meeting, as well as the succeeding ones, Eruch explained Baba's special messages given in *Life Circulars* one and five. Some time was reserved for questions and answers. Later, to those who were interested in Baba, Eruch asked if they were prepared to join Baba in the Fiery Free Life. Each one had to decide this issue on his own responsibility and on his own free will.

Eruch had been rather uncertain of his ability to talk about Baba in public. These initial meetings were made not only public but attended predominantly by very cultured and highly educated people. However, they went well and presumably Eruch was not so diffident thereafter about answering questions on Meher Baba's life.

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In addition to the meetings, Eruch and Pendu were instructed by Baba to also meet the *masts* and saints (or saintly persons) of the places they visited. Before they set out on their travels, Baba bowed down to both of them. He then instructed them to meet *masts* wherever they went and convey to them His "special message." After doing this, they were asked to put their foreheads on the feet of the *masts* or saints, as this would be tantamount to Baba Himself bowing down to them. At Amravati they contacted two saintly personalities named Tai Maharaj and Jairam Bua.

At Nagpur, Nana Kher, with the help of other local Baba lovers, arranged the programs. One of these was on the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission. The president of the Mission's Nagpur branch, the venerable and scholarly Swami Bhaskaranand, attended this meeting.

The Swami personally knew Eruch from the 30's. He had Meher Baba's *darshan* in Mary Lodge, where the Jessawalas stayed until 1938. Before meeting Baba, he had planned to ask Him certain questions of a spiritual nature. But the moment he met Baba, he decided to sit quietly in the *darshan* gathering. Later he told Eruch that Baba's divine presence was itself a convincing answer to all his questions; in fact they seemed to fade into nothingness.

The next day, Eruch and Pendu met two *masts*—Amin and Gulam Hussain—and gave them a message from Baba. They also visited the *dargah* of Tajuddin Baba, one of Meher Baba's Masters, to pay their homage.

At Saoner, a town about thirty miles from Nagpur, Pophali, an advocate, arranged a meeting. Abdul Majeed Khan introduced Eruch to the audience; he also narrated his personal experiences with the *Avatar* of the Age. At Pulgaon, Eruch and Pendu stayed with a very devoted family, the Pillays. One of the girls in the family, Meher Veena, had become so absorbed in Baba's love that she behaved like a semi-mastani.

By the last week of April they reached Delhi and obtained visas for Pakistan. Owing to a severe storm, they had to cancel their first booking, but they were able to fly the following day

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for Karachi. They stayed for over a week in one of the suburbs, Malir, at Pilamai's house in the Parsi Sanitorium. On the 16th a meeting was arranged at Minoo Pohawala's house and Eruch spoke for two hours. It was a small gathering, but most were interested in or devoted to Baba.

On May 14th, Adi Dubash and Minoo Kharas took them to an exclusive boat club where they went out rowing. After awhile, the bottom of the boat split open and the boat started sinking. Adi Dubash, Pendu and Eruch had to jump out and swim back to shore. Unfortunately, they had their money, passports, and other important papers with them. By the time they swam to shore, several furlongs away, they were thoroughly exhausted, not to mention completely drenched.

Yet surprisingly, every bit of their belongings was intact, although the currency notes did have to be carefully unfolded and dried. While doing Baba's work, mishaps occur, difficulties crop up, but His *nazar* (protective grace) saves us and we come out of these dangerous situations with a laugh.

During this stay, Eruch and Pendu also travelled through the different suburbs of Karachi in search of God-intoxicated souls. They met Nizamuddin on a footpath, Malang in the market place, Raman Das near Hardings Bridge, and a *mastani* near a railway station. Baba's message was conveyed to them all. The spiritual significance of these meetings Baba alone knew!

Hamirpur and Andhra Pradesh

On their return to Delhi they proceeded to the district of Hamirpur in Uttar Pradesh. This was a heartwarming and inspiring period of their tour. The main places they visited were Hamirpur, Rath, Nauranga and Jarakhar. Keshav Nigam and others most lovingly welcomed Eruch and Pendu and made the necessary arrangements for the various programs.

In all the meetings, small gatherings and house visits, people expressed growing affection and eagerness to hear

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more and more about the Advent of God as Man, Meher Baba. During the devotional songs, the atmosphere became so charged that few could resist shedding tears. Some anxiously inquired when they would be blessed with the opportunity of having Meher Baba's *darshan*. In the midst of these overwhelming programs, Eruch received a telegram informing them of Baba's auto accident in the States. However, they completed this part of the tour as planned and then returned to Ahmednagar on June 5, 1952.

About this time they received a special cable from Baba instructing them to stick to the previously arranged schedule of their tour through India. It often amazed those who were staying with Baba how, in spite of His grievous physical injuries, He remembered all the instructions, both big and small, given to His dear ones. This particular cable reached Ahmednagar at a time when Eruch and Pendu were expecting some directive or confirmation from Baba.

The third part of their journey began on July 11th, when they left Poona for the south. Their first stop was at Sholapur. It was here that after a year I again met Pendu and Eruch in the Coronation Hotel. In the course of our conversation I told them about my trip to Hardwar and Rishikesh to meet Mauni, as ordered by Baba. I also casually mentioned to them my stay in the *ashram* of a renowned Swami who made an indirect, adverse remark about Baba's stay at Rishikesh in the early 40s.⁵³ In the evening, at a meeting arranged in a club, Eruch lucidly explained Baba's Life phase to the audience.

From Sholapur they went straight to Madras, a port of southeastern India, where Sister Janaki arranged a get-together. Then they proceeded to visit Tadepalligudem in Andhra Pradesh. Like the people from the district of Hamirpur, those in Andhra also welcomed Meher Baba's *mandali* with great enthusiasm and respect. Some expressed unforeseen interest in and devotion to Baba as the *Avatar* of the Age.

Dr. T. Dhanapathy Rao was the chief host. Some who had not met Baba or any of the *mandali* before, very devotedly took an active part in arranging the meetings and house visits. Eruch would speak in English which would then be translated

⁵³ *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. II, pp. 130-134.

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into Telugu, mostly word for word. One Baba lover who owned a printing press, printed reports of Eruch's talks which were received with much interest.

Some had read Jean Adriel's book, *Avatar*, and were greatly impressed with Meher Baba's life. They asked Eruch many questions about Baba's *Avatarhood*. They were very receptive to his replies and especially to Baba's statements about His Divinity. Here, I wish to give a short account of a program at Eluru. It will give an idea of the meetings held at other places.

This meeting was at Subramanyam Sastri's house at Eluru. The host was a scholar of Sanskrit. He requested Pendu to unveil Baba's portrait. Then prayers were recited in four languages: Sanskrit, English, Telugu, and Hindi. Baba's pictures were garlanded amidst loud cheers. Sastri's daughter played sweet classical music on the *veena*. As the next item of the program, a few shared their experiences of Baba's Divinity and His love for them. In the end Eruch spoke for half an hour disseminating Baba's message of Love.

The following is a part of a prayer read out during one of the Baba gatherings. It portrays how the hearts of some people were awakened to Baba's love even before meeting Him in person:

O God Incarnate,
Our dear Sri Meher Babajee
The Kings of kings, the Lord of lords,
The Master of masters and
The Saviour of the Universe!
Thou art the source of Divine Love,
Infinite Knowledge, Eternal Bliss,
And mighty dynamic powers are in Thee.
May our hearts be awakened to Love Divine
That flows eternally from Thee .
May Thy Grace be on all of us,
Ever and anon: Amen.

The descent of Reality into Illusion, the Formless God manifesting in the form of man, is known as the Advent of the *Avatar*. Meher Baba stated in *God Speaks*⁵⁴ that the *Avatar*

⁵⁴ *God Speaks*, pp. 267-269.

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becomes everything. This implies that the descent is tantamount to the God-Man's directly contacting the whole world. That is why He can awaken love in anyone, at any time He pleases.

For anyone's heart to awaken to Baba's love, a meeting with Him in person, in the gross world, is not essential. For that matter, all those who had Baba's physical *darshan*, although benefitted spiritually, did not necessarily become Baba lovers. The *Avatar's* outer physical contact, either with individuals or with the masses, is only in relation to His inner spiritual work which is carried out on the different planes of consciousness, unknown and unnoticed.

But coming to Him is an internal process. Baba as the God-Man resides in each heart. From within He draws us to Him so that we can finally see Him as He should be seen, instead of just seeing His physical form with our gross eyes. The outbursts of love for Baba and the acceptance of Him as the *Avatar* of the Age by the people of Hamirpur and Andhra before having Baba's *darshan* testifies to this. In a similar manner, people all over the world are now accepting Meher Baba as the God-Man, although He has dropped the body He assumed for His *Avataric* work.

On their return journey to Ahmednagar, Eruch and Pendu stayed for a short time at Hyderabad, especially to meet the *masts* and to convey Baba's message to them. After a short detour to Navasari in Gujarat, the last leg of the trip was a journey by train to the east of India—Calcutta (W.B.). While on the train, Pendu developed a severe pain in his stomach. A doctor had to be called, but in spite of his treatment, Pendu had to lie in bed for two days. From Calcutta they went to Allahbad where they met some *masts* and saintly personalities.

Here a Baba lover offered to arrange a program and to give news in the local paper about Eruch's talk—the date, time and place. However, he failed to attend to this job and only a few people came. Still Eruch talked for an hour, omitting none of the main points regarding Baba's Life phase. Baba's instructions mattered much more to him than the number of people who came to hear him. At Allahbad they went out to see

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a football match which was perhaps their first and last recreation of its kind during their tour. On August 12th, five months later, they returned to Ahmednagar. The tour was complete.

A fortnight later Baba arrived. Within a week He called Eruch and Pendu to give Him a detailed report of their tour. Eruch prepared a big table showing the places they visited with the dates. It also showed who offered them meals or refreshments or money towards their transport, down to the last penny. Baba looked at this table with great interest.

Then He marked with a pencil some places that He personally wished to visit. From this it may be assumed that Baba had sent Eruch and Pendu, without their knowing it, for a "fiery field work"; and soon after His return from the West He disclosed His plan of visiting most of these villages and towns for mass *darshan* and also to contact *masts* during the phase of His Fiery Free Life.

Baba Cures the Incurable

Baba had reached Meherazad on August 24th. Earlier it had rained and the fields were green with their tender shoots waving in the wind. There was an air of repose, but life at Meherazad did not resume any relaxed orderliness. Many things were in waiting for Baba's consideration and approval.

The day after Baba's arrival, Adi started visiting Meherazad regularly at 3:00 P.M. with the mail. At that time the place now known as "Mandali Hall" was just an improvised garage, so Baba attended to the correspondence in the living room of the main building—Baba House.

Baba's leg continued to give Him a lot of trouble. He did not feel at ease with the shoes specially made for Him in the West. A cobbler from Ahmednagar was taken to Meherazad to fit Him for inserts. A doctor from the city was also called as Baba's arm was causing Him much pain. The crutches He was using were not completely comfortable, so Sarosh started searching for a suitable wheel chair for Baba.

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During Baba's recuperation, He did not wish to see any visitors at Meherazad. However, one day while He was sitting on the verandah, a car stopped at the gate. One of the *mandali* went over and tried to persuade the visitors to go back. Their conversation became louder as the visitors pressed their request to see Baba, although it was not permitted.

Three Baba lovers, two boys from Ahmednagar and one girl from Poona, were in the car—Rangole, L. B. Thade and Subhadra Bandelu, who looked like a skeleton. She was suffering from advanced tuberculosis of the lungs. In spite of the best treatment, her condition continued to deteriorate and the doctors had given up hope. A specialist from Bombay, who used to visit Sassoon Hospital in Poona, frankly told Subhadra's parents that the disease had reached its final stage and that death now was only a few days away. So he advised them that there was no point in restricting her diet any longer and they might as well give her whatever she wanted to eat.

From the extra loving attitude of her family members, Subhadra sensed the inevitable—her approaching death. She was one of the members of the Poona Meher Baba Bhajan party. She had a very sweet voice and she used to sing Baba songs. Naturally, she wanted to see Baba before she died. She gathered her courage and through of an adventurous plan to see Him.

Her bed was in a small room. Early one morning, when all in her house were fast asleep, she got up and placed her pillow and blanket in such a way as to give the impression that she was still resting in bed. Then she made her way down the stairs and out the door. Although she was too weak to walk unsupported, she managed to make it some distance down the street by leaning against the house walls. Luckily she saw a *tonga* (horse cab) waiting by the road. She hired it and went to the bus stand. Within three hours she reached Ahmednagar.

One of her close relatives, Laxmi Narayan Thade, had been recently transferred to Ahmednagar. She knew his address and went to his house, but it was locked. She waited on the steps for his return. When he finally arrived with his friend Rangole he was shocked to find Subhadra sitting there

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in such an emaciated condition. Both led her into the house and made her lie down on a bed.

Subhadra told them of her adventure and said that she had come with the express purpose of having Baba's *darshan*. Coincidentally, Baba had just returned from His visit to the West. So Thade went to Adi and told him Subhadra's desire. Adi, according to Baba's order, flatly refused to allow them to go to Meherazad. Thade left greatly discouraged, but then he thought of a possible alternative.

He and Rangole contacted Adi's mother, Gulmai. They knew that Baba regarded her as His spiritual mother. They related Subhadra's plight to her and also Adi's reply. Gulmai was deeply touched with Subhadra's last wish and said to them, "Take her to Meherazad. If anyone objects to your going there, tell them I have sent you." Thade did not tell Adi about this new plan, but went straight home. Subhadra felt overjoyed with the prospect of seeing Baba. They hired a taxi and quickly reached Meherazad.

Hearing the sound of a car, Baba sent someone to find out who had come. After a few minutes the message came from Baba that the visitors should be allowed in to see Him. He thus honored Gulmai's wish even before it was mentioned.

Resting her one hand on Thade's shoulder and the other on Rangole's, Subhadra started walking towards the verandah where Baba was sitting. When Baba saw her at a distance, He asked Thade and Rangole to let Subhadra walk alone to Him. They thought this was impossible and that she would collapse to the ground. But to their amazement she started walking slowly, with her eyes fixed on Baba. No sooner had she reached Him than she prostrated at His holy feet. The boys helped her to stand up and Baba, the All-knowing One, started asking her, "Who are you? Why have you come here?"

Thade related in a nutshell what brought them there. Upon this Baba asked Subhadra, "Who am I?" She spontaneously replied, "You are God." With a face lit with compassion, Baba gestured, "I am God. God is in everything. God is in everyone. God is also in you. Now listen carefully. God who is within you wants you to know, 'You will not die soon even if

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someone were to throw you against a big rock!" Subhadra felt extremely delighted and relieved.

Baba continued, "Each morning when you get up remember me wholeheartedly. Don't worry, don't feel disheartened. Immediately go back to Poona. When returning home from the bus station look for a doctor's sign board. The first one you see will be your doctor. Follow his treatment for two months. Take my name each time you take the medicine. I will be with you. You will get well. My blessings."

Most happily the trio returned to Ahmednagar. Subhadra followed all of Baba's instructions and got well. At present she is leading a happy married life with two children. Marvelous are Baba's ways! Even during the recuperation or seclusion period, such striking scenes were not too uncommon.

Baba the Perfect Host

On August 31st, Baba called the men *mandali* from Ahmednagar and Meherabad. Those who accompanied Baba to the West gave a general account of their visit. Baba referred to the critical situation caused by the auto accident. He praised Nilu for his night watch duty. He also remarked, "I found my *mandali* at their best." With a pause and a smile He added, "And also at their worst!" At the last part of this meeting, He asked Eruch to tell them about his all-India tour with Pendu.

One morning in the first week of September, Baba visited Ahmednagar with the women disciples for a special movie arranged by Sarosh at his cinema. During the second week He went with Dr. Donkin to the city hospital for diathermy (heat therapy). Donkin was also trying to get an appointment for Him with a surgeon in Poona.

On the thirteenth of the same month, Baba called Yeshawantrao Borawake from Sakori and He talked with him about the forthcoming *darshan* programs and instructed Yeshawantrao to be with Him for one month beginning November 5th.

Yeshawantrao was a close disciple of Upasni Maharaj.

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During Baba's stay at Sakori in the *jhopri* (hut) with Maharaj, when the latter brought Baba back to full normal consciousness, Yeshawantrao looked very lovingly after Baba's physical needs for six months—July to December, 1921. In that critically important period, Yeshawantrao supplied Baba with lots of *pan*⁵⁵ which He loved to chew. The *kamli*⁵⁶ coat that Baba wore in the 1920's, which is currently in the museum on Meherabad Hill, was also presented to Baba by Yeshawantrao.

Now he was seeing Baba again after a long period and both looked very pleased. Godavri Mai, the representative of Upasni Maharaj, was at Sakori and conducted the *ashram*. Baba's message to Godavari, sent through Yeshawantrao was: "I (Baba) am everywhere."

On September 15th, Baba with some of His *mandali* left for Poona. He stayed there for a fortnight in a bungalow named Amar Jyoti, on Karve Road. He had gone there for diathermy treatment. Along with other matters, He continued to discuss with Adi, Eruch and Pendu the list of people who were to be invited for the special gathering at Meherabad, which had been planned for the second week of November. In that year food grains were being rationed by the State Government, so providing food for a gathering of 250 people was a problem. Sarosh, who was an influential person, offered to shoulder this responsibility, which pleased Baba.

In Nariman's Oldsmobile, Baba returned to Meherazad on October 1st. On October 5th, as previously arranged, Baba met with the workers from Andhra and Hamirpur to discuss His upcoming visit. They had arrived one day early. The next morning, as instructed by Baba, Adi went at 4:00 A.M. to the *dak* bungalow where they were staying to see that the visitors had hot water for a bath and a good breakfast.

By sunrise Adi left with this group, along with Eruch and Pendu, for Meherazad. Baba sat with the invitees behind the Blue Bus and discussed with them the arrangements for the November gathering. They also told Baba how inspiring Eruch-Pendu's visit had been. All were beaming with happiness for they had the blessed fortune to be in Baba's company. The meeting was over by 10:00 A.M.

⁵⁵ Betel leaves with slaked lime and other ingredients.

⁵⁶ A coarse woolen blanket.

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On October 6th, Baba visited Meherabad. He discussed with Pendu and Padri the lodging arrangements being made for His lovers. This included the setting up of the kitchen, erecting a dining hall, putting up the *mandap*, and creating washing and latrine facilities. Nothing was left undiscussed. He did not overlook even minor details. Whenever Baba called any meeting He would be the Perfect Host.

Jal Kerawala, one of Baba's closest disciples, died on the 6th at midnight. A day earlier he had left Bombay for Nagpur. On the train he had a heart attack and passed a restless night, and was directly rushed to a hospital at Nagpur where he breathed his last, without regaining consciousness. Baba sent a telegram to Meherjee, Jal's friend: "What God decrees must come to pass and Jal has now come to me eternally."

Jal Kerawala had held a commissioner's post with the Indian Government. He was unmarried and had no close family members. So Baba instructed Meherjee, Eruch and Papa (Eruch's father) to go to Nagpur and see to Jal's affairs. Jal, with his impressive bearing, deep understanding and unadulterated love for his Master, was indeed one of the gems among Baba's disciples.

Role of the Fiery Free Life

During Eruch and Pendu's all-India tour, they had given to some of Baba's devoted followers a special letter. This offered them an opportunity to dedicate their money, property or lives in the service of Meher Baba. After Baba's arrival, the list of persons who were given this choice was read out to Him. Later, some additional names were approved by Baba and mimeographed copies of a circular letter prepared by Adi and quoted below were sent to them:

Dear . . .

In the cause of God and entirely in the interest of spiritual life, Baba desires to know whether it will or will not be possible for you to act up to the items as enumerated in the attached letter form, which you should fill in, sign

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and send to Meher Baba, c/o Adi K. Irani, King's Road, Ahmednagar, by Oct. 1, 1952.

Everyone who received this circular was to fill in this letter which appeared below it:

Dear Baba,

As per your letter of 1/9/52, I agree on my own free will and responsibility to follow you, by unquestioningly dedicating to you any one or more or all of the "following" entirely in the interest of spiritual life:

- 1. MY MONEY _____ YES/NO _____
- 2. MY PROPERTY _____ YES/NO _____
- 3. MY SERVICE _____ YES/NO _____
- 4. MY VERY LIFE _____ YES/NO _____

My remarks on the above (if any)

MY NAME AND ADDRESS Yours devotedly
(In Block Letters)

After receiving the above communication, some people asked Adi about Baba's forthcoming Fiery Life. To one of the group heads, Adi wrote:

The Fiery Free Life will have two aspects: Impersonal and Personal.

The Impersonal aspect will represent something beyond imagination, beyond time and form, and as such is incomprehensible for us. Baba knows what it would be to function impersonally. Suffice for us to know that it is impersonal.

The Personal aspect will represent something done that is tangible and perceptible and, as such, practical. It will have several phases—*mast*-work, work with the poor and mass *darshan*.

Each day, Adi kept Baba informed about the replies from His disciples and devotees. A proportionately large number of

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people expressed their readiness to offer their lives. One person who had no money to offer Baba, requested Him to accept instead not only his present life, but his successive lives as well! Comparatively few agreed to dedicate their money or property to Baba. Later, He jokingly remarked, "How can we manage with so little money for so many people wanting to stay with me?" On another occasion with a meaningful smile He added, "It is easy to offer one's life to me, but it is extremely difficult for one to part with one's money!"

It must be mentioned here that after receiving all the replies, Baba did not accept money or property even from those who wanted to give these to Him. Was this just a test, a lesson or both? What transpired between Baba and those who dedicated their lives to Him we do not know; it is a personal affair between each lover and the Beloved. It is, however, obvious that although Baba, as the *Avatar*, may or may not accept or reject the possessions offered to Him, it becomes impossible for Him to refuse hearts lovingly placed at His feet.

In October, He inquired of those who had not replied to Him. He expressed concern that they might not have received the form. About this time, I received a letter in which Baba directed me to meet a certain Baba lover and to get his form duly filled in. The place where this person worked as a teacher was an out of the way village. I traveled there by a road that was so muddy that I have yet to see its like again. I briefly wondered if this form could possibly be so important. The same day, if I remember correctly, the form, along with my letter, was mailed to Ahmednagar.

A month later, I had an opportunity to stay at Meherabad for two weeks. During Baba's visits to Meherabad He would at times attend to correspondence. One day, along with the other letters, He also took out the letter that I had sent Him from Gunjoti, the village I had just visited. Baba did not say anything about it. But this casual happening served as a reprimand to me for belittling, though inadvertently, the importance of Baba's instructions. With Baba, nothing was unimportant; nothing, though outwardly insignificant, was purposeless. This gentle reprimand is an example of how He

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clears even the stray cobwebs of doubt from the dark corners of one's mind.

On October 14, Baba visited a hospital in Ahmednagar. He had x-rays taken which did not reveal anything wrong, but the pain in His leg and arm persisted. The surgeon suggested that Baba should try to walk on an even surface and start weight bearing exercises. He agreed to do this under Donkin's supervision at Meherazad.

On October 16th (the third anniversary of the start of the New Life) Baba fasted, neither eating nor drinking (even water) all day. For the first time since the accident He also began walking independently with the aid of canes (walking sticks). It was as if Baba were symbolically bridging the last few months of physical inactivity and linking the New Life (with its wanderings on foot) with the upcoming Fiery Free Life, where Baba traveled once more around India, often having to walk considerable distances, especially during the mass *darshan* programs.

On His return from Poona, He gave seven messages to be read out to the masses during His visits to different places in India. In addition, as an introduction to the Fiery Free Life, He dictated:

The role, which God has willed for me, has had several phases. The pre-realisation ordinary state, the Old Life State of realised Divinity, the New Life State of perfect humility and intensive seeking of God as Truth through the achievement of *Manonash* (annihilation of the limiting mind) and the tripartite Free Life, which emerged after the attainment of *Manonash*, have all happened by God's will.

In the first part of this Free Life, culminating on 10th July 1952, bindings dominated freedom. It was in this first part that the personal disaster, for some years foretold by me, took place in the form of an auto accident, while crossing the American continent, causing me through facial injuries, a broken leg and a broken arm, much mental and physical suffering.

It was necessary that it should happen in America.

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God willed it so. In the second part of this Free Life, freedom has dominated bindings. And in the third part of this Free Life, commencing from 15th November 1952, both freedom and bindings are consumed in the fire of Divine Love . . . ⁵⁷

Continuous Repetition of God's Name

To backtrack a bit, the first news I had that Baba's New Life had ended was when I received the first "Life Circular." In this circular Baba had also stated that after March 21st He would permit people to see Him again. However, three weeks later, this blessed chance to see Baba was withdrawn by another circular. Owing to Baba's impending visit to the West and His ill health, He agreed to a period of convalescence after His operation for piles and fissures. Thus the opportunity of having Baba's *darshan* was postponed for eight more months. The last line of the circular stated, "After His return from the West, God willing, Baba will see people individually and in masses." It was a pill to be swallowed in which disappointment and consolation were mingled together.

Fortunately for me, in September I received a letter from Baba instructing me to visit Junjoti to do some work and report back to Him. Although still denied His *darshan*, I felt as if this order re-established my connection with Baba and I was consoled. And in October, to my great surprise and joy, I received another letter in which Baba said I could come to stay at Meherabad for the first two weeks of November.

Luckily it was no problem for me to get leave from school to go see Baba. Accordingly, on the evening of October 31st, I found myself at Meherabad. I hadn't been there since October 1949, three full years earlier, when Baba had released me from accompanying Him in the New Life and instructed me to continue my duties at school instead. As I tried to carry out this divine directive, I always found that the school authorities were very considerate about my off and on visits to Baba.

Over 30 people, including the *mandali*, were asked by

⁵⁷ *The Fiery Free Life and Seven Other Messages*, Nov. 1952, p.1.

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Baba to be at Meherabad for the first ten days of November for meetings with Him. Meanwhile, over 300 people from all parts of India were invited to the main *sahavas*, which was scheduled for the 7th to 9th of November, 1952. Baba stayed at Meherabad and usually it was Adi who drove Him each morning to Meherabad.

But on November 1st, at about 7:30 in the morning, Baba came to Meherabad with Meherjee and Nariman while the *mandali* came in Adi's car. We were on the verandah to greet our Beloved Master. As Baba got down from the car, He looked as radiant as ever. To me He looked beautiful and also powerful, but with an ineffable tenderness about Him.

The left wing of the main hall was covered with a green carpet. In the middle, close to the wall, was a wooden chaise lounge with a back rest; it was the same one that Baba had used in the 1930's.⁵⁸ A soft mattress with a spotless white sheet was spread over it. As the meetings were expected to be held frequently in this hall, this arrangement seemed the most comfortable for Baba as it would allow Him to conveniently stretch out his legs.

After a little while all were called into the hall. Pendu, Gustadji, Baidul, Adi, Kaka, Jal S. (Baba's brother), Chhagan, Ramjoo, Vishnu, Eruch and other *mandali* were sitting around Baba. He was seated at the far end of the hall, but a casual look from Him seemed to wipe away the distance between us. He motioned us to sit down. I purposely took my seat at the back for I had planned to note the happenings of my days with Him and I did not wish to appear conspicuous about it.

The account that follows is mostly based on those notes (scribbled in English, Hindi, and Marathi, as Baba used all three languages), my memories of those two weeks, as well as the notes Ramjoo compiled. However, since I am now reviewing this material after a lapse of 27 years, the sequence of events and the exact wording of Baba's statements are open to correction.

Referring to those who had come from the outstatis—Pleader, Minoos Kharas, Haji Abdulla, Savak Kotwal, Pandoba,

⁵⁸ Known as Baba's *gadi*. At present it is in the tin shed, behind the study hall at Upper Meherabad.

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Madhavrao, Gadekar, Nana Kher, Bal Natu and a few others— Baba began, "I am very pleased to see you all. This is a very important period. Now that you have come, drive away all thoughts about your family, money and other responsibilities."

Sidhu, who was present in the hall, at a sign from Baba, got up to bring Ali Shah, one of the two resident *masts*, to Him. While waiting for Sidhu's return, Baba casually spelled out, "I forgot about what I had decided early this morning, that I would begin the day by bowing down at the feet of a *mast*. There are two here, Tukaram and Ali Shah (also known as Mohammed and Bapjee respectively). The first is out of the question; he would not leave me alone for long once I see him. He is the *mavali* (mischievous or cunning) type. So it is better to get the *jamali* (gentleman) type."

Sidhu brought Bapjee into the hall. As Baba had just begun to walk without the aid of crutches, Dr. Nilu was very concerned about Baba's decision to bow down to the *mast*. He carefully supervised Baba's bowing down, until Baba touched Bapjee's feet with His forehead and then sat up.

As Bapjee was led to his room Baba commented, "I receive letters from many different parts of the country as well as from the West of people having experiences of me, like seeing me face to face, receiving guidance and help from me, and so on. I honestly tell you that personally I have not myself known about such things. Either God has done these things for me or it is the faith and devotion of the individuals concerned that have brought this about. But from November 15th, onwards, God will make me do such things directly as and when necessary. That is why I will be allowing the masses to contact me and will let those who so desire to perform my arti."

Turning to the upcoming Fiery Life, Baba began, "These two weeks are of my final working, and after that will commence the Fiery Life. This period is so important that I had to invite the selected few to be with me in order to participate in my preparations for the Fiery Life." (Although this particular period of Baba's work is known as His Fiery Free Life, during the meetings at Meherabad and the succeeding

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darshan tours, He referred to this phase simply as the Fiery Life. Therefore, I have decided to use this same phrase throughout my narration.)

Baba resumed, "Pleader has not seen me for about 12 years, but because of his old connection with me, I have brought him here by force of internal compulsion so that he may not miss this great chance. Manek Mehta will also prove to be lucky if he turns up. It would have been better if Jal Kerawala had passed away after this Fiery Life, as I expected great work from him."

With an indescribable radiance on His face, Baba continued, "I will do what I have to do myself internally. But I also have to see to the external aspects of the Fiery Life. All that work put together is the rhythm for the Fiery Life commencing on November 15."

To those who had assembled in the hall, Baba advised, "Whether I give you work or no work, leave you alone or keep you engaged, I want all of you to stop all other thoughts over your personal affairs, and to think of me most of the time. That would be the best way for you to remain ready to do as and when I find it necessary for you to do anything. Only do as I say and remain free from your worries and your own plans.

"I have to do many, many things. Many among you can do a few things for me and on my behalf, by carrying out the duties with utmost sincerity from the bottom of your hearts."

Baba then nominated 12 of those who had been especially called for the *sahavas*, to repeat audibly one of the following names of God: Ya Yezdan; Allah-Hu; God Almighty; and *Parabrahma Paramatma*. This was to be done in two hour shifts in the *jhopri* or Agrakuti (the hut where Baba began His silence). This repetition was to continue without stop from nine in the morning on November 2nd until nine on the morning of November 12th. Papa Jessawala was chosen to begin this continuous *jap* (repetition). Nana Kher was to substitute for anyone who became ill.

After this had been taken care of, Baba arranged for a similar procedure for the next three days, during which four of the holy books (sacred scriptures from four different

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religions) were to be read out each morning in *mandali* hall. For half an hour beginning at 7:00, Kaikobad was to read from the *Avesta*. At 7:30, Murlī was to read from the Bible, followed by a half hour of Kalemama reading from the *Dnyaneshwari* and finally, Ramjoo was to finish by reading from the *Koran*.

Real Knowledg —Flash of "Becoming"

After these preliminary arrangements had been made, Baba was in one of His rare moods to give a long discourse. Sometimes He used His alphabet board which Jal or Eruch or Vishnu read, and sometimes He used gestures. Besides English, He also used Indian languages such as Gujarati, Hindi, Marathi and Urdu. He began the discourse on *Dnyan*:

On the one hand, *Dnyan*⁵⁹ (Divine Knowledge) is a thing which cannot be gained even after going through numberless forms for countless ages, and on the other hand, when it comes, it comes. It would not be correct to say that Knowledge comes quickly. To say that it comes suddenly, or that it comes unawares and so on, is still not correct to express the "Flash of Becoming" which is beyond description because Knowledge is beyond the range of imagination.

Imagination has a tremendous range and an almost unlimited scope, and man has a very strong imagination. For example, it would not be impossible for man to imagine a rat having a million heads. The whole world is created and carried on by the force of imagination. But in spite of being apparently unlimited, imagination reaches the limit when checked by Knowledge itself. By the power of imagination no man can ever understand or explain the beginningless beginning or the endless end. In other words, Eternity is beyond the reach of all imagination, and Knowledge is Knowledge of Eternity.

God is without beginning and without end, and there can never be any question of time and space in Infinity as, otherwise, that would mean a limitation of God's

⁵⁹ Also *Jnana*. Sufi term *Marefat*.

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Infinitude. No amount of imagination can, therefore, ever think of Infinity, because where there is no beginning, the very question as to what was in the beginning cannot arise at all.

For example, let us repeat that before God there was God, and before that there was God, and before that there was God, or repeat that after God is God, and after that God is, and after that God is. All this would convey nothing to the imagination. That is why Knowledge is said to be even beyond the reach of *rishis* and *munis*. Hafiz also advises against the futility of trying to catch the "Falcon" of Knowledge when he says that nothing but "emptiness" can ever come into the "net of imagination."

Thus, the most powerful mind in imagination is entirely helpless against Knowledge, because it comes only after all power of imagination is completely and absolutely exhausted and ended. For imagination to go, mind must go, and for Knowledge to come, consciousness must remain. Only when the mind disappears, does consciousness become freed of all imaginary "this and that" and "I and you." The moment consciousness is freed from all imagination, this "consciousness of nothing" is all at once transformed into the "Knowledge of Everything," i.e., Dnyan.

Vedanta and Sufism cannot reach or explain Knowledge. One may try to imagine a shoreless ocean with numberless drops, and think out in various terms of comparison and contrast, but just as "no beginning—no end" will always remain "no beginning—no end," so Knowledge can never be imagined.

If that is so, and if I was a listener among you, I would have asked, "Then why all this headache over explaining a thing which can neither be explained nor understood?" The fact is that when you come in contact with a Perfect Master and he starts explaining, that amounts to your being put on the Spiritual Path. Therefore, if I am the Master, and I am that, then even this headache will prove a "heart filler." So, let this be continued.

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A man, a woman or a child neither acquires nor has any need to acquire the knowledge of one's individual existence from sources outside existence itself. Similarly, when one gets *dnyan*, one not only feels oneself in everyone and in everything, but one then actually lives the free life of God.

This Knowledge can come even at a moment when one is attending to a call of nature, as has actually happened in certain cases, including that of Upasni Maharaj. This is because a Master can give Knowledge any moment instantaneously, provided there is a sufficiently deep and strong connection with him, or if there is complete surrender to his Will.

The fact is that God alone is real, and everything is in God. We all are one with Him, but owing to our ignorance, we feel ourselves separate from God. We always were. What was before us? We! Before "we?" We! We! We! Only when we get Knowledge, do we know what this *being* means. Then, instantly, everything is absolutely clear in the twinkling of an eye, but such a "Flash of Being" is even quicker than the twinkling of an eye!

The question may yet be asked as to why the Master should not then impart Knowledge to all individuals instead of giving Knowledge to some, and not to others? This is a question of Divine Law. It is not because of the Master's incapacity to give it to all, but because of the incapacity of one and all to receive Knowledge. The latter incapacity is due to the lack of a sufficiently deep and strong connection with the Master or for want of complete surrender to his Will or on account of the absence of the required degree of preparedness on the part of the individuals concerned.

Baba concluded, "This is all about *dnyan* which implies Union with God. As for myself, I say, love for God is the best avenue to Real Knowledge, for God alone is worthy of love."

After the completion of this discourse, Baba casually remarked, "God is so kind that it is impossible to imagine His unbounded kindness. Some think that although they have

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suffered a lot, God still does not shower His grace on them. But the fact is, the necessary longing is lacking." Baba here quoted a couplet of Hafiz which when translated into English means: "With one end of the string in my hand and the other end in the Friend's, this tug of war has been going on for years on this point."⁶⁰ What a strange game of pulling and being pulled!

Before leaving for lunch, Baba told us that the next day—November 2nd—He would grant personal interviews to all, and added, "I will do this for my own work and not for giving a hearing to individuals' 'crying and weeping' over personal difficulties. They are there, no doubt, but it is equally true that they have been there more or less all the time. The fact is that when one dies, one has to leave everything there and then, done or undone, important or unimportant. What a joke!"

With reference to His silence, He gestured, "Do you know how fed up I am with this silence? I long for the moment when I shall break it, and give the Word to the world. You all put your grievances to me but who will hear mine? You say, 'Baba, you have *anubhav*—experience of the Infinite trio-nature of God—but then my grievances and complaints are also Infinite!"

Then He changed the subject and with a shine in His eyes ended the morning session with the following words: "Remember, besides God, all else is Illusion. God is the One who alone is Real. All are in Him. Everyone has to experience THIS. It is for THIS that one has to pass through innumerable experiences of opposites: pain and pleasure, rich and poor, strong and weak, etc.

The God-Man helps all to achieve this Goal. That is why I have to come again and again, and experience infinite bliss (*maja*) and suffering (*saja*) simultaneously."

Divine Vacuum Precedes God-realization

A little after noon, I heard a bell ringing which reminded me of school but, thank Baba, it was a call for lunch. The food was plain and simple—rice, *dal*, *chapati*, and one vegetable—but it was very delicious. Baba returned to the hall at about

⁶⁰ *Yak sare mooy ba daste mano yak sar ba doost Salha bar sare in nukta kashakash daram.*

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3:00 P.M. He told us that from November 15th, for two months, at least 25 people would be with Him when He visited Hamirpur, Andhra and other places for the *darshan* programs of the Fiery Life.

He explained that the Fiery Life was different from the New Life; however, implicit obedience to His orders was a common factor in each. He wanted men who would even lay their lives down to obey His orders. The women *mandali* were not to be with Him during these tours.

In order to avoid confusion during the day to day matters in these tours of the Fiery Life, Baba allotted specific duties to the *mandali* as follows:

- 1) Eruch to be Baba's personal assistant. Chhagan to help Eruch.
- 2) Vishnu to be responsible for all payments.
- 3) Pendu assisted by Ali Akbar (Aloba) to make the necessary arrangements for transport by road and rail.
- 4) Sadashiv Patel, assisted by Savak Kotwal, to look after food and shelter for the party.
- 5) Baidul to proceed in advance when necessary to facilitate *mast* contacts.
- 6) Gadekar to keep an eye on medical assistance and requirements. Baba asked Anna 104 to be on night watch duty.
- 7) All collectively to keep themselves, as far as practical and possible, near Baba so as to remain at His beck and call at all times.

When somebody asked what was to be done about presents that might be offered to Baba in cash or kind in the course of the Fiery Life, Baba said, "The whole collection, if any, will be placed at the disposal of the local committee for the people at large."

Although Baba said that He would fully explain the Fiery Life with all its implications when all the 300 or so invitees had finished arriving by the 7th, He remarked, "I have to set myself afire and, since I am everywhere, all will be in that fire of mine. There is no doubt about it now and the whole world will have to burn with me. I am not taking you all with me to

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attend to programs, but to be by my side in this most critical period of my spiritual life. It goes without saying that all who go with me should now only think about me and the duties entrusted to them."

After these assignments Baba asked Sidhu to sing. The first song he sang was about Lord Krishna in which a *gopi* complained to Krishna as follows: "O Beloved, why have you glanced at me from the corner of your eye? It has changed the entire course of my life. For now, I cannot think of anyone except you!" Baba enjoyed Sidhu's song and perhaps still more his hand gestures and facial expressions.

A record player and some recordings of *ghazals* were brought from Meherazad. At Baba's suggestion, *ghazals* in Urdu were played which expressed the lover's complaints and loving challenges to the Beloved. Baba did not explain any of the lines but most of the time looked solemn.

After awhile Baba stopped having the records played and once more appeared to be in a communicative mood. He explained the characteristics of the four spiritual paths (*dnyan*, *bhakti*, *yoga*, and *karma*). He also pointed out the difficulties that one encounters as one traverses any of these paths. At the close of the discourse He stated that each of these paths culminates in *Fana* which means "passing away in" the absolute vacuum, *nirvana*. It is a state where apparently "God is Not" and "Consciousness Is."⁶¹

Baba then commented on the state of final *Fana*. He continued, "The real headache lies in that you have to become what you really are and therefore in order to gain God you must first lose Him! In Real *Fana* (Divine Vacuum), likes and dislikes are not there, wants are not there, desires are not there, you are not there, even God is not there! However, the moment this *Fana* takes place, God comes into His full glory of the everlasting *Baqa* (abiding). Even when God is lost and found the 'life of God' is not there. The life of God is led by fully regaining Creation-consciousness while simultaneously retaining God-consciousness."

Baba further explained, "In some cases before the Divine Vacuum is filled up, the link with the body is cut off and these

⁶¹ In Sufi terms *fana* means "passing-away-in." *Fana* has two stages: the first stage of *fana* is the conscious experience of the absolute vacuum state, and the second stage of *fana*, or *fana-fillah* is the conscious experience of the "I am God state." *God Speaks*, p. 134.

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souls drop their bodies. In a very few cases, the bodies are retained but the link with the world (Creation) is snapped. These are known as the Perfect *Majzoobs* (the God-merged souls). They are not conscious of this world; they do not know what they eat or drink.

"And then there are those whose link with the world is firmly established. Amongst them those who use their infinite power, knowledge and bliss for the emancipation of all souls *live* the 'life of God.' They are known as the Perfect Masters (*Sadgurus* or *Qutubs*)."

It was almost evening and Baba left for Meherazad. From sunrise to sundown, for me it was a complete Baba day. The heart was full with joy to its brim but a corner of my mind was a little disturbed, for Baba had not chosen me to participate in the repetition of God's names. How funny! I had failed to realize that to stay at Meherabad, a place incredibly rich with His presence, was itself a bountiful blessing.

WARMING UP OF THE FIERY LIFE 1952 - PART VI

Baba Becomes a Devotee

November mornings at Meherabad are cool and pleasant, and a stay with Baba at Meherabad or Meherazad meant rising early. Most of us got up by 5 A.M. I finished my morning activities including a simple breakfast of a *chapati* with hot cups of tea by 6 o'clock. Then some of us paced back and forth on the verandah of Meherabad Hall so as not to miss our first glimpse of Beloved Baba.

Sometimes when He arrived I would find myself at the back of the gathering. However, I felt that although Baba did not look directly at me, a gentle wave of His presence touched my heart—the Presence that now prevails throughout the premises of Meherabad and Meherazad.

On the morning of November 2nd, Baba arrived in Adi's car and we followed Him into the hall. On this day He wanted to bow to all those whom He had asked the day before to repeat the different names of God for a certain period each day until the 14th, as well as those who were to read from the Holy Books. Baba opened the meeting by stating, "From today until the 15th I will be a devotee." During the November meetings Baba also conveyed on other occasions that He had become a devotee, perhaps in the same way that he had become an ordinary man, a seeker, during the New Life. And true to this "role," Baba not only had different ceremonies from different religions performed during the gatherings at Meherabad, but He also took part in them, just as a devotee of that religion would have.

Before I continue the narration of the day-to-day events at Meherabad, I would like to quote a most appropriate remark Nariman made a few days later about Baba's becoming a devotee. Very lovingly he said, "Baba, you as a devotee is an issue between you and God (i.e., God Personal and God Impersonal). But for us, the *mandali*, you are only, as always, the Master of Masters."

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To be frank, the *mandali* have never claimed to understand the entire meaning of the different phrases that Baba occasionally used in different phases of His work. Without analyzing His words, they have totally accepted Him as their Beloved Master forever. This is their steadfast, unflinching conviction. I hope Nariman's remark will help us to understand the background and activities that Baba began on November 2nd.

At 8 A.M., Daulat Singh arrived. Baba was very pleased to see him but everyone else was surprised, for just the day before a telegram had been read out saying that he wouldn't be able to come. Baba gestured, "I am happy you have arrived in time. You wrote that you could not be here, then how did you manage to come?" After a little pause Baba added, "I drew you here." To digress a little, Baba's statement about Daulat Singh brings to my mind his first meeting with Baba which he shared with me, in personal conversations, prior to Baba's New Life phase.

Baba's Irresistible Pull of Love

In the early 1940's, Daulat Singh met one of Baba's followers, Bhavanand, in Srinagar (Kashmir). Bhavanand showed Daulat Singh a picture of Baba and he immediately recognized Him as the same One he had seen in a vivid dream. Shedding tears of love, he embraced Bhavanand. On being told that the picture was of Meher Baba, he immediately wanted to offer himself at the feet of the Beloved Master. But Bhavanand expressed his inability to tell him the Master's whereabouts, for at that time Baba was in seclusion and even His close followers did not know His program.

Despite this situation, Daulat Singh remained determined to try to meet Baba whom he deeply felt to be Guru Nanak come again. The one clue he had was the address of Adi K. Irani which appeared on the pamphlet Bhavanand had given him. Daulat Singh planned to write to Baba care of Adi and he did. However, he received no reply to his letter; he wrote Baba again, but this letter also met with the same lack of response.

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Finally, he decided to send a registered letter to Baba to be sure that his communications had definitely reached Him. He got back the acknowledgement card but he did not receive a reply. On the acknowledgement card he noticed the postal stamp of Dehra Dun (U.P.). So it was clear that Baba's headquarters were at Dehra Dun.

Although Dehra Dun was about 700 miles from his residence in Srinagar, Daulat Singh felt that he should not waste any time in trying to meet the Master. He hurried off to Dehra Dun even though the only evidence he had that Baba was there was a postmark. Arriving in Dehra Dun, he checked all the hotels and contacted all the house agents, but he could not come up with any clues as to Baba's whereabouts.

At last, in desperation, he asked a *tonga* driver who was then passing along the street, if he knew any saintly person from Bombay side who was now residing in Dehra Dun. The *tonga* driver just shook his head and went on his way. But after a minute or two he suddenly turned his *tonga* around and approaching Daulat Singh said that on the previous day he had taken an exceptionally impressive "businessman" from Bombay to a certain house. He then offered to take Daulat Singh there if he so desired. Daulat Singh felt that it was the only chance he had of picking up Baba's trail.

At the end of the *tonga* ride, Daulat Singh found that his pursuit had been rewarded for he learned that it was the very house where Baba was staying with His *mandali*. Daulat Singh's joy knew no bounds. He expressed his earnest desire to see the Master, but he was told point blank that Baba was in seclusion and wasn't seeing anyone. Having found Baba after so long a search, Daulat Singh felt he couldn't leave without having at least a glimpse of Baba, so he again repeated his wish to see Him.

One of the *mandali* came forth and asked Daulat Singh who he was, what he did and why he had come. Daulat Singh explained that he had retired from the Indian Military where he had served as a medical doctor, and that he had later started his own clinic at Srinagar. He also briefly explained why and how he had come to Dehra Dun. To this the *mandali*

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member replied, "You have been in the military so you must know what discipline and obeying orders mean. Higher than the discipline of military service is the discipline expected of us by our Master. So if you want to please Him, just accept the fact that Baba is in seclusion and does not want to see anyone."

This explanation made sense to Daulat Singh, but it took away any hope he had of having Baba's *darshan*, and in a dejected mood he returned to his hotel with a heavy heart. To console himself, he opened his suitcase which contained Baba's picture. He took it out and with tearful eyes prayed before it with all his heart, "Baba, in fact I did not know you, not even by name. You yourself awoke me from my sleep and brought me to your door, in your own mysterious ways. Now you are sending me away. I can understand that you are in seclusion but couldn't you make an exception and allow me to have your *darshan* for just one minute? This is my request, but let your will be done!"

Daulat Singh was sobbing and weeping while praying. He was overcome by the situation of having come so close to meeting his dear Master, only to be denied even a passing glimpse of Him. He put Baba's photo back in his suitcase, closed it, and felt that he must respect Baba's wish. He decided that there was no point in staying any longer in Dehra Dun. But before returning to Srinagar, he decided to purchase some presents for his children.

As he was walking through the market, someone came up to him and asked, "Are you by chance Dr. Daulat Singh?" "Yes," he replied. The man continued, "Your physical features were described to me by my companions and then Meher Baba instructed me to try and find you. Meher Baba has been in seclusion for a very long time and has stopped giving *darshan* to anyone. But it seems that He is treating your visit as a special case; He has made an exception and He will allow you to see Him for a moment. You are really very fortunate."

Daulat Singh was overcome with joy; Baba had answered his wholehearted prayer. He was quickly taken to Baba's residence and was soon ushered into Baba's presence. He could not utter a single word as a flood of tears streamed from his

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eyes. All he had to convey and listen to was done in silence. Baba instructed Daulat Singh to go back to Srinagar.

Irresistible is the pull of the God-Man's love. Through incredible ways Baba helps His lovers to leap over the barriers that stand between them and Him, as He leads them to Him—the real Beloved—at the right time. From the masses of humanity He draws His lovers to Him when their longing reaches its height. Once Baba asked a boy in his teens to recite a couplet. The Urdu lines he quoted aptly express this aspect of the *Avatar's* working:

Alag baithe the phirbhi nazar Saqi ki padi hampar;
Hai tashnagi kamil to paimane bhi ayenge.

These Urdu lines when freely translated into English mean: "I was sitting all alone in a corner away from the gathering. But *Saqi's* glances revealed to me His All-knowingness, and I felt that if I were really thirsty, the cup of wine would come right into my hand!"

"Get Thee Behind Me, Satan"

To resume the narration of the morning of November 2nd, Baba asked Daulat Singh to be with Him until November 28th. He also ordered him to read the *Guru Granthasaheb*⁶² from 1 to 2 P.M. for the next three days. Then Baba recalled an incident that had happened during a meeting preceding the New Life. At that time He had suddenly given Daulat Singh a cigarette and told him to smoke it. Although cigarette smoking is anathema to a Sikh, Daulat Singh did not hesitate for a moment and began to puff away.

Baba looked pleased; this was, however, the beginning and the end of the Daulat Singh's smoking. The incident indicates Daulat Singh's conviction of Baba's Divinity and the intimacy of Baba's relationship with Daulat Singh.

Baba continued, "Indeed, God's work is unfathomable. He has brought here those with whom I have connections. Pleader and Vibhuti have also come after many years, and those who have come are fortunate." Addressing the *japwallas*,⁶³ Baba

⁶² The Holy Book of the Sikhs.

⁶³ *Jap*: Lit., Repetition of a name of God; *japwallas*: Those who perform *jap*.

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stated, "Now I will bow down to you. From today until the 14th I will be repeating God's names through you. As I place my forehead on your feet, think of God, who is the only Reality and who is ever present within us all. Also remember the Name you are asked to repeat."

Baba then sat on a carpet with His palms placed at His side, ready to bow down as the *japwallas* passed by. By 9:00 A.M., He had finished the touching of the feet of the 17 men. Those who were to read the Holy Books had also joined this line and Baba asked them to read on His behalf. When this was all over, Baba concluded by saying, "Repeat the Name as if your very life depends on it. If you do this wholeheartedly, God may liberate you. *Maya* creates obstacles in God's work. So some may get sick, but be cheerful, be careful."

Baba left the Hall by 11 o'clock to have His lunch. Although it is difficult to express in words my happiness at being with Baba after a year and a half, a thought briefly passed through my mind that was silly: "Baba has assigned different duties to different people. I have not been asked to do anything. Has He discarded me as worthless?" It wasn't long after that that someone brought me a message from Baba that He wanted to see me in His cabin. I hurriedly went and saw Vibhuti standing near Baba. Baba asked Vibhuti to say aloud "*Om Parabrahma Paramatma*" 5,000 times a day near the *dhuni* which is by the roadside.

He then turned towards me and instructed me to repeat the following one-line prayer 1,400 times a day: "Oh God, Baba asks you to give Him strength in His Fiery Life." He did not mention any specific place or time for doing this. Both of us were to begin our duties the next day and to continue until November 12th. Physically, I was the frailest among all of those who had gathered, yet Baba had chosen me to invoke God's strength for His Fiery Life: a Baba joke embedded in His Compassion!

In the afternoon, Baba entered the Hall and gracefully took His seat on the *gadi*. All of us, with our eyes fixed on His person, quietly sat before Him. He very lovingly looked at us and conveyed, "Although I am the Formless One, I am

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destined (as the *Avatar*) to assume a human form again and again, and so I am here. But I wish for you to become free from the wheel of births and deaths, of being born again and again: growing, maturing, marrying, enjoying, procreating, decaying and dying."

He continued, "God is just as soft as He is hard, as compassionate as He is harsh. Just remember that when you call on Him or invoke Him, if He is touched even once, the impossible then becomes possible and you become free. This is not an easy thing. However, during the forthcoming days, try to repeat God's Name wholeheartedly; then I and God will see to it."

Referring to the susceptibility of getting angry, Baba observed, "These days I try not to get angry or excited. Whenever I am about to, I remember the words of Christ and say in silence, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' So, whenever you find that thoughts of lust, greed, jealousy, anger, money matters, or family matters possess your heart, say silently (as did Jesus), 'Get thee behind me, Satan,' and be at peace."

Could Baba, the One who is beyond mind, really have trouble controlling His moods? My supposition is that this was a lesson for us all, a sort of assurance that if we do as He instructs, He will help drive away "the Satan." So let us try. But just to understand Baba's instruction is not to comprehend it fully. The simpler the spiritual truth, the harder it is to live up to. However, if one's effort is sincere and one's yearning wholehearted, the Divine response becomes incredibly clear and the meaning of Baba's words blossoms in one's heart. The tricks of Satan are foiled.

Baba in a Reminiscent Mood

While we were seated around Baba, He had the list read out to Him of the people who were to accompany Him for different periods until the end of April. The following eight were to remain with Baba from November 1st until the end of April: Eruch, Pendu, Gustadji, Vishnu, Savak Kotwal,

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Kaikobad, Ali Akbar (Aloba), and Baidul. Another 18 people were to be with Him for varying lengths of time during the Fiery Free Life. Baba listened very attentively as the name of each was read out.

When Yeshawantrao's name was cited, Baba added, "Yeshawantrao must come with me. Maharaj had deputed him to serve me *pan* during the last six months when I was at Sakori with Maharaj in 1921. Yeshawantrao did his job perfectly, which is another reason why Maharaj has devolved on me his spiritual responsibility of "looking after" him and also of Gustadji who had stayed with Maharaj for some years."

Baba now turned to Gustadji and asked him to tell those present what Maharaj had told him about Baba in the early 20's. Gustadji related that Maharaj once said the following to him in the presence of a small group, "I have made Merwan perfect. He is the Perfect Master of this Age. Now you have to leave me and stick to Him. I have given my charge to Him; He is the holder of my key. Follow Him sincerely, faithfully and wholeheartedly."

Baba added, "However, at present, in this particular phase of my work, I am bent upon doing or dying. If my body remains until the end of April, it is well and good. I am 99% sure that my body will not fall, and in that case I will surely consider Gustadji's case. Indeed his longing, love and patience are beyond measure."

Then Baba told everyone some of the hardships Gustadji had borne, such as the time he had subsisted only on water for six months. Or how, in the early 1920's, he had been ordered by Baba to sit up all night with Babajan, attending to her every want. He used to return at dawn to Baba's toddy shop, stopping on the way to buy some spinach for one *paise* that he simply boiled and ate without even adding salt. This was his entire diet and he would then work all day in the toddy shop until it was time for him to go to Babajan. So for three years, in addition to subsisting on such a meager diet, Gustadji had practically no sleep.

Baba then began to express His appreciation of Kaikobad's

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love and faith in Him. Earlier, Kaikobad had told Baba that once he had had a *jhalak* (*glimpse*) of Baba's Divinity and that since that time whenever he gave anything to Baba, he thought he was giving it to God. Baba explained that in some cases such a *jhalak* is enough to make one unaware of body consciousness for a long time. Then He conveyed to the *japwallas*, "From the 6th to the 9th, try to be in this Hall as soon as you finish your duties, so that I may call on you whenever I need you."

Baba was in a very cheerful and reminiscent mood. He recalled some stories about Dr. Ghani and Jal Kerawala, both of whom had recently passed away. He stated, "Ghani and Jal have 'won'; that is what I feel. The last word that Jal uttered as he breathed his last was BABA. How fortunate. Indeed such cases are rare!" In fact, a month earlier, Baba had issued a special circular about the passing away of Jal Kerawala in which He expressed His appreciation of him in these words:

Jal was going to play an extremely important part in the planning of the Fiery Free Life. Before going to the West, I had asked Jal to be in Meherabad for 15 days, from the 1st of November, in order to contribute his vital share in the planning. None except Jal knew about this till I returned from the West. I, thus, wanted him to be with me at the threshold of the Fiery Free Life. However, God has willed that he will not be physically present in the midst of the selected persons, invited at Meherabad for 15 days in November.

Through the incident of Jal's death, *Maya* has delivered a severe blow to my Work. But in the very act of my Work becoming more difficult, it has become more forceful. I am more determined than ever to plunge into the Fiery Free Life which is calling me.⁶⁴

Dr. Ghani and Jal Kerawala were very dear to Baba and their absence during the November meetings was conspicuously felt by all.

Baba then went on to praise Babadas for the work he had done for Him, especially in Hamirpur (U.P.). In His humorous way, Baba mentioned that Babadas was remarkable in that he

⁶⁴ *Life Circular* No. 7, issued on Oct. 10, 1952.

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had very little intelligence and no tact, but He also added that to have such a nature required good fortune. He went on to point out that Babadas's conversation was so filled with *non sequiturs* that it was mostly irrelevant. No matter what he started to talk about, he would soon be giving a lengthy explanation on something else, completely having forgotten the point he had originally wanted to make. Baba then turned to Babadas and told him that he should not be upset if others criticized him.

Looking at the gathering Baba concluded, "My Work is strengthened through opposition, and grows as people oppose those who work for me. So let the balance between your mind and heart be as firm as a rock that remains unmoved among storms and high tides. Remember this well and don't feel agitated or distressed. Let others say whatever they think of me and my Work, but be steadfast in your love for me. Don't fear. Don't worry."

The Final Snapping

Baba was in a good mood and with His humorous remarks, He teased some of His close *mandali*. Then He wished to listen to some of His favorite *ghazals*, which were played on a record player. Baba's mood changed suddenly, and He listened very attentively to all the songs. Perhaps, in His own way, He was responding to the "agonies" of His lovers which were voiced indirectly to Him through the meaningful lines of these *ghazals*. On such occasions the atmosphere and hush around Baba would be so complete that each would be aware of his own breathing and could hear the ticking of the clock. No one would dare to disturb Baba's mood.

After half an hour or so the playing of the records was stopped and Baba was again in a communicative mood. He began to narrate incidents from the lives of the Perfect Ones, with special reference to stories of bestowing the Grace of Realization.

One such account was of Dhuniwale Dada, a Perfect Master who lived in a remote area in Khandwa in the state of

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Madya Pradesh. Thousands flocked to him for his *darshan* and blessings. Once one person approached him without any intention of deriving spiritual benefit. Dada, however, knowing fully well that the person was completely prepared internally for the final touch, picked up a stick from the *dhuni* that was kept burning continuously near his seat and struck him so hard that the person fell to the ground unconscious.

All who were standing nearby ran away, fearful that Dada would attack them next. For three days the man lay unconscious near the *dhuni*. On the fourth day when he recovered consciousness, it was the consciousness of Self-realization. Within a few days, however, he dropped his body.

Baba then cited another instance, this time of Maulanasaheb of Bombay, a Perfect One who read the *Koran* most of the day. Hundreds of Muslims (for he was a Muslim) approached him for spiritual guidance. Once, a Hindu doctor who had no spiritual interest happened to go to him. To everyone's surprise, Maulanasaheb asked the doctor to sit by the side of a wall in the room in which he himself was living. The doctor obeyed the order implicitly and did not leave the place for nearly three years. By the end of this period, he received the experience of God-realization. However, within a short period of a few days, he too dropped his body.

Perhaps I should interject here a note about the dropping of the gross body that follows God-realization. Baba had mentioned at another time, "Just before merging with the Truth, comes the final snapping of all links and connections with body, mind, universe and energy. The snapping of these so-long-vital connections has no parallel example in the gross creation." Baba has also pointed out that after Realization one usually drops one's body within three or four days.

During my visits to Meherabad in the late 1940's, Dr. Ghani once tried to explain this to me. On such visits, after Baba had left for the evening, I used to enjoy seeking Dr. Ghani out and he would tell me stories from his days with Baba as well as expound spiritual truths in a very lively manner. With reference to the point mentioned above, Dr. Ghani told me that I should think of a rifle being fired. When a rifle is

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fired, there is a recoil. The more powerful the rifle, the more powerful the recoil. So also in the case of a person who is in the state of final *Fana* preceding Realization—the recoil from the final snapping of all links with the body, mind, etc., is so strong that the body usually cannot survive the shock and is dropped.

Inscrutable are the ways of the *Sadgurus*. Baba explained that some bestow Realization to those in whom they notice 100% spiritual preparedness; some Masters prepare their disciples themselves before they confer the final experience of Realization. However, in most cases the spiritual preparation of the individuals is a matter of past connections with their respective Master.

During the day's conversation, while relating the life stories of the Masters, Baba casually stated, "Whatever I say today is only what I guess, for now I am in the state of a devotee." Being Perfection itself, the *Avatar* can express Himself perfectly through any role. Love, lover and the Beloved are One as the *Avatar*, a perfect devotee and a Perfect Master at one and the same time.

God in the Beyond Beyond State

It was the morning of November 3rd. Baba, radiant and lively as ever, was in the hall. He inquired after everyone's health. Specifically, Baba asked if anyone was suffering from a cold or a cough. Some confessed that they were. Being in a teasing mood, He announced with a smile that Nilu was feeling extremely fine and all who were coughing should not sit close to Him, but near Nilu where they were free to sneeze aloud.

Then Baba asked, "Who is worrying?" No one raised his hand. Baba said, "I am very happy to see that no one is worrying. Your faces look like those of *bokas* (large male cats—in the vernacular this means to look fit and hearty)." Baba then pointed out the difference between worry and care as He told all, "Of course you must think seriously and be very careful about two things: remembering God, and the duty I have entrusted to you. So be careful, but do not worry."

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Baba continued, "As for me, I had no sleep and in a way I was worrying about the programs of the 7th, 8th, 9th, and the first move of the Fiery Free Life on November 14th. But in spite of these worries, I feel especially happy these days. I don't know why. There was a certain period at Sakori when I was also very happy. And in the New Life at the Hyderabad meeting (June 1951) I experienced immense happiness, although it was of a different nature.

"When I was in Bombay, some days after my contact with Babajan, I was experiencing the state of infinite suffering. I used to lie on a bench in Victoria Garden for 12 to 14 hours. During those days I had no sleep at all. I felt as if some electric motor had been set working within me 24 hours a day, and the impressions of all the worlds were operating in me. It was the most miserable and the most happy state! It was an individual experience, an individual happiness and an individual suffering. Nowadays the happiness that I derive is also personal and individual." However, Baba did not explain the special nature of His happiness.

Baba was in a cheerful mood and some incidents from His New Life were related by those who were with Him in that incredible phase. Later, to the *japwallas*, Baba conveyed, "I have bowed down to God through you so you must do the *jap* and the reading of the Holy Books on my behalf, with all your heart. And because you love me, you must help me 100%. Don't worry about anything. Have no mental strain. You have nothing to do with the result. You are not doing this for yourself, but as I want to do it through you, try your best so that I feel, and God sees, that I have worshipped Him with all my heart."

Then Baba asked Padri to bring in a printed colored chart in which "The Ten States of God"⁶⁵ were illustrated. With His finger He pointed at the two semicircles at the top and gestured, "Here in this chart, the first state is named 'The Beyond Beyond State' and the second 'The Beyond State' of God. The Beyond Beyond State of God is referred to by the Vedantists as *Paratpar Parabrahma* and by the Sufis as *Wara-ul-Wara*.

⁶⁵ This chart with the detailed explanation of "The Ten States of God" was later incorporated in *God Speaks* by Meher Baba, first published in 1955.

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"This Beyond Beyond State is within everyone. But even if you think deep, and deeper, and deeper, it is impossible to comprehend that state. Being in the state of a devotee, I am invoking this Beyond Beyond State of God."

Before continuing the discourse, Baba bowed down to Vibhuti and Bal and asked Vibhuti to go near the *dhuni* and repeat "*Om Parabrahma Paramatma.*" As Baba got to his seat, He remarked in Gujarati: "Existence is God; non-existence is also God. Then what is left out? And if at all anything could be left out, that too is God. It is a fact." Perhaps this is what Baba meant by God in the Beyond Beyond State—beyond words and beyond silence, even that of the Perfect Ones!

Baba asked Daulat Singh to repeat the prayer by Guru Nanak, "*Tum thakur tumpe ardas.*" These were Baba's favorite lines of Nanak. Then Baba asked all the *japwallas* to repeat aloud, one by one, the name of God just as they had been repeating it in the *jhopri*, and added, "Take God's names very sincerely and wholeheartedly. He may hear someone and be touched."

Not too long after this the meeting broke up for lunch. Just as we were about to finish lunch, Baba, on His own, came into the hall from His cabin and sent for everyone to listen to a special clarification on "The Ten States of God." In no time we found ourselves around the *gadi* on which Baba was resting with His legs stretched out. People stood on either side of Baba's seat in an informal way, while others craned their necks to see what Baba was conveying.

Baba Demonstrates God Speaks

Circling with His finger the chart which details "The Ten States of God," Baba began, "All this [referring to the chart] is God, and God means God—Infinite, Beginningless, Endless—Knowledge, Power and Bliss. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, God is always God."

Then Baba traced His finger downwards from the second

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state and upwards to the eighth state and continued, "In this chart you will notice two stages,⁶⁶ one of descent and the other of ascent. The process of descent has seven stages as does that of ascent. In between these two stages is the state of 'stalemate' (i.e., there is the process of reincarnation in between that of evolution and involution)." Baba also casually hinted that in these two stages there is an important hint or clue in the fact that everything is based on the number seven.

Baba continued, "The driving force behind the evolution of all forms is the urge of God to gain full consciousness, and the purpose for which consciousness is developed, is to become fully Self-conscious. Until the perfect form of a human being is evolved, the development of the consciousness of God continues growing automatically, from the most finite into the full consciousness of a human being. Once consciousness begins to develop, it has to continue to develop until the end. There is no other alternative.

"Thus, starting with the next-to-nothing or the most finite consciousness in the lowest form of a stone, the scope of God's consciousness keeps increasing effortlessly along with the evolution of the lower forms like those of stone, metal, vegetable, worm, fish, bird and animal. The evolution of forms and the development of consciousness reach the zenith in the form and consciousness of a human being.

"The most finitely-conscious God, in the form of a stone, is the same God fully conscious in man. However, in spite of the perfect form and full consciousness in man, God's purpose remains unserved, because instead of experiencing Himself as God, He begins to experience the universe of gross forms, the vehicle of the development of His consciousness. In other words, instead of being Self-conscious, God becomes universe-conscious.

"The stalemate lies in that men in the human form get 100% stuck with the impressions born of the evolution of forms for the development of consciousness, instead of being able to use consciousness for the purpose of knowing one's own Self.

"For example, let us liken the increasing of consciousness to one whose head is in a lowered position and whose eyes are

⁶⁶ Meher Baba has explained these two stages in a detailed colored chart. See: *Divine Theme* (1943).

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yet to open. The first, next-to-nothing beginning of the development of consciousness, is the beginning of the upward trend of the head with the thinnest slit of an opening between the lids of the eyes. Now, suppose I am God," Baba gestured, and He began to actually demonstrate with His head lowered and His eyes close.

Although the Beyond Beyond State is actually beyond the grasp of the finite human mind, I felt as if Baba's face, with an incredible tranquility about it, gave me a glimpse of how profound truths can be expressed so simply and so beautifully without saying a word, just through gestures. Baba gradually lifted His head and very slowly began to open His eyes, until He was looking straight ahead. Baba looked at the wall in front of Him with eyes now wide open, and then slowly began to direct His gaze upon Himself.

Thus, in a few moments, without saying a word, Baba had made us feel that the whole drama of Creation was being played out before our eyes, and this was brought home to us in a very convincing manner.

Baba continued, "For the sake of illustration we have taken it for granted that I am God, and as such I am always Infinite, Beginningless, Endless, All-knowledge, All-power, All-bliss. But as I demonstrated when I had my eyes closed, I was in the Beyond Beyond State, and in spite of my being God, I still did not know that I was that. I then began to open my eyes in order to see myself, gradually seeing more and more, until in seven stages my eyes became fully open and I became capable of seeing my Self. But, instead, I could only see my own shadow before me [i.e., the walls, windows, doors, etc., of the hall which Baba pointed to].

"This is the state of stalemate in which the eyes remain open, yet do not see that for which they were opened, due to the impressions gathered on account of the growing 'shadows' of myself in the course of the seven stages of descent.

"The stalemate slowly begins to end, when, with eyes open, I commence looking towards myself, through seven stages of ascent. And when I succeed in seeing myself fully, I see my Self as God in the Beyond State, where God is called

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Paramatma, Allah, Ahuramazda, God Almighty and so on.

"In this state, God is conscious of His Power, Knowledge, Bliss, Light, Beauty, etc. One who consciously experiences the Beyond State naturally gains Eternity, Infinity, etc., and this is the 'I am God' State. If from this state, God does not come back to human consciousness, then He remains a *Majzoob* (a God-merged soul).

"However, if he 'comes down,' which is the second descent, then he becomes simultaneously conscious of evolution, reincarnation, the seven planes and 'the seven in everything.' This is the *Qutub* state, wherein God not only enjoys Knowledge-Power-Bliss as infinitely as a Perfect *Majzoob*, but He can and does make use of the Knowledge-Power-Bliss for the emancipation of all.

"But after passing through the seven-in-seven states, even God in the Beyond State can never actually experience His own Beyond Beyond State. That is God's original beginningless and endless state. It is the state of GOD IS, with Power, Bliss, Knowledge, Light and Everything but without being conscious or unconscious, either infinitely or finitely of anything.

"Although God in the Beyond State cannot experience the Beyond Beyond State, He knows that originally He was unconscious, and He cannot experience that state again because once Real Consciousness is gained, it is eternal and therefore there can never be unconsciousness again.

"In other words, a Perfect One knows that He was and is Infinite Knowledge-Power-Bliss, etc., and from that He knows that the original state was the Beyond Beyond State. Thus, to actually experience the Beyond Beyond State is impossible even for God in the Beyond State (*Allah, Paramatma, Ahuramazda, God Almighty*)."

Baba concluded by saying, "All this is an attempt to understand that which is beyond understanding. What is of real worth is to actually *become* God. Let us pray to God for this."

I was hesitating to include this discourse in this chapter as it is based on what I gathered from the fragmentary notes taken in 1952. However, it is done with the intention of

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portraying the way in which Baba, the *Avatar*, chose to demonstrate through simple gestures the theme of creation, later expanded in *God Speaks*.

"God Does This for Me"

Baba then asked Abdulla to relate an experience he had that morning. Being disabled he was allowed to repeat the name of God in his room. Abdulla said, "Baba, when I was repeating *Allah-Hu* this morning, I was about to go to sleep. But that very moment I saw you sitting on my bed, and this prevented a break in the continuous repetition of God's name."

Here Baba referred to an incident similar to Abdulla's concerning Mansari. It so happened that in October, 1949 before Baba set out for His New Life, He visited Upper Meherabad. During the few hours that He was there, He conveyed to Mansari, "Wherever I may go (physically) I am definitely here (on the Hill) always. Remember this well." He also gave her some staves and told her that she should use them to break the head of "anyone" who came at night. Mansari replied, "When you are here, who would dare to come?" Baba did not answer, but simply repeated the instruction.

Ten months later Mansari was staying in the outer part of the "cage room"⁶⁷ on Meherabad Hill. One day in August, 1950 when she was going into her room she had a strange feeling that someone was inside. After entering she checked the inner and outer rooms with her small lantern. Finding nothing she went to bed. About midnight, however, she was disturbed in her sleep by the feeling that something was at the base of her neck—something cold and soft like a piece of rubber. Half awake she brushed it aside and went back to sleep.

A little later she woke up with the same feeling. She got out of bed thinking that there was a gecko (a small lizard) in her blanket. When she shook it out something dropped to the floor. She lit the lantern and found that it was a small cobra!

Frightened, she went inside and got a short stick from the firewood and started beating the cobra, but the snake eluded

⁶⁷ A room partitioned by bamboo poles behind Baba's Tomb Shrine on Meherabad Hill in which Baba was in strict seclusion for some days in 1940.

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her attack and began to climb up her cot. Mansari had totally forgotten about the long staves Baba had given her, and with that short stick her frantic chase continued. At last she killed the cobra and threw it outside in the grass that had grown around.

Exhausted, she lay down on her bed and fell asleep. But about 2:00 A.M. she woke to see Baba sitting at the end of her bed. He was intently looking at her throat, but not at her face. She wanted to speak to Him but found that she could not. From then until 5:00 A.M., she saw Baba at the foot of her bed each time she woke up. She even rubbed her eyes to make sure that she wasn't dreaming, but Baba's expression and position did not change. In the end she saw His figure slowly fade away.

For the next eleven nights a strange thing happened: each night she would come across another cobra of the same size, perhaps the mate of the one that was killed. It seemed to Mansari that the snake was seeking revenge. This frightened her to such an extent that on the twelfth day she stood before Baba's picture and sincerely prayed to Him, "Baba, it is too much for me to bear any longer. Either the cobra should kill me or I should beat it to death." To Mansari's surprise, from that day onward the mate did not appear again.

Mansari told Baba the entire story in detail after the completion of His New Life when He asked her if anything special had happened to her during that time. When she finished, Baba gestured, "Are you convinced now of what I told you earlier about my being here always?" What could Mansari reply? Her facial expression portrayed that she was more than convinced.

After the completion of these two stories, Baba remarked, "To tell you the truth, I don't know anything about this. So it follows that God does these things for me. How compassionate is God!" When the God-Man becomes a devotee, God has to do these things for Him.

After Mansari's story, Baba informed all that from the 7th until the 9th none should crowd around Him. Instead, He wanted only a few of the *mandali* near Him. Though nearly three hundred people were expected to come, Baba wanted a

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quiet yet lively atmosphere at the meetings. "At the time of mass *darshan* programs I don't expect this, for then people will make such a great rush, even to the extent of pulling my hair," He added.

Baba next fixed the time for reading the *Avesta*, the *Bible* and the other Holy Books on the fifth of November. He also asked the five "priests" to collect the necessary things for the occasion. "Let us represent properly," was Baba's remark.

Baba Tells a Story

In the course of casual conversation, Baba referred to some lines from Tulsidas, a well known saint and poet of northern India. When freely translated these mean: "If one regards all treasures belonging to others as stone, and if one treats all women (except one's wife) as one's mother, then Tulsidas stands guarantee that such a life will lead one to God." And the expression on Baba's face conveyed that one's way to God can be as simple or as difficult as that—just to be vigilant to stay away from the vitiating thoughts of lust and greed. How nice it would be to lead a life of continence with minimal needs in the loving remembrance of Baba, the only true Guide.

Some records were then played on a gramophone. Baba especially liked a *ghazal*, *Bhedi bhed na khulne paye sar jaye to jaye* (meaning: O holder of the secret, even if you were to be beheaded, do not reveal it!). At the end of this song, Baba conveyed, "Knowledge can be talked about but to *know* is an entirely different order of experience; *bhed* (the secret knowledge of love) is not connected with intellect. Instead, it is closely related to feelings and if indiscreetly disclosed creates chaos."

To illustrate how *bhed* is intimately linked with emotion, Baba told an interesting story of a Pathan and a Marwari which showed how uttering certain words could lead to an outburst of feeling capable of transforming a man's relationship.

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The story concerned a stout, sturdy Pathan and a weak, scrawny Marwari who were not on good terms. The Marwari really hated the Pathan but was unable, owing to his size, to give him the beating he so desired. But one day, seeing the Pathan approaching from quite a way off, he gathered up some of his friends near him and said, "Friends, this Pathan is a very treacherous fellow. Though I behave very politely with him, he treats me very rudely. Now I will prove this to you, and I hope you will help me teach him a good lesson."

By this time the Pathan had come near. The Marwari, with a smiling face, shook hands with him and embraced him, but as he did so he whispered in his ear, "You're a son of a swine!" These words were enough to arouse the feelings of the Pathan and make him fly into a rage and begin to beat the Marwari. Whereupon his friends, not knowing the real reason for the Pathan's anger, assumed that everything the Marwari had told them about the Pathan was true, and they in turn became incensed and fell upon the Pathan and gave him a good beating. In this way the "outer" belied the "inner" and the result was deplorable.

It was a delightful sight to see Baba relating stories interspersed with His radiant facial expressions and lively gestures—the false smile of the Marwari, the angry frown of the Pathan, and the beating hands of the Marwari's friends. Baba was indeed a master story teller.

It was evening and Baba left for Meherazad.

"What's Your Aim in Life?"

Each day after Baba's departure, the visitors would share Baba stories among themselves. My comradeship with Nana Kher began with these November meetings. It continued all through the 60's when we were often together at Guruprasad during Baba's summer stay in Poona. After Beloved Baba's dropping of the body, Nana came to stay permanently at Meherabad and for the past few years I have been residing at Meherazad. Here, as an aside, I wish to narrate how Nana came to Baba as this will also illustrate the way in which

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visitors spent their time in sharing Baba stories.

Nana Kher first heard of Meher Baba from Dr. Deshmukh in the early 1940's. He felt inwardly drawn to Baba and wished to have His *darshan*. He wrote a letter to Beloved Baba but it remained unanswered as Baba was visiting different parts of India for His work with the *masts*. In the meantime Nana completed his education and by chance got a job as a clerk in Poona. As Poona is close to Ahmednagar he thought he might have an early opportunity of seeing Baba.

While in Poona Nana met Eruch and the Jessawala family, whose company were of great importance and significance to him. From Poona he again wrote to Baba and this time he received a much awaited reply. Adi wrote: "Baba knows everything about you. You shouldn't worry about anything; you will see Baba at the opportune time." This filled Nana with a rare delight.

In 1945, at the time of Eruch's marriage, Nana at last had the opportunity of seeing Baba in Ahmednagar. Eruch introduced Nana to Baba and Baba made him sit on a chair nearby, a significant gesture of close contact. Baba casually inquired about Nana's journey, work and health. At the close of the interview Baba asked, "What is your aim in life?" Nana had just finished reading and studying the *Discourses* and spontaneously replied, "Spiritual Freedom." This pleased Baba.

In the course of conversation, Nana told Baba that his parents were pressing him to get married. Baba with a twinkle in His eyes gestured, "Where is the hurry about it? Wait for about two years and then I will tell you what to do." Baba then gave Nana some personal instruction that helped him to maintain an inner link with Him over the next few years of separation.

Around this time a special circular was issued about the possibility of staying with Baba for one month. Nana felt that he might not be able to get a long enough leave to attend this program, which he felt would amount to an irreparable spiritual loss. He was so alarmed by this thought that he left his job and went to Nagpur to start a business of his own so that he could visit Baba at any time.

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But as it turned out, Baba did not call anyone to stay with Him. However, in April 1947, He visited Madras and held an open *darshan* program. One of the conditions of attending this program was that the visitors could have Baba's *darshan* and personal contact only once, after which they had to leave. Three Baba lovers from Nagpur—Kapse, Nana Kher and Pankhraj—duly reached Madras and arrived at Meher Bhawan, in Saidapeth. Because of the condition of having *darshan* only once, the three did not join the line of those waiting to see Baba, but instead continued to feast their eyes on Baba's graceful, radiant figure by looking at Him through the windows of the room where Baba was sitting on a specially adorned seat. Soon the morning program was over without the three having ever entered the *darshan* room.

Later, when Baba was resting in His room, He sent a message to the three to present themselves before Him. When they were ushered into Baba's presence, He joked with them about their method of observing His order. He asked each one if he had anything special to ask Him. Since the period of two years was over, and since his parents were pressing him to marry, Nana opened the topic with Baba. Baba conveyed, "If you wish to get married, I give you my permission and blessings." Nana explained that it was not a question of his wanting to get married, his only interest in the matter was to do as Baba wished.

Hearing this, Baba asked if he was in love with anyone or if anyone was in love with him. Nana's reply was, "No, Baba." Then Baba asked him to confess if he had touched any girl with a lustful intention. Nana again answered, "No, Baba." These replies pleased Baba very much. He gestured, "Then why don't you marry me?" Nana, not knowing how to respond, mumbled, "Yes, Baba, that is best."

At the close of the interview the group feared that Baba would ask them to leave for Nagpur at once, but He graciously permitted them to attend all the programs during the *darshan* days in Madras and they felt overjoyed.

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Ransack a Good Bank

Baba's earlier plan of holding a meeting of one month in February, 1946 had been canceled. However, in His message for spiritual workers, Baba assured them that He would give certain instructions which would help them to lead a life of Love and Truth. Nana, having resolved to totally surrender to Baba, sought an opportunity to ask Baba if he could volunteer as one of Baba's workers.

In December, 1947 he visited Ahmednagar and through Adi conveyed his intention to Baba. Though in partial seclusion, Baba asked Adi to bring Nana with him to Meherazad. Baba asked him, "Why have you come?" Nana explained that he had come in response to Baba's circular—to receive instructions from Him. Baba looked happy. The first and foremost condition to be His worker, Baba explained, was to obey Him implicitly. Nana said that he was willing to do this.

Baba continued, "Will you do whatever I ask you to?" Nana answered, "Yes, Baba!" "Will you cut the throat of your father as soon as you go home, if I ask you to?" Nana unhesitatingly replied, "Yes, Baba." With a smile on His face Baba continued, "Leave that aside. But can you give me 4,000,000 rupees within two months?" Nana again replied, "Yes, Baba." "How?" Baba countered. Nana told Him that he would go from door to door and do his best to collect the required money. Baba interjected, "You won't be successful if you follow that method. But if you ransack a good bank you can come off well! You can give me the money and then go off to prison for a number of years. Are you prepared for this?" Nana, with devout obedience, responded, "Surely." "Go and do it then," Baba gestured. At this Nana turned and began to walk away. Just then Baba called him back and expressed His happiness over Nana's readiness to follow His commands and added that He neither wanted money, nor the life of Nana's father. Time and again, Baba has brought to the notice of His close ones that what He really wants from them is their lives in complete surrender to Him and nothing else.

Baba continued, "If you want to dedicate yourself to my

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cause, you must be free from any personal liability." Nana brought up the problem of disposing of the shop that he owned. Baba permitted him to transfer ownership into the name of his mother. He then asked Nana to visit Ahmednagar again on an appointed day. He was told to walk the distance from Nagpur to Ahmednagar barefoot and beg for his food. He was to carry no extra clothing, only the shirt and pants he had on. Baba also told him that without hurting the feelings of his parents he had to tell them that he was going to stay with Baba permanently.

On his return to Nagpur it was hard for Nana to convince his old and loving parents to permit him to walk barefooted. They requested Baba to withdraw this order and also the order of begging for food. Baba agreed. Then there was a change in Baba's plans. He soon commenced the New Life phase and Nana's hopes of meeting Him and leading a life under His guidance seemed to have ended. But then, after a year and a half, Baba called him for a two-week stay at Meherabad in November, 1952 and then asked Him to accompany Him on His Fiery Free Life tour.

Through the sharing of such stories, our evenings were spent happily in Baba's loving remembrance. As the days passed, the momentum for the Fiery Free Life was building.