

Stay at Motichur

1950 Part III

New Life Phase; A Spiritual Emergency

ON January 25, Adi, Ghani, Babadas and Anna 104, having accepted Plan I-C, left Dehra Dun for their respective places. As they embraced each other farewell, tears sparkled in the eyes of the companions. According to the New Life conditions, they were not to meet each other again in the future. Donkin, as per Plan I-B, was to be a medical practitioner at Dehra Dun. He had willingly agreed to shoulder the responsibility of providing for Kaka, who was still unwell, and also for Gustadji who was too old to get any job. For the group of eight who were in Plan III, Baba appointed Vishnu as their manager for the household affairs. Obedience to Baba's orders continued to be of paramount importance. It should, however, be noted that obeying Baba, the God Man, was qualitatively different from obeying anyone else, however great.

The New Life phase appears to some as a period of spiritual emergency. Accompanying Baba in this phase was not compulsory, but from those who decided to be His companions, He expected implicit obedience and unfailing loyalty. Whether through planned journeys or aimless wanderings, reasonable doings or reasonless dealings, Baba's work of awakening the hearts, continued on different planes of consciousness to reveal in time to come the Divinity latent in each. Baba's life was Divinity in action. So the fortunate ones who were given the option of participating in His work had to obey the God Man whole-heartedly.

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In one of the meetings Baba had clearly stated, "You may believe that I am the *Avatar*, God, Devil or anything or anyone you please, but you must understand that although I may live among you as if I were your brother or friend, I will in fact be your Master whom you must obey absolutely." At the end of the meeting Baba pointed out that from March 1, He expected complete obedience from those who had accepted Plan III. Was the Compassionate One becoming the Merciless One? After studying the methods that Baba used in His relationship with the companions, one would in fairness agree that He had beautifully blended the ways of Marpa and Milarepa, the Tibetan Masters, in an incredible integrity. Baba's orders and statements were not irrational but super-rational, beyond the grasp of the human mind.

In the midst of these serious discussions, an amusing incident occurred which provided a little fun. Anna 104 of Plan I-C while leaving Dehra Dun unwittingly carried Gustadji's baggage instead of his own. That bag contained Gustadji's warm clothing and other necessary things. Dear old Gustadji who was observing silence tried to express his inconvenience and displeasure through gestures to all, including Baba. This aroused sympathy for Gustadji who was going to suffer the discomforts of the severe cold. Gustadji through his lively gestures and irrepressible facial expressions had so many times entertained Baba with humorous and funny stories, but this time he himself had to play the tragedian. This event, however, ended happily for after some days Gustadji's belongings were collected and sent back to Dehra Dun.

When Has God to Worry?

In the next meeting, Donkin was asked by Baba to visit Bombay to purchase some medical appliances and surgical instruments for his dispensary at Dehra Dun. While returning he was instructed to bring a typewriter

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for Mani and some sewing material and aids. Baba had previously hinted that the women accompanying Him might be asked to take jobs or earn money by doing odd work like stitching clothes. In those days Mani and Meheru were not keeping well; it was tiresome for them to attend to the work in the kitchen. So Baba asked Donkin to meet Naja at Nariman's place in Bombay and, if she was willing, to invite her for a stay at Manjri Mafi. This was not an order from Baba, but it was a choice given to her. The only condition she had to observe strictly was that she was not to refer to any incident or person from the good Old Life. In Mahant's house people were not allowed to meet Baba, but He was easily available to the family members of Nalavala and Kumar (Ghildial). They were lucky people indeed to be in Baba's physical presence when His dearest disciples and devotees were not allowed to have even a glimpse of Him.

Kumar had newly come into Baba's contact, but Kaikobad (Keki) and Freiny Nalavala had met Baba a few years before. In April 1941, when Baba was staying in Dalanwala on New Road, Keki had Baba's auspicious and heart warming *darshan*. Later in 1946 he helped Papa Jessawala find a quiet bungalow near Dehra Dun for Baba's special spiritual work. It was located about five kilometers away from the city, in a village called Niranjapur. Baba stayed here with a group of His disciples for about eight months. Baba wished to remain undisturbed, so His stay at Niranjapur remained a closely guarded secret. In *The Wayfarers*, an account of Baba's work with the God-intoxicated souls, Niranjapur was only referred to as a "place of seclusion".

Yet, on some mornings, Baba allowed Keki to see Him. As a way of accepting the whole-hearted services that he had rendered, Baba consented one day to have a simple meal of rice, *dal* and *chutney* at his home in Dehra Dun. Baba instructed that the lunch should be prepared by his wife Freiny in complete silence. It was an indirect opportunity given to her for remembering

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Him whole-heartedly. This indirectly helped her clean and purify her mind and heart to receive the radiance of Baba's love. This was her first unforgettable meeting with Baba. It was during this visit that their son Naosherwan,¹ a two month old baby had the unique fortune to rest in Baba's lap. A blessed family!

This breeze of compassion continued to blow towards this lucky group even in the New Life. In 1950 Baba paid another visit to their house. He lovingly inquired about each. Freiny told Baba that Keki unnecessarily worried himself sick about certain things in life. Baba flashed a carefree smile and in simple words gave some profound advice: "If you worry about yourself, God does not worry about you. And why should He? If you stop worrying, God has to begin to worry for you. Remember Him whole-heartedly; leave your worrying to Him and be free to remain cheerful." Had not Baba been in the New Life, He would have replaced the word God with Baba. For, a year later, in a similar situation, He authoritatively conveyed, "Whenever my lovers one-pointedly call on me, I dare not ignore them."

All residing in Mahant's house were kept busy with some work. Baba gave different duties and instructions to different companions. He told Pendu and Vishnu to sell the vehicles and animals. The money received in this transaction was to be handed over to Donkin to work out Plan I-B. The white horse was not to be sold. It was received in *bhiksha* from Khare. So the horse was given to Donkin. He was free to keep it or give it away to anyone. The four bullocks worth 2,500 rupees were donated by the women companions to an institution called *Nanhi Duniya, Children's World*.² Baba told the Principal that the work done by creating opportunities

¹ Naosherwan Anzar, the editor of *Glow International*.

² Mani, Baba's sister, once said, "What can I say about children? If Baba hadn't loved children so much, He wouldn't have loved us so much! Wherever Baba was and where there were any children, they somehow always came to Him. I remember in 1952 on the plane to the U.S.-- of course, nobody knew who Baba was -- the children would walk down the aisle and constantly stop where Baba was sitting and caress His coat or look up at him. And their mothers would be after them, 'Don't disturb that gentleman!' Then Baba would smile, the mothers would relax and forget to scold.... I think they wanted to come and caress Baba too!" (Laughter.) *The Awakener*, Vol. XIII, Nos, 1 & 2 p. 77.

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in which good qualities in the hearts of innocent children blossom and flower, was and is always noble and commendable in "the eyes of God." Baba encouraged him to carry on with this meritorious work in a spirit of selfless service, leaving the results to the All-knowing Will of God. Nalavala and Eruch Mistry (Elcha) were directed to find a suitable flat in the city for Donkin to use as his dispensary. Eruch (Jessawala) was often sent to see Kumar to find out how the construction of the hut, the extension of the old building and the newly dug well, on the Hardwar property, were coming along.

Baba's Game of Love

By February 10, Donkin returned from Bombay to Dehra Dun with Naja, Baba's cousin and "master cook". Naja knew Baba's likes and dislikes about food better than anyone else. Her services became indispensable, especially after the two accidents. The day she arrived at Manjri Mafi, Baba entrusted her with the work of preparing *rava* for His forthcoming birthday. According to the Zoroastrian calendar it fell on February 12. On this day it was very chilly in the morning. When Baba was sitting with the companions, He, as usual, asked them about their sleep and the weather. To this Nilu replied that he could not sleep and added, "It's cold, cold, cold." This evoked Baba's sporadic mood to compose a short stanza. He dictated:

We are neither young or old,
Our everything is sold,
Neither we have silver or gold
There is New-Life all told.

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To this Donkin added,
From March, it will unfold.
And Baba concluded,
For those who are real bold,
Conditions hundred per cent to hold.³

Was it Baba's birthday message to the companions to be buoyant and bold, in spite of the grim and cold "weather" the discomforts of the New Life?⁴

Some families were invited to participate in the informal celebration of Baba's birthday. Baba distributed *rava* and *prasad* to the visitors. In addition He also gave good *bhajias* to all, followed by tea. Those who attended this program still remember with great delight and reverence this pleasant occasion, when they received delicious *prasad* at Baba's hands. To commemorate this festive occasion they continue to share *rava* with their friends and Baba people on their Beloved's birthday.

The next day Donkin left Manjri Mafi for Dehra Dun in connection with the dispensary work. Sadashiv Patel left for Poona. He was to help Arrangementwallas, Nariman and Meherjee, in some legal matters. Manek Mehta of Bombay had been given the option of joining Baba's New Life as one of His companions from January 1951. In spite of this concession he had not let Baba know his decision. So by the end of January, Baba sent a letter to him through Adi, but once more no reply was received. A reminder was then sent which too remained unanswered. Eventually it turned out that Manek who had composed devotional songs on Baba's Divinity, had been deluded by *maya's* trick and lost the chance to be with Baba in the New Life. Such incidents

³ *Circular NL 4*, issued on 7-3-1950.

⁴ To a follower who was dejected, Baba once conveyed, "If you don't want to be old before your time be cheerful in deed and word and in appearance — most of all in appearance. It is a divine art to look cheerful, it helps others."

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reveal how, in spite of having had Baba's close *darshan* and intimate contact, it was possible, in the case of some, not to realize how precious these opportunities were! Baba had said, "I am most slippery." On the other hand we also come across some Baba people who had only casually heard of Him or had caught a glimpse of Him but were impatient to leave all and to follow Him with unfailing fidelity, and Baba had to order them to wait. No one is to be blamed. Baba, the Infinite One, alone knows the "moves" He plays through us all in His Game of Love.

"Big Mistake" Remains a Secret

From the second half of February the companions had tea and *chapatis* for breakfast at 5 A.M. Soon after Baba would visit them. The weather during the month was unpredictable and so were Baba's moods. It all depended on the spiritual work He was engaged in. Sometimes, Baba would be in a pensive mood or get upset over ordinary matters. There were occasions when He would ask a few of the companions to pinch His ears for losing His temper. Though it happened rarely, there arose a few situations where under some pretext He would ask someone to slap Him. This order had to be obeyed immediately. What an incredible companionship!

It was not a life meant for the weak-kneed. Once Baba had quoted a couplet of Hafiz wherein the poet stated that the aspiration for God-realization is in itself an indication of stark madness! One could however say that to stay with the God Man during His different phases of work such madness was essential. Only those who, with His grace, surrendered their intellect to Him and became devotedly pliable, could stay with Him. Spiritual blossoming depends upon the showering of the Master's compassion from beginning to end. For most of the time Baba was very considerate about His Companions' faults and was forgiving. After an early

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supper, He would generally spend half an hour with them in light talk. To find Baba in a really cheerful mood was an occasion of great delight to all. During such moments He would look exquisitely graceful, His face beaming with an extraordinary glow about it.

A few days earlier Baba had sent one of the companions to visit Hardwar and bring back water in two jars from the holy Ganges. In the third week of February, He instructed Baidul to empty these jars in the current of the Ganges at Rishikesh, to refill them and to bring them back to Manjri Mafi. Was Baba symbolically sanctifying the flow of the Ganges from Rishikesh to Hardwar, for the thousands of *sadhus* and pilgrims who were expected to visit these places of pilgrimage, to have a dip in the river, during the Kumbha Mela? On Baidul's arrival, Baba used water from one of the jars for His bath. Water in the second jar was to be utilized on March 1, the day of the new phase in Baba's New Life.

Nalavala and Elcha Mistry were successful in securing a place at Dehra Dun for Donkin's dispensary and the necessary papers for leasing it were executed. Baba agreed to visit the dispensary on its opening day. Murli, one of the companions, was asked to give homeopathic treatment to the patients coming from the nearby villages. One day, while returning on foot from Mahant's house an old woman approached Baba. Her son was ill in bed. He had vomited many times and was also suffering from acute dysentery. On Baba's instruction Nilu gave free medical treatment to him. There was a rapid recovery and within a few days the young man visited Baba's residence and profusely thanked Nilu. Even in the New Life, Baba's loving concern for the sick and the poor and the afflicted, whom He incidentally met, continued.

Baba had given a special interview to Norina and Elizabeth in the first week of August, 1949. At that time He had promised Elizabeth that He would visit the West. In connection with this matter, He directed Donkin to write a letter to Elizabeth inquiring about

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the possibility of His visiting the States in the near future. The conditions of this visit were previously explained to her. Adi, who had accepted Plan I-C and had returned to Ahmednagar, sent one thousand rupees to be used for the requirements of the companions. While strictly adhering to the conditions of the plan he had saved this amount from the insurance business he had entered on his return from Dehra Dun. This pleased Baba and He sent an encouraging telegram to Adi.

In view of the thousands of *sadhus, sanyasis, nangas* and *bairagis* who were expected to visit Hardwar in large numbers for the Kumbha Mela, Baba decided to shift His headquarters temporarily to Motichur. It was a village about five kilometers from Hardwar. From this place it seemed convenient for Him to visit the premises of the Kumbha congregation. On March 1, Baba asked for a small pair of scissors and cut a lock of hair from the head of each companion. Then He had a bath with water from the Ganges brought by Baidul. He gave no explanation about this particular "hair cut and bath" and no one asked Him about it. On March 3, Baba was to leave for Motichur with Pendu, Eruch, Baidul, Gustadji, Murli and Aloba. Vishnu and Nilu were to stay at Manjri Mafi to look after the women companions and also to take care of Kaka who was still unwell.

In the morning, Baba asked the companions under Plan III to wash their feet; He then placed His forehead on the feet of each. He apologized to them in case He had hurt their feelings. Simultaneously He pardoned them all for the mistakes committed by them, if any. At the end He conveyed the following: "During the period between October 16, 1949 and March 1, 1950 I have committed consciously and deliberately one big mistake and I want the companions to kick me so that God forgives me." Then He gestured to the companions to obey His order. You can imagine the plight of those who had to kick hard the Beloved of their own hearts, for whom they were ready to lay down their

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very lives most willingly. Baba never disclosed, even in the later years, what this "big mistake" was for which He underwent that submissive act of chastisement.

The Origin of the Kumbha Mela

As was planned, Baba, with a few companions, left for Motichur by the noon train. The rest set out in a bullock cart with the necessary luggage piled in it. Baba liked the house at Motichur. According to Baba's instructions, in one of the rooms a hut was erected with a thatched roof. Outside the room a small tent was also pitched. Baba was to be in seclusion in this hut. In the evening He distributed *chapatis* and cooked vegetables to the companions. This was their simple supper. Baba wanted Jal S., His younger brother, to stay with Him at Motichur. So some days back a letter had been mailed to Jal. However, Jal expressed His inability to join the Baba-party, owing to his illness. The life at Motichur was austere and the diet frugal. In the morning, the companions had tea with a little milk, while in the afternoon it was without milk. The companions and Baba had only one plain meal a day. Baba Himself swept His room, washed His clothes and cleaned the pots He used. Was Baba indirectly contacting, through these austerities, the spiritually minded people who were also leading disciplined lives and were due to arrive for the Kumbha Mela? On March 7, Baba walked to Bhimagoda. Eruch, Baidul and the other companions were asked to collect information about the different camps of the *sadhus* and the *mahatmas* and their expected arrival dates at Hardwar.

There is an interesting mythological (*Pauranic*) background to this fair. It is believed that when the ocean was churned by the *devas* (gods) and *asuras* (demons), fourteen mysterious things came out of it. Next to the last but one was a jar of deadly poison which Shiva drank. Then there came out the *Kumbha* of *Amrit* (pitcher of Nectar) that had a quality of bestowing immortality.

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The *asuras* wanted to possess this pitcher while the *devas* wanted to carry it to the heavens. During this dispute and subsequent pursuit the bearer of this pitcher, while rushing to heaven unwittingly spilled a few drops of nectar in the river beds at four places Nasik, Ujjain, Allahabad and Hardwar. Therefore the Kumbha Festival is held at these four places. The exact dates of the fair are connected with certain astronomical positions. Anyway, March 1950 served as a good opportunity for Baba to bless thousands of pilgrims and hundreds of *sadhus* and *mahatmas* with His divine physical presence.

Baba wished to begin His work at Hardwar on March 15. Prior to this, He planned to visit Rishikesh and accordingly He paid visits to the Kailas and Mangal Ashrams. He also contacted many aspirants residing in different cottages, huts and caves. He either touched their feet with His hands or, in some cases, placed His forehead on them. In the Old Life, the disciples accompanying Baba were not allowed to witness Him touching or bowing down either to the *masts* or spiritually advanced souls. From the New Life onwards there was no ban on watching Baba pay His respects to the *masts* or to the poor.

Unburdening an Old Life Burden

After a week's stay at Motichur, Baba returned to Manjri Mafi for two days. He was pleased to find Kaka in good health. Coincidentally, Donkin too, had come from Dehra Dun and met Baba. In the course of the conversation, he brought to Baba's notice the contents of a letter he had received from Ghani (Ganoba). Baba did not approve much of Ghani's way of indirectly calling Baba's attention to his problems concerning the Lonavla property. It seems, however, that Baba had a soft corner in His heart for His childhood chum, Ghani. The next day He sent a letter to the Arrangementwallas explaining the circumstances which had made Him

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consider Ghani's case rather differently. In the circular to be issued He Himself begged His Old Life disciples and devotees to help Him discharge the debt, which He treated as an Old Life burden. This debt, which in fact was one only because Baba had so declared it, was thus fully repaid.

In Meher Baba's life receiving and disbursing money was a significant activity. He had turned down grand offers and sometimes asked for small sums. His acceptance and refusal of money was qualitatively different from that of an ordinary man. He neither desired to possess money nor was opposed to it. He used it for the spiritual upliftment of the *masts* and to fulfill the material needs of the poor. Baba's love for His lovers was so great that sometimes, overlooking their weaknesses, He went out of the way to help them monetarily by begging money from His other loved ones.

As far as I recall, Meher Baba had once stated that that person is really rich who knows how to spend his wealth well irrespective of its extent. One who hoards money with selfish ends (however small or large the amount may be) is really poor. Through the above mentioned circular, it was as if Baba had offered His dear ones a chance to be "really rich". Ghani was given the sum fixed by Baba and not a rupee more was accepted by the Arrangementwallas for this specific purpose. Call this method what you may, a benediction or bait, but this too was one of Baba's ways of winning His dear ones for their spiritual benefit. In one of the Discourses⁵ Meher Baba has explained why the Master tolerates the failings of the disciples with unfailing patience and subsequently how these lapses are used to awaken them to higher aspects of living.

What Sort of *Bhagwan* Is He?

Baba was at Motichur. One day while having His

⁵ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, Vol. II. The Ways of the Masters.

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meal, He remarked that the rice was not cooked well. A little later He expressed regret about this grumbling and asked one of the companions to pinch His ears. Having become man, Baba was demonstrating how easily men lose their temper over trifles. Having His ear pinched was Baba's way of reminding His companions to become aware of their ordinary actions. Otherwise, why would Baba have complained about the rice, for in the past He had immensely enjoyed eating hard, stale pieces of bread given Him by the *masts*!

Baba's visits to different *ashrams* in Hardwar and Rishikesh continued. This particular area is typically oriental, evocative of the ancient spiritual traditions. Under the skies of these twin places, aspirants for centuries have longed and nourished noble, selfless feelings while their minds pondered deeply over the significance of life and the timeless Reality. Unfortunately, at present, that glorious past is being exploited by hypocrites. Some seem to don ochre colored robes for everything but God and it is difficult to differentiate between real and false gurus. During His wanderings, the All-knowing Master, Baba, as He moved through these people, knew the spiritual worth of each. In 1950, Baba contacted over ten thousand *sadhus* and *sanyasis* during the Kumbha Mela. The spiritual significance of these contacts was not revealed to those who were with Him. The outward expression of these contacts was so common that those who accompanied Him had no idea of the "give and take" which transpired on the inner levels of consciousness. The following incident that took place earlier in this area reveals the depth of Baba's contacts with *sadhus*, *yogis*, *masts* and saints.

In 1946, Baba was staying at Niranjapur, a suburb of Dehra Dun. Krishna⁶ from Kerala, was staying with Him as a night watchman. One night, while quietly

⁶ Krishna (not Krishnaji), a boy brought to Baba by His brother Jal at Bangalore, in 1939. Later, he served Baba as a night watchman but was sent back home before Baba started for the New Life in 1949.

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sitting by the door, he was badly bitten by mosquitoes. He very lightly slapped his legs to get rid of them, but that little sound disturbed Baba's sleep, and He called Krishna near Him. He began to admonish him for disturbing His sleep. Krishna wanted to complain about the mosquito bites, but Baba ignored his words and dismissed him with an instruction to be more careful in his duty. Krishna felt annoyed with the way Baba had treated him. As he returned to his seat, Satan seemed to possess him. In that mood of irritation he began to think, "Baba is quite comfortable in the mosquito net but can He not realize my inconvenience? He says He is God in human form, but has no pity for those who serve Him. What sort of *Bhagwan* [God] is He?" He was restless throughout the night.

The night watchman was usually allowed to rest and sleep till late in the morning after his night duty. But that night Baba unexpectedly instructed Krishna to accompany Him during His visit to Hardwar early next morning. Krishna had to forego his rest and sleep for he was also ordered to arrange for transportation to Hardwar. On reaching Hardwar, Baba disclosed that He had it in mind to contact only a *mast* type *yogi* who for years had been in the habit of standing on one of his legs. For most of this time he had been observing silence. He had some followers who revered him greatly. Yet when Baba arrived none of them were present. No sooner did Baba approach him than the *mast* became ecstatic, folded his hands and with tears of joy streaming down his cheeks, broke his silence saying, "You are *Bhagwan*, God in human form. O God! I was waiting for you for years and at last you have come. How blessed am I!" Krishna, as he heard these sentences, felt that this visit was in answer to the disbelief he had entertained the previous night. Baba did not stay any longer with the *mast* but quickly returned to Dehra Dun.

That night, though feeling drowsy, Krishna tried his best to be diligent in his duty, thinking that he would have a long rest the next day. But just when he was

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leaving Baba's room after his night watch was over, Baba ordered him again to visit Hardwar in the morning and to meet that *yogi-like mast* for a second time. He was to go alone. Krishna was on the verge of putting forth the excuse that he was too exhausted, but the words of the *yogi* ringing in his ears restrained him from saying anything.

When Krishna reached Hardwar he noticed that a crowd had gathered around the *yogi*. They had assembled there for his last *darshan* as he had breathed his last. The bliss of meeting the *Avatar* can be so shattering that sometimes, even an advanced soul cannot contain it. Krishna noticed that this *mast's* (*yogi's*) face looked blissfully calm, radiating peace all around. His last words to his devotees were, "I met *Bhagwan*, face to face and He blessed me. My life's desire is fulfilled." Disclosing this secret in a very cheerful mood he dropped his body. It dawned on Krishna that as he had doubted Baba's Godhood, He, in His love for those who serve Him, had provided direct evidence of His All-knowing nature through this episode. Krishna realized how blessed he was for the opportunity to wait on Baba as a night watchman! The mosquito bites now seemed insignificant. He thought to himself, "What an incredible *Bhagwan* is Baba!" Such incidents, whether in the Old or the New Life, occasionally revealed the significance of Baba's contacts with the *masts* and other spiritually advanced souls.⁷

"I Give Love; I Receive Love"

Returning to the narration of Baba's New Life activity, in March 1950, He often paid visits to the different *ashrams* in Hardwar and Kankhal. In the early morning

⁷ *The Wayfarers*, by William Donkin, gives a detailed account of Baba's contacts with the *masts*. In his book, on page 242 he has stated that Baba visited Hardwar at different times with different people and that it was difficult to mention all the contacts made. The incident mentioned above is one not included in *The Wayfarers*.

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with four companions, Gustadji, Baidul, Pendu and Eruch, Baba would leave Motichur on foot and return by late afternoon. Throughout the day, He would walk from place to place, in the hot sun, contacting seekers and *sadhus*, mostly in ochre clothes. In that area anyone wearing such clothes was referred to by the people as a *mahatma*. Pendu was the "scorekeeper". After a fortnight, Pendu's record showed that Baba had contacted over a thousand persons from the different sects of *sadhus*, including those from Nirmali and Udasi. The strain of this work especially affected Baba's eyes, but He would not agree to discontinue these strenuous visits. When the number of people contacted reached 1,300, Baba went to Manjri Mafi for a two-day stay. It was March 21, *Jamshed-e-Navroz*, New Year's Day for the Zoroastrians. On His arrival all greeted Baba with, "*Naoroz Mubarak*." Baba's vital presence filled the hearts of all with great delight. Baba, however, looked tired and His personal doctor, Nilu, noticed the ill effects of the physical strain in Baba's eyes. Baba permitted him to prescribe treatment for His eyes, but He also decided to go back to Motichur the next day.

Some people interested in spirituality heard about Baba's stay at Motichur. They visited His residence for *darshan*. But He rarely gave an audience. On one rare occasion, when the visitors expressed their wish to have His blessing. He conveyed to them, "In New Life, I give love and I am happy to receive love. No disciple-Master relationship." This remark expresses that the New Life meant giving and receiving love and love alone on a friendly footing. Baba had become a companion to all and His New Life will ever sing the note of companionship, a free and fearless relationship of man with God.

Baba continued His visits to Hardwar where the *sadhus* and *sanyasis* from different parts of India had assembled for the Kumbha Mela. In those days it seemed that any person with a long beard and hair, or clean shaven, or in an ochre robe was worthy of receiving Baba's attention. As He walked through the crowded

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streets He would cast them a special glance. It would be so penetrating but so quick that the person concerned would hardly realize how significant and potent it was. Sometimes Baba would touch the feet of these people with His finger tips. On such occasions, He would look gracefully divine and yet perfectly human. The person contacted would be struck with Baba's elegance and deep concern about him. But perhaps being blinded by Baba's unseen radiance, he could hardly discern the worth of this sanctifying touch. Once the contact was made, Baba would not wait a moment more. In this way Baba continued to bless many spiritual aspirants. To illustrate this particular method of paying homage which Baba adopted during those days, He once held one end of a walking stick in His hand, with the other end in Baidul's. The next moment He gestured to His companions that He was ready to bow down to anyone Baidul would lead Him to. This method of contacting *sadhus* and the like continued throughout Baba's visits to Hardwar and Rishikesh. Baba could thus use any of the *mandali* as an instrument for His spiritual work.

The Eclipse of the Moon

March 27 was one of the important dates in the Kumbha Mela. On this day *sadhus*, *bairagis* and others, belonging to various sects, were expected to march in procession towards the banks of the Ganges to bathe during the specified hours mentioned in the Indian almanac. So thousands of people, fired with excitement, swarmed near the bathing *ghats* to witness the ceremony of the day. Because of the crowds, Baba preferred to stay at Motichur. He spent the time washing His own clothes and cleaning the pots, etc. The next day He visited some camps to contact *mahatmas* and *matajis* (literally mothers, woman aspirants). At a place known as Nirmal Akhada, a *mahant* (chief of the sect) was giving a discourse to a large audience, explaining the spiritual

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bounties derived from the *darshan* and *sahavas* of saints and Masters. The people had no idea that the One worthy of *darshan* and *sahavas* was intently listening to this talk for about half an hour. It was rare for Baba ever to spend such a long time listening to a spiritual discourse.

While bowing down to the hundreds of *sadhus*, Baba had to bend His back and neck again and again. This strained the muscles and nerves of His tender frame. Perhaps the serious suffering He endured during the 1960s owing to neck trouble had its origin in this wearying work. Though repeatedly requested by the companions, Baba refused to use any conveyance to reach *any ashram*. In addition, He also observed a fast on certain days. While returning to Motichur, He often looked very fatigued and walked with heavy steps. The eye trouble did not subside and His health was not good; He, however, seemed totally engrossed and devoted to this "*darshan-taking*" phase.

April 2 was another important day connected with the fair. It was the full moon day which concurred with the lunar eclipse. Hindus regard this coincidence as having great spiritual potential which can be utilized beneficially by devoting this particular period to the worship of God or the God-Man. Especially those who are after occult powers and are known as *tantriks* repeat certain disciplines and *mantras* as they stand in the river to revitalize their psychic powers. In the early days, Baba had been asked whether there was a grain of truth in such a belief and He explained, "It is a scientifically acknowledged fact that the stellar regions, planets and stars do exert an influence on the life and activity of this planet earth. And since this earth of ours has the highest evolved organic life, the human happens to be the nearest to the spiritual planes; the phenomenon of eclipse does indirectly affect the world spiritually. The *rishis* of old knew too well the astronomical basis and the spiritual influence of such heavenly occurrences. Looking at the average mentality of the masses of their

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times, the *rishis* could do no better than issue cut and dried instructions as to prayers and penance and austerities . . . rather than give a rational and spiritual elucidation . . . There is, however, no denying the fact that a few prayers . . . undergone with keen concentration, concurrently with the eclipse of the sun or the moon do result in . . . spiritual benefit to the individual concerned.”⁸

By the way, I would especially like to add here that on some occasions I had the opportunity to stay with Baba during eclipses. He, however, did not give any special instructions to those who stayed with Him. There was not even a mention of the eclipse during the day. I gathered that any moment spent in the wholehearted remembrance of the Timeless One (Baba) is spiritually more beneficial than offering prayers or doing penances on astronomically auspicious times. On April 2, Baba did not visit Hardwar. Yet, He seemed to participate indirectly in the mass bathing of that day; He had a bath with Ganges water brought to His residence by Baidul. At night the *sadhus* and the like were expected to continue their prayers and other ceremonies on the bank of the Ganges, during the period of eclipse. At the appearance of the full moon, as per tradition, all were to bathe for a second time before returning to their camps. The next morning, April 3, Baba left Motichur as early as 3 A.M. for the Kumbha grounds to meet these holy men. This was the most active and strenuous day for Baba. Without rest or respite He moved between Hardwar, Kankhal and Neeldhara for about ten hours. Through His loving presence and sanctifying touch, Baba quietly poured His radiance upon the "ochre-race" — *sadhus* and *sanyasis* — and silently inspired and strengthened them to lead a life of honesty and selfless dedication in their search for God. At the end of the day's work He felt extremely tired but preferred, as usual, to walk back to Motichur on foot.

⁸ *Meher Baba Journal, February, 1939, p. 76.*

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Raja, The English Bull

During each visit to Hardwar, Baba had to walk about 20 kilometers and had to spend six to eight hours in the sweltering sun, meeting and bowing down to the mendicants and *mahatmas* residing at different places. In spite of the great physical exertion, Baba would not agree to use any conveyance. Very rarely He consented to hire a *tonga* to reach Motichur. In fact there was an ox cart at His disposal which had transported the party's odd things — utensils, etc. — from Manjri Mafi to Motichur. It was drawn by a single ox called Raja, brought from Ahmednagar along with the caravan. As a calf Raja had been presented to Baba by Sarosh. Baba had a special fondness for him and he was occasionally fed by Baba. Raja was an English bull and looked very noble. It was brought to Baba's notice that Raja needed some work and the cart could easily take Baba to Hardwar. Baba agreed that Raja should have some exercise and He told Murli to yoke Raja daily and visit Hardwar to purchase good fodder for him. He, however did not comply with the request of the companions to make use of the ox cart for Himself.

Murli commenced his daily cart drive. One day when he was returning to Motichur someone driving a car honked from behind. Raja, licking his nostrils with his rough tongue, was leisurely swaying his neck from left to right but did not move aside. The road was rather narrow; the car could not pass, so the driver repeatedly honked his horn and got annoyed with Murli who was holding Raja's reins. Finally the car overtook the cart and its driver, a British officer, stopped the car, got down and grumbled at Murli for his indifference to the traffic rules. Upon this Murli humbly apologized to him and softly added, "But sir, that was not my fault; I tried my best but the bull did not respond to my language. Perhaps it will understand you better; he is an English bull!" Raja's expression of unconcern and Murli's sense of humor made that grim Englishman not only smile

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but also laugh merrily. He spent a few minutes more, asked some questions about Raja and had a good chat with Murli. In the evening when Baba heard the story about Raja it provided Him with a few moments of joy and relaxation after His exhausting work during the day.

At the end of the conversation, Baba suddenly announced that Raja should be unconditionally donated to any good institution. This habit of immediately declaring some plan or order about a person or object which had come up quite incidentally in the conversation was typical of Baba. In the light of Baba's instruction, Pendu, while returning from Motichur to Manjri Mafi,⁹ contacted Sister Miraben (Miss Madeline Slade), a close associate of Gandhiji, who was maintaining *Pashu Lok*, an animal farm, near Dehra Dun. She personally wanted to have Raja but the rules of the institution prevented her from accepting him. So, in the end, Raja was donated to *Goshala* — House of cows and calves. This incidental mention of Miraben's name brings to mind a controversial statement linked with her name in Rom Landau's book entitled *God Is My Adventure* published in 1935. With reference to Gandhiji's meeting with Baba on the steamer *Rajputana* in September 1931, the author writes:

I was travelling to America in the same boat as Miss Madeline Slade, Gandhi's English disciple and companion. I asked Miraben (as Miss Slade was called) about Baba's conversation with Gandhi. "I know all the details about the connection between the two men," she said. "It was always Shri Meher Baba who went to see Gandhi, never otherwise. Shri Meher Baba sent round a word, asking whether Gandhi would receive him. Gandhi of course consented. They had

⁹ Although the decision to give Raja away had been made at Motichur, this was not actually accomplished until after the group returned to Manjri Mafi.

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a talk, and after that Shri Meher Baba visited Gandhi again in London."

This information is totally distorted. On the contrary it was Gandhiji who, after receiving a telegram from Jamshed Mehta, the Mayor of Karachi, desired to see Baba.

Baba's secretary, F. H. Dadachanji (Chanji) who was well-acquainted with Gandhiji, brought the above statement to Gandhiji's notice. Later, Gandhiji himself wrote a letter to Chanji as follows:

Sevagram,
Via Wardha (M.P.)
20-9-41.

Dear Dadachanji,

With reference to the alleged interview with Miraben reported by Rom Landau, you may announce to the curious that it was not Meher Baba who sought me out on the Rajputana but I had sought him out in his cabin and it was I who used to go frequently to his cabin. And . . . you were Baba's interpreter of the alphabetical plate which he held to converse with the world. You know the spiritual nature of our conversation. I had further invited Baba to meet me in London during the time I was there . . .

Yours Sincerely
M. K. Gandhi¹⁰

I also know a few similar incidents when ill intentioned and superficially interested persons have tried to malign Baba and His cause, but these will be dealt with later. All such reactions, I noted, have their root in contempt prior to honest investigation.

¹⁰ The photostat of the original letter is with Meher Baba's disciples.

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Omniscience Without Knowledge

These regular visits to Hardwar bring to mind another incident depicting Baba's role as a seeker. In the Mela grounds He bowed down and touched the feet of *sadhus*, whether pseudo or real, sitting or standing by the roadside. He also visited the *ashrams* located on the banks of the Ganges. During one such visit as He reverentially bowed to the head of an *ashram*, Baba was offered some *prasad*. He, however, turned away swiftly as He always did after each contact, unwittingly not accepting the *prasad*. At the end of the day's program, before returning to Motichur, Baba conveyed to His companions, "I feel I should have accepted the *prasad*, then and there, that was offered by the *Mahant*." Eruch replied, "What you think is right, Baba. I personally feel that in the spirit of the New Life it should have been accepted." Upon this, Baba asked Eruch if he could find that particular *ashram* and meet the person again. Eruch assured Baba that he could and accordingly he met the *Mahant* again. Eruch apologized on behalf of his elder brother -- Baba -- for not accepting the *prasad*. The *Mahant* was pleased to re-offer it. This was later distributed by Baba in a devotional mood to His companions. Whatever role Baba assumed He played it to perfection. This reminds me of Baba's words, "*Sadguru* acts, Avatar becomes."

It is believed by some Indians that, though very rare, witnessing the mating of crows is a sign that foretells the death of a person very dear to the observer. Once, while Baba was on His daily march to Hardwar with the four companions, one of them witnessed such a mating. Knowing this, Baba, like an ordinary superstitious person, seemed very concerned over this matter. He asked the companions what should be done to avert the death of a close one. Fortunately, every superstitious peril has its own amusing antidote! As Baba seemed very grave it was agreed that the death (!) of someone should be announced in order to avert real physical

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death. Baba suggested that as He was the dearest person to them all, His name should be used in a telegram to a person connected with the New Life activities. Eruch suggested that Baba's name would be too much of a shock to that person. And in case that person immediately communicated this news to Adi at Ahmednagar, who generally circulated news about Baba to His disciples and devotees, it would cause serious complications. In the end it was agreed that Pendu's name should be used and that a little later another wire would be sent cancelling the news of Pendu's death. Could anyone imagine that the Deathless One could express such concern about someone dropping his body?

Accordingly, a telegram was sent from Hardwar to a Baba lover in Delhi. But strangely enough, the first telegram was received after the second. And instead of any confusion, it gave the family members a good laugh. This revealed to them the absurdity behind such a superstition. Do we not know that devoid of any hypocrisy, birds live a natural and simple life? They are not lustful like men who are often overpowered by lust. But what an irony that man, who is the crown of creation claims that the birds' playfulness and innocent passion predicts an evil happening! Having lust is entirely different from being lustful. Through this whole affair it seems that Baba has very skillfully disclosed the foolishness embedded in any superstition. In the New Life Baba had become an ordinary seeker, but it cannot be denied that all the happenings during this phase had their origins in His divine wisdom. Baba's New Life expressed His omniscience without knowledge and omnipotence without power.

Baba Returns to the Headquarters

Baba and the companions visited Hardwar each day from Motichur. Aloba stayed at home but he was not keeping well. So Baba allowed Kumar to send a young boy from the hills to guard the house and also to cook

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the evening meal. This lad, named Satpal, was simple and sincere in his work. He once expressed his concern about the poor quality of the meals that all of them had. He suggested that at least a teaspoonful of ghee should be served with the food. Baba approved the suggestion. The next day the companions were allowed to purchase a tin of ghee and they carried it to the headquarters. The first evening, Satpal served each one a spoonful of ghee and all felt happy about the added flavor and nourishment. During the meal Baba smiled and casually warned the boy to take care of the tin.

The next evening, to the surprise of all, no ghee was served. Baba inquired and the boy sorrowfully told Him that there was no ghee left in the tin. The details which he gave later were amusing. A stray dog, lured by the fascinating smell of ghee, stealthily entered the room and carried away the tin. In his attempt to open the lid he knocked the tin over and, in the hot sun, the ghee soon flowed out to be licked up by the dogs. When Satpal noticed the tin was missing, he first searched for it in the house. Finally, he found it dirty and almost empty outside. Hearing this Baba had a meaningful smile. He did not get angry at all with Satpal. It seemed that in the New Life discomforts could not be avoided. The New Life Song of the companions reads:

We are merrily singing the song of helplessness;
We are inviting all calamities and difficulties.

On another occasion, Satpal felt that after their strenuous wanderings on foot the Baba-party needed at least a tasty meal. However, he dared not suggest anything extra be served and certainly not ghee. He knew that they were not having enough milk in their tea, not to mention fruit or any other nutriment. But there was no question of changing the menu, much less preparing a feast. Even so, Satpal once devised a way to serve them a better meal. On that day the companions relished the *dal* and praised Satpal for its preparation.

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However, after a few hours, all of them began to feel uneasy in their stomachs and developed diarrhea. They sensed that something must have been wrong with the food. They called Satpal and asked him what he had done. He explained that to make the *dal* rich in nutrition, he had soaked it in sweet oil before he cooked it. The good intention of the cook made the *dal* very tasty but it also acted as a light purgative. From then on Satpal never thought of preparing any other dish than the usual food.

Throughout this stay, Aloba was particularly not feeling well. It was hard for him to digest any food. He fasted for some days but this made him weaker and once he fainted near the bathroom. The entire stay at Motichur was very tough and rigid. Various were the "tastes" and tests in the New Life, Baba sharing them with one and all as the Real Companion. While Baba was thoroughly engrossed in His work with the *sadhus* and the like, a few security officers were busy gathering information about Baba's activities from the companions residing at Manjri Mafi. The officers felt curious about the nature of Baba's work. They wanted to ascertain whether it had any anti-social or communistic bias to it. Baba had instructed His people to abide by the laws of the government, so they willingly furnished the authorities with the necessary information about Baba's external activities. They were soon convinced that Baba's work posed no threat either to the government or to its policies.

Dr. Donkin who had accepted Plan I-B was at Dehra Dun practicing medicine. He was allowed by Baba to communicate the New Life activities to Elizabeth Patterson, residing at Myrtle Beach in South Carolina in the States. In March 1950, he wrote her as follows:

As far as Baba's New Life goes, not one of us (New Life companions) can make head or tail of it. Even the "3rd plan" people now with Baba do not expect to be there long and Baba has openly told them that

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He does not want them with Him. It is all a mystery, a mystery and again a mystery, and very difficult both for those who are with Baba and those away from Him.

I went into Plan B, (taking a temporary job), since that is what I felt Baba wanted me to do; but whether it is a frightful waste of money I really don't know. Also I don't know, as you can realize, how long Baba will let me keep at it (practicing medicine in Dehra Dun), whether for a month, a year or a life-time. . . As far as Baba Himself goes, He is as adorable as ever. . .¹¹

This excerpt from the letter is enough to express the unpredictability of the New Life.

On April 4, Baba left for Belwala to continue the work of bowing to the mendicants and sages. At the end of this visit, Pendu, the scorekeeper, declared that the grand total of the holy men so far contacted had reached ten thousand. Baba seemed pleased to hear this. Before coming to Motichur, He had it in mind to contact personally a large number of those who had come for the Kumbha Mela. Reaching the residence He conveyed to the companions that the purpose of His stay at Motichur was accomplished and expressed His intention of returning to Manjri Mafi the next day. Gustadji, Eruch, Baidul and Aloba were to follow two days later. Pendu and Murli were to drive the one ox-cart drawn by Raja carrying the belongings and other sundry things of the Baba-party . One of the companions accompanied Baba to Manjri Mafi and returned. Thus a very wearying yet greatly significant stay at Motichur was over.

¹¹ *The Awakener*, Vol. VII, No. 1, (1960), p. 19.

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1950 — Part IV

Participation in Baba's Suffering

ON April 5, Baba returned to Manjri Mafi at noon. Those staying at the headquarters rejoiced at Baba's arrival. He visited the men's quarters in the afternoon. All were happy to hear that Baba's work at the Kumbha Mela was accomplished to His satisfaction. They felt especially delighted at this achievement because they knew how hard He had had to exert Himself in contacting the spiritual wayfarers in spite of His frail health. Dr. Nilkanth (Nilu) wrote, "Baba looked tired and overworked. He appeared to drag His feet. While making inquiries, He was frequently coughing. Though He was not in good health, His face was lustrous and His eyes were brilliant. His face looked so beautiful and charming that our eyes refused to look anywhere."¹

Some hours later it saddened them to find Baba fatigued and worn out. The next day when He arrived He looked more radiant and agile. But in fact He had had no sleep due to a fever and cough. He discussed with Kumar the practicality of staying at Manjri Mafi during the impending rainy (monsoon) season. With the first showers, puddles of water were forming in the surrounding area. This informal discussion was a prelude to Baba's decision to soon leave that place for good. Baba's indifferent health worried the companions. Baba's personal doctor, Goher, consulted Donkin and Nilu about possible treatment and precautions they

¹ *Circular NL 8*, issued on 23-5-1950

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should take. The doctors always did their best for Baba, but the results depended mostly on Baba's inner spiritual work. The internal crucifixion will not necessarily be mitigated by the administration of an external prescription.

The companions too, one way or the other, seemed to participate in Baba's sufferings. They were allowed only one meal a day consisting of *chapatis* and *dal*. The only variation permitted was to have some vegetables instead of *dal*. In the evening, milkless tea was served. The weather and living accommodations did not suit them, and they were not used to such a life. Yet, the morale of the companions was high and they cheerfully tried to obey each of Baba's instructions. Nevertheless, their physical bodies had to bear various afflictions and ailments. After all, they were made of clay! The following paragraph from Nilu's diary is sufficient to give an accurate picture. On April 9 he writes:

The New Life is now nearly six months old and during this period, the companions had undergone such trials and tribulations and certain ordeals that their general health was not only much affected, but it had given each of them a certain infirmity — Pendu with pleurisy and pain in the chest; Eruch with lumbago and sprained foot which was becoming chronic; Murli with broken wrist-joint, still weakened by the labor; Vishnu crippled down with a rheumatic knee joint; Nilu with sciatica and left knee joint trouble due to water-carrying duty; Ali Akbar (Aloba) weakened and fatigued by fever, watercarrying and other hard labor; Kaka with his chest trouble; Baidul with all sorts of body ailments, and Gustadji with his old age and increasing weakness.

Individual suffering and ill health may not mean much, but the collective result of the whole party's illness is not very cheerful and bright . . . This weariness is due to natural and unnatural circumstances; due to normal and abnormal circumstances. In spite

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of all this, one could easily observe the genuine attempt the companions were making to maintain a cheerful face with jokes and humor amongst themselves. It is true that the companions have their innocent and harmless faults and weaknesses, and why? Because they are simple human beings, and beyond that they do not claim anything.¹

The above mentioned facts bring out how hard it was to stay with Baba in His New Life phase. In the Old Life, Baba would express great concern over the slightest sickness of any of His dear ones, and now, for the most part, He seemed unconcerned about it. As for one's relationship with the Beloved Master one of the Urdu poets has aptly stated, "O Beloved, in our first meeting, how lovingly you spoke to me and stole my heart! But now, O Thief of thieves, you are withdrawing yourself, not even casting a sideways glance at me!" In spiritual life, a short spring can usher in a long drawn out autumn. What a strange inversion! And this phase entails an incredible internal tug-of-war, sustained only by the grace of the Master's companionship.

The Beginning of the New Plan

April 11, 1950 was one of the important days for the companions. From Baba's casual remarks they had gathered that there was going to be a major change in the course of the New Life. From the beginning of the meeting held on that day, the atmosphere was serious and fraught with doubtful expectations. Baba looked very solemn. He was curt in admonishing the companions for the slightest mistakes they had committed. When Baba was conveying anything the eyes of His companions were fixed on His face and gestures. If He gave a severe look to anyone, by way of a rebuke, the heart of the recipient seemed to jump into his throat!

¹ *Circular NL 8.*

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To live with Baba implied one's readiness not only to enjoy the soothing glow of His radiance but, also to bear its blazing glare.

Every activity of the New Life was strictly conducted, according to Baba's orders. At times, in spite of the utmost care, the companions had to yield to Baba's severe criticism. In Baba's New Life it seemed that a little violation of His instructions on the part of His closer ones resulted in a hindrance — like the anticlockwise movement of a cog — in the subtle operation of His work on the inner planes. Baba's reprimand or anger was a compensating as well as a comforting factor, for it was meant to relieve the companions from any harm that might come to them through disobedience. So it can well be termed another aspect of His compassion.

In this meeting, to avoid future lapses on the part of those who were with Baba, He decided to free them from the three phases begging, gypsy and *langoti* life. He wished them to lead only the labor phase. He reserved the first three phases for Himself. With gentle piercing eyes and a serene unworldly expression on His face, Baba conveyed from the board the following: "I feel that everyone of you in Plan III is trying his best to carry out the conditions one hundred per cent. . . [but] to carry out Plan III seems impossible under circumstances due to the gulf that exists between you and me in the matter of understanding while executing the conditions . . . I, therefore, decide today. . . that from 1st May 1950, none of you remain in Plan III. I shall remain alone to carry out the three phases of New Life of Plan III, and I order you all companions of Plans III and I-B, to join a 'new plan' which will enable you to earn your livelihood and yet make you stay in one group near me. . . My help in the form of guidance. . . I shall give as far as possible to make this new plan a success."²

² Circular *NL 8*.

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All willingly agreed to execute this plan, and Baba's beautiful face looked more pleased and tranquil. Dr. Donkin suggested that if Dr. Nilu were allowed to work with him as a colleague and Pendu and Murli were permitted to assist him, then he would open a clinic that would easily maintain the whole party. Baba liked this idea, but it was kept pending for lack of funds. In this meeting, He told all that it did not seem practical for Him to continue His stay at Manjri Mafi and that He intended to shift to Delhi. For further discussion He wished to hold another meeting on April 15.

Blessed Hours at Kumbha Mela

While recounting the events that took place during the stay at Motichur, Baba told the companions who had stayed at Manjri Mafi about the large crowd of *sadhus* of different sects. They had assembled at Hardwar from various parts of India. They represented a fantastic cross-section of the different sects of the Hindu traditions. They had camped on both banks of the Ganges eagerly awaiting the most eventful day of the Kumbha Mela; it fell on April 13. All of them were supposed to bathe in the holy river during a specified time. The various groups exhibited widely divergent ways of living. Some wore costly costumes, while some put on threadbare robes and a few had no clothes on at all. Some, with large and heavy bodies smeared with ash and matted hair reaching their knees, proudly paraded through the streets, while others, with shaven heads and lanky frames, meekly moved on the roads without any glamor or show about them. Indeed it was a heterogeneous multitude assembled with the motive of quickening their journey to heaven! Baba proposed and decided to take all the men and women companions to Hardwar for this particular occasion of *Purna Kumbha*.

Accordingly on April 12, Baba left Manjri Mafi for Hardwar in a station wagon, with Eruch and the women companions. Those remaining left the headquarters the

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next day by the morning train, walking five miles to reach the station. At Hardwar, Baba stayed in a mansion situated on the bank of the river. On the second day, He sent Eruch to Neeldhara, a particular spot, with special instructions to fetch water from the Ganges. A day later, on April 13, Baba took a bath with that water and when all the companions arrived He summoned them to Him. He asked Donkin to read out a prayer which was similar to the one read at Benares before He stepped out for the first *bhiksha*. After the prayer, He touched the feet of every companion with His hands. A most serene atmosphere always prevailed on such occasions. Baba seemed to pray like others, but it was never like others' prayers; it was matchless.

As if to get over this solemn mood, Baba led all to the terrace which offered a panoramic view. They saw crowds of gay pilgrims on both banks of the Ganges, and the distant blue mountains. After midday the great procession of the Kumbha Mela was in sight. It was led by *nangas* followed by different *mahants*. The dust raised by thousands of feet marching prevented a clear view. Nearly a million people had assembled there from distant parts of India. Man wants to travel externally, while God wants him to journey internally within himself. What a paradox!

The auspicious hours of the Kumbha bathing were in the afternoon. During this time, Baba sometimes strolled on the balcony. It has been observed that occasionally when Baba found it hard to bear the burden of His inner work, He would walk briskly up and down the room. On the terrace of that house Baba sometimes stood and looked at the pilgrims and *sadhus* through a pair of binoculars, as the banks of the river were not very close to the house. Was He contacting certain persons through these frequent appearances? This seems quite possible because one of Baba's dear ones, Keshav Nigam, later recounted his wonderful experience of that day. He had had Beloved Baba's first *darshan* at Meherabad in August 1949.

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That first glimpse of Baba set his heart aflame to see Him again, but this had become impossible as Baba had entered the New Life and did not allow any of His disciples or devotees to see Him. Keshav came to know about Baba's stay at Dehra Dun from Babadas who, on his own, had selected Plan I-C. Now Keshav could not restrain himself from visiting Hardwar where he expected Baba during the Kumbha fair, and luckily he had Baba's *darshan* too. His heart swelled with delight and his eyes were filled with adoration as he gazed at the brilliance on Baba's radiant face. About this incident Keshav wrote:

I made a pilgrimage to Hardwar during that Kumbha. For me Kumbha bathing meant nothing but a chance to take Baba's *darshan*. At that time Babadas was with us. With his help I was able to reach . . . the bank of the Ganges' canal . . . on the opposite bank stood the building in whose upper storey Baba was staying alone with His New Life companions. Sometimes Baba would come out of the room, stand on the balcony and look at the thousands of pilgrims through binoculars. Sometimes, He would stroll all over the balcony. This gave a good opportunity to ... His lovers to see Him during the entire Kumbha day and take His coveted *darshan* to their heart's content. The Kumbha hours began at about 3 P.M. and ended at 7 P.M. For me, the Ganges was where my Beloved Baba was. As such, on that very spot of the Ganges' canal I took my dips in His Name, and with each dip I again got what I longed for — the *darshan* of Baba ... It was dark enough at 7 P.M. and yet even in the darkness I could clearly see the bright form of Baba on the balcony after every dip. My Kumbha pilgrimage was fully rewarded and my Kumbha bathing was one hundred per cent fulfilled! I felt extremely happy and blessed!

When the special hours of the procession and bathing

in the Ganges were over Baba left Hardwar by train for Dehra Dun.

Passing Away of Vishnu's Mother

After the party's return to Manjri Mafi the next day, Baba asked some of the companions how they would respond to the news of the passing away of their dear ones. They assured Baba that they would receive this information calmly and with composure. At the end, Baba asked Vishnu how he would feel if his dear mother, staying at Meherabad, were to drop her body. Vishnu conveyed that the news would not disturb him. At this moment Baba disclosed that a telegram had been received by Dr. Donkin from Ahmednagar. It said that Kakubai, Vishnu's dear mother, had passed away. Vishnu did not express any outward sign of emotional turmoil. He did not shed any tears, instead he attended to all his duties including marketing. Later on Baba praised Vishnu's attitude of tolerance and embraced him in appreciation of his even temper and his "brave" heart.

Kakubai was an old contact. In 1920 Baba was staying in Kasba Peth at Poona. He had started gathering the *mandali* round Him and Vishnu was one of them. He frequently visited Sadashiv Patel's house where Baba resided. Baba indirectly asked Sadashiv about this young boy. Once, on His own, Baba visited Vishnu's residence. His mother Kakubai was at home and Baba had a good chat with her. As the number of such visits increased, the relationship became more informal and intimate. Sometimes Baba would ask Kakubai to prepare a certain hot dish called *pithla*,³ and he enjoyed having it for lunch with *bhakri*⁴ or rice.

Once, when Baba visited the house, He learnt that Vishnu had paid a visit to the theater. Hearing this, in

³ Prepared from gram flour.

⁴ Millet bread.

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the presence of Kakubai, Baba gave him a sound slap that turned his cheek red. Vishnu with lowered head said nothing. The next moment Baba said, "If you want to visit the theater, you may do so at any time, but only with my prior consent. And every time you decide to go do not fail to collect the necessary money from me!" And He heartily smiled! Maybe such slaps and pamperings paved and quickened the way for the *mandali* to surrender to Baba unconditionally. Soon Vishnu left his education and permanently joined Baba, and later Kakubai stayed as one of Baba's women *mandali*. Vishnu was her only son. She was deeply grieved when she learnt about her son's decision to accompany Baba in His New Life. A mother's love for her son is very deep rooted indeed. Vishnu loved his mother immensely, but in one's life with the Master everything has to be forsaken cheerfully and voluntarily at His beck and call.

The meeting that was adjourned on April 11 was resumed on April 15. Baba visited the men's quarters before 7 A.M. The points mentioned in the earlier meeting were discussed again from different angles. In addition, Baba informed the companions that He was expecting a cable from Elizabeth Patterson about His forthcoming visit to the United States and that it would be either in 1950 or 1951.⁵ At the end of this meeting, He asked Eruch to proceed to Delhi the next day and to inquire about suitable accommodations for the Baba-party in the capital of India. In connection with the new plan of starting a business, Eruch was to speak to Keki Desai and Harjeevan Lal. The work of the meeting was to be continued after Eruch's return from Delhi.

Baba was not keeping well. The slightest effort would tire Him. Nilu's diary states: "Some companions had become so weak that to send them out to beg for food was out of the question. The remaining companions

⁵ In fact, this visit to the West was delayed till April, 1952.

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were somehow managing to pull on with the duties entrusted to them.” In addition, the weather was windy, cold and wet. Vishnu suffered from a high fever and owing to a severe cough, he could not sleep at night. So Nilu had to do the marketing. It was as if the body and mind of each companion were being tested.

"Loving" the God-Man Is "Living" with Him

About this time, Rustom S. Hansotia, Gustadji's nephew, came to visit Baba with the intention of joining Him as one of His New Life companions. He was working for the railways. After studying the New Life circulars, he decided to follow Baba and stay with Him. He informed his father who tried to dissuade him from his intention. Rustom had already resigned his post and soon left his town in search of Baba's place of residence. After visiting Hardwar and Motichur, he finally reached Manjri Mafi. He met Pendu who explained to him that in the New Life, Baba did not permit interviews. Rustom said that he was ready to obey Baba implicitly, but with one exception. He feared that Baba would say to him, "Go back home." And he expressed his inability to carry out this particular instruction because he had determined to stay with Baba under any conditions.

Pendu informed Baba of Rustom's arrival. Baba pointed out that as there was going to be a change in the external aspect of the New Life with the introduction of a new plan, the visitor should be told to go back and await the final decision at his home town. It would be conveyed to him by Baba through a letter after He had a special meeting with His companions. In a depressed mood Rustom asked Pendu for Baba's *darshan*. "This is not possible," Pendu explained. At the last moment Baba, however, allowed the visitor to have a glimpse of Him from the other side of the road and it was quite a long distance. Rustom looked at Baba with insatiable eyes, while sweet tears of joy and agony

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partly blurred his vision. He left Manjri Mafi with a heavy heart.

Baba did not visit the men's quarters for over five hours because of Rustom's presence. Was it so difficult for Baba just to walk over there from the main house? Maybe a visit planned on one's own is not the approach that qualifies a person for his meeting with the God-Man. It has to be the other way. The meeting can bear fruit only at His choice. Rustom's visit to Manjri Mafi reminds me of a similar incident, over a thousand years earlier.

A seeker who felt deeply drawn by the teaching of Prophet Mohammed approached him and expressed a keen desire to stay near him permanently. This person was from Yemen. The following lines in Persian expressed the Prophet's reply to the seeker:

Garbaomani daryamani pishamani
Garbimani pishamani daryamani

When freely translated in English these lines mean:

O seeker! If you really have me (i.e., if you have love for me) in spite of your staying away from me at Yemen, in fact you will be residing quite close to me. And O dear! In spite of your living with me in my close vicinity, if you fail to love and obey me, it is tantamount to your staying away from me even further away than Yemen.

With this laconic reply, Mohammad asked the person to return to his homeland. He, nevertheless, assured him that carrying out his instructions would make him feel strongly the Prophet's presence.

It is good to long for the physical presence and company of the God-Man. But it is not good to seek this against His wish. He expects us to love and obey Him, and to live in accordance with His teachings. There are some instances when Baba had asked His

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lovers who wished to stay near Him permanently to return home and to lead a normal life. In Rustom's case, within a fortnight after the above mentioned meeting, he was informed that he should not come to Hardwar, but he was free to lead his life according to the conditions of the New Life. He was not allowed either to correspond with Baba or see Him in person. Unfathomable are the ways of Baba in dealing with His lovers.

Two Aspects of Companionship

During the next meeting with the companions, Baba reiterated the points connected with the implementation of the new plan. Different suggestions as to how to faithfully carry out this plan were put forth by the companions. This honest expression of opinions, however, provided quite a few heated discussions. Baba silently listened to this unreserved and frank exchange of concepts and sentiments. In the end, with an air of benignity and brotherly love, He asked them to wait for a few days for His final decision. He instructed Eruch to visit Delhi to make further specific inquiries in connection with the forthcoming business in ghee.

About the daily schedule at Manjri Mafi, the women companions later reported: "Despite the cold and rain, Baba rose at the early hour of 4 o'clock. After Todi Singh and his family left, Mani, Meheru and Mehera did the cooking and *chapatis*. At 8 o'clock Baba would come and ask if food was ready, and we would say, give us half an hour to have it ready. At 12 noon we had afternoon tea, and the evening meal would be over by 5 o'clock, and by 6 o'clock the dishes washed. In the evening Baba would sit with us and ask us to say something amusing or relate a story we could remember. We could not read books or newspapers, and not even the wrapping papers provided for packing."⁶ Mani later

⁶ *The Glow*, February 1973, p. 11.

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recalled that the articles they required would reach them wrapped in newspapers mostly in languages they could not read or understand. With Baba's *mandali* the time for tea and food varied widely during the different phases of His work. In the early '60s at Guruprasad, Poona, I remember afternoon tea was immediately followed by a cold drink, *sharbat*. We would pass in a line and Baba would fill our glasses with delicious *sharbat*, mostly pineapple. At Manjri Mafi, after an early supper, Baba would usually retire very early.

After the pre-monsoon showers the weather became cold, wet and windy. Goher and Mani fell ill. Water from the well on the premises of the headquarters had such a stink that it could not be used for drinking or cooking purposes. Water was fetched by the companions from a distance of about half a mile. Nilu, one of the inmates, commented on the life led during this period as follows: "Lack of proper food, clothing, sufficient quantity of good water . . . added to semi-privation, starvation, physical and mental tension and exhaustion, with continuous chilly weather during the six months of the New Life, had run down Baba's and the companions' health."⁷ In spite of this all had to attend to the duties assigned to them by Baba. Once Vishnu had a high fever, 103, but the day his temperature became normal he had to be carried on a pushbike to Dehra Dun on some important business.

Why had Baba, who, at Belgaum at the beginning of the New Life, lovingly carried a basket of vegetables on His head from the women's quarters to serve His dear companions, become so callous? Whatever Baba's intention was behind this rigid discipline and apparently cold attitude, it was clear that the companions had to suffer much physically and mentally too. Baba also suffered with them, and His suffering was not just personal. For the companions, the New Life was a journeying through a series of painful yet fruitful

⁷ *Circular NL* 8, issued on 25-5-1950.

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"rebirths;" each time a different aspect of their being would be confronted and revealed. Once you come into the love-orbit of the God-Man whatever happens either compensates for, or complements, the innate needs of the spirit — the involving consciousness. The God-Man as Man suffers immensely to fulfill His mission which is to help humanity attain its rightful inheritance of Godhood. The *Avatar's* life represents the struggle of humanity with its attendant joys and sorrows, and the New Life phase stands out as a typical aspect of Baba's work.

In spite of such circumstances the companions would sometimes find Baba in a gay, jovial mood. On such occasions He looked very lively and even had a twinkle of mischief in His eyes. He would then be seen beaming with delightful radiance. This change would warm the hearts of the companions, replenishing them with zeal and confidence. One day Baba agreed to attend a sugarcane juice party. That was a very happy time for all. On some mornings, He used to play badminton with Nilu and Kumar. Once He suggested that they play cricket and that was great fun. There was no regular playground and the fielders had to run after the ball bouncing and gliding through the trenches when it was hit for a boundary.

On the last day of April 1950, one of Baba's favorite Indian games, *gilli danda*, was played. In the early 20s, He often used to play different Indian outdoor games. Sometimes He would explain the spiritual significance attributable to these games. *Gilli danda* needs a wooden rod (*danda*) about two feet in length, and another small piece (*gilli*) about six inches long with two pointed ends. In playing this game the shorter stick is skillfully tapped at one end so that it is lifted high up in the air, and before it falls to the ground it is hit hard for a second time by the same stick.

Baba explained the spiritual background as follows: ". . . when a Perfect Master selects a disciple as worthy of God-realization, he invariably strikes at the lower

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part of his nature, his self-egoism. This corresponds to the striking of the smaller piece of wood by the rod in hand, to enable the former to lift itself in the air. The egoism or the lower self of the disciple once shattered, the second step consists in driving him onwards towards the Goal of Self-realization. This second ordeal is explanatory of the second stroke which sends the piece hanging in the air to a distance proportionate to the force of the impact conveyed.”⁸ The Old Life association of the companions with Baba can be likened to the first, light touch, while keeping companionship with Baba in the New Life resembled the second, hard hit.

From a different angle, Francis Brabazon, in one of his *ghazals*, expressed this relationship thus:

How simple was this matter of love in the beginning —
Glad night, sweet sleep and awaking to the magpies'
singing.

The sun rose each morning as a peal of bells from
the sky,
Calling our spirits to another day's glad journey.

None of us thought that that journey would lead to
this bitter
Helplessness, with the stoutest an eyeless palm-joined
sitter.⁹

And in another *ghazal*, he presented another aspect of one's relationship with the Beloved as follows:

May our enemies never know our hardships. Yet we
rejoice,
For we were free men who became your slaves out
of free choice.¹⁰

⁸ *Meher Baba Journal*, September 1940, p. 682

⁹ Francis Brabazon, *In Dust I Sing*, p. 18.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 40.

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And Baba had thrice warned and asked the companions to exercise their free will fully before each one decided to join Him in His New Life.

The New Plan

On Eruch's return from Delhi the decisive meetings were held. A brief summary of the decisions taken is given below:

All the members of the new plan were to abide by the conditions that Baba set in January 1950 under Plan I-B. The following eleven members were to take part in this project: Kaka, Gustadji, Pendu, Baidul, Eruch, Nilu, Vishnu, Murli, Donkin, Ali Akbar (Aloba) and Sadashiv (Patel). At Delhi, Keki Desai's residence was to be the headquarters and the head office of this new business. Todi Singh of Aligarh was the chief promoter and organizer. In his capacity as a businessman, Todi Singh assured the companions of a steady, good supply of cream through his old contacts in Nainital and Kathgodam. Todi Singh's connections with Baba and Baba's love for Todi Singh seemed to have resulted in choosing this ghee business. Maybe, through this occupation, Baba wished to shower more of His blessings on Todi Singh by offering him opportunities to share some work in the New Life.

All the "partners" in this business were expected to earn their livelihood through honest transactions. They were to work as one team. At the start, Baba agreed to provide some money for their initial capital. This amount was to be raised by selling the very property occupied by the Baba-party. Of the four phases of the New Life as mentioned earlier, Baba declared that He would lead the first three phases on behalf of the whole group, whereas the companions were to carry out the fourth, i.e., the labor phase for themselves and also for Baba. Gustadji and Kaikobad were totally exempt from any type of work. Dr. Donkin, who was getting himself established as a leading physician in Dehra Dun, was

asked to close his profession and to dispose of the things he had in his clinic.

As the property¹¹ where Baba stayed was to be sold, He planned to occupy the place where Donkin had his clinic. It seems that Baba's trait of building and dismantling things and plans continued rather intensely throughout the New Life. He was to stay at Donkin's place till a suitable house could be leased in Delhi. Kain and Harjeevan Lal of Delhi were asked to help the companions if conveniently possible.

After Ghani's departure, Baba had ordered Nilu to maintain a diary of daily events. In one of the meetings this order was cancelled. With the discontinuation of this diary it turned out that some important dates and events of the New Life went unrecorded.

The time fixed by Baba for a special *bhiksha* was the morning of May 1. The same day at 5 P.M., the companions were to be freed from undergoing the first three phases and were to be admitted to the new plan which consisted of hard physical labor. From the many sittings and meetings of the New Life it can be noted that Baba did not deal with the so-called philosophical subjects or metaphysical themes. However, while giving instructions, whether ordinary or extraordinary and when making casual remarks, whether meaningful or apparently meaningless, He did what was perfectly human and natural.

Bhiksha Ends for the Companions

According to Baba's instructions, on May 1, all the companions got up at 4 A.M. It was pleasantly cold and

¹¹ This property was sold for a few thousand rupees, though the expenses incurred on the well alone were over 2,000 rupees. Baba's first condition was to get money in cash and only a short time period was allotted for the sale. He hinted to those who had come in closer contact with Him during the New Life to purchase the estate, but they failed to raise enough money. In the end it was purchased by a photographer in Dehra Dun.

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the early breeze was delightfully refreshing. When the morning duties were over, all the members of Plan III wore white *kafnis* and green turbans. On Baba's arrival, Nilu and Kaka helped Him to put on the green turban. He looked incredibly beautiful and profoundly serene. Baba's solemn mood superimposed a gravity on the quietness of the morning. No one dared to break the profundity of the prevailing silence.

After sunrise, Baba, accompanied by the band of companions, left on foot for the dry, sandy bed of the Rispana. On the bank of the river, Nalavala's and Kumar's families were to offer *bhiksha* to the Baba-party. Freiny, the wife of Kaikobad Nalavala, decided to prepare a dish of rice called *pulao*, to be offered in *bhiksha*. The time fixed for this program was 7 A.M. She woke up early to begin work in the kitchen. At about 6 A.M., Freiny found that in spite of her utmost care the *pulao* was not perfectly cooked. They did not want to be late and Keki Nalavala knew that Baba expected them to be present by the river bank a little before the appointed time. So it was hard for them to allot more time for cooking. This put them in a dilemma. What should they do? Should they carry the rice as it was for Baba, or should they delay the appointment? Kaikobad insisted on obeying Baba's order and they hurried towards the bank of the Rispana jogging along in a *tonga*. Their hearts were filled with mixed feelings of worry and delight.

At the appointed time, they saw a group of mendicants in white robes, with Baba in the lead. Soon the party reached the specified spot. Baba, with sparkling eyes, sweetly smiled at those present and their hearts rose up as on a wave of delight. They felt blessed to offer *bhiksha* to the God-Man and it was indeed a rare privilege. Baba's loving and gentle glances carried the message of love from His heart to each one, and they forgot their worry about the raw *pulao*. At a signal from Baba they brought out the food and Baba very lovingly accepted the *bhiksha*; the companions also

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followed suit. All quickly returned to Manjri Mafi. While going back, Baba asked all the companions to observe complete silence; it made this *bhiksha* all the more memorable. On reaching their quarters, Baba conveyed to the companions that it had been their last turn to go for *bhiksha*. They would not be required henceforth to beg for food. Baba would, however, carry out this phase as and when necessary. With His own hands Baba served *pulao* to all. He also declared that according to the decision in the last meeting, after 5 P.M. on May 1, the companions of Plan III and Plan I-B would come under the new plan.

Freiny after reaching her house realized that in the overwhelming presence of Baba she had totally forgotten to mention that the *pulao* was undercooked. After a few days when they had another opportunity to visit Baba's place, they humbly apologized to the companions for offering the half-cooked rice on May 1. No one could understand exactly what they meant for each of the companions had immensely enjoyed that day's food. A few even remarked that it was exceptionally delicious. The secret of "raw" turning into "ripe" remains concealed to this day.

Kathgodam Stay: A Retrospective View

In the second week of May, the companions left Dehra Dun for Delhi to conduct the ghee business. The property at Manjri Mafi was already sold. With the first installment of money received through this deal, the wheels of the new occupation were set in motion. Baba with the women and Baidul and Vishnu shifted to the house on 29 Lytton Road used by Dr. Donkin for his clinic. During this short stay, Baba in a light mood once visited a circus show. While watching the pranks of the clowns, He felt so delighted and laughed so much that His cheeks glistened pinkish and He covered them with His palms, as was His habit. On another day He paid a visit to the Botanical Gardens and had a good stroll in

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it with an amusing look, perhaps wondering over His creation! Sometimes He seemed to be seriously engaged in His work. As for the companions, after reaching Delhi they commenced their hard labor phase. They were accommodated at Keki Desai's place, 4 Hussain Building, Nicholson Road, Delhi-6. On each alternate day, Todi Singh would visit the Nainital and Kathgodam regions to dispatch the cans of cream.

With this casual reference to Kathgodam, I am reminded of some past interesting events which occurred during Baba's stay in this little town. It was July 1942, one of the years of Baba's special work with the masts and intensive seclusion. A secluded hut about two miles from the town, overlooking the slopes of the hills, was tentatively rented. The four disciples accompanying Baba were Gustadji, Baidul, Kaka (Baria) and Adi. Baba had asked the four men to keep a two-hourly night watch by turn. On the first night, through a small window, Gustadji saw a ball of light moving over the footpath of the hills. He was astonished. The next day he expressed through gestures — as he had been observing silence since 1927 — the marvel of the night. Adi remarked that it was all Gustadji's fanciful imagination. Baba too did not take any cognizance of it. The next night Baidul saw the same wonder and related it to the others. Adi began to have second thoughts about his skepticism. On the third night Adi himself observed a small globe of light gliding along the path and wondered what it could be!

He later told this to Baba and asked Him what sort of phenomenon it was. Baba, who had shown indifference on the first two days, now revealed that the trailing lightball was a yogi visiting a cave situated in that area. Baba also brought to Adi's notice that it was not a thing worth paying any more special attention to. So many wonders are strewn on the spiritual path! Baba has repeatedly stressed that love for God is what matters most; and the rest of the things, if necessary in one's journeying, incidentally accrue. And this love is to be

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kept constantly and secretly alive in one's normal life.

The second incident of Kathgodam is also worth mentioning. In the mornings Baba used to move freely on the slopes of the nearby hills. On July 14 the *mandali* woke up at 3 A.M. and left the hut at 5. Baba walked briskly, His white *sadra* flowing about Him. After plodding for two hours the Baba-party reached a plateau. Here, Baba began to walk fast in different directions. His combed hair, that was hanging on His shoulders, gracefully flowed back and forth with His quick pacing. As He walked with elegant and authoritative dignity, He stopped a while at some places on the plateau deeply absorbed in His work. Returning to a flat surface, Baba selected a spot where He intended to settle all alone by Himself, unobserved by anyone. He asked the four disciples to take their posts in four different directions at a distance of about 150 meters away from Him. They were not to look at Him unless He clapped. Earlier He had also informed them that He might even break His silence! What a thrilling occasion! Suddenly some unnameable emotion stirred the hearts of the four disciples. Would they hear the Original Sound, and what would be its spiritual impact on world consciousness?

What Baba did under the blue sky no one knows! But when He stood up and clapped He looked exceptionally glowing with spiritual splendor. The disciples gazed at Baba's luster and beauty, radiating from His face. No wonder that their hearts soared high as on a gale of gaiety. Baba too was very happy and He instructed Adi and the others to collect some earth from the spot where He sat, and it is still preserved. It was on the above mentioned slopes that the cattle continued to graze and it was from these herds that Todi Singh collected the cream for the New Life business in ghee. Perhaps too remote a context! But it is a Baba context, in Baba time!

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Dishonesty, Baba Never Permitted

Returning to the narration of the new project in Delhi the work was really well planned. There were different groups attending to different matters. Some had to go to the railway station to bring the cans of cream, some had to empty them in the churner barrel. After adding ice, some had to rotate the barrel with the handle provided with it. All this was hard work. The process of rotating separated the cream into butter and toned milk. One group would heat the butter on a big Indian-style "*hibachi*" (brazier)-like charcoal stove to the boiling point. To know the exact temperature when butter is clarified, giving out a delicious odor, requires experience and skill. Todi Singh was an adept in this art. A few were entrusted with the work of filling the containers of different sizes with ghee. They were also to paste the labels Nav Jeevan (New Life) Ghee on them. Finally the containers were soldered.

Sometimes owing to adulteration of the cream purchased or a fault in their method of boiling they would not get good butter. In that case, to compensate for this loss, the stuff had to be turned into sweet cheese in the form of *pedhas*. Once, in an attempt to sell these, one of the companions shouted on the roads of Delhi like an ordinary hawker, "*pedhas*, good *pedhas*, for sale" to attract the attention of customers. A funny experience! Even getting a good market for ghee was a problem. The bare cost of production turned out to be higher than the standard rates of ghee in the Delhi market. The thought of making a profit was out of the question. It was discovered that even the best ghee was, to some extent, mixed with some inferior stuff by other producers.

During Baba's visit to Delhi this state of affairs was brought to His attention. He did not feel surprised. But the lack of sales had resulted in a piling up of stock. What next? Should they continue with the business or close it? To compete with the stuff in the market Dr.

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Donkin asked if they could follow the course of other businessmen. Baba's instantaneous and emphatic reply was, "No, No, No." Baba never permitted dishonesty in any form. He simply mentioned that He would let them know about the business later.

Yoga Implied Spirit of Dedication

May is generally the hottest time of the year in Delhi. The companions sweated profusely as they worked near the charcoal stoves. Most of the time they would wear underwear and T-shirts only, but that too was not comfortable. The peculiar smell of butter milk, cream and ghee all mixed together was nauseating.

The entire ghee affair can be termed as a "*paseena*" phase (perspiring phase) of the New Life. This sort of hard labor phase had its parallel in the summer of 1924. At that time Baba was staying at Meherabad. He kept the *mandali* extremely busy with the work of dismantling and rebuilding a few rooms at lower Meherabad. All had to put in eight hours of intense physical labor every day, in the hot sun. The food they had was millet bread and vegetable curry. They had no weekend off. Using shovels and pickaxes they had to fill iron pans with mud, mortar and stones which they had to carry to different places. Baba would often visit and supervise the work

Once when He was inspecting the site, a cleanly-dressed, spiritually-inclined person who was also practicing some *yogic* exercises approached Baba. He knew that Baba was regarded as a Perfect Master. The person, however, had been conditioned by conventional ideas of spirituality and its usual disciplines. He was amazed to find Baba's *mandali* working like coolies (hired labor). In his conversation with Baba on spiritual subjects, He could not refrain himself from asking the following question of Baba. He said "I have studied *Dnyan Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Karma Yoga* and *Raja Yoga* and other *yogas* too. But I would like to know what *yoga you* teach to your followers!" Baba, with His inimitable sense of humor

simply said, "*Ghamela Yoga!*" This made the visitor look all the more confused. *Ghamela* literally means a broad iron pan, and it was the most commonly used tool that the *mandali* worked with. It is not known whether the person correctly understood Baba's words or not. But it was obvious that Baba never underestimated physical labor in relation to the spiritual disciplines that are commonly known.

There was also a time when Baba and the *mandali* used to grind flour on a big grinding stone, a *chakki*. And this period was called *chakki yoga*. It means that anything that one honestly and sincerely feels like doing or everything that is carried out under the Master's instruction can be termed as *yoga* for that particular person. Such a course of life will ultimately lead him to Real *Yoga* — union with Beloved God.

Spirituality does not necessarily consist in practicing *asanas* or meditating for a specified time. It is a way of total living. It is not the outward form but the inner attitude of dedication that really counts. The hardships of the ghee business in Delhi might have reminded the companions of the *ghamela* days, 25 years earlier, at Meherabad. The *paseena* phase in a way was the silver jubilee celebration of the *ghamela yoga!*

The Secrets of Spiritual Life

During Baba's second visit to Delhi, the ghee problem was again brought to His attention. Another point for consideration was that even after making their best efforts a suitable apartment for Baba's stay in Delhi had not been secured. These two subjects were discussed from various angles in Baba's presence. At the close of the meeting, Baba quite unexpectedly suggested that in the prevailing circumstances, He would prefer to return southwards, to His favorite area between Poona-Satara-Mahabaleshwar. It meant that the business in Delhi had to be closed. So, according to Baba's instructions, the companions began winding it up. They feared that it had

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not been a profitable venture; that was true. By May 24, 1950 they washed their hands completely of the business by selling all the things connected with the affair, lock, stock and barrel. The money recovered from the sum invested was to be spent by the Baba-party for travelling towards the south and on other daily requirements, till the companions started earning money through odd jobs. No one had the slightest idea about the future nature of the New Life; no one worried about it.

The women companions residing at Dehra Dun were also completely ignorant about the life that lay ahead; but they were blissfully happy about it. Baba had instructed them to work and earn. Donkin had brought the hand sewing machine from Bombay, and the women spent their spare time sewing clothes. Some would cut different designs from colored designed cloth and this applique could be embroidered or sewn onto a dress to make it more attractive. Mani revived her art of making puppets. She remembers that she made a charming figure of Krishna with a lovely bluish complexion and a cruel looking butcher having a black moustache with an open knife in his hand. What a contrast! Through this business and other sundry indoor occupations, the women earned about three hundred rupees.

On May 25, under Baba's order, Eruch wrote to Jal Kerawala, one of the Arrangementwallas, about the forthcoming shift from the north to the south. Baba expressed His intention to stay in a moderately big town that had a mountain and a river nearby. The climate should be temperate, not hot in summer and not too cold in winter. It seems that Baba's inner work had some connection with the outer geographical environment. On certain occasions Baba would insist on a specific site or a venue before making a move to that place. In that letter to Jal, Baba expressed His special preference for the region near Satara-Mahabaleshwar. In spite of its heavy rainfall, He seemed to have a special affinity for Mahabaleshwar. The next best place was Satara. On May 27, Baba sent Eruch to help Jal secure the required

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residence. Eruch was successful in hiring two bungalows in the camp area in Satara, which was sparsely populated and had a quiet atmosphere. Soon, with the women and a few men companions, Baba left Dehra Dun on June 14 1950 for the south, a journey over a thousand kilometers. The servant companions at Delhi boarded the train for Satara two days later. And by the middle of June the temporary headquarters of the New Life at Manjri Mafi were left for good.

Baba's activities in the north from November 1949 to June 1950 were characterized by great extremities and tribulations and a challenge to the old ways of living. Baba Himself suffered much physically. He did not reveal the reason behind this. Perhaps some secrets are not to be spoken of, and even if words dare to convey these, they are not much understood. Rather, such an attempt makes things more confused. Baba preferred not to explain certain things for He expected His lovers to have the daring to live by faith and love, not reason. Baba was passing through an unparalleled phase of "helplessness" which was concealed from the sight of the companions. An occasional glimpse, however, would reveal the grandeur and enormity of the New Life. This sustained the morale of the companions in staying with Baba.

This was also the time when the companions physically endured much beyond their normal limits, and as such they had to face inner crises. Why did the companions choose to suffer and be with Baba? Because they had complete freedom to leave Him. A so-called free man shackled with rationality shall call this madness, but the liberated spirit of a lover shall regard this as a benediction. To learn the secrets of living a spiritual life, one has to know the art of dying to the past continually — an avenue leading towards the Eternal New Life.

Headquarters at Satara

1950 — Part V

An Incredible Eye Infection

BY the middle of June 1950, Baba left Dehra Dun and reached Satara. The nature of His work as well as its locus was now shifted from the foot of the Himalayas in the north, to the base of the Sahyadri range in the middle of India, Maharashtra. Two houses were rented in the camp area which was some distance from the crowded part of Satara city. Mutha's villa where Baba stayed in 1947 was made available to Him for His residence and work. The companions occupied another place, Bhurke's bungalow. It was about four furlongs away from Baba's residence but quite close to the government rest house where Baba used to halt for a day or two during His earlier *mast* tours. The *mandali* knew the locality of Satara well. Baba often visited the men's quarters and sometimes He called them to Mutha's place. This villa was a two-storey building. Mehera, Mani Goher and Meheru stayed on the ground floor. Soon Kitty and Rano joined them. The second floor was reserved for Baba and for His meeting with the men companions. It was here that a local *qawwal* was engaged to sing the New Life song in Baba's presence, for the benefit of the companions. The song was sung almost daily in the same fashion and to the tune approved by Baba. This singing was accompanied by two musicians from among the companions, one playing on a harmonium and the other on a tabla.¹ The words and tune of

¹ A kind of drum.

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the song ringing in the ears of the companions, helped keep aglow in their hearts the ideal of the New Life which was to harbor no regrets for the past and to have no plans for the future. All of them were expected to be like hollow reeds ready to play, voluntarily and happily, the music of each moment.

On June 7, the monsoons began in earnest. Small puddles of brown water were seen around the houses and bungalows. The climate, however, was neither chilly nor humid but moderate. The grass sprang up in the enclosures and along the streets. The roses blooming in the morning sun with a few raindrops on them looked very lovely. Owing to the change in the climate and the surroundings Baba felt relaxed, but He did not completely regain His normal health.

The fasts and physical strain He had gone through at Motichur and Manjri Mafi in Uttar Pradesh had greatly affected Baba's digestive system. Besides, His eyes were also giving him a lot of trouble. Most of the time Baba would have the feeling that He had sand or grit in His eyes. Occasionally the irritation would become so extreme that in the end while staying at Manjri Mafi, Goher, Baba's personal physician, decided to call a well known eye surgeon from Dehra Dun. His son was also an eye specialist. Both of them examined Baba's eyes very thoroughly, perhaps not knowing what a fortune it was to stare deeply into Baba's eyes. After a short talk with Goher the eye surgeon prescribed treatment.

Here I would like to mention that when specialists would call on Baba, His body would not show all the symptoms recounted by Goher. On such occasions Baba would appear quite well and instead of Him being the patient Baba would tend to treat the doctors as His spiritual patients. He would ask them questions about their physical and mental worries and would assure them of His inner help. In some cases He even suggested certain diets for them. And when the physicians had left, Baba would again start complaining to Goher about His ailments and indispositions! The same thing

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happened with the visit of this eye specialist.

Within a few weeks of Baba's arrival at Satara He began to complain that the gritty sensation in His eyes had started troubling Him again and that it was very painful. In fact, Baba's sufferings from various physical disorders and injuries form a unique medical case. It seems, however, that these disorders and injuries were closely related to His spiritual work on the inner planes of consciousness and were not a direct result of physical causes. There are a number of incidents which suggest such side effects of Baba's working and the sandy sensation in the eyes was one of these occurrences.

At Satara one day, Eruch was marketing in the city area and he happened to notice a sign of an eye specialist. He thought that until Goher was able to call some specialist from Poona or Bombay, perhaps this doctor would be able to provide Baba with at least some modicum of relief. With Baba's permission he arranged the eye specialist's visit to Mutha's villa. This doctor had no idea whom he was to treat.

The doctor took Baba for Eruch Jessawala's elder brother or perhaps as someone just visiting Satara for a change of climate. He arrived at the appointed time with the necessary medical appliances and set to work. He pried open Baba's eyes and noticed small granules beneath the eyelids. With a delicate pair of tweezers, he plucked many little globules as easily as one would pick grapes off of a bunch. That the famous eye surgeon from Dehra Dun had not detected the formation of these granules seems odd! Yet stranger is the fact that this eye specialist did not recognize his patient, whom he so closely examined, even during Baba's subsequent stays and *darshan* programs at Satara in the following years. Otherwise he would have realized his unique fortune. Baba was perfect in concealing and revealing His Divinity. Anyway, it is a fact that the extraordinary pain in Baba's eyes was completely cured with the casual visit of this eye specialist and He did not suffer from the eye trouble again. Isn't that incredible!

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Kitty and Rano Called to Satara

Prior to the commencement of the New Life, Baba told Kitty and Rano that, owing to the prevailing political situation in India, He had decided not to have any western woman with Him in His New Life of wandering on foot and begging for food. So in October 1949, following Baba's instructions, both of them went to Bombay and stayed at Meherjee's place. They willingly agreed to abide by Baba's decision. Yet they kept a few necessary things packed in a small suitcase so they could leave Bombay and join Baba immediately if called. It seems that Baba often fulfills the sincere wishes of His dear ones, but not necessarily when they are looking forward to them. After some months in Bombay they received a letter from a place in the north, probably Dehra Dun. It was sent with Baba's instruction that there was no possibility of their being called to stay with Him and they were asked to get jobs. They had never, during their previous stay in India, sought paid work. But as Baba's wish was a command and a call of love to them, they earnestly tried to follow His orders.

They started contacting different people and institutions, such as the Y.M.C.A. as well as the different consulates. But it was difficult to obtain the sort of work they wanted, a job that would not violate the conditions laid down by Baba. One day Meherjee's wife, Homai, suggested Kitty see the Principal of St. Mary High School which Meherjee's daughter, Perviz, attended. Kitty had studied and taught piano in England and she sought an opening in that department of the school in Bombay.

The Principal, Miss Groom, was a very religious and loving person. At their first meeting Miss Groom formed a very good opinion of Kitty and agreed to appoint her as a teacher. Kitty decided to teach English instead of piano. During the course of their conversation Kitty mentioned Rano, and that she was

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also seeking a job. The Principal casually mentioned that she would try to get her on the staff. So Rano met Miss Groom and again the result was favorable; she was asked to teach drawing and painting part time. Miss Groom was much impressed with Rano's paintings. Knowing that Rano was a novice as a teacher the Principal agreed to give her a small batch of students and permitted her to draft her own curriculum. At the beginning Rano introduced perspective to the pupils and they seemed to get on well with her. While Rano was working part time, Kitty became a full-time English teacher. She was so conscientious that she worked overtime so that her students could acquire a thorough knowledge of English. She gave them extra lessons and this meant that she and Rano would at times work late into the night, correcting the exercises and preparing the lessons. A wonderful new life!

The pay they received in the high school had to be handed over to Homai. They had to ask Homai for whatever they required for sundry expenses, including bus fare. They were not allowed to eat out. Going to the movies was out of the question. Days turned into weeks, and weeks into months, but these two dear ones of Baba who, leaving their homes and countries, staying with Baba continuously since 1937, now spent their days in Bombay, a city they never dreamt of residing in. That was a totally unexpected participation in Baba's New Life. Above all, the thought of seeing Baba had to be put out of their minds. In a way this instruction helped them to keep Him in their minds and hearts all the more. In one's life with Baba, the Eternal One, one has to accept with cheerfulness not only the days of delightful sunshine, but also the so-called rainy days. And when He is pleased with the spirit of your resignation He spreads a feast. And soon this happened in their case. Quite unexpectedly they received a letter that brought the best of news. Baba had asked them to come for a month's stay with Him at Satara.

The explicit condition mentioned in the letter was

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that they could come to Satara on condition that they could have their jobs back. Both of them had begun their duties at school with the special help of the Principal, Miss Groom. Resigning would have been easy for them. But as Baba wished, they had to ask for a long leave right in the middle of the term. When they had been hired they had made it clear that they should be treated as temporary teachers. Yet now they were asking for the special concession of being allowed to rejoin after a month's absence. Their visit to Baba depended on this particular favor from the Principal.

So with great hesitation and a lot of trepidation they approached Miss Groom who, to their surprise, readily sanctioned their leave without asking for any details or reasons. When they asked her whether they would be allowed to resume their duties Miss Groom replied, "Of course, yes." The whole affair was a sort of Baba surprise. Packing things and getting ready did not take much time and in the second week of July, perhaps on the 8th, Kitty and Rano reached Satara to be with Baba and the women companions. Both immensely enjoyed their stay since it was a unique privilege to be with Baba in the New Life.

Ganoba and Aloba

During the early period of Baba's stay at Satara, He once asked Aloba, one of His servant companions, to go to Bombay and get settled in business or seek a job. According to the New Life conditions, he could not dare question Baba's decision. He immediately left Satara and secured a job as a cashier in an Iranian restaurant in Bombay. Baba's reason for sending Aloba was revealed to some extent within a few weeks. The husband of Aloba's niece soon arrived in India from Iran. Had he not found Aloba in Bombay he would have created a scene among his fellow men, the Iranian Muslims. In the course of his search he would have tried to contact Baba and being a fanatic he might

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have eventually created such a scene that it would have disturbed Baba's New Life. Such a nuisance had occurred in the case of the Muslim boys from Iran studying at Meherabad in the Meher Ashram in 1928. Every action of the *Avatar* has a profound significance whether hidden or explicit, and as years pass by sometimes a few glimpses of this are revealed.

After some months Aloba managed to secure his own tea shop and he made good money. Some months later when it was in full swing, Baba ordered Aloba to close the business and join Him in the tours throughout India, during the phase of His Fiery Free Life in November 1952. Since then he has continued to stay with Baba as one of the resident *mandali*. Aloba's real name is Ali Akbar Shahapurzaman. He is an Iranian Muslim.

Baba's New Life commenced in October 1949, i.e., two years after the political partition of the Indian subcontinent into India and Pakistan. This division was decided not so much by geographical consideration as by religious bias. The Mohammedans especially claimed a separate state — Pakistan — where the majority of the people were Muslims. For a few months the religious fanaticism resulted in looting and killing innocent people in the name of religion, and the Hindus and the Muslims who resided on the boundaries separating the newly formed states suffered immensely. Even after a lapse of two years the bitter ill feelings between the Hindus and the Muslims had not entirely subsided. The march on foot of the Baba-party was through Uttar Pradesh where the majority of people were Hindus. Among Baba's companions were two Muslims. So to avoid any trouble caused by the inquisitiveness of the public, Baba nicknamed Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff and Ali Akbar as Ganoba and Aloba respectively; these sounded like Hindu names and made them a little more inconspicuous. Dr. Ghani passed away in 1951. Ali Akbar even after the New Life is known among the *mandali* and Baba people as Aloba.

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Most Unexpected Meeting

Once while Baba was sitting with the companions in Bhurke's bungalow, He happened to notice someone wearing a *kafni* sitting on a culvert by the roadside. He asked the companions who they thought the person could be! As the man was sitting with his back towards them they could not say anything. Baba sent Eruch to get information about the stranger. As Eruch approached him, to his great surprise, he found that the person was none other than Dr. Daulat Singh. Both felt greatly astonished at this unforeseen meeting and fell in each other's arms, in a loving embrace. Daulat Singh asked Eruch if Baba were in Satara. Eruch replied that He was. He, however, asked Daulat Singh not to follow him and said, "Wait where you are till I come back." When Baba heard that the stranger was Daulat Singh, He asked Eruch to call him into the bungalow and to tell him that Baba Himself would offer him *bhiksha*. Listening to this, apparently unaware of it himself, tears started rolling down Daulat Singh's cheeks. Eruch reminded him that he should be very cautious about shedding tears in Baba's presence for that very act was the cause of his leaving Baba's company at Belgaum in October 1949.

Hurriedly collecting his satchel and bowl, he followed Eruch to see Baba, the Lord of love. As he approached the door he was extremely thrilled to find himself in Baba's overpowering presence. With a gracious gesture, Baba asked him to extend his bowl. He filled the bowl to the brim with food and his heart with love. With the love that shone in Baba's eyes, Daulat Singh began to weep all the more. The tears seemed to rush into his eyes from nowhere. It was a unique event in the sense that this was the only occasion in Baba's New Life when, instead of asking for *bhiksha*, He offered it. Baba allowed him to come inside the room. He asked him to narrate the whole story from the day he had left the New Life companions. A glorious glance again darted

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from Baba's eyes and Daulat Singh burst into fresh tears. In a hoarse voice he muttered something which was inaudible. Baba gestured, "Why are you weeping, Daulat Singh?" He replied, "Excuse me, Baba. Please believe me. I am not crying for anything; I am feeling overjoyed."

After a little pause he controlled himself, and began his narration. All that had happened to him since he left Baba came flooding back to him in vivid detail. He told Baba how happy his family members were to welcome him home on his arrival from Belgaum. But this happiness did not last long. As soon as they learned of Baba's orders that he had to observe, they were displeased. They could not bear the thought of Daulat Singh, who was the honorable head of a respectable family, begging. Daulat Singh, on the other hand, maintained that he would not mind begging in the city where they all stayed, even in the locality where he resided. His relatives tried to dissuade him. In the beginning they requested him, pleaded with him and later even threatened him, but Daulat Singh had resolved to carry out Baba's instructions to the very end.

When they failed in their efforts to convince him, the family approached the elders of the Sikh community and urged them to ask him to change his mind. The elders also failed totally in their efforts. Daulat Singh, who was very reasonable and sensible about the various subjects they talked about, refused point blank to modify the slightest part of Baba's orders. The leaders thought that such behavior would be a slur on the Sikh community and they regarded his decision in following Baba as sacrilegious. Thus Daulat Singh's life became a target of the intellectuals of his community and his friends questioned him, "Why put on a wanderer's robe and beg when God has given you a home and enough to eat? What have you gained by following Meher Baba?" They did not know the difference between following the code of religion and the commands of the God-Man. Even the thought of having

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any material or spiritual gain was alien to the conditions of the New Life. The entire episode infuriated the community and the family members found themselves in an awkward situation. After trying his utmost to stay at home for some months, Daulat Singh felt compelled to leave the house, locality, and even the city to carry out Baba's orders, whom he regarded as the Supreme Lord.

Though physically away from Baba, Daulat Singh indirectly seemed to participate in the different phases of the New Life practiced by the companions, such as walking barefoot, resting under the open sky at night if no shelter were available and begging for food. Only the fire of his all-consuming love for his Beloved Master sustained his life of physical and mental suffering. His way of living reminds me of the following lines of Francis Brabazon, the great poet:

To those who are not ready he fulfills their desire;
To those who obey him he gives a consuming fire.

By ruin we have evolved to manhood from star dust;
From ruin God will raise us to Godhood — if we trust.¹

Daulat Singh told Baba that from Bangalore he started towards Poona by the highway with no special intention except to obey His orders. He casually thought of staying for a day or two at Satara, not knowing why. His sitting on the culvert to rest was a divinely ordained coincidence which brought him that most welcome meeting with Baba, his Compassionate Companion of the New Life.

All present listened to this narration with great admiration. Baba's face glowed with a rare radiance. He conveyed, "I am pleased with you, Daulat Singh. Now I order you to discontinue this wandering on foot,

¹ Francis Brabazon, *In Dust I Sing*, p. 33.

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wearing of a *kafni* and begging. Return home and lead the normal life of a practicing physician as you had been previously doing. Go.” Daulat Singh's eyes were fixed on Baba's radiant face. He caught Baba's eyes and felt that a shaft of luminosity had touched his heart and in a wonderment of delight he rose to leave the place. The buoyancy felt in the company of the Beloved Master made his eyes glisten all the more. The New Life had sighs of pain but it also offered at times tears of delight.

Daulat Singh was in Bhurke's bungalow for perhaps half an hour but he lost all sense of time in Baba's presence. At parting Baba conveyed, "Do not linger at Satara; go straight back to Bangalore where your family stays." Very lovingly Baba also added, "I am really pleased with your love for me, Daulat Singh. As you have come most unexpectedly to my door, one day you shall find me also visiting your home. This is my promise to you." Before leaving, Daulat Singh embraced Baba with great fervor and it appeared that he was encircling the whole world in his arms. I wish to mention here that Baba did keep His word by visiting Daulat Singh's residence after some years. At that time Daulat Singh, overwhelmed with Baba's presence, forgot to offer Him any refreshment or even tea! He was lost in Baba's wonderful presence and this was such a strong experience for him that soon after this meeting he dropped his body, perhaps to be united with the Divine Beloved, never to part again. His faith in Baba's *Avatarhood* and his spirit of resignation in the face of extraordinary circumstances and great suffering were exemplary and Baba's love for Daulat Singh also seemed unparalleled.

25th July, an Eventful Day

In the second week of July, Baba began His work with the mad and the poor. These persons were accommodated in the compound of the companions'

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bungalow. On July 21, in a meeting with the companions, Baba decided to send Donkin within a few months to the West for specific work. Baba's special message to His lovers in the States concluded: "My coming to the West in July 1951 is definite, and Elizabeth and Norina have undertaken to arrange this."² Baba was in the New Life and no one was allowed to correspond with Him. So this general assurance consoled those yearning hearts expecting the Ancient One to visit their "modern" land.

July 25, 1950 can be regarded as one of the important and eventful days of the New Life. The servant companions got up at 4 A.M. Before Baba's arrival, Pendu and Eruch thoroughly cleaned the stone flooring in the hall with water. Here, Baba was to hold an important meeting. All were instructed to have a bath by early morning. At 6:45 A.M. Baba arrived from His residence. He went directly to His seat and told all to get into the hall. He also asked one of them to close the windows and the doors of that big room as was done at the time of the first meeting about the New Life at Meherabad. At such meetings, Baba looked extremely solemn though His face continued to radiate a divine glow. Baba asked everyone to be very attentive about everything that would transpire during the day.

At the commencement of this meeting Donkin read Baba's following message which was later circulated to all His people: .

On this most eventful day of my New Life, I send salutations to all my Old Life men and women disciples and devotees . . . and to all my New Life companions. I ask the Most Merciful God to forgive us all our shortcomings, failures and weaknesses, to help the Old Life disciples and devotees to keep firm

² Again, there was a change in this plan and Baba visited the U.S.A. in April, 1952.

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in their faith and their love and their understanding of God and His Divine Manifestations, to give courage to the Arrangementwallas to fulfill their responsibilities 100 %, and to give strength to the New Life companions to abide by Truth and the following of the New Life conditions honestly and faithfully.³

After offering salutations to His dear ones and asking God's forgiveness, Baba asked the men to go out of the room. When He was alone, He reaffirmed the oath of the New Life. Then each one was directed to enter the hall and to approach Baba. As each came to Baba, He pressed His forehead on their feet. Later Baba asked Nilu and Vishnu to recite a Sanskrit hymn in praise of the *Avatars*. The first and last verses are rendered into English as follows:

O Lord! I bow down to you. You are the Ruler, the Primeval, the Male, the Cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the universe. You are the animating Principle, assuming Form in answer to the call of Your Lovers . . .

In my heart I always meditate on You, O Supreme Brahman. You are birthless, deathless and You pervade the whole universe . . .

Now followed the Zoroastrian, Mohammedan and Christian prayers previously dictated by Baba. A part of the Christian prayer read by Donkin on behalf of Baba is given below:

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, O Lord! Hear my prayers and let my cry come unto Thee . . . I beseech Thee because Thou art Mercy Itself. I offer Thee all my thoughts, words and

³ Circular NL 2, issued on 25-7-1950.

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actions, my sufferings and my joys because Thou art the only Beloved. . . I, therefore, beseech Thee my God! My Lord of Lords! the Highest of the High! The Ancient One!, to have mercy on me according to Thy Unbounded Mercy and let my cry come unto Thee. O My Beloved! Suffer me not to be separated from Thee for ever and ever. Amen!

After these prayers Baba directed Nilu and Donkin, the two doctors, to read the English translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. The reading of the *Gita* continued for over an hour. Such a long reading was rather unusual for Baba. He also looked very solemn. Maybe Baba wished to counterbalance His statements about the extreme helplessness of the New Life with the most authoritative declarations He had made, in one of His earlier Advents as Krishna. Krishna, in the part of the *Gita* that was read (Discourse IX), has stated:

I am the Father and the Mother of the Creation. I am He who awards to each the fruit of his action. I am the Receiver and the Giver. . . I am equally in all and I am for all. Anyone who loves me comes to me.

At the end of the *Gita*, Krishna proclaimed:

Think of me, worship me, love me. I promise you that I love you dearly. Leave all the various ways of attaining liberation. Surrender to me whole-heartedly; do not fear, do not brood. I assure you [with my divine authority] that I will set you free from all sins — bindings created by *karma*.

I am specially prompted to quote the above lines because when Baba was journeying with the *mandali* in northern India, one of the visitors who had come for His *darshan* said, "Baba, what is your opinion about

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the *Bhagavad Gita*?" Baba's simple but laconic reply was, "I experience the *Gita*," meaning the God-Man State of the Ancient One.

The first part of the day's program continued inside the house and it ended with the recitation of the New Life song. Baba then stepped out of the bungalow to feed a *mast*. Later He served food to all the companions. After a short break, at 2 P.M., Baba commenced His work with the *masts*, the poor and the mad. The companions helped Baba shave and bathe these people. Each one of them was given new clothes, a shirt, a pair of pants and white pyjama. The poor, in addition, received a bed mat of cotton fibers and two coarse blankets. Baba was extremely busy throughout the day. He also fasted, abstaining from taking any solid food, as He used to on such occasions in the past.

Next morning when Baba visited the companions, He expressed His wish to go out begging at the house of the caretaker of the government rest house at Satara. It was a place where He had halted during previous tours. He broke His fast by partaking of the food received as *bhiksha* that day. The great Giver willingly becomes the Beggar if His work demands that He play that role.

While Baba was engaged in His external activities, as mentioned earlier, and especially in the New Life period, those who were with Him had to put in hard work without expecting good food or enough rest. The companions, however, had to remain cheerful, always. This did not mean that Baba was inhuman. He had His own reasons for setting such regulations. In one of the letters, Donkin wrote "Moods due to illness, want of sleep, etc., was one thing and this Baba understood and it was not deemed a fault, but if arising out of anger and irritation because of putting up with hardships, etc., then it would be deemed as a fault not to be tolerated. And Baba warned them all that He had complete freedom to send any away or to keep them

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with Him.”⁴ However, it was noticed that "throughout the New Life Baba was very strict and Baba was also very forgiving, and not without His jovial moods and eternal humour.”⁵

Following Baba in His New Life was a thrilling ordeal and a profound challenge!

An Invitation from the Master

Before shifting from Satara to Mahabaleshwar, Baba, through Adi, issued a general circular to His Old Life disciples and devotees. This gave them news about Baba's activities and a tentative work program. The circular also disclosed the most unexpected but pleasing news about the possibility of meeting Baba in person, during a meeting that was to be held at Mahabaleshwar on October 16, 1950. To quote from the circular:

Baba has resolved . . . to free his present life-long servant companions on 16th Oct. 1950 in order to give them another chance to revise their decision whether to continue the New Life with Baba or become again disciples of Old Life of Baba! . . . After taking a very careful and complete retrospective view of their personal weaknesses and some pleasant but too many other painful experiences of the New Life with Baba, if they still choose to continue to stay with Baba ... then Baba will take some of them with Him for three months from 1st Nov. 1950 to January end 1951 to help Him in His work amongst *masts* and poor ... as well as for His three Phases of begging, *langoti* and gypsy life.

. . . on the 16th Oct. 1950, He has decided to step into the Old Life for a short period of four hours and as soon as the period is over, He will immediately step into the New Life again . . . Only all the companions

⁴ *The Awakener*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (1960), p. 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*

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of the New Life will be given another choice to stay with Baba in His New Life.

. . . Those, other than servants of Baba . . . who desire to live that life are free to do so in spirit independently.⁶

This circular also conveyed the following information:

Baba invites all Old Life men disciples . . . and all Arrangementwallas to Mahabaleshwar to attend the program between 7 and 11 A.M. sharp on 16th Oct. 1950 . . .

Those who will accept the invitation must make their own arrangements regarding boarding, lodging and conveyances.

. . . [They] are warned that they should not under any circumstances talk to Baba and his companions about their Old Life affairs.⁷

A few more points that Baba wished His people to note were compiled in a supplement to this circular. It was brought to Baba's notice that the amount on hand for the forthcoming *mast* work and work with the poor was not sufficient. In consideration of the importance of the work ahead of Him, Baba agreed to offer an opportunity to His people to donate money during the meeting; after its termination He did not wish to accept money from any of His people. A portion from the text of the supplement was as follows:

. . . Baba can accept and add to the *mast* account only during those four hours when He will step into the Old Life on 16th Oct. 1950.

Anyone who genuinely desires to give Him money during that period should do so from Rs. 50 (minimum) to Rs. 500 (maximum).

⁶ *Circular NL 7*, issued on 11-9-1950

⁷ *Ibid.*

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Adi K. Irani circulated the details of the October meeting to the Baba people staying in different parts of India. It was a pleasant surprise and everyone looked forward to the unique opportunity of meeting their Beloved Master. Baba groups scattered over the country at Delhi, Dehra Dun, Hamirpur, Nagpur, Bombay, Poona, etc., started contacting Adi to say they were coming. Among these the Poona group seemed to be the youngest. In those days the young Baba lovers from Poona were referred to as Ghani's group. Ghani was one of Baba's New Life companions. At Dehra Dun, in one of the meetings, Baba had offered three plans to His companions. Ghani accepted Plan I-C and accordingly he returned to Poona in January 1950. He was most responsible for the formation of this young Baba band.

These youngsters generally gathered at Laxmi Narayan B. Thade's place. It was in the building where he worked as superintendent of a government hostel. Ghani stayed quite close to this hostel and often visited Thade. Fascinated by the Baba stories related by Ghani, a few of the boarders who were in their teens like Rangole, Bade, Pratap Ahir and some friends like Madhusudan as well as Thade's maternal uncles, (Narayan and Krishna), frequently gathered there to hear more about Baba. On every Thursday there was a meeting. After *bhajans*, *arti* and *prasad*, most of the youngsters would sit around Ghani and listen to his talk, interspersed with Baba stories. This would often continue late into the night. The boys would ask all sorts of questions and Ghani, with his superb sense of humor and without the least irritation, would explain to them the different facets of the Avatar's working and His words of divine wisdom in a pleasant and appealing manner. Sometimes Madhusudan would compose songs on the topics discussed with Ghani. In later years most of these songs were sung before Baba and were much appreciated by Him.

Once in 1950 these young boys, along with Ghani, visited the Theosophical Lodge where a famous theosophist

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was to deliver a lecture on some spiritual subject. At the end of his talk he invited questions. One of the youngsters asked, "What is *Nirvana*?" Perhaps the speaker did not expect this question especially from a teenager and he fumbled while answering it. One of the office bearers of the Theosophical Lodge felt awkward at this situation. Standing by the dais he sarcastically commented on the question about *Nirvana* by saying, "It is ludicrous that those who are not in the elementary grade expect an answer to a university question!" Ghani could not bear this satirical statement. He stood up and requested the chairman to allow him to have his say. He first explained the seven planes of consciousness. Coming to the subject of *Nirvana*, he explained that it was the state of *Fana* (annihilation of the individual mind) in which consciousness of absolute vacuum prevails. For the sake of intellectual understanding of the term *Nirvana*, he added that this state can be likened to the experience that one may have on immediately entering a pitch dark room after a long walk in the bright sun. Or it is like a feeling that dawns on someone as soon as he comes out of a totally dark cave into the dazzling light of the midday sun. You are in it but do not know it. *Nirvana* does not mean total extinction but it is the dying down of the last vestige of separateness. At the end he did not hesitate to declare to the audience that they had no idea of the quality of intense inquiry of those young "back benchers".

During the meetings at the center, Ghani encouraged all sorts of questions, even if they revealed the boys' ignorance. He, however, definitely asked them to be sincere and honest in understanding Baba's statements. He would also bring home to them the limits of human understanding. He said to them, "At present you are like coals that have just caught fire giving out smoke and sparks. That's natural. Baba willing, if and when you are completely ablaze, the smoke [the questions why and how] will cease of itself." In later years, with a growing conviction in Baba's divinity, the group

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slowly lost interest in dry, intellectual discussions, and began spending more time in singing the glory of the God-Man.

A Persian couplet states:

Akal go astanse door nahin.
Eske takdeerme hazoor nahin.

Although the intellect is not far from the threshold of
God, it is not blessed with the fortune of having a
glimpse of the Lord.

At Poona there were also a few other disciples of Baba like Khaksaheb, Gadekar, Sule and Baily Irani. They would also frequently visit Thade's place and would relate Baba stories which were helpful in clearing up the youngsters' questions. The boys gathered from them that love for Baba surpasses all spiritual disciplines. Baily narrated a funny episode of the early years. Once Baba visited Baily when he was on the point of taking poison after being disappointed in a love affair with a girl. Baba's timely visit dissuaded him from committing suicide. Baba had a free and intimate talk with him which greatly consoled Baily. Later, Baba pointed at a chair and asked Baily to sit in it. Baba stood at a little distance from Baily and most unexpectedly commenced revolving on the spot, faster and faster. This surprised Baily. But as he continued to watch Baba, he felt that the person spinning like a top wasn't Baba, but the girl he loved. Baba stopped after a while, made no comment, but immediately left the place. Baily, however, learnt that to love Baba was to love all. The God-Man is the Eternal Beloved of everyone.

Ghani also recounted different incidents from the lives of the *mandali*, revealing their intimate relationship with Baba. He also depicted how each one was different from the rest except in his rock-like faith in and love for Baba. These anecdotes were not recorded in any of

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the diaries as they were of a more personal nature. So Ghani would humorously refer to each of these stories as "inner boxing". He also told them many inspiring events from the lives of the Perfect Masters and saints who had *Vedantic* as well as *Sufic* backgrounds. To emphasize the fact that Baba was the Expected One, Ghani once read out to them the following words of Baba:

From the viewpoint of Divine gnosis, the Muslims progress from Oneness (*Wahadat*) to Manyness (*Kasrat*) and the Hindus from Manyness to Oneness i.e. the Hindus and Muslims represent the extreme and opposite points of a diameter of a circle with God as the Centre. Zoroastrianism is midway between the two extremes and hence the choice at this juncture of a Zoroastrian Form in me as the vehicle of spirituality derived from Hindu and Muslim sources.⁸

Here I would like to mention that in this Advent the *Avatar* of the Age chose the English language to explain spiritual truths. This indicates that Meher Baba is also for the Westerners, among whom a good many are Christians. As for Buddhists, I am reminded of a particular incident which I heard lately. One of the *mandali* once reminisced that while visiting one of the caves at Ellora which enshrines a statue of Lord Buddha, Baba gracefully pulled out the alphabet board that He was holding under His arm and, as others were watching Him in silence He spelt only three words, "I am Buddha." And all felt that the entire cave was resounding Baba's statement. Baba did not convey anything more but left for the next cave. All these statements eventually signify that Meher Baba is equally for all.

The informal "talks" with Ghani gradually helped the Poona group to accept Baba whole-heartedly, on

⁸ *Meher Baba Journal*, December 1940, p. 107.

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His terms, as God in human form. When this young band got the news of the meeting at Mahabaleshwar, all felt extremely happy. They jumped at the opportunity of being in Baba's *sahavas* on October 16. Thus, this particular circular from Adi became the harbinger of glad tidings to many Baba lovers who were eagerly awaiting the chance to see Him.

At the beginning of October 1950, Baba left Mutha's villa in Satara for Aga Khan's spacious bungalow in Mahabaleshwar where the memorable meeting of the lovers with the Beloved was to take place.

Sermon on the Mount at Mahabaleshwar

1950 — Part VI

"Coming Down" to the Old Life

A FEW hundred Baba lovers, men only, arrived at Mahabaleshwar, a hill station in Maharashtra, from different parts of the country on October 16, 1950. They were expected to be present at Florence Hall¹ by 6:45 A.M. the next day. Some of the hotels in the town were crowded with the Baba people and these began to bustle with activity in the early hours of the 16th as everyone hurried through his morning chores. By 6 A.M. with clean clothes, happy faces and expectant hearts, the Baba lovers walked along the quiet roads leading to Beloved Baba's residence. He was already present in the open yard, in front of the men's quarters by the time they reached there.

Baba was in the New Life yet all witnessed about Him the same Divine glow of the Old Life. He was standing on the veranda and small groups of visitors were waiting at a distance for His call. After a while, according to Baba's instructions, every congregant was allowed, one by one, to approach Him. Each one, irrespective of their previous years of contact with Baba, was introduced to Him by Adi. It seemed Baba had severed His connections with His lovers during the New Life phase! Or was it a blessed excuse to allow them to have an embrace? After a brief introduction, Baba embraced each one with much love — and its sanctifying

¹ Formerly it was the estate of the Aga Khan, but now it is owned by the Poona Catholic Education Association Ltd.

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warmth touched and kindled the hearts of all.

At the close of this "reception", Baba directed all to get inside an enclosure which was formerly used as a stud farm for race horses, by Aga Khan. In one of the wings of this meeting house, there was an ordinary wooden chair which Baba occupied. Near Him sat the New Life companions. Dr. Ghani was asked to sit on His right. The visitors occupied their seats silently. Baba looked at the assembly of His lovers and asked them to be comfortable and at ease. Before commencing the work of the meeting, Baba directed Vishnu, one of the *mandali*, to close the big, broad gate of the stable. As Vishnu reached the gate he noticed, at a distance, good old Gustadji, one of the companions, still walking towards the gate. Perhaps he had gone out to urinate. Respecting his age, Vishnu waited for him to come in. But during this short interval another two or three people also slipped in. After Gustadji's entry the gate was shut and both left together to join the assembly.

During this small interval of Vishnu's "exit and entry" the congregants were sitting in front of Baba and an air of delightful feeling prevailed. All had their attention focused on Baba. Some were looking intently at Him as He sat there, His mystical dignity and profound Divinity encompassing His fair features, especially His gestures. His casual glances pierced the hearts of His dear ones. It is hard to state what actually transpired during the informal, personal inquiries made by Baba but it was clear that the inner revelations experienced by the Baba people were enormous. Some with tears silently streaming from their eyes communed quietly with the Divine Beloved. Baba, with His loving and overpowering presence, seemed to have touched the depths of their hearts. These were the preliminaries of that momentous meeting.

But at this point, the uninvited people who had sneaked in, directly approached Baba and not knowing His injunction bowed down to Him with due reverence.

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Baba reciprocated this action by pressing His forehead against the feet of each. Astonished, the people repeated the act of paying respect by prostrating themselves before Him. This made Baba all the more displeased. According to the conditions of the New Life, He returned their homage the way they offered it. All those who were witnessing this were taken aback by surprise. Just then some people explained to the visitors Baba's special instructions and brought home to them that it would be not only right but beneficial for them to remain quiet and act as Baba would ask them to do. They were convinced and obeyed Baba's order to leave the enclosure at once.

Baba now called Vishnu closer and asked why he had been late. He told Baba that he had to wait for good old Gustadji to get in. But in this act of solicitude he had failed to obey Baba literally and instantly. This lapse on Vishnu's part had allowed the uninvited people to enter without his knowledge. Baba had been upset by their presence. Whenever Baba called any meeting, big or small, He was particular that only those who were invited attend it. And this gathering was no exception.

Baba, in the presence of all, severely admonished Vishnu for not being prompt in obeying His order. "Even if you had seen 'God' approaching the gate, you are not supposed to wait for Him to enter!" gestured Baba sternly. Even if He had slapped Vishnu, the displeasure on Baba's face could not have been more obvious. He was in an exceptional *jalali* (fiery) mood. Vishnu, however, stood there quietly, in total surrender to Baba's rebuke. This unexpected happening changed entirely the atmosphere of gaiety at the meeting. Vishnu admitted his fault, and to the assembly his behaviour was an example of the life led with Baba in His New Life. In all the different aspects of this life, obedience — complete surrender to the wish of the Companion — was the first and foremost requisite expected of each one accompanying Him.

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This episode did not end with Baba chastising Vishnu; He openly asked some of His lovers whether it was right for Him to lose His temper. And without waiting for any reply, He motioned to one of His devotees to slap Him. This particular person felt so nervous that he hardly hit Baba's cheek. Baba was not pleased with this tender touch. He continued, "Is that the way you slap when you punish someone?" He then asked one of His dear ones from Karachi (Pakistan) to do the job properly. He at once rose up and gave such a harsh sounding slap to Baba that the visitors were astounded to see Baba's face turn red. Baba, however, looked very pleased and this enhanced the radiance about Him. The meeting had not yet begun in earnest. Some who were sitting at the back did not realize what had come to pass in quick succession. Various were the reactions in the minds and hearts of those who closely watched this unforeseen event. It may be assumed that this whole affair was a symbolic prelude to Baba's intention of "coming down" to the Old Life, from the profundity of the New Life, to conduct this meeting.

Every act of the Perfect Master (*Sadguru*), whether of honoring or humiliating his dear ones, whether of blessing or beating them, equally carries with it the secret significance of untying some of the deeper knots of the *sanskaras* of his devotees. Each of his gestures or actions, even when in his *jalali* mood, has its origin not in any personal hostility but in his impersonal Divinity. With reference to such *jalali* actions of Baba's Perfect Masters, I am reminded of a remark once made by Shri Upasni Maharaj. One day a newly-married girl visited Maharaj to offer her respects. He blessed her and permitted her to return home. The girl however continued to linger around him. So Maharaj asked her if she had anything special to convey to him. The bride, in green *sari* and blouse, the conventional color preferred at weddings, shyly replied. "My mother-in-law has strictly warned me not to leave this place unless I had a beating at your hands. This," she added, "I am

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told is the best of blessings!" Maharaj smiled and said, "Yes, she is perfectly right. But you can neither demand nor put up a request for it. It is not so cheap. It happens; such intimacy is a rare fortune!" Then, with a few words of advice, he sent her home. In the life of Meher Baba, we notice that only the most intimate men *mandali* received this precious *jalali prasad* at Baba's hands; sometimes He severely reprimanded them, and Vishnu was surely one of His most beloved disciples.

The Simple, Significant Sermon

Baba declared that He had stepped down to the Old Life for this special meeting. In addition, He explained that His companions also had entered the Old Life. At the commencement of the meeting, Baba asked forgiveness of God for not being able to live the New Life as He wanted to. He pardoned His companions for all their weaknesses and lapses committed in the New Life and in return He asked them to forgive Him if He had done anything which had hurt their feelings. Forgiveness, the Forgiver and those who were forgiven had all become One; it was a Divine unifying performance. There was a fascinating grandeur of humility and of Divinity in Baba's bearing. As He looked at those sitting before Him, the light of love seemed to flow from Him, and with His vibrant presence, He appeared to open fresh reservoirs of feeling within the hearts of His lovers. All felt very delighted and relaxed. Baba then asked Donkin to read aloud the Sermon. It was received with great solemnity and eagerness. The simple words of the Sermon, potent with profound significance, stole into the hearts of the audience. The first sentence, "Essentially we are all One" brought to the listeners the truth that Baba as the God-Man stepped down to the level of a common man to reveal that the two — God and Man — are One. The text of the sermon is given below. Meher Baba stated:

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Being just now in "Old Life" for these few hours, I will tell you what I feel to be the established Divine facts:

Essentially we are all One. The feeling of our being otherwise is due to ignorance. Soul desires consciousness to know itself, but in its progress towards this Goal which it cannot realize independently of creation, it must undergo the experience which it gathers as the individualized ego and which is all imagination. Thus it is faced at the outset with ignorance instead of Knowledge.

Dual forms and illusionary creations are the outcome of ignorance: birth and death, happiness and misery, virtue and sin, good and bad — all are equally the manifestation of this same ignorance. You were never born and will never die; you never suffered and will never suffer; you ever were and ever will be, as separateness exists only in imagination.

Soul undergoes experience through innumerable forms such as being king and beggar, rich and poor, tall and short, strong and weak, beautiful and ugly, of killing and being killed. All these experiences must transpire as long as the soul, though it is one in reality and undivided, imagines separateness in itself. When soul is bereft of the impressions of these illusionary experiences it becomes naked as in its origin, to become now fully conscious of its unity with the Oversoul which is One, Indivisible, Real and Infinite.

The soul becomes free of the binding of impressions through various paths. And Love is the most important of these paths leading to the realization of God. Through this love, the Soul becomes entirely absorbed in God, ultimately forgetting itself completely. It is then that all of a sudden Knowledge comes as swiftly as the lightning bolt which burns to ashes all that it falls upon.

This Knowledge uproots illusions, doubts and worries, and apparent sufferings are instantaneously replaced by everlasting peace and eternal bliss which

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is the Goal of all existence. Soul now free from its illusions, realizes its Original Unity of Being.

Let us not hope, because this Knowledge is beyond hoping and wanting. Let us not reason, because this Knowledge cannot be comprehended or thought of. Let us not doubt, because this Knowledge is the certainty of certainties. Let us not live the life of the senses, because the lusty [lustful], greedy, false and impure mind cannot reach this Knowledge. Let us love God as the Soul of our souls, and in the height of this Love lies this Knowledge.

The divinely Perfect Ones can bestow this Knowledge on any one they like and whenever they like. May we all gain this Knowledge soon.

The Hindi translation of the above Sermon was read by Deshmukh. Baba then asked everyone to get a mimeographed copy of The Sermon. "May we all gain this Knowledge soon," was a sort of assurance from Baba that He would help His dear ones to be worthy of His gift of Grace that bestows divine Knowledge. The copy of The Sermon that I received from Baba forms part of my personal, precious Baba treasure. A casual look at this old paper brings back to my mind the whole scene in that "stable," with its incidents glowingly alive. When the distribution of the copies of The Sermon was over, Baba saluted all the Old Life disciples and devotees. This was a lesson of how one should feel obliged at the opportunity of presenting Divine facts to others.

Pukar's First Meeting with Baba

The gathering was then informed that those who wished to offer money for Baba's work with the poor and the God-intoxicated ones could now make their contributions. It was a rare opportunity given to His lovers. This was not compulsory. No one knew what others donated. While this was happening, the audience saw a stout young man silently stand and take off all his

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clothes except for his underpants, a *langoti*. He was Parameshwari Dayal Nigam (Pukar) of Hamirpur. Before narrating what followed I intend to present some information as background to show what led to this spontaneous though unusual response.

In his childhood Parameshwari Dayal (Pukar) was immensely devoted to Rama. *The Ramayana* was the book he revered and loved most. He could recite line after line from it with great devotion for Rama, the God-Man. After finishing his schooling, he gradually got involved in politics especially because India was then under the British rule and he vowed to free his motherland, India. The interest in leading a spiritual life which he had in mind as a boy, slowly receded and he became a staunch revolutionary, one of the top leaders of an underground organization.

When he first heard of Baba he thought that Baba might be a British spy, trying to divert the attention of other Indians from the struggle for freedom. He also suspected that Baba might belong to that group of false masters who cheat the gullible. Besides, his mind vehemently rebelled against the claim Baba made of being the *Avatar* of the Age. He even decided to expose Meher Baba as a fraud. He openly expressed his views against His Divinity. But in spite of his efforts he found that a few of his close friends and relatives in Hamirpur began to worship Baba as God in human form and loved Him deeply. All this made him visit Hardwar and later Dehra Dun to see Baba in person; each time he missed Baba however. When he reached Dehra Dun, Baba had just left for Satara.

In the early 1940s Pukar wrote a few letters to Baba, challenging His authority. He criticized Baba's way of changing the dates of His programs so often and at the same time expecting implicit obedience from His followers. In one of his letters, he rather impertinently asked Baba why hundreds of people in Bengal (one of the Indian states) should die of starvation due to a severe famine when He claimed to be the *Avatar*. He also

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wondered when this could happen right under His "nose" in India, how He could possibly relieve humanity at large of its suffering! In those years, Baba was very busy contacting the *masts* and only important letters were attended to. Pukar did not receive any reply to this letter. Owing to his immature understanding of the spiritual work done by the Perfect Masters, he felt that Baba dared not reply to him. This made Pukar denounce Baba all the more. In spite of this severe criticism, his own relatives continued to love Baba, and he became more and more perplexed.

In this state of hostile bewilderment, he learnt about the meeting at Mahabaleshwar. Luckily, he received an invitation and decided to avail himself of this opportunity to solve or appease the conflict that had been raging within him for years. From the day he left for the meeting he experienced a few coincidences which made him feel strongly that Baba was drawing him to Him. There were also incidents that confused him, but after awhile he would realize that he had simply misconstrued the facts. It could not, however, be denied that the entire journey from Hamirpur to Mahabaleshwar was a significant and even glorious event in his life. On the way to Mahabaleshwar he participated in a gathering of Baba people at Poona. The *bhajan* program appealed to him so much that tears of unknown joy often rolled down his cheeks. He also heard with interest some *lilas* from Baba's life and was much impressed. In general, all this made him decide that if Baba was really the One He claimed to be, he would surrender his entire life to Him and would not go back home.

At Mahabaleshwar, on the morning of October 16, Pukar watched Baba very lovingly embrace each of the visitors. He was greatly moved. Baba seemed to have established a perfect rapport with everyone He met. As Pukar approached Baba he nearly broke down. Through the tears that flowed from his eyes, many of the doubts he had harbored about Baba's Divinity were washed

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away. In the stable, the meeting place in Florence Hall, he sat facing Baba and experienced an incredible awakening of the heart.

People with love and respect started giving money for Baba's special work. As this was optional, Pukar had not previously thought of donating any sum. But on the spot he felt so overpowered that he wanted to give whatever he possessed. He took off all his garments except his underpants *langoti* and made a bundle of them. Before doing this, he had hurriedly scribbled a note that he placed in the pocket of his shirt, along with the money he possessed. The short note read that he wished to surrender his money, body and mind at the feet of Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, all in the service of the poor. In tune with the spirit of this note, Pukar, as one of the integral components of the bundle, stood on it. Then he prostrated before Baba with uncontrollable sobs. As he stood in that gathering, nearly naked, a few thought that he was deranged, some even thought that he might be a *mast!*

It was all Baba's game. He gestured to Pukar to bring the bundle of clothes to Him. Someone helped him to go near Baba. Baba looked intently at the clothes, kissed the bundle and returned it to Pukar. Baba instructed him, "Put your clothes back on. When this meeting is over go back to Hamirpur. Continue the work that you have been doing. But remember one thing, that formerly you were doing it for yourself, now think that you will be doing it for Baba." In a way this was a response to the resolution he had made at Poona. In a casual way Baba also conveyed, "It is the inner attitude that counts and not its outer expression." These words of advice helped Pukar in the forthcoming years to understand that Baba's work of spiritual awakening is totally and qualitatively different from the propaganda and activities conducted by the philanthropic societies or political parties the world over.

This understanding was instrumental in his withdrawing from political and social fields and offering his

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services in Baba's cause. At the October meeting he had only a glimpse of Baba's Divinity. The firm conviction of His *Avatarhood* occurred a few years later. At the time of this first meeting, Parameshwari Dayal was the editor of a Hindi weekly called *PUKAR*, dealing mostly with the political and social issues of the time. Later this weekly was turned into a monthly called *MEHER PUKAR*, totally devoted to Avatar Meher Baba and His message of Love and Truth. And as Parameshwari Dayal came in closer contact with Baba, instead of calling him by his long name, Baba nicknamed him "Pukar", which is how he is known to this day.

When all who voluntarily wished to contribute had done so, it was declared that the money collected would be used only for the work mentioned in the earlier circular, during Baba's tour beginning on October 21, 1950.

Pankhraj Gets Married

The previous night all the Baba people staying in different hotels were advised that if anyone had had any difficulty in obeying Baba's orders which had been given to him in the Old Life, he should bring that point to Baba's notice. Such people were to write their problems on separate notes which were to be handed over to Baba the next day. After a short break the morning session continued. Baba inquired whether all had come back. Then He allotted time to attend to these problems. As Baba learnt the contents of each note, He spontaneously offered concessions or suggested adequate changes in the previous instructions. All these little alterations expressed Baba's deep spiritual insight, tempered with His sense of humor. This was most evident in the case of Pankhraj, who was earlier asked by Baba to get married in His physical presence. Before coming to this topic, I wish to relate a short account of Pankhraj's previous contact with Baba which reveals Baba's omniscience in drawing His dear ones to Him.

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In 1940 Pankhraj was studying in a college at Nagpur. During summer vacation, he chanced to read some spiritual literature which impressed him so much that he decided to discontinue his education, much to the displeasure of his father. Instead of having a degree to lead a so-called rich and respectable life, he resolved to be a simple aspirant and seeker of Truth. He commenced leading a life of strict spiritual discipline. He took vegetarian food without salt, slept on a rough bed, maintained a day-to-day diary in which he wrote about his own weaknesses and made confessions. He formed a small group and prepared a code of conduct. He became a *sadhak* (an aspirant). This was not only a sudden but also a complete change from the life he had led in college. During his college days Pankhraj was a good sport and keen participant in college activities. He did not then have any interest in spirituality. In fact he used to criticize the lives of the saints. However, years earlier as a child there had been a time when for days and months he used to repeat the name of God, Rama, continuously for hours. Perhaps the seeds of spirituality had thus been sown in his childhood.

In July 1940, he attended a talk by Deshmukh on "The Need for the Awakener". The Awakener's (Baba's) message of love touched his heart. As he read and heard more and more about Baba, he felt that Baba was the personification of love and the embodiment of beauty. The more he became one pointed in his allegiance to Baba, the more he severed his connections with his former group of semi-ascetics.

In 1941 he got a temporary job in his father's office filling in for a clerk who had a 20 day earned leave. The day he received his first pay envelope, he decided to spend the money on a visit to Meherabad to see Baba. Dr. Deshmukh told him that Baba's whereabouts were not known. He suggested to him that he get an appointment. But in his fervor to see the Beloved, Pankhraj was not ready to wait any longer. He boarded a train at Nagpur and got down at the Ahmednagar railway

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station. He had not been to this place before; however, in one of the books on Meher Baba he had seen a picture of the Meher Retreat on the hill and remembered that it was by the railway track.

With this meager information he started walking along the railway lines until he reached the top of the hill. There he saw Pendu supervising some construction work. From him he learnt that Baba was not at Meherabad and he felt very sad. Pendu, who was the manager at Meherabad, nevertheless permitted him to stay in the *ashram*, down the hill. It was here that after so many months he drank tea and slept on a mattress. He gradually realized that Baba expected His devotees to lead a normal life of love and service, in His wholehearted remembrance, without imposing unnecessary restrictions. If you get a plain meal don't grumble, if you have a feast don't indulge. Parading of spirituality vitiates the core of spiritual life.

Coincidentally the next morning, Baba arrived at Meherabad and was busy calling different members of the *mandali*. They were meeting Him after a year's absence, resulting from His extended *mast* tours and seclusion. As they were called to receive specific instructions, Pankhraj, through Vishnu, conveyed his request for *darshan* to Baba. But it being a phase of seclusion and special spiritual work, Baba refused to see him.

Pankhraj had come to Meherabad with the intention and mental preparation of staying permanently near Baba, but he found that he was not allowed to have even a glimpse of the One at whose feet he wanted to surrender his entire life. This was quite shocking. Instead, Baba sent a message that if Pankhraj could afford to, he might pay a visit to Kedgaon for the *darshan* of Shri Sadguru Narayan Maharaj, one of Baba's Masters. This was quite an unusual instruction. But it carried hidden significance. Pankhraj loved Baba but he was very skeptical about His Masters, especially Upasni Maharaj and Narayan Maharaj because of the perverted information published in a few Marathi

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journals. He had neither the urge nor the money to spend on this visit to Kedgaon. This message, though not acted upon, nevertheless helped Pankhraj to shed his misgivings about Baba's Masters. To be able to accept Baba as BABA on his terms, needs not only inner guidance but also His grace.

The denial of *darshan* greatly upset Pankhraj. In obedience to Baba's instructions he left the *ashram*, but remained sitting under a tree by the roadside asking each of the *mandali* going up the hill to place his "case" before Baba for reconsideration. He could not refrain from sobbing and weeping bitterly. After his going through a period of agony and restlessness for a fairly long time, Vishnu came with heart-warming news from Baba. Pankhraj was summoned by the Beloved, and in raptures he followed Vishnu up the hill. He was asked to stop at a distance of about 50 feet from Baba who was then standing on a cement platform under a tree. He wore a silk coat and looked very radiant. In the period of "special working", Baba would not allow anyone other than the resident *mandali* to come closer to His person. Pankhraj saw Baba; and His divine splendor stirred his soul to its depth. His joy knew no bounds. He stood gazing at Baba. Nothing was asked or conveyed orally but his heart communed with the Beloved's. After a few minutes, Baba gestured, "Isn't it enough? Now leave."

On the way down the hill, Vishnu asked Pankhraj some personal information about him and his family members and especially inquired as to why he wished to stay near Baba. According to Baba's instruction, Vishnu said to him, "If Baba gives you sufficient wealth to provide for all the amenities of life, will you be happy?" "I have not come here for this," was Pankhraj's reply. When this was conveyed to Baba, He was pleased and He called Pankhraj again for a second *darshan*. At this time Pankhraj was told that he would be called after a year or so and that Baba might then give him certain instructions which he should wholeheartedly

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follow. He was also instructed to return directly to Nagpur. However, before he left Meherabad another message communicated to him was that Baba's *nazar* (protective blessings) would be on him. With Baba's initial refusal to see him, Pankhraj found himself in the valley of dejection, but Baba's subsequent intimate concern and loving messages lifted him up to the skies. Baba, at times, used and is still using this "pushing away and drawing closer" technique to awaken the hearts of His dear ones to His love.

With a very warm heart Pankhraj left Ahmednagar. He had a passing thought to get down at Chitali, to see Upasni Maharaj at Sakori. But Baba's instruction to go straight home made him drop the idea. When he got down at Bhusaval, he saw the connecting train for Nagpur standing on the next platform. Instead of directly getting into it, his mind lured him into walking round the city before catching the next train. What a vain thought! It was the trick of the Devil tempting him to swerve from the spirit of obedience to the Master. Poor Pankhraj succumbed to it and after roaming about in the city he returned to the station but boarded the wrong train. Only after great inconvenience did he reach Nagpur but at least the lesson he learned stayed with him for the rest of his life: never to alter with selfish motive any of Baba's instructions. After Baba's *darshan* at Meherabad, he witnessed a considerable change taking place within him. The rigidity of *sadhana* was replaced by liveliness. He realized that Baba's guiding hand had been silently at work during the so-called good and bad times of his earlier life. They had all been designed to lead him to Meherabad for the *darshan* of the Eternal Beloved and the opening of a new chapter in his life.

In the summer of 1942 Pankhraj was specially called to Dehra Dun. Baba directed him to follow a few specific instructions and this gave him a strong feeling of being accepted by Baba. The years passed by and he came into closer contact with Baba. He wished to remain

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a bachelor but circumstances took such a turn that he had to ask Baba whether he should get married or not. Baba permitted him to remain engaged to a girl, another Baba lover. The marriage, however, was to take place in Baba's august presence. Time rolled on and Baba entered the New Life. In this phase, no one from the Old Life was allowed to see or correspond with Baba. So Pankhraj refrained from getting married. In the meeting at Mahabaleshwar, Baba permitted His dear ones to put forth their difficulties, if any, with the previous instructions given by Him.

In the course of the notes that were read out to Baba, Pankhraj's case was also brought to His notice. Only men were invited to this meeting so Pankhraj's fiancée, though a Baba lover, had not come. With a smile Baba asked dear old Gustadji to stand up. He was to play the role of Pankhraj's "bride". Amidst laughter, Baba asked Pankhraj and Gustadji to come closer to Him and to shake hands as husband and wife. They did so and Baba blessed the couple! He then instructed Pankhraj to go home and get married in any way he liked. Pankhraj wished to perform the wedding without any pomp or traditional ceremonies. So he visited the Registrar's office with Tara Raje, the bride, and in Meher Baba's loving remembrance, Rama Pankhraj and Tara signed the register. It was a human attestation to the Divine Registration! To this day, in their united love for Baba, the Real Beloved, Rama and Tara are leading a happy married life.

Baba thus attended, very lovingly, to one and all the questions brought before Him by His disciples and devotees. Rama Pankhraj's case is enough, I think, to give an idea of the magnitude of the other problems presented as well as of the love and loyalty with which Baba lovers obeyed and still obey Baba's instructions. When this item of dealing with the difficulties was over Baba looked relieved and switched to the next subject.

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Perfect Divinity and Perfect Humility

In that enclosure behind Baba's seat there was a piece of cardboard displayed on the wall. In the centre of it was pasted one of Baba's pictures. On its right side was written in bold letters, OLD LIFE — Perfect Divinity, Divine Man, and on its left, NEW LIFE — Perfect Humility, Ordinary Man. To clarify the symbolic meaning behind these phrases, Baba had already prepared an explanation which was now read out. It revealed how these two aspects of Divinity in action get expressed through the life of the God-Man, to fulfill His spiritual work of awakening. Baba asked Donkin to read this special message which also included some other important points connected with His New Life. With reference to the phrases, Old Life and New Life, written on the board, Baba had stated in the message:

If I am the One my Old Life disciples take me to be, I would wish them to endeavour whole-heartedly to stick to their faith and love, to carry out my Old Life instructions without any feeling of enforced bondage on their part, and to live a life worthy of real Love; and, irrespective of what I am, the Most Compassionate God, will surely reward them spiritually, even if they do not seek reward . . .

My Old Life places me on the altar of Absolute Godhood and Divine Perfection. My New Life makes me take the stand of a humble Servant of God and His people. In my New Life I am the Seeker, the Lover and the Friend. Both these aspects Perfect Divinity and Perfect Humility have been by God's Will and both are everlastingly linked with God's Eternal Life. Anyone may believe me to be whatever he likes, but none may ask for blessings, miracles, or any reward of any kind. My New Life is Eternal.

In the earlier part of this message, Baba had offered the Yeswallas another chance to reconsider their decision

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of continuing to accompany Him in His New Life. He asked all of them to think seriously about their own weaknesses and to take an impartial survey of their past experiences before arriving at their final conclusion. About the forthcoming life Baba clarified:

If in spite of all this, they [Yeswallas] decide to join me as servants in the New Life, they must know that they will have to try and obey me 100 per cent, and must do whole-heartedly whatever I want them to do. The servants' obedience to my orders must be spontaneous and devoid of any feeling of slavery or compulsion. They must carry out my wishes with a cheerful willingness, without in any way feeling it an encroachment on their freedom.

He also added that the conditions accepted in the first meeting of the New Life at Meherabad on August 31, remained unchanged.

The gist of this message, rendered in Hindi, was conveyed to the visitors by Deshmukh. Baba again distributed copies of the message in English to all and declared a recess for half an hour. Perhaps it was intended to offer time to the Yeswallas to think over this latest proposition from Baba. This short period also provided the opportunity for each of the congregants to receive *laddoo* (a sweet) as *prasad* from Baba. Everyone also had a cup of refreshing tea.

When all gathered in the enclosure for the third time, Baba expressed His satisfaction over the duties performed, despite great odds, by the Arrangementwallas. Before the beginning of this session He left the chair and went inside a room to take the Oath of the New Life. When He returned, He was wearing a white *kafni* and an ochre colored satchel was hanging down His shoulder. In the New Life, He had used this satchel while begging for food. As He took His seat He declared that He had entered the New Life and asked every Yeswalla to announce his decision. Adi,

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Daulat Singh, Anna Jakkal, Ali Akbar (Aloba), Minoor Kharas, Babadas, Pandoba, Kishan Singh, Bal Natu and Dr. Ghani decided to adopt the Old Life. Pendu, Vishnu Eruch, Nilu, Donkin, Kaka Baria, Baidul, Gustadji, Murli and Kaikobad (Dastur) resolved to be Baba's servants in His New Life.

Baba offered a prayer to God to give Him strength to live the New Life fully and completely as He wanted to. The Hindu, Muslim, Christian and Zoroastrian prayers were recited by different companions, the way they were offered at Satara on July 25, 1950. These prayers considerably changed the tempo of the meeting. Then followed the *qawwali* program. The *qawwal* who used to sing in Mutha's villa at Satara was called to Mahabaleshwar. To the accompaniment of a harmonium and a *dholak* (*drum*) he sang the Song of the New Life. At the end of this singing, Baba slowly and gracefully got up and went out to bathe a *mast* known as Bapji. As Baba emptied mug after mug of water over Bapji's bare body the *mast* obviously enjoyed the bath. Baba also looked alive with the delight of some inner work done to His satisfaction. Bathing a *mast* in the presence of all was an unusual event. Maybe it represented cleansing some *sanskaras* of the visitors, through the medium of Bapji. Only a guess!

The meeting was over. As some visitors began to leave the premises a few tears rolled down their cheeks. With voices thick with emotion they took their leave of the companions. Some looked very buoyant while some were deeply absorbed in and impressed by the happenings at the meeting. Yet, everyone definitely felt, "What a wonderful day!" and with the fullness of this feeling they left Mahabaleshwar.

*Nawab*¹ Selling Bidis and Matchboxes

On October 21, Baba and the companions offered the following prayer: "Grant us your guidance, Oh God

¹ A Mohammedan title for a nobleman.

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Most High, and stir up our hearts with your love, Oh Christ the Everlasting Truth, that we may live the New Life with a faithfulness that will endure to the end." The same day, as was planned earlier, Baba decided to commence the tour of India for His *mast* work and His work with the poor. In the Old Life, He had personally contacted thousands of poor people in various villages and had given them, as *prasad*, cloth, money and food grains worth tens of thousands of rupees. It was not charity but a typical external activity to accomplish certain results on the inner planes of consciousness. How? Baba did not explain.

Collecting and contacting poor in India was not very difficult, but during the forthcoming tour Baba wished to offer large sums of money not to such individuals but to the heads of very poor families who were once rich and well-to-do. He did not reveal any reason for such a preference. It was a new phase of His work with the poor. The *mandali* never questioned Baba about His intention. They firmly believed that Baba's every action was completely selfless and that the Divine Will continuously manifested through Him. They knew that if they whole-heartedly carried out Baba's instructions, however difficult they might be, Baba's inner guidance would lead them to the appropriate persons and places. On this tour Pendu, Eruch, Gustadji and Baidul accompanied Baba. Thirty-three families of the type mentioned above were contacted by Baba in different states of India, viz. Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Tamilnadu and Andhra. Only two such accounts are given here but this narration will give some idea not only of the type of families contacted but also the ways in which Baba delivered this financial assistance.

Baba was in Hyderabad (Andhra) when the *mandali* heard of a very wealthy Muslim *Nawab* who had literally become a pauper. In the earlier years when he used to travel by train he had his own special coach. He was wealthy enough to maintain elephants at his palatial residence. But the tables of fortune turned or, rather,

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crashed to such a degree that it was now hard for him to earn his daily bread. Friends and relatives who had thrived on his money totally deserted him. What a world! The *mandali* thought that the *Nawab* would be the kind of person that Baba would like to contact. So they made many inquiries about his whereabouts. At last they learnt that recently he had been staying on the open veranda of a *sarai* which afforded free lodging to the poor. There he had a small wooden crate in which he placed *bidis* and matchboxes for sale. This was his only source of income by which he had to feed himself and his wife.

When Baba and the *mandali* went there, they found that the man was ill and his wife had gone out to get some medicine, perhaps from a free dispensary. Eruch told the man about Baba's intention to help him financially and explained the routine He followed before offering this help. The man agreed to all these conditions. So he was asked to move to the edge of the veranda. He dangled his legs over the low parapet. Baba swiftly but very lovingly washed and dried his feet with a towel. Then Baba bent down and placed His forehead on the feet of that *Nawab*. But as He was lifting His head the old man suddenly collapsed and became unconscious. Luckily, one of the *mandali* caught the man and prevented him from falling to the floor. Perhaps his heart could not contain the joy of receiving financial help so unexpectedly! Maybe Baba's tender touch overwhelmed him. Whatever the reason, this complicated the situation.

A group of women who had been curiously watching the whole scene from a distance drew closer and out of sympathy for the old man they raised a hue and cry. Thinking him to be dead a few even beat their breasts. They openly accused the party of killing an innocent person for nothing. The *mandali* felt embarrassed but Baba looked calm and unperturbed. He asked His men to inquire if there were any responsible persons around who were related to the *Nawab* to whom the envelope containing the money could be given. In an indignant

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tone one among the crowd replied, "The old man's wife is his only relative and she has gone out to get medicine for him. Oh God! But of what avail is it now!"

While the women were engaged in making some accusatory remarks about the party, Baba Himself joined the *mandali* in lifting the *Nawab* and making him rest on a bed which had an unclean, tattered bedsheet. They also sprinkled water over his face and continued to fan him so that he might regain consciousness. As it was getting very stuffy inside the room, the *mandali* asked the crowd to disperse but no one would listen. However, after a while, the man gradually opened his eyes and the *mandali* heaved a sigh of relief. The *Nawab* was alive! Just at this moment the *Nawab's* wife arrived and she was greatly surprised to find people crowded inside the room, including a few persons whom she did not know, and her husband looking very wearied lying on a bed. With a bewildered look she said to the *mandali*, "Strangers, why are you harassing a sick person?" Eyes lit with gratitude, the *Nawab* softly muttered, "They are not strangers but God-sent angels!" His words calmed down the old lady and also alleviated the prevailing confusion and hubbub.

Eruch took this opportunity to speak with the *Nawab's* wife. He disclosed to her the purpose of their visit. He also introduced her to Baba as his elder brother who lovingly offered her the envelope containing the money. Eruch addressed her as follows, "This is offered as a gift from God and you will oblige us by accepting it." Baba also instructed her to use this amount towards their welfare. By this time the atmosphere in the room had completely changed and most of the people started praising and glorifying God. Baba, who would not wait a moment more when His work was done, left the place with the *mandali*, almost unnoticed. The *Nawab* never knew whether the money received by him was a Godsent help or the God-Man's *prasad*. No one from the *mandali* ever met this couple again! Perhaps such incidents in Baba's life are meant to set examples of how

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to render help selflessly and anonymously.

Sincere Prayer Is Never Ignored

During this tour Baba visited Madras and was moving through the city to contact *masts*. At midday He consented to have coconut water, a very refreshing and cool drink of the south. Baba had a special liking for fresh coconut milk. He was standing under the shade of a tree and Eruch went to the other side of the road to get the coconut dressed. In the meantime Baba overheard some people talking at the *pan* shop about a person who had once been rich but whom the wheel of fate had reduced to a pitiable state. On Baba's instruction, Eruch approached the *panwalla* and told him of his big brother's intention to help some respectable poor families. The *panwalla* narrated the whole story, including the name of that unfortunate person and also that of the contractor who had swindled him and usurped his newly built home at Gudur in Tamilnadu.

Hearing the report, Baba decided to leave for Gudur immediately by the first available train. It was a journey of 2-3 hours. At Gudur, Baba, Pendu, Baidul and Gustadji waited at the railway station. Eruch left to find the house where the person whom Baba intended to contact lived. He knew the name of the contractor who had finagled his way into getting possession of this man's new building. With this clue he first found that particular building and knocked on the door. A person with diamond rings on his fingers opened the door and politely said, "What can I do for you, sir?" Eruch told him the name of the person Baba wished to contact and added, "I hear that he is in dire need of help. My brother wants to help him. Can you tell me his address?" At this, the mood of the contractor changed. He even looked a bit annoyed and said, "Sorry, I do not know." But at this point a boy who was not even in his teens came out from inside and said, "Sir, I will show you the house of this person." This boy was either the son of the contractor

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or someone living in this family. The man got angry with the boy but Eruch skillfully interrupted "Why do you not allow him to come with me, sir? I shall be thankful to you for this."

The boy willingly led the way while Eruch followed him. They crossed some lanes and by-lanes and Eruch was all the time observing their route, trying to remember the shops they passed since he would later have to take Baba there. By a narrow lane there was a row of adjoining houses. It was late in the evening. From a distance the boy said, "You see that house. I mean that door which has no small clay lamps with lighted wicks in front of it.² That is the house of the man you wish to meet." So saying the boy quickly left Eruch and hastened home. It was *Diwali* day but that particular house had no lamps lit before its doors. Standing at the door, Eruch saw in the semi-darkness a young girl, with her back to the door, standing before a life-sized statue of Lord Krishna; she was absorbed in prayer. Ten minutes passed and her prayers continued. Finally, not wishing to keep Baba waiting too long at the station, Eruch lightly knocked on the door. The girl turned her gaze and invited Eruch inside. She must have been a well-educated girl for she spoke in fluent English.

Within a few minutes Eruch received corroboration of the information they had gathered at Madras. As he stepped into the room, he saw the girl's father, who was very ill, lying on the floor. He was an invalid. In another corner of the room was her sick mother. What a miserable situation! Except for the statue of Krishna, there was no other furniture in this room. Obviously circumstances had forced them to sell what they had. Eruch explained to the girl that his brother, out of His compassion for all, wished to render some financial help to her father, and that He had especially come to Gudur

² On *Diwali* days it is the custom for Hindus to have near the outer doors and windows, small clay lamps filled with oil lit by wicks. In the early hours of the morning and in the late evening these are kept burning for hours. Hence *Diwali* is known as the festival of lights.

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from Bombay. He asked her to stay home till he returned there with his brother who was waiting at the railway station.

Eruch met Baba who was very eager to hear his report. Within a few minutes Baba, accompanied by Pendu and Eruch, left by a *tonga* to visit this particular family. It was unusual that the *tongas* in this city were drawn by bullocks instead of horses. Eruch, with his excellent memory, directed the *tonga* to the correct lane. The young girl was at home and a single little oil lamp was dimly burning inside the room. Eruch explained that before giving financial help his brother had to observe certain formalities. Her father who was running a high fever was made to sit on his bed. He was asked to put his feet in a basin. Baba washed his feet with lukewarm water and dried them with a soft towel. All these things, including water, were carried by the *mandali* whenever Baba used to go for such work. At the close of the contact, when Baba handed over the packet of currency notes worth five hundred rupees to the person, Eruch repeated in a soft voice, "My brother says that this money, given by loving hearts for deserving and needy persons is now offered to you. You should not take it as charity or feel yourself under any obligation whatsoever. Please consider it as a gift of love." These words brought tears to the eyes of the old man.

Baba left the house as soon as the work was over. Eruch thanked the girl. She looked so amazed that she could not express her feelings in words. As the Baba-party was leaving the house, Eruch saw her standing again before the statue of Lord Krishna saying, "How compassionate you are, O Lord! How quickly you respond to our prayers!" Little did she know that in her case the Lord of the Age Himself had blessed the whole family. Owing to their dire poverty, on that *Diwali* day the family had not been able to decorate their house with small clay lamps for "light". But Baba's presence must have lit the hearts of the trio, a real celebration of *Diwali*, the Festival of Lights. The God-Man bestows His blessings with

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such consummate skill that the recipient is not aware of the treasure conferred on him.

The work of helping poor families led the Baba-party to Bihar where the people were severely affected by the flooding of the Kosi River. Baba visited the interior parts of the state. After reaching Jhanjharpur and Madhupur in the district of Darbhanga, Baba walked through the ravaged villages to contact the poor afflicted villagers. He gave five rupees to each of the persons, male or female, He contacted. Baba's trip symbolized His silent participation in the sufferings of the people. Eleven well-off families who were severely affected by the floods also received substantial financial help at Baba's hands.

A Funny Scene on the Railway Platform

Side by side with the work of helping the poor, Baba continued His contacts with the *masts*. Baidul was in charge of finding these God-intoxicated ones and in taking Baba to where they resided or roamed about. During this tour nearly a hundred *masts* had the blessed fortune to meet the God-Man face to face. In Bihar, Baba contacted such souls at Patna and Chhapra, in Andhra at Hyderabad and Secunderabad and in Tamilnadu at Madras. Though the places visited for the *mast* contacts are known, the names of the *masts* and their special traits have not been recorded. It seems that after the New Life phase no one asked Baidul about their names and the interesting incidents connected with this tour. However, as an exception, in a letter sent to the West, one of the events was reported. This happened during Baba's journey by train from the Nepal border to Calcutta. Baba had visited Janakpur in Nepal, a place of many temples and *ashrams*, where He blessed twenty spiritually advanced souls, though not *masts*. Then the party proceeded to Calcutta.

The following incident occurred at Colgon, a small railway station. Here there was a *mast* who was regarded by some people as mad. He passed most of his time in

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the station premises; he also roamed about the adjacent streets. Baba seemed pleased to contact this person. Later, the *mast* sent word that Baba and His party should spend the night with him, as his guests. Baba, as a rule, tried to accommodate the wishes of any *mast*. In this case, He sent a message to the *mast* through the *mandali* to cancel the invitation and to permit the party to proceed by the next train. The *mast* did not readily agree.

After some time he came to the railway platform and extended the same invitation. The passengers crowded around the Baba-party engaged in conversation with that so-called madman. In the beginning they felt amused but soon, for some unknown reason, the crowd felt so agitated with the whole affair that Eruch and Baidul were pulled about and a group of the people dragged the *mast* out of the station. Baba was silently watching and enjoying this comic situation. Just then the train arrived and the people rushed towards the compartments to get good seats. During this confusion and uproar the *mast* probably gestured at Baba to leave Colgon, and that is why the Baba-party also boarded the same train. What a funny contact!

As for the other *mast* contacts in the eastern states of India, it can be stated that the general method of meeting with them did not differ much from that followed in the Old Life, except that the companions were allowed to be with Baba while He paid homage or served these God-intoxicated souls. Whatever the city or town, Baidul would collect information about the *masts*. He would personally pay visits to them. If he felt that the person was a genuine one, Baba would consent to contact him. Most of the *masts* had life stories which although true, if recorded would read like fiction. With a profound awareness of inner realities these lovers of God led a life of external and inner renunciation, unmindful of any discomforts. With them the abhorrence of luxuries was neither forced nor imposed. Their stay near urinals for years or their roaming practically naked in severe cold formed part of their natural living, in

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communion with their Beloved God.

In spite of the abuses they uttered they had real love in their hearts. In their mumblings, ecstasy would rise as song. When they would stare at Baba's face their eyes would shine brighter. After Baba's contacts their hearts would either be filled with peace and bliss or would be set aflame with His love. This also depended upon the nature of the work Baba had with them. During the present tour of different states, Baba offered many *masts* the things they seemed to like most as *prasad*. It was a tangible expression of His spiritual help to them. Baba's work with the *masts* can be regarded in many ways as the matchless *Avataric* activity of this Age.

Illustrative Mast Contacts at Bombay

Baba concluded this tour by visiting Kolhapur, Miraj and finally Bombay in Maharashtra State. At Bombay, He stayed at Nariman's house, Ashiana, on Warden Road in the Breach Candy area. This flat was kept entirely at Baba's disposal for twelve days, from November 25 to December 6, 1950. Besides those in the Baba-party, only the Arrangement-wallas were permitted to stay at Ashiana and Ramjoo Abdulla was one of them. Ramjoo accompanied Baba during the *mast* contacts in Bombay and has written a graphic account of it. This narration will also help the readers get a picture of the other contacts made in different states during this whirlwind tour. Ramjoo writes:

Baba started contacting the *masts* from the morning of 27th and completed the work on 29th of November. Baba maintained a uniform method of approach to all those whom He contacted. That approach was essentially one of great humility and submission. First of all, Baba used to be very careful and avoided causing the least disturbance or annoyance to the one approached. One of the *phirta masts* i.e., those who keep on roaming from place to place

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without sticking to any particular place or locality, was found lying on a footpath near Mahim. The moment the *mast* was spotted, the car was stopped; and we all followed Baba quietly near the spot, where this semi-naked *mast* was lying huddled up, on the bare ground. In spite of the blazing afternoon sun, he was found fast asleep without any shelter over him. After watching him for few minutes, Baba decided not to disturb him at all and said, "We shall take another chance, some other time"; and with that we moved on.

Although Baba would not seek actual permission in order to pay His respects, He would not make an advance, unless He was satisfied that it was not likely to be resisted. But, once the contact was established, Baba would not leave the place without obtaining the express permission of the other party by word of mouth, nod of head, or any other gesture of assent. Once at Bandra, a *mast*, who puts up in a very simple but neat little hut over a hill, overlooking the sea, granted Baba's prayer for the asking; but he added, "*kabhi, kabhi aaya karo,*" i.e., "Visit once in a while." Baba at once stopped; He had the prayer repeated with the statement that He would like to go now and waited until He got the clear and unconditional assent of that *mast*.

Unless and until Baba could touch His forehead upon the feet of the *mast* and get an assent to His request from him, a contact was not supposed to be complete. It was while He placed His forehead on their feet that I [Ramjoo] generally used to repeat the prayer, "*Aap dua karayn kay inka ruhani kaam ho jai,*" meaning thereby, "You will kindly pray that His [Baba's] spiritual work is carried out." The response used to be received in various ways and words. The *Salik* (discerning) type, would say, "*Insha-Allah ho jaiga*" i.e., "God-willing, that will be completed." Some would merely nod their heads. Some boldly asserted, "*Ho jaiga*" i.e., "That shall be done." One queer type,

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at first did a lot of fencing by asking how he could dare interfere with the Will of God and the work of the Masters. But when assured that all that was needed from him was his own blessings, he suddenly went into an ecstasy and began to give sharp raps on the back of Baba, four or five times, saying that the work shall be carried out . . .

The *masts* were found in all sorts of places, settings and circumstances, throughout the nooks and corners of Bombay. Nothing stopped Baba from carrying out His self-appointed pilgrimage with the briskness and thoroughness of an electioneering campaign. I [Ramjoo] will, for the present, stop with describing the case of one, who so to say, paid back Baba in His own coin! I would call him the Patiwala Baba — a short, robust, full-bearded Arab or Pathan type of a Muslim. We had to go to him twice, once in the morning and the second time late at night. He would let people collect round him. So, the second time, Baba decided to approach him with only myself by His side. In the sweetest and most persuasive tones that I could adopt, I began to plead with him that we did not mean to disturb him, and pointing to Baba, I [Ramjoo] said that He only wished to pay His respects. At last the "lion" roared. With a gesture towards Baba he said something to this effect, "He may be God, may be Mohammed; but why not leave me alone?" Baba quietly touched the old man's feet from a distance and beat an immediate retreat, asking me to leave him alone. "He is a fine fellow" repeated Baba more than once.³

During Baba's stay in Bombay He contacted nearly 20 God-intoxicated souls. He felt satisfied with this work and wished to relax for a few more days at Ashiana.

³ Ramjoo Abdulla, *Meher Baba and The God-Determined Step*, p. 17.

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Bhiksha and Langoti Phases Concluded

In the Mahabaleshwar meetings, Baba had informed the gathering that in the forthcoming tour He would be concluding the two phases of *bhiksha* and *langoti*, i.e., begging for food and wearing a loin cloth. These phases symbolically represented the helplessness of the New Life. During His stay in Calcutta one day He specially visited Dakshineshwar where the Perfect Master Ramakrishna Paramhansa stayed most of his life. It was morning and Baba with the companions moved briskly through the premises and all the temples. He inquired about the dining hall used by the disciples of the Master. The *swami* in charge of the *ashram* told Eruch that as they were not using the hall it was locked. On Baba's instruction, Eruch told the *swami* that his brother would like to retire a while in that particular place and asked him for the key. The *swami* without making any further inquiries readily offered it. Baba sat quietly in seclusion in that hall for about half an hour, wearing only a *langoti*. It was indeed fitting that Baba selected Dakshineshwar for this type of work, where *Sadguru* Ramakrishna, who was renunciation personified, had kindled the flame of *sanyasa* in the hearts of his close disciples Thus ended Baba's New Life phase of wearing a *langoti*.

After the short seclusion at Dakshineshwar, Baba put on a *kafni*, took the "begging bowl" and hung the ochre colored satchel on His shoulder. He started "begging" at the stalls that lined both sides of the lane leading to the temple. No one gave Baba anything. Perhaps no one dared to offer that exceptionally radiant beggar the sundry things they possessed. Also it was a strange sight to them, for those who followed Baba had decent clothes pants and coats. And, in addition, Pendu had a bag full of coins of low denominations, from which he gave a handful to each beggar or mendicant that Baba, with a glance or gesture, directed him to.

Where the line of stalls terminated, Baba turned to

the right and commenced begging at each of the adjoining houses on the side street. Eruch generally used to say at each house, "Mother, please, with love, give *bhiksha*." In the first few houses no one paid attention to this call of love. As the Baba-party neared a house with a latticed veranda and issued the call, the women of the house came out. They seemed greatly impressed by the Beggar standing at their door. Spontaneously they said, "Please do not move on till you accept *bhiksha* here." In a short time they filled Baba's bowl with freshly cooked vegetables and offered Him a good quantity of cooked rice. Baba looked exceedingly pleased. It was the last house where the Lord of this Age begged for food. How fortunate must be that family though the members never knew the great worth of their simple offering!

After leaving that locality, Baba stopped at a quiet place under a tree. He distributed the *bhiksha* to His companions and He Himself joined them for lunch. The food tasted very delicious. Thus ended the *bhiksha* phase of the New Life.⁴ Baba then took off the *kafni* and put on the *sadra*, trousers and coat which He generally wore during such trips. While staying in Bombay, Baba also concluded the work of offering financial help to needy families by giving one thousand rupees to four families connected with Him in the Old Life who were in great need of help.

Having completed the different phases of work, Baba wished to relax and rest for some days. Of course, this only meant a change of "work". He consented to visit the Bra-bourne Stadium to witness the cricket matches between the Indian eleven and the Commonwealth team. Baba and the *mandali* sat in the North Wing of the public stand. He appreciated the enthusiasm and the witty remarks made by the spectators about the good drives and strokes of the batsmen and the easy catches

⁴ Even after this, however, Baba went out begging once at Khuldabad in November, 1951.

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which the fielders missed. On December 5, when He called the companions and the Arrangementwallas to His room, for no outward reason, He looked very tired and ill. He told the *mandali* that He would not visit the stadium on that day. By lunch time, when He gestured to turn on the radio, perhaps to hear the score of the match, the first news they all heard was of the passing away of Shri Aurobindo Ghosh, at Pondicherry in the early morning, at 1:30 A.M. In the Old Life, Baba would refer to Shri Aurobindo as one of the great saints of India. He asked Nariman and Meherjee to confirm this news from other reliable sources. Later, He decided to remain indoors for the whole day and was in a pensive mood. Why? He alone knew.

On December 6, Baba left Bombay and reached Mahabaleshwar. As He was very particular about the proper expenditure of money received from His lovers He asked one of the companions to write down and check the details of their expenses during the tour. The balance was sent to one of the Arrangementwallas with the necessary instructions. The entire information was circulated to all Baba people. Sometimes Baba used to appear very lavish and sometimes very frugal. It all depended on the spiritual need of the time; money by itself had very little value. During the above trip, Baba was very economical about the requirements of the Baba-party though He gave thousands of rupees to help poor families. This itinerary like the other *mast* tours of the Old Life was full of hardships, little food eaten at untimely hours and only a few hours sleep for those who accompanied Baba. Baba's demanding but compassionate companionship, His challenging yet, at the same time, reassuring demeanor made this trip very trying but also fascinating.

Singing Program on Mehera's Birthday

During Baba's stay at Satara a little pony was purchased from the gypsies. Baba named it Begam (Lady).

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At Mahabaleshwar when Baba, with the women *mandali* would go out for a walk in the mornings in the bracing and cool climate, Begam would follow like a pet dog. In Florence Hall she would climb the veranda and go straight to Baba in the drawing room where He would feed her with carrots. Sometimes Begam would come earlier and expectantly wait for Baba. Baba's love for animals was one of the most loving facets of His life.

This year Mehera's birthday coincided with Christmas and Baba agreed to have on that day a singing program by the Poona *bhajan* party. This group was composed of young Baba lovers. R. K. Gadekar, one of Baba's old, close disciples, residing at Poona was asked to inform the youngsters about the program. The Thade brothers, Madhusudan, Pratap and a few others were given this news which greatly delighted their hearts. Gadekar was also instructed to send a passport size photograph of each member of the group. Baba intended to select one of these boys to stay with Him for a few more days after the program.

Dr. Ghani who stayed at Poona continued to feed the group with enlightening and inspiring Baba stories (*lilas*). He brought home to them how fortunate they were to be invited by Baba during His New Life. He strongly desired to accompany them but in the letter Baba had instructed that only the Poona *bhajan* party should visit Him. So he composed a *ghazal* and asked or rather requested the boys to sing it before Baba. On December 21, Khaksaheb, another of Baba's old *mandali* visited Thade's place. He had developed an intense urge to see Baba. But owing to Baba's injunction he dared not visit Mahabaleshwar. He too composed a very touching *ghazal* and asked the boys to include it in their singing program. Coincidentally, two days after this visit, Khaksaheb passed away and that particular *ghazal* turned out to be his last message to his Beloved Master. Gadekar was one of Baba's old disciples, yet he decided to join the young group of lovers because he used to join them in singing. A good excuse!

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On December 24, in a very delighted mood, the party reached Mahabaleshwar. Vishnu looked after the lodging arrangements of the visitors. The same evening Baba happily agreed to have a program. When the group arrived Baba's eyes sparkled and with a sweet smile He conveyed, "I am happy you all have come. Tomorrow you have to visit Florence Hall again in the morning. Sing freely and wholeheartedly. But remember that you have not to refer to anything concerning the Old Life." Pointing at Pratap (Ahir) who was hardly in his teens, Baba asked if he could stay with Him for a few more days. Pratap's immediate reply was, "Yes Baba, Yes." A lucky chap! Then Baba signalled to commence the program. Baba was pleased with Pratap's singing and He asked him to sit near His chair. When the group sang Khak's *ghazal*, Gadekar, who was blessed with a childlike nature, looked very restless and wanted to tell Baba about the passing away of Khaksaheb. But because of Baba's earlier instruction concerning the Old Life, he tried to check himself. Baba noticed this and knowingly gestured at him, "Don't worry, I know." This calmed Gadekar down but a look of wonder shone on his face.

After a few songs, Ghani's *ghazal* was sung. Baba liked this composition through which Ghani, in his humorous style, had expressed his feeling of being "pushed aside" by Baba. The refrain of the *ghazal* was:

What a sunny day it was!
What a dreadful night it is now !
(I hope) God's hand is on the Wheel of (my) fate!

Ghani was Baba's schoolmate and close disciple too. He used to have free access to Baba. But in the New Life phase, after his return from Dehra Dun, Baba did not permit Ghani to visit Him except at the October meeting at Mahabaleshwar. Even then he had had no personal interview with Baba which saddened him. In the above *ghazal* Ghani poured out all his pent up feelings, spiced

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with humor. Ghani's *ghazal* did touch Baba though at the time He did not comment on it. A month later He sent Ghani an invitation through a short poem composed by Him. It is said that if anything ever touches the Universal Heart it is love, and also a real sense of humor. And Ghani was a great humorist.

Here I am reminded of another humorous refrain composed by Ghani in 1940 when Baba was at Bangalore. At that time, Meher Baba was busy with the formation of a Universal Spiritual Center and His work with the *masts*. He had assigned various duties to the *mandali* staying near Him. No one was expected to interfere with the work of others. Baba casually remarked that the one who could efficiently and economically manage his department would please Him the most. For some days Baidul was in charge of the mess. With the thought of winning Baba's favor by being extra economical, Baidul purchased a lot of pumpkins. They are very cheap and last for a long time. So every day the *mandali* would have a vegetable dish of pumpkin for lunch, and supper too. This continued for a week and a few developed an aversion to the food.

The *mandali* freely talked with Baba but they dared not complain about any instruction He had once given, unless He asked someone about it. Naturally everyone hesitated to bring this "pumpkin problem" to Baba's notice. Ghani could not bear this any longer. He had a brain wave. He knew that sometimes Baba asked a few of them to sing. He composed a *ghazal* and trained one of the inmates to sing it. The refrain of it was:

Our dear Baidul has cooked a *kola* [pumpkin] today,
And lo! He cooks it every day!

The song not only gave Baba a hearty laugh but it also conveyed to Him the *mandali's* grievance. He looked into the whole matter and instructed Baidul not only not to cook the pumpkin again but ordered him to bury the whole stock on hand that same day!

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The next day, on December 25, the Poona *bhajan* party reached Baba's residence by 7 A.M. The group was led to a spacious hall where the program was to take place. Soon Baba arrived. He had put on a silk coat over a long white *sadra*. To the young Baba lovers He appeared very resplendent and in a relaxed mood. His expression belied the sufferings He had endured during the earlier tour. It had often been noticed that in spite of excruciating physical pain and spiritual suffering, Baba looked very radiant while meeting visitors.

The boys tuned the musical instruments and the hall resounded with the vibrations of sweet music. *Bhajans* glorifying the love of God, the Beloved, were sung. Baba looked very pleased. He gestured, "I like you all." And He sweetly smiled and added, "You have sung some Krishna songs; do you know any Radha song?" Baba might have proposed this because of Mehera's birthday. The boys remembered one such *bhajan* but they had not practiced it before. However, as they began to sing it, Baba liked it so much that after the refrain He took a *dholak* on His lap and Himself played on it. Padri who was present photographed Baba playing the *dholak*. During this two day program, Padri's camera clicked many times to register Baba's unique gestures. The singing continued for about two hours. Then the moment of departure arrived. A deep silence fell over the group. In that overpowering silence Baba communicated His message of love to each. The *bhajan* party left Mahabaleshwar the same day, their hearts singing merrily the name of the Lord of Love.

Rano and Kitty were also at Mahabaleshwar as the school where they worked in Bombay remained closed for Christmas. About that Christmas morning Kitty writes:

Baba returned to Mahabaleshwar from the tour before Christmas. How well I remember that Christmas! We went into the jungles that surrounded our

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villa, and dug up a small evergreen tree to place on the living room table. Mehera and Mani, with Meheru assisting, made all its paper decorations. Mani insisted I make an angel for the top of the tree. The tree looked beautiful and I can still see that sweet, gentle smile on Baba's face as he stood by it on Christmas morning. Rano and Naja made their contribution — a table decoration. It was a wonderful cottage made out of cookies, icing and sugar. A face peered from one of its windows. It was lit up from inside by some quite simple contrivance, for we could not buy materials. Up the lane to the little house trotted, I believe on the snow, a deer. There in the middle of the jungle Baba had this wonderful surprise — a Christmas tree and a wintry Christmas cottage! It is these small things which bring that not-so-frequent smile on Baba's face when suffering is acute.⁵

And the New Life phase for the year 1950 was thus concluded.

⁵ Kitty Davy, Recollections Part II, *The Awakener*, Vol. VII. No. 1 (1960), p. 30.

Hundred Days' Seclusion

1951 – Part I

Service to the God-Man Never Goes Unrewarded

DURING the New Life, Baba's daily routine was full of activities which entailed hardships and suffering. It was a part of the arduous spiritual game He was engaged in. In early December, after His return from Bombay, He commenced planning another tour of contacting *masts*. The lease in connection with Florence Hall where the Baba-party stayed in Mahabaleshwar was to end at the end of May. Every year by the second week of June it starts to rain generally in Maharashtra and the monsoons bring torrential showers specifically to Mahabaleshwar. Sometimes the sun is not visible for days. So Baba wished to move to some place with a more moderate climate and He preferred Hyderabad. He instructed Adi to bring his blue Chevrolet to Mahabaleshwar and to drive Him to Hyderabad so He could select the two bungalows (houses) to be rented in June. While He was there, He also wished to contact some of the God-intoxicated souls. Adi promptly arrived and in the third week of January 1951, Baba, with a few companions, left for Hyderabad.

On the way, the party halted at Sholapur where Baba contacted three *masts*. Ghuliappa was a typical *yogi* of the fifth plane. He referred to himself as if he were a woman! He resided in a clean apartment and had remarkable eyes. Mulla Baba was contacted a short distance from an Indian gymnasium where he was sitting in a filthy environment, oblivious of his surroundings. He had long dirty nails and a wild temper

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too. Despite his disposition, he was greatly revered by the local populace. They feared him, respected him and loved him as well. The party resumed their journey and reached Hyderabad on January 16. The guest house at Osmansagar was reserved for the Baba-party for three days. Before beginning the hunt for the *masts*, the *mandali* inquired of real estate agents about vacant bungalows. Baba had already specified the requirements for the houses to be rented and Adi appeared most concerned about checking every detail with the agents.

Adi had a good reason for being concerned. A few years back, in 1945, Baba had entrusted to Adi the work of leasing a house at Hyderabad. Adi did this job diligently and reserved a newly built villa for Baba on the Jubilee Hills. This Villa had a good swimming pool and a lovely lawn. After the arrival of Baba and the women *mandali* it was noticed that though the electric fittings for the fans and lights were perfect, the house lacked a direct connection with the power station. Since this was during World War II, regulations prohibited the establishment of any new connection and thus the house was without electricity. Even kerosene was not easily available. Those staying in the house did not grumble over the inconvenience. Baba, however, would often blame Adi for not being careful enough in observing the instructions given. Sometimes, He threatened Adi to the extent of His leaving the house and even the city where He had come for special spiritual work. Adi felt very sad over the whole affair.

It was only after thorough inquiry that he found that Dharam Karan, one of the Rajahs in the Hyderabad state, was the only person empowered to grant an extra connection -- under exceptional circumstances. He tried to meet this person but to get an official interview with this Rajah who rolled in riches, and in princely vagaries too, Adi had to wait patiently for over three hours. The Rajah, on his arrival, seemed most disinterested in meeting his visitor. Adi pleaded his case well, specially by stating that his elder brother (Baba) had come from

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Bombay and that the party should be treated as the guests of the great city — Hyderabad. Had Adi disclosed Baba's identity, things would have moved very smoothly but that was not permissible. The Rajah somehow was convinced of the genuine need for "lights" and put his long and most illegible signature sanctioning the application. The head of the power house reluctantly extended the connecting wires to the bungalow where Baba and the women *mandali* were residing; and there was light!

This Rajah was in fact interested in paying his respects to the saints. One of his secretaries who was a Parsee had previously heard of Meher Baba and, anticipating his master's interest, he visited the house where the men *mandali* stayed. Adi met him and explained that since Baba was in seclusion, it was not possible for Dharam Karan to have Baba's *darshan*. Perhaps Adi had a grudge against this Rajah who had not behaved cordially towards him. Just then Baba who had recently arrived at the *mandali's* quarters, sent someone to the living room to inquire as to who had come and what he wanted. Hearing the report, Adi was called in and, to his surprise, Baba at once acquiesced to the Rajah's request for *darshan*. On some later occasions, Dharam Karan came to see Baba with his whole family. He became friendly with Adi. It seems that even if someone unconsciously renders any help in the cause of the God-Man, it shall be rewarded tenfold. Whether you love, serve, or hate the God-Man, nothing shall go in vain. Once the connection with the *Avatar is* established it will draw His blessings and compassion. And there are a good many instances to justify this supposition.

During the present stay — January 1951 — the owners of the two vacant bungalows were contacted and without any difficulty the due legalities were completed within a day. This made it easier for the companions to move freely with Baba for the *mast* contacts in Hyderabad. Baba's special intention, during the short visit, was to renew past contacts with the God-intoxicated ones. He

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resumed this work with a brilliant start and within a day and a half, He had met about thirty-one *masts*. It was rare for Baba to be able to meet so many *masts* in such a short period. It was as if these contacts had been prearranged by Baba, for no sooner would He arrive at a certain place than the mast would be spotted as if he were waiting for Baba. While returning to Mahabaleshwar, Baba halted at Gulbarga and Humnabad. There was also a short detour to visit Itka. Here Baba had to walk a pretty long distance to contact a spiritually advanced soul named Swami. This love-intoxicated person was found in a very jolly mood and readily accepted the sweets given by Baba, a favourable indication that the mast would be willing to shoulder spiritual responsibilities. Hence this diversion made Baba quite happy. From Gulbarga the Baba-party journeyed straight to Mahabaleshwar.

Ghani Invited for a Short Stay

Before leaving His headquarters for Hyderabad, in one of the informal gatherings of those who stayed with Him, Baba made a casual reference to Ghani's Urdu *ghazal* that was sung by the Poona *bhajan* party portraying Ghani's "heartache" following him. The refrain of the *ghazal* was:

What a sunny day it was!

What a dreadful night it is now!

(I hope) God's hand is on the Wheel of (my) fate!

The whole composition, though spiced with humor, expressed Ghani's woeful feelings. In reply to this *ghazal* and perhaps in consideration of his school day friendship, Baba in a sympathetic and witty mood, composed the following poem, addressed to His dear companion, Ghani.

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If you are well
If you feel swell,
If you have not gone mad
Or don't say you are sad,

Have no material loss
From servant or boss,
No talk of Old Life
Or child or wife;

But entertain me
With jokes and poetry
Will pay both fares
But won't listen to your cares.

Then come for eight days,
So Meher Baba says.
Don't give me pain
By asking material gain.

Talk of spiritual benefit,
Will give you gober¹ and shit.
In New Life no responsibility,
Of reward no possibility!

Naturally, Ghani felt highly honored and delighted at this most unexpected invitation from the Compassionate Companion. For an answer he spontaneously wrote the following stanzas and mailed them promptly to Baba. He wrote:

Received your loving letter
I feel awfully better,
Is India getting dry?²
It never looked to me wetter!

¹ *Gober* — cow dung.

² During those years there was a prohibition drive in India.

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A thousand thoughts and what not,
It looked almost a boycott!
Twelve months no (w)-ink, no inkpot
I could not get the upshot

And Jal with dates noting,
Gadekar drowned in doting,
With Pappa seemingly bloating
And Ramjoo meaningly gloating.

This atmosphere was pretty sure
Could not very long endure,
De facto verdict for a cure,
Could not ignore my stand *de jure*.

Accepting all your orders
Will come for dates and numbers,
On mind no madness, murder!³
Be damned the cares and "thunders!"

Hoping there are no blunders,
For ever I remain yours

sd/- Abdul Ghani

After Baba's arrival at Mahabaleshwar, the above stanzas were read out to Him. He seemed pleased with this reply full of humor and in appreciation of Ghani's response, in a jovial mood, Baba dictated the following four lines as a message and confirmation of the call.

After carefully your letter noting,
I feel like going a boating;
If any of my orders you break,
Your body on the Ganges be floating!

³ About a decade earlier, Ghani, through sheer desperation, had tried to commit suicide and Baba, most unexpectedly, visited his town, Lonavla, and helped him at the right moment.

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Later, Ghani visited Mahabaleshwar for a short stay with Baba and it was a period of good relaxation and recreation for both, especially for Ghani.

A Short Visit to Bombay

As it was previously planned, after a little rest Baba agreed to visit Bombay. On the way, at Poona, near the Aranyeshwar Temple, He did a part of His work with the poor by offering monetary help. This sum of money had been offered to Him by Pilamai Irani when Baba was about to begin the New Life. Pilamai was one of Baba's early stalwart disciples who, in spite of great opposition in the 1930s from the Parsee community at Karachi, was the first to make beautiful rings and lockets containing Baba's pictures. People wondered at her conviction in Baba's Divinity as the God-Man. Baba wished to offer this money to seven deserving people who were His Old Life devotees. In addition to this work, at Bombay, He gave seven hundred rupees to two Parsee families.

It was noticed that even in the New Life, Baba's work with the *masts* and the poor proceeded hand in hand. Besides the servant companions (Eruch, Baidul and Gustadji), Baba had called Adi Jr., Jal S., Padri, Ramjoo and Savak (Kotwal) to travel with Him during the *mast* contacts in Bombay. This work of contacting the God-intoxicated ones did not differ much in its outer features from what has been described in the earlier chapters. As for its spiritual significance, Baba once casually remarked that these contacts with the souls drowned in Divine Love had a 100% bearing on the forthcoming work to be achieved in the hundred days' seclusion which was to begin on February 13, 1951. In Ashiana, Nariman Dadachanji's residence in Bombay, Baba, in the company of His close ones, once conveyed, "It is natural for me in my New Life to feel void of all that it was natural for me to feel in my Old Life." So Ramjoo, the author of *The God-determined Step*, referred to

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Baba's role during the New Life as one of a very "extraordinarily ordinary man."

It was about this time, on His return from Bombay, that Baba received a cable from Elizabeth Patterson. It stated that Baba's visit to the West in July, 1951 was not feasible. In answer to this Baba asked Donkin to send the following reply to her, "Baba's plans are changed. Instead of leaving in July, 1951, He will leave in February, 1952. Do not worry and rest assured that Baba wants to come and stay for one year." In Florence Hall, on February 12, Baba had a meeting with His companions and the following decisions were arrived at: from February 12, 1951, the servants were freed from the bindings of the New Life conditions except for a few standing orders, i.e., not to commit any lustful action, not to create circumstances that will invite homage, not to accept money or food from anyone and above all to obey Baba 100%. All the companions were to stay with Baba as His servants till June 10, 1951.

Self-giving Love Accepts Suffering

On February 13, the sacred seclusion began. This phase of work caused great physical and mental strain for Baba. He tried to adjust for His subsequent fatigue by changing His places of work in the Aga Khan bungalow (Florence Hall). Sometimes He stayed in a small cabin or closeted Himself in a specially built hut with a thatched roof. The first forty days, from February 13 to March 24, turned out to be very critical and crucial. Perhaps in order to participate in His spiritual burden, Ali Shah, a *mast* of the fifth plane, was brought from Ahmednagar to Mahabaleshwar. For three weeks (February 15 to March 5), Baba sat for some time each day with Ali Shah who was very cooperative in Baba's inner work. At the beginning of this sublime seclusion, Baba fasted for a week and for the rest of the period He had only one meal a day. The work in the hut seemed very strenuous for Him and whenever He came out,

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He looked very tired. This was one of the indications of the profundity of His work.

A typical way of working in the hut was that at night when He was all alone by Himself, He spent some hours in complete darkness and some in bright glaring light. Was He dealing with the prevalent forces of darkness and the impending days of spiritual sunshine? Baba never explained the significance of this particular method of work which was adopted only once to accomplish the required spiritual results. And had He conveyed anything I wonder how far it would have been of avail to us! Baba lovers carry the conviction that the depth of Baba's work is unfathomable and love expects no explanations other than those the Divine Beloved gives on His own. To those who stayed with Baba, it was clearly visible that out of unbounded compassion He had to stand great physical strains which made Him extremely helpless.

Kitty Davy who was staying at Mahabaleshwar wrote her impressions about Baba's seclusion as follows:

I can recall Baba's weak physical condition and supreme state of helplessness during the hundred days seclusion, yet every evening during that period the *mandali* were called to Baba for recitation of evening prayers in Marathi, Urdu and English. This period was my first experience of seeing Baba so helpless and in such great physical pain . . . On one occasion, Dr. Goher, realizing how much Baba was suffering and his state of helplessness and humiliation during this period, gave way to tears. Baba asked her why. She replied through her tears, "Because we have done all we can and that has not helped." Baba replied that it did not help him to see her so upset that all was as it had been ordained, and our part was to keep cheerful and happy.

In this New Life phase when Baba emphasized his

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purely human aspect with all its limitations, it was difficult at times to remember that Baba had also "Eternal Bliss." Perhaps as someone suggested this unlimited Bliss forsakes a Christ when he deliberately out of his compassion and mercy for man takes on the sufferings and the limitations of man and this, though appearing to limit the unlimited, is really fuller proof of the true perfection of a Christ, for it expresses the self-giving love which accepts suffering for a struggling humanity.

Krishna, we read, used to offer prayers and homage to God, worship and serve saints and his own lovers and devotees in all sorts of lowly capacities. Christ asked God to forgive him in order to give the world the example of seeking forgiveness from God, thus assuming a separateness from Him. Baba, in this New Life phase, living life in its different phases, holds up before us all the practical example of repentance, worship, prayer and service.

"We may not know, we cannot tell
What pains He had to bear,
But we believe it was for us
He hung and suffered there."

And we too must believe it!⁴

Dr. Nilu, one of the companions, was also attending Baba as a physician. One day, he felt very nervous while giving an injection to Baba, who looked extremely tender and utterly helpless. In Nilu's attempt to be overly cautious and careful, the injection needle got twisted. Beads of perspiration crowded Nilu's forehead while Baba, silently writhing in pain, was looking with great compassion and forgiveness at Nilu. Throughout this seclusion the barometer of Baba's health fluctuated

⁴ Kitty Davy, *The Awakener*, Vol. VII, No. 1, (1960), p. 31.

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greatly; the pointer mostly tending towards great physical weakness.

A Step of Revolutionary Change

When the critical period of forty days was over, Baba issued a Statement and after a fortnight it was followed by an Elucidation. The excerpts given below from both the circulars are self-explanatory.

Out of the hundred days' seclusion that began on 13th February, 1951, the main work was achieved during the first forty days which were very crucial and important. Without the help of God, I could not have gone through this ordeal successfully, considering my usual changing temperament and the physical and mental strain that I suffered during this period. It was as if God wanted to prove His help to me by giving me suffering as well as strength to endure it. I also feel that the prayers and the invocations dictated by me and offered on my behalf by the servants have been accepted by God.

The remaining sixty days are not very difficult for me to live through. With God's help I can adjust the activities and the place of work according to my convenience ... In view of the fact ... that my hundred days' seclusion is likely to be accomplished to my entire satisfaction and that I feel God also will be entirely satisfied with it, I have, God knows, the honest conviction that during the period between 10th June and 30th June, 1951, God will, out of His infinite wisdom and grace make me take a Step which will bring about an extraordinary revolutionary change in my life, and in the life of the servants, the Arrangementwallas and the Old Life disciples and all those directly or indirectly connected with me.⁵

⁵ *Circular NL 25*, Statement issued on 1-5- 1951.

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While elucidating this Step, Baba continued:

I have firm conviction that God is so determined that I shall certainly be made to take the irrevocable Step . . . This Step might plunge me into a life older than the Old Life or newer than the New Life; or into a life below both these lives; or into a life above both these lives . . . I am also confident that by God's help and by His Will the result of the irrevocable Step which I shall come to know and declare in June, 1951 and which I shall put into execution on 16th October, 1951 will fructify by 16th February, 1952. All this has been put before you plainly and clearly in order that my statement may remove confusion, if any, and give confidence, if none, to you all. Nevertheless I feel, the result of this irrevocable Step that God will bestow in His own ways will in no way depend upon whether one is confused or confident.

The extraordinary that has to happen must happen by God's Will.⁶

Correspondence Course in the Bible

On May 23, the seclusion was over and the Baba party was getting ready for a shift to Hyderabad. After this strenuous work of a hundred days, Baba wished to leave Mahabaleshwar for a short period — a change. Before leaving for Hyderabad, Baba consented to visit Poona for a few days. A bungalow in one of the suburbs of Poona was kept at Baba's disposal and also for the *mandali* going with Him. This was a huge unfurnished house in the part known as Wanori. On arrival Baba felt that the house was not suitable for His relaxation and work, especially because of a nearby tannery which filled the surroundings with an awful odor. The men *mandali* went out in search of another house and were

⁶ Circular NL 25, An Elucidation issued on 1-5-51.

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delighted to find a really ideal place for Baba. This was Guruprasad. Thus the foundation of Baba's work that He did in Guruprasad in the 1960s was laid in the New Life.

During Baba's stay at Mahabaleshwar, He had expressed a wish that no one should directly or indirectly try to see Him or write to Him. The Baba people abided literally by His instructions. However, one day there came a visitor, a Roman Catholic priest. He had not come to see Baba about whom he knew nothing, but he wanted to meet Murli Kale, who was one of Baba's New Life companions. During Baba's stay at Satara, Murli, to improve his knowledge of English, had enrolled as a candidate for a correspondence course in the Bible. A novel idea! Every week he received a printed lesson based on the gospels of the apostles. Along with each lesson there would be a questionnaire on that particular part. It was a sort of test to find out how far the pupil had studied and grasped the truths revealed in the New Testament.

From the beginning of this course Murli relied on Eruch's help in writing the answers. Eruch in his teens had studied in a Catholic school at Nagpur. There he attended the scripture classes and studied the New Testament with great interest, so much so that he developed a great love for Jesus the Christ.

In the scripture classes, Eruch would sometimes ask questions about certain incidents in the life of Jesus. The Father would explain the matter well but at times there would arise a question to which he, being unable to answer, would reply, "Sit down, Jessawala. That's a mystery!" When this continued to happen often, Eruch thought, "How nice it would have been if I had been in the company of Jesus! Then everything would have been plain and simple; no mystery!" It was about this time (1930s) that Meher Baba frequently visited Nagpur and stayed in Mary Lodge owned by Beheramshah D. Jessawala (Eruch's father) who was a high ranking government officer — the Chief Inspector of Factories

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and Boilers — for the Central Province and Berar, now the state of Madhya Pradesh. This estate had a big garden with some fruit trees and many potted flower plants.

During Baba's visit, on school days, Eruch would sometimes get into the house by the back (wicket) gate, have a wash, change clothes and leave for the playground to join his friends, while Baba would be strolling near the main gate, occasionally inquiring about Eruch. Gaimai, Eruch's mother, would later say to her son, "Why do you evade Baba's company, Eruch? Do you know who is Meher Baba? He is our Prophet Zoroaster come again!" Eruch would frankly tell his mother what he thought and did. Of course he revered and respected Meher Baba very much. But he had not as much love for Baba as he had for Jesus. His heart silently whispered, "Even if Meher Baba is Zoroaster come again, so what? I love Jesus the Christ. I await His second coming." Thus the *Avatar* of the Age, Meher Baba, was lovingly waiting for Eruch at the main gate, while Eruch with his genuine yearning to be in the company of the Christ was unknowingly evading Him by sneaking through the back gate! What irony! Years later, Eruch had the conviction that the same Ancient One, who had come as Zoroaster, as Jesus and as other *Avatars* in the past, had once again assumed the human form as Meher Baba and he accepted Him as the Lord, the Highest of the High.

Eruch had left Nagpur in 1938 to stay permanently with Baba Now after twelve years, while he was going through the Bible lessons that Murli received, he was in a way reliving his days at school. His deep interest in the New Testament and love for Jesus were reflected in the answers he framed in reply to the questionnaires. As the weeks passed by successive lessons were received, but with each lesson Murli's enthusiasm diminished, and he started depending entirely on Eruch for the answers. After a month or so, the Baba party shifted from Satara to Mahabaleshwar where Murli's course concluded and

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he heaved a sigh of great relief!

According to the convention of the institution, one of the priests in that area was asked to contact Murli and to offer him a special present as his answers were most remarkable. The priest congratulated Murli on his scholarly answers. Murli had never dreamt of such an honor and was completely taken aback. He hurriedly ran to Eruch who was warming water for Baba's bath and said, "You helped me in submitting the answers during the Bible course and now I request you for the last time to relieve me of the subsequent predicament! At present a priest has arrived to offer me a present for the distinction I obtained in the scripture course. But how can I reveal to him the secret of my success?" Eruch did not want to go but sensing Murli's awkward position he decided to accompany him. Eruch was in his *banian*⁷ and boxer shorts. During the conversation that ensued, Murli practically said nothing, except "Thank you, sir" when the Father offered him the prize.

The visitor was very much impressed by the way Eruch conducted the talk and felt impelled to ask him, "What are you doing here my son?" "I am serving my Lord," was Eruch's reply. This made him all the more curious to ask Eruch more questions. As Eruch wanted to return soon to his work, lest Baba notice his absence, he gave precise but profound answers. The priest, a thin, middle-aged person, indirectly challenged Eruch on the truth of his statement that he was serving the Lord. He also quoted some references from the Bible asking people to be beware of imposters. Eruch answered, "I am speaking from my personal experience and not from the words stated in any Book or books. Again, how can you prove to me that the One I am serving is not the Lord?" During this talk Eruch, however, did not make even a passing reference either to his own study of the New Testament or to his love for Jesus the Christ when he was studying in the St. Francis De

⁷ Undershirt.

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Sales High School conducted by the Roman Catholic Mission. The conversation between Eruch and the Father continued and the latter seemed to be more and more receptive to Eruch's words. When he left, what feeling he carried about Meher Baba, the Lord alone knows!

Murli had already sneaked away from the scene. Eruch returned to Baba who did not ask him anything about his absence. After many days when Baba heard the funny incident of Murli's "grand success" and the visit of the priest, Baba beamed with a smile. Maybe it was the reason why He allowed Eruch to have a long talk with the Father. Baba in His infinite patience knew when the seed of His name would germinate in the heart of the priest.

It will, however, be interesting to mention that Murli's casual interest in the Bible was in a way rewarded by Baba in November, 1952 during one of the meetings in the hall at Meherabad. Under Baba's instruction, Murli wore a gown like that of a priest and read the Sermon on the Mount to Baba who solemnly stood before him, holding a cross in His hand.

The hundred days' Seclusion began on February 13, and ended on May 23, 1951. The Great Seclusion in the Blue Bus (June-July 1949) marked the initiation of the New Life, while the present Seclusion irrevocably established the foundation for the next "Step of *Manonash*", the concluding phases of the New Life.

Manonash Meeting at Hyderabad

1951 — Part II

The Unexpected Call

BY the first week of June 1951, Baba, the women *mandali* and the servant companions were at Hyderabad. A month earlier, Baba had wished to inform some of His disciples and devotees of the Old Life about a meeting to be held in the last week of June. A special letter of invitation from Baba was sent to selected Baba people. I give below a part of the letter I received:

To enable you to come within the field limits of my association for the period, I desire you to be present at Hyderabad [Deccan] for three days, 28th to 30th June, 1951. In compliance with this you should be present at Hyderabad for the occasion. If, in spite of your wishing it deeply and your trying for it utmost, due to unavoidable circumstances you are unable to come, do not worry . . . You are to come alone . . . Send the acknowledgement slip duly filled in and signed whether you will attend . . . If you are coming details of when and where to arrive at Hyderabad will be sent to you by Adi during the first week of June.

— BABA

The letter points out how Baba was perfectly practical in arranging any meeting or program, big or small, to enable His lovers to attend it with a free mind. A few were summoned by Baba for ten days, some for seven days and the rest, by far the largest group, for three days.

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At the Mahabaleshwar meeting everyone had the impression that they would never see the Beloved Master in person again. Baba's life and activities whether in the Old or the New Life were simultaneously simple and mystical. Yet whatever He did or said was so perfect that it carried the stamp of finality. Therefore, the only hope of seeing Baba again lay in His perfect unpredictability. In one's life with Baba the unexpected happens only when He leads you beyond all hopes. As one grows in His love, the intellect voluntarily agrees to be subservient to the Divine Will — the natural flow of Life — and then follows the fun of following Baba! Baba, though infinitely slippery, guides each one in learning and relearning the basic requirements of spiritual life — whole-hearted love and unconditional surrender to Him. But this is not an easy lesson!

When I received the earlier circular about "the irrevocable Step" it evoked a considerable concern in me. The intellect tried to interpret, understand and sometimes even rebelled against Baba's mystical statements. But each time, in the end, the storm would subside with the heart reaffirming, "Whatever the Compassionate One does or says is for the ultimate good of all, irrespective of the outer crust, the words." In such a reflective mood I received the unexpected call to be with Baba for three days and it filled my being with joy to its brim.

The rallying point for this meeting was Hyderabad. The northwest part of this extensive city is known as the Jubilee Hills. It's a very clean and quiet locality, with many well-designed bungalows and villas, some with pretty flower beds and good lawns. A palatial building, (H.N.G. 2/529), was reserved for the meeting and also as a residence for those who were expected to come for it. Formerly this house was owned by Nawab Ali Nawaz Jung, a very influential person of the State and an architect of some renown. The spacious dining hall, the beautiful terrace, as well as a circular staircase winding round a fountain and other similar amenities which were provided expressed the high artistic caliber

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of the *Nawab*. As for me, I had never stayed in such a royal residence so the bungalow impressed me greatly. Of course, long stays with Baba in the palatial Guruprasad came much later.

The Arrangementwallas Arrived

On June 20, the few who were invited by Baba for a stay of ten days arrived at Hyderabad. They were either the Arrangementwallas or the old resident *mandali* members. On the first day of the meeting, as Baba walked up the staircase, He looked radiant as usual but a new slowness in His regal gait was noticeable. It could be assumed that the physical weakness was the result of intense spiritual work. He later conveyed to the visitors that He was suffering from piles and also had gnawing pain near the diaphragm. He had lost His appetite and the very sight of food was nauseating to Him. However, His general health after the strenuous seclusion, He gestured, was good. He then inquired of everyone present about their health and instructed all to be very careful about it during their present stay. He also asked them to forget all their worries and remain cheerful. Normal physical fitness and a free mind were the essential requirements to participate in any Baba gathering.

It was generally observed that prior to such meetings Baba would not be in good health. Was He taking upon Himself the sufferings of those invited and thus warding off the difficulties that the lovers would have encountered in their visit to Him? I have this thought because those who attended such gatherings often wondered how, despite great odds, they had managed to attend the meeting. And by the time Baba's dear ones arrived, He would start regaining His strength and good mood.

In one of the informal sittings with the first batch of visitors, Baba mentioned that before taking the "Step" He wished to be free from any *boja* (lit. burden — physical/mental) before October 1951. As a sequel of this intention, Baba wished to make some basic provisions

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till February 16, 1952 for the *mandali*. Baba instructed the Arrangementwallas about such provisions. With reference to the *mandali's* spirit of dedication which was without any spiritual or material expectation from Baba, He proudly stated, "Compared with the importance of the day to day carrying out of the Master's orders through thick and thin, even the courage of the martyrs is trivial." On another occasion someone brought up, though inadvertently, the subject of mass *darshan*. In reply to this Baba conveyed, "At first I am going to have *darshan* of [the] Old Meher Baba State! or go blind. And this seems to me the only remedy for the many problems including the mass *darshan* programs." He also added that *darshan* was worthwhile only if people were truly ready to avail themselves of the opportunity.

This reminds me of Kabir's couplet wherein he succinctly says, "If the Master offers you anything, however insignificant it may be, it is precious like 'milk'; if you ask for something, even anything which you think is the best, and the Master gives it, it is like plain 'water'; and if you force the Master to give you something, it is as bad as extracting 'blood' [of the Master]." If you ever dare to receive the most precious gifts at the hands of the God-Man, surrender to Him totally and voluntarily, and do not ask. He KNOWS best what to give and when to give. True to Baba's words about *darshan* we find that after the period of *manonash* Baba visited the West and some parts of India to give *darshan*.

And He awakened in some the rare spark of His love, a unique gift from the God-Man. And as love is essentially self-communicative, its radiance will continue to enkindle the hearts of others and keep aglow the *Avatar's* work of awakening humanity.

In Baba's Overwhelming Presence

On June 27 the third group of about seventy Baba lovers, from different states of India reached Hyderabad.

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Kalemama, one of the old *mandali* and the father of Murli, one of the New Life companions, came to Kurduwadi, my town, on June 26. We decided to travel together. In those days the trains were overcrowded but because of Kalemama's old age and serene expression the passengers in the overcrowded compartment treated us well and we got sitting accommodations. We had to change trains at Wadi but we missed our connection and instead of arriving at Hyderabad in the morning we didn't get in till late afternoon. Vishnu had come to the station to receive the Baba people. He also arranged for our transport. In the taxis we were driven to the bungalow on the Jubilee Hills. It seemed a lovely place. The flowers in the garden seemed to wave at us but our hearts were eager to greet the Divine Gardener, Baba.

From those who had arrived earlier we learnt that Baba was on the first floor and the new arrivals would be ushered into His presence soon. This made us extremely happy. We met Pendu, the manager, and we were directed to our rooms and beds. I also contacted Adi and paid him seventy-five rupees towards my lodging and boarding arrangements. This prompt payment on arrival was one of the conditions mentioned in the printed letter from Baba. After a quick wash, I rushed near the room where Baba was meeting His dear ones. Within a few minutes I was called in and there was Baba, as beautiful and radiant as ever, His entire form beaming with love. Though in the circular it was clearly mentioned that no one should ask Baba any questions, He, of His own, lovingly gestured if I had to ask Him anything, anything! I kept silent. He continued, "How is your health? Any worry?" "Nothing special, Baba. Sometimes physical weakness wearies me," I replied. With a sympathetic smile He gestured, "Don't worry about it, about anything! Again as long as you are here remain happy and cheerful; do good justice to lunch and supper." And with a twinkle in His eyes He gestured, "Forget about school and family members, but do not forget to be punctual at the meetings! "The

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interview ended with my intimacy with Baba not just renewed, but invigorated as well. A fresh wave of love refreshed me. I felt my body and mind were geared to a new energy to face life, come what may.

About fifteen of us who arrived in the afternoon got together and we were apprised of the points conveyed by Baba in the earlier part of the day. In the morning, Baba told the gathering that He had to attain "the zenith of strength" at a time when He was at the "zenith of weakness", in an impossibly short period of four months — October 16, 1951 to February 16, 1952 — and as such His life was at stake. To the visitors He conveyed, "You have been called here to bear witness to the Declaration that I am going to make tomorrow, before God." "Witnessing the God-Man's Declaration, what does that mean?" I thought. But in Baba's overwhelming presence such thoughts vanished like mist before the bright sun.

In the evening, Baba left for His residence and we were told that He would be visiting Ali Nawaz's bungalow by 8 A.M. the next morning. We were to get ourselves ready before that time for the meeting. After a sumptuous supper the Baba people lovingly shared many stories of the Master's grace and compassion. Baba lovers from Hamirpur performed a *bhajan* program. Their simple love for Baba impressed me deeply. I was lodged in a billiard room with many pointers lined on the wall. I thought, "We are like the billiard balls rolling on the table depending on the skillful strokes and touches of Baba."

The rather long train journey had tired me but because of the intense inner joy of meeting Baba, I did not sleep well. There were not enough bathrooms to accommodate the number of guests. But everyone, as is the custom among Indians, wished to have a bath before meeting the Beloved Master. In fact, a bath was compulsory only if one had had a wet dream. However, by 4 A.M. most of the people woke up. They were attending to the morning chores, repeating slowly and melodiously

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the blessed name of Baba. We knew Baba's habit of arriving earlier than the scheduled time. So, by 7 A.M. almost all of us had finished our breakfast. Baba arrived at 7:15 and was busy talking with some of the *mandali* in connection with the three day program. He also met some people from different groups.

Meher Baba's Declaration

On June 28, the momentous meeting was to be held in a special hall on the first floor. As per the instructions, before getting near the hall we washed our hands and faces and we were eagerly waiting in the adjacent rooms for a call. At ten minutes to eight, Baba clapped and we started going into the hall. All squatted on the carpet in the Indian fashion. Baba, with flowing hair wearing a white *sadra* was sitting in a wooden chair. He inquired of Pendu, Adi and other group heads if all had come in. Then His fingers started moving on the alphabet board. Addressing the gathering He stated, "One thing I can definitely say with all emphasis is that for me, for you all and for those connected with me: by February 16, 1952 things won't be as they are now, whether for good or bad, and I feel confident it will be for the best." He continued, "To be honest, in the New Life I never felt so happy as I feel now. And this happiness makes me feel that God wants me to make the Declaration."

Baba casually referred to the hundred days' seclusion and told the gathering how enormously helpless and incredibly nervous He felt in that period. He added, "Last night I hardly slept. All of a sudden at about 3:30 in the morning, it was clearly revealed that God wants me to take the irrevocable Step. Since then I am happy and do not feel nervous at all. I feel deep down in my heart that God will definitely help me to regain the Old Life Meher Baba State by February 16, 1952." Asking us to be very attentive, He gestured, "Be here wholly when you listen to the Declaration." He got up

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and washed His face and hands in a basin that was placed in a corner. As He occupied His seat He looked very solemn but of course not without the Divine glow about Him.

Before the delivery of the Declaration, Dr. Ghani read out its Corollary — What God Has Determined — to the audience. The important parts are given below:

1. The period required for this inevitable Step will be from October 16, 1951 to February 16, 1952.
2. The Step God wants me to take is one of complete and absolute annihilation. That means, that during this period of mental annihilation, I will, in the natural course of events, be facing physical annihilation as well, without my actually seeking it.
3. Irrespective of what I was, am, and will be, God in His Infinite Justice will see to everything. My strongest and only advice to each one of you is to hold fast to your faith and love — at least in the same proportion as now, if not in greater.
4. I will plunge deeply into the act of Annihilation from October 16.
5. I ask God in all humility to help me achieve the desired end by February 12.
6. In the event of my physical death the Arrangementwallas have to carry out the instructions I have given them.
7. I will be away from Hyderabad from October 16 to February 12, 1952.
8. Anyone who wants to go through this dying process with me can join me, but ... I will have absolutely no responsibility and might have no concern whatever for anyone accompanying me.
9. I order the servants who are with me, to choose between two things; to join me in this hopeless task, or to stay at Hyderabad doing whatever duty I allot to them.
10. From July 1, to February 12, I might be available either to all, to a few, or to none.

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11. Even if there is only one of you accompanying me I shall be quite pleased and satisfied and even if many choose to come with me I will not mind.
12. Also, from amongst those offering to come with me, I will finally decide who is to accompany me, and who is to stay [behind].
13. During this period of annihilation my actions and mode of living will be free from any binding conditions. I might beg for anything, demand anything, accept anything or reject anything, or perhaps I might do none of these things. I will do anything ordinary or extraordinary, good or bad, as the occasion may demand of me, based on the Will of God for this great Annihilation.¹

Dr. Ghani also read aloud the Urdu and Hindi translation of the Corollary and Deshmukh its Marathi version. After this reading, Baba got up from the chair and gestured for all to stand up. He folded His hands in a devotional manner. Most of the visitors did the same. Baba also closed His eyes. Dr. Donkin on behalf of Baba very solemnly read out the following Declaration:

In the presence of God, and bearing in my heart all the Perfect Ones of all times as witness, I declare that by the help and Will of God, I will definitely take this Step of Annihilation on October 16th of this year. God helped me to do the seclusion work of the 100 days to my entire satisfaction and I feel absolutely confident that God will help me to attain to the Old Life Meher Baba State by 16th February 1952, and to manifest universally.

To those present, Baba gave the following order:

I want everyone of you who is present here as

¹ *Circular NL 26.*

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witness to this Declaration, to fast for 24 hours on tea and water, on the 16th of October, beginning from 8 o'clock in the morning of that day.

This profound and sublime Declaration was received in great silence and admiration by the Baba people. Baba, as He took His seat, declaring a break of fifteen minutes. Whenever any serious message or discourse was given, Baba would generally order a short recess.

The Discourse on Manonash

When we assembled again Baba looked very cheerful and relaxed. He told the gathering that from the middle of October He would not be in Hyderabad for four months. To give all an idea of the magnitude and seriousness of His work that He had to accomplish during those months He spelt on the board, "It would be facing 400 deaths in four months!" He asked the servant companions and all the visitors to seriously and honestly consider if they really felt like going with Him during that period. Baba reminded all that He would bear responsibility towards none. No one who wished to join should expect any material or spiritual benefit from Baba; on the contrary he would have to face sleeplessness, sickness and starvation. One of the old persons asked if there was any age limit in accompanying Baba. With a smile Baba gestured, "No age limit! But for heaven's sake do not say 'yes,' assuming that I may order you to stay behind." Looking at the gathering He added, "Don't fool me and fool yourself. After knowing your decisions I shall decide for each one wishing to join me."

Then Baba commenced dictating from the alphabet board a discourse in English on *Manonash* (annihilation of the mind). It was simultaneously translated into Hindi. A few, including myself, tried to note down Baba's words to the extent that we could. I must state that I am neither a steno nor a typist. But

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from whatever I scribbled in long hand and with the gaps filled in from my memory I am trying to reproduce the matter in this chapter. I have, however, tried to maintain the sequence in which the discourse was given. Later on, the notes on this discourse were edited, compiled and published in a book, *Meher Baba and the God-Determined Step*, by Ramjoo Abdulla. To me this discourse is a superb commentary in simple words on the Sermon given by Baba at Mahabaleshwar.

Baba opened the subject:

Mind. Mind changes according to the *sanskaras* [impressions] but it is not [basically] transformed. Mind is of the false and it remains false. Being false it can be annihilated. Today you think "I am a man." If your body falls and you get a body of a woman, you will think, "I am a woman." This "I" of being a man or a woman is false and it continues to think so till there is real transformation. Mind is never transformed; Ego is transformed only once. Ego is of the Real and it shall ever remain Real. By Ego, I mean your very Being as *Astitva*. Ego by itself is not false; mind makes one think so. Mind creates worlds, delusions and illusions yet it is never One in itself. Ego [as witness consciousness] is always One in itself. The Real Ego that each of us has is apparently bound up by the mind and makes the Real Ego think of itself as false. Mind makes you think birth and death, happiness and misery are real; and nothing can be more false than this. You are never born but mind gives the impression: "I am this." "I am that." "This is my wife." "This is my child," etc. Mind always keeps you in a tap dance. If you know that you and your wife and your children and all are One, and that you never die, never suffer, what else would there be to know?

So mind which is made up of false impressions makes the Real I think itself false. Mind may make You say, "I am God," but not make you feel, "I am

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God." So as long as mind is there, Ego cannot be transformed from its false assumption [attitude] of its Real State. You are really Infinite and Eternal. But you do not feel it. To experience this Original State, mind must go. But who is to destroy mind? The very act of destroying creates impressions and mind gets bound. The magic (*jadu*) of *sanskaras* has bound you so tight and skillfully that the more you try to come out, the more you get bound. The only recourse is that mind has to annihilate itself by itself. So Hafiz says:

Tu khud hijabe khudi, Hafiz, uz miyan burkeez
(Hafiz, remove thyself for thou art the veil.)

But how to remove yourself? The very process of removing creates impressions.

So the Perfect Masters laid down different paths that subsequently direct towards destroying mind, retaining consciousness. These paths are based mainly on action, meditation and love. The Masters knew that actions which have false ego and mind full of impressions as its background, instead of destroying mind, feed it. And there is no escape from action. So some Masters demonstrated the path of "actionless action". The secret lies in performing action in a way, [as if] it had not been done at all. Then what happens — past impressions of actions done get spent up and [as you have no self-interest] no new impressions are formed.

It was lunch time and Baba told the gathering that it was no good in getting on with the discourse (though on *Manonash*) on empty stomachs. We were with Baba for about four hours but we became time conscious only after hearing Baba's remark. In the dining hall the tables were already spread. After a delicious lunch and a little rest we were back in the meeting hall by 2 P.M.

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Decisions about Accompanying Baba

Baba first asked the servant companions about their decisions. He made it clear that if anyone or all of them wished to stay behind, He would provide for each good boarding arrangements plus some pocket money! Baba of Himself asked Vishnu to attend to the lodging and food arrangements of the women staying at Hyderabad. Nilu was sick and so he did not attend this session. Murli decided to stay behind. Donkin very devotedly said, "Baba, my heart will go with you but my body shall stay at Hyderabad." The remaining six servants, Pendu, Gustadji, Baidul, Eruch, Kaka and Kaikobad, decided to be with Baba.

Then turning to the visitors, Baba asked those to stand up who were willing to go with Him for four months, accepting the conditions laid down by Him. Out of 75 Baba lovers, 15 showed their readiness to accompany Baba through thick and thin. They were: Minoo Kharas, Nana Kher, Pankhraj, Goma Ganesh, Sailor Mama, Todi Singh, Kishan Singh, Daulat Singh, Pritam Singh, Gadekar, Babadas, Shripat Sahai, Kain, P. D. Nigam (Pukar) and A. C. S. Chari. The Arrangement-wallas were not to consider anything about this subject as they were given certain duties from the beginning of the New Life. Baba concluded, "Today you have decided for yourself; tomorrow I will decide for each of you. As for me, whatever I have already declared is final." Baba continued, "In fact, this New Life [phase] is only for me. I began it on October 16, 1949. Till now, although I am leading the New Life, I have not been able to live it as I wanted to. In the coming period of four months, I want to live the whole of the New Life and end it for me."

Baba looked very happy for the main subject of the meeting was over. He, however, did not wish to continue the discourse on *Manonash*; He desired to complete it the next day. He further suggested, "Now let us not be serious. Tell me some good jokes or humorous

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stories. Make me laugh and laugh yourself." If I remember correctly I vainly tried to entertain Baba with a joke I had recently read about the "sane sailors". When a large steamer was in mid-ocean these "wise" sailors were ordered to throw a passenger from cabin No. 36, who had recently expired, overboard. In all readiness they went there. Surprisingly enough the man in the cabin said, "But I am alive! Perhaps you got the wrong number." "Who are you?" asked the sailors. "I am a press reporter," the man nervously replied. "We don't believe reporters! They give false news," said the sailors jointly and holding him tightly they threw him overboard! I do not recollect how far I was successful in telling this joke but my diffidence in speech and poor presentation must have amused my friends, I hope. Of course there were some funny stories and jokes in Hindi, Gujarati and English that made Baba and the whole group laugh heartily. As opposed to the solemn morning session the afternoon atmosphere in the hall was one of joviality and light-heartedness, vibrant with Baba's loving presence.

Born Once; Die Once

The next day, June 29, all assembled in the same hall by 8 A.M. Baba had already arrived. He told us that He had not slept well the previous night and so could not make any decision about those to accompany Him during the *Manonash* phase. He added, "As I want to be absolutely free from any kind of interference the selection is difficult. I find servants Pendu, Eruch, Gustadji and Baidul O.K. but, God knows, I have not yet finally decided about them. I had a very restless night and hence I could not take any decision. Now till I decide I cannot sleep! If I feel that even to have one [person] with me is a hindrance, I shall go alone. But again that does not seem possible."

After such casual talk, Baba wished to continue the discourse. He gestured, "This is the last thing I wish

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to explain in my New Life." But before Baba began the discourse, Ghani directed His attention to the question of "one birth and one death" as believed by Mohammedans and Christians. To enlighten all on this subject Baba replied:

The real Goal of life is not the death of the ego but the death of the mind. When Mohammed or Jesus or Zoroaster talked of being born once and of dying once, it was of the mind [and not of the body]. When mind dies totally, the false ego becomes Real I [i.e., false ego is completely effaced and Real I manifests]. In reality ego is not born and as such it does not die. Ego [as witness consciousness] is always Real. It is only due to mind that ego acts and feels limited and false. Mind takes the body according to its good and bad impressions. Taking up and giving up of bodies is not the mind or the ego taking birth or dying. Every time when body is discarded, mind survives, impressions remain. These impressions press on mind to spend them by taking another body. So mind takes another body according to the impressions; ego witnesses. And another body and another. When you are in sound sleep, ego, mind and *sanskaras* are there. *Sanskaras* wake up mind. They say, "Go on, spend us." Waking up from the sound sleep is, in a way, an everyday birth for the body. When one body is left, another body comes up though there is a time lag between the giving up of one body and taking up another. Mind exists even when a new body is not given to the ego; it is the mind-state of heaven or hell. But mind has to die while it is in a human body, retaining full consciousness. This is the Goal.

At the close of His reply to Ghani's question, looking at the gathering Baba gestured, "If you can really grasp the central point of what I have been explaining now, it will be easy to follow the rest [of the discourse on *Manonash*]."

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The Three Paths

Through simple words Baba further elucidated:

Yesterday, I told you that the Perfect Masters chalked out different paths for the annihilation of mind. Let us commence with the path of action because the main activity of mind through body is of actions. As long as mind is there body is there and actions too are there. Actions leave impressions and impressions feed the mind. So for the false ego to be transformed into Real there is no other remedy than *manonash*. Therefore the Masters wanted actions to be done in a way so that the effect of the impressions becomes impotent, hence no result, no binding. For example, a scorpion generally wags its tail and stings. It is natural for it to sting someone. What is the result? The person suffers. Even if the scorpion's sting is cut off its act of wagging and stinging continues. But as the "thorn" is removed the person concerned does not suffer. So, the Masters thought of the following remedy on actions: act in a way so that the results do not bind and no impressions are created. But for this, the action has to be rendered impotent in the matter of its dangerous results and this is not easy. Why? I will explain.

There are three ways by which the actions done do not bind. One is to act but absolutely without having any self interest. But this selfless action which is referred to as selfless service is almost impossible. Even the feeling of pity for others should not be there. The moment you think that you are serving or uplifting others you get caught and bound. The second way is to dedicate whatever you do to God or to the Perfect Master. This dedication must be constant and continual, without a moment's break. If you are able to do this then actions have no impressions created. But this is very difficult. The third way is to act on the orders of the One whose

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mind is annihilated and so is free from impressions. If you do whatever He tells you to do, you are not bound. This too is not simple for you must have 100% unflinching faith in the Perfect Master.

The second path is of meditation. Some Masters put forth the way of defeating the mind through mind itself, through meditation² and concentration. When mind is concentrated, its further function is weakened and the *sanskaras* exhaust themselves. Thus the *sanskaras* which are like [earth] worms and which must have execution, eat themselves. But during this process the mind feels frustrated and gets more desperate. Unwanted thoughts, that you never had, assail you and eventually one of the three things happen: 1) you get fed up and you can no

² During this meeting Baba did not explain further regarding the path of meditation. But as this subject is of great interest to some seekers of God, I quote below some excerpts from a discourse which Meher Baba gave in later years:

There are various retreats in India where meditation classes are held and different but set techniques of meditation are observed, which, if followed faithfully and for a long time, result in slight occult experiences such as seeing flashes of light, colors, even visions, etc. These occult experiences by themselves are nothing, are in the domain of illusion, and not only have no direct bearing on the incomparable reality of God-Realization, but can actually become a hindrance and obstruction to the aspirant's path to God.

The direct Path to God is the Path of Love. Love is not derived from meditation — it has nothing to do with it. Love is a grace of God. One in many has it, and it is all sufficient. Love does not depend on anything but itself. Love without meditation is enough — meditation without love is not. That is why *Sadgurus* or Perfect Masters do not set meditation for their disciples as a necessary routine. Rather, they stress the aspect of love and selfless service. The masters of the Path, on the other hand, not having reached the Goal themselves, advocate meditation to the aspirants following them.

In the Prem Ashram the boys were touched with the spark of Love ...Then, when the phase of intensive meditation followed (with the resultant flashes of occult experience), the love aspect began gradually to decline. (*The Awakener*, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 31.)

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more concentrate; 2) you get sleepy or drowsy; 3) you continue to get more and more bad thoughts. For the very few who persist patiently with a brave heart the result is that the mind is temporarily stopped. Then one experiences ecstasy [*bhav*] but it becomes like a dope to which one gets addicted, or one goes into *samadhi* [trance]. But this is not *manonash*. Thus through concentration, annihilation of mind is not possible.

The third path is of *bhakti* [devotion]. When one is totally devoted to God or the Perfect Master he forgets himself and his mind gets no chance to form new, binding *sanskaras*. The Eternal Beloved is ever present but unless you step out of your old habits how can you aspire to meet Him? So Hafiz says:

*Hazoori gar hami khahi
az uoo ghayeb mashow Hafiz
(O Hafiz, if you want the Beloved's Presence,
do not absent yourself from Him.)*

But even through the path of devotion, complete and continual self-forgetfulness is practically impossible. So, no *Manonash*.

At the close of this discourse Baba stated:

The mind's part is to make ego think through body, feel false and experience the *sanskaras*. But when mind sees that the false ego is not ready to accept its dictatorship, then submissive, loose and weak impressions are formed which eventually lead one towards the Goal. Thus either through selfless service or meditation or devotion, though not perfected but if persisted, with 100 percent faithfulness a stage comes when mind is permanently at rest or becomes totally quiet and sees God everywhere [and longs for Union with Him]. Only the Perfect One, who is free, can uproot [annihilate] the minds of others, even of the masses.

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In conclusion Baba continued:

All the paths are meant for *manonash*, to make you feel, "You are God, the Infinite, the Eternal." We are all the same, One God, but we are misled by the *besharam* [illusive] mind. With the death of mind, ego feels [experiences], "I am God; I have no connection with the body." If this shock [of gnosis] is too strong, the body drops down, otherwise the momentum [of the impressions] keeps the body going for some time and then it is shed. This is the state of a Perfect *Majzooob* [*Majzooobiat*]; mind is not there but Real I and body remain. Few after *manonash* keep their bodies and get minds too, but these minds have "impressionless impressions"; then Real I, Real Mind and Real Body remain. Such a one is a Perfect Master.

When mind dies ego realizes Reality. With *manonash*, dawns the Knowledge. By Knowledge I mean the experience of "I am God State." Then God's Knowledge is yours. God is All-knowing. So in a flash you know Everything; you KNOW that there was/is nothing to know.

When the discourse was over Baba conveyed, "I am absolutely in the New Life and full of weaknesses. To achieve this extremely difficult task of *manonash*, I have four months in hand. It is like a lame person wanting to reach the top of Everest in four months. But I feel 100% confident that God will help me to achieve this. On October 16, when you all fast that day, pray for five minutes from the bottom of your hearts asking God to help me gain this end."

We Thanked God

Baba concluded the discourse and proposed that in the afternoon He would like to have some indoor games. He added, "This will be a sort of relaxation for me and

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will help me to decide about the persons who should be with me during the *Manonash* period." From this serious subject the minds of all were thus switched to playfulness and fun. Different persons suggested different games and Baba attentively listened and even joked about certain proposals. Unexpectedly He ordered an interval of half an hour. During this period He interviewed one by one all the twenty-one persons who had volunteered to accompany Him. Baba freely discussed the commitments, liabilities and responsibilities that each one had to shoulder as most of these men were householders. He appreciated the courage and devotion of all and their loving response to His call. Any honest and sincere offer or expression always evoked Baba's admiration. But He comforted them all and asked each one to wait for the opportune moment. When we all gathered in the hall we were told that out of 21 persons, Baba had decided "No" for fifteen.

Pendu, Eruch, Gustadji and Baidul were to accompany Baba definitely for four months. About Minoo Kharas and Daulat Singh, He was to give His final decision on Sept. 7, 1951. Baba instructed Adi to issue a circular to the Baba people instructing them not to have any correspondence with Baba and not to try to see Him, even if they happened to hear of His whereabouts. The suggestions for games were again invited. Baba, being very practical, directed the discussion to a program of light entertainment, including a fancy dress parade. He, Himself proposed the names of some who were to participate in the program.

After lunch the Hindi group was apprised of the discourse in English on *Manonash* given by Baba in the morning. Pendu was busy having a small stage put up in the hall. Exactly at 3 P.M. the "show" commenced. An atmosphere of joy and lightheartedness prevailed. Dr. Ghani appeared on the stage as a Pathan to loud applause. Savak Kotwal, though in his forties, danced so well that his skilled performance gave Baba the surprise of the day. The last item was a song by

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Mirabai, sung by Rustum Kaka (Hatidaru), with the accompaniment of a harmonium, in a very melodious manner. The refrain of the song was:

Payori mainay Ramaratan dhan payo.
(Verily have I found the most precious pearl — the
Divine name of the God-Man, Rama).

As the song proceeded Baba looked very solemn. With a steadfast gaze, He commenced looking outside the window most of the time. This was unusual. It seemed that He was gradually withdrawing Himself from everything about Him. This had its effect on the audience too. Rustum Kaka with eyes closed continued to sing in his warbling, inviting voice.

When the song was over, with a remote glow in His eyes, Baba conveyed, "I have heard this song and some similar songs many times. But today it is something different! The song has evoked 'something' in me and in the presence of God I felt that the work I have undertaken will be done successfully. So let us thank God whole-heartedly." At Baba's indication all the people rose up and thanked God from the bottom of their hearts. It was 4:30 P.M. At the close of the program, Baba gave a locket (with His picture on it) as a present to each one who had tried to entertain Him. The rest of the people felt that they had lost a good opportunity to receive something precious from Baba's hand. Perhaps sensing this feeling, Baba called for some roses and very lovingly gave a petal to one and all. He dictated, "The main program for which I have called you is over. Tomorrow we go out for sightseeing to Osmansagar." Someone suggested that a group photo with Baba be taken; Baba agreed and this made all happy. This was perhaps the first and the last group photo in the New Life. A great treasure! We were to get ready by 7 A.M. the next day.

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Grand Game of the God-Man

On June 30, we were in the hall in the morning. Baba had put on a yellowish silk coat over His usual white *sadra*. He had His hair plaited, though a few loose strands were still flowing about His earlobes. To me He looked rather slim but very beautiful and powerful too. He dictated from the board, "These two days have been of extreme happiness for me. I hope you too must have shared this happiness. Having made the Declaration in the presence of God and the Perfect Ones of past, present and future and you to witness it, I feel extremely happy. Honestly I feel happy." Baba put the board aside and at His gesture we left the hall for the two buses waiting outside. We reached Osmansagar, a very extensive man-made lake (*sagar* literally means a sea). We walked along the bridge and reached the other end of the garden. A very cool and charming place indeed!

Then we drove to Char Minar (the famous four minarets) and Madina Masjid (mosque). To make us feel more refreshed, Baba asked all to have tea in a good hotel. Then we were taken to Bagh-e-Aam (public gardens). With Baba in our midst we quickly strolled through the garden. Stopping on the way Baba conveyed, "I like Hyderabad for its spiritual atmosphere; specially for its Hindu-Muslim unity in matters spiritual." He also told us that He had not washed His head for the last two months but after our departure, He intended to wash His hair. Some wondered why Baba should tell them about such a personal thing. Was it not a sign of intimacy towards those who had come?

The party returned to Ali Nawaz's bungalow by 10:30 A.M. The photo was taken on the steps of this building. Baba again called us on the first floor and distributed *prasad* packets (sweets) to all. He instructed each one not to open it until one got home. Once there, however, we were permitted to share the contents with our family members and whomsoever we liked. Baba

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was lavishly showering His love on us all. As He left for lunch, He told us that He would be back again by 2 P.M., and that no one should ask Him any question at the time of farewell. We had our meals and we packed our bedding and bags. We were about to rest but Baba's car rushed up the driveway and within a few minutes we were in His presence. It was again a session of humorous stories and good jokes. By afternoon we collected our small supper cartons. Baba gestured, "Don't waste a single particle from this stuff." *Prasad*, from the abode of the God-Man, is indeed one of the most precious things to receive. With a cheerful face He waved at us and gestured, "Don't worry. Be happy." What a loving parting!

The next morning I reached Kurduwadi. For a number of days the happenings in the hall at Hyderabad often filled my being with a delightful feeling. Thoughts about Baba and His graceful gestures brought me luminous, lively remembrances. Yet, sometimes, a part of my mind would raise questions about the discourse on *Manonash* and especially Baba's New Life — its inauguration and imminent consummation. My heart continued to remain steadfast in His love but the mind would not keep quiet. How can it ever understand the grand game of the God-Man who in fact is leading His own self in and through us all beyond births and deaths. The explanation given by Meher Baba linking the reincarnation theory of Hindus with the no rebirth concept of Muslims and Christians was undoubtedly superb and matchless. Till this day, I personally have not come across such simple yet most convincing statements made by anyone on such a paradoxical spiritual subject. Besides, Baba's statement that each time one gets up from sleep it is a new birth in the same body appealed to my heart very much. "What a challenge and an opportunity each day, for a new life!" I thought.

And the New Life? This phase was and still is a divine enigma to me. Can the limited mind ever fathom the Universal Mind? Never. Yet, my monkey mind

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went on speculating upon this phase. Now, years later I may add that Baba had to become an "extraordinary" ordinary person of the New Life subsequently to declare on September 7, 1953 His status as the Highest of the High (Perfect God: perfect man) which is beyond the phases of the Old and the New Life.

The Declaration of the irrevocable Step *of Manonash* at Hyderabad was an intensely profound event of the New Life.

Beginning of the Manonash Phase

1951 — Part III

A Tentative Program

AFTER the momentous meeting held in the last week of June, Baba and those accompanying Him in the New Life continued their stay at Hyderabad. Murli Kale was one of them. One day, however, he expressed a wish that, if Baba had no objection, he would like to complete a full course in homeopathy. Baba readily released Murli from the New Life and sent him back to the Old Life asking him to qualify as a homeopath. Murli later practiced as a doctor in Jabalpur, till he died in 1977. According to Baba's order, on July 10, the servant companions and the women *mandali* fasted for twenty-four hours, beginning at 6 A.M. the same day.

Perhaps this was the year when Baba started giving instructions to His dear ones about observing a fast or silence on this memorable day. In the later years, especially in the 1960s, a regular circular would be issued to Baba people about such observances. In 1968 the option of fasting was not given. Maybe Baba indicated that henceforth His followers should commemorate this day by observing silence. The silent loving remembrance of the Silent One on July 10 is a delightful experience, a spiritual treat, worth trying.

In the second week of August, Baba called Meherjee, Adi, and Adi Jr. (Baba's youngest brother) to Hyderabad for a meeting in which He discussed certain arrangements to be made in the near future. With reference to the immensity of *manonash*, Baba hinted that there was the possibility of His dropping the physical body during

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this critical phase. He also told them that during the specified period of four months (October 16 through February 16) He would be absolutely free to act as He liked. He would, if He so felt, change any previous plans at any moment. He would exercise absolute freedom from any conventional bindings. During this meeting, He also chalked out a tentative program for the four months which consisted of the following phases:

(1) Baba wanted to spend thirty to forty days on a hill which had a spiritual background. He wanted the hill not to be too close or too far away from the city of Hyderabad. (Baba informed Meherjee and others that He had already approved of such a hill and that preparations had been undertaken to make the place suitable for His stay.) His work on the hill was to be the first phase.

(2) In the second phase Baba planned to march on foot from Hyderabad to Aurangabad. He casually mentioned that during this journey He might don just a loin cloth (*langoti*) or any other dress; He might eat four times a day or fast for days on end. In short He would do whatever God would want Him to do.

(3) The third phase depended on Baba's physical condition. Adi was to find a suitable hill near Ahmednagar or Poona where Baba would be concluding His *manonash* work. Baba also stated that because of the two preceding phases, wherein He would be deeply absorbed in achieving *manonash*, there was the probability that His physical body would be on the verge of being shed. If such a situation would arise, Baba wanted to spend the days till February 16, 1952 at a place associated with His Old Life Meherazad Hill. In anticipation of such an exigency, He gave certain instructions to Adi and Adi Jr. to consult Sarosh and Padri about repairing the cabins and erecting a tent on the top of that hill.

Such indefiniteness and refusal to commit Himself to a set program was not treated by His close ones as a gap

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in or lack of knowledge on Baba's part. They were deeply convinced that Baba was setting an example for man, the way he should totally trust, under any and all circumstances, in the Omnipotent Will. Owing to this element of unpredictability, Baba's New Life is regarded by some as a period of utter incomprehensibility; they are not completely wrong. The Divine Life of the *Avatar* is beyond the comprehension of human understanding. In addition, it cannot be denied that the New Life of Meher Baba was an unprecedented phase!

Unexpected Help from Baba's Schoolmate

In the third week of August a circular from Meher Publications brought the following news to Baba people: "Baba never has had and never will have any concern with politics. He, therefore, desires that if any of you do political work you must never involve Him or make use of His name in connection with that work. Baba desires that all His Old Life followers should not give way to the temptations of pursuing selfish ends. [They should] kindle in their hearts the light of love for God." Perhaps by this Baba meant that the real religion of man lies in loving God selflessly.

Here I would like to include an excerpt from Meher Baba's Message on "Religion and Politics" delivered a year or so later, clarifying His approach towards these two much talked of subjects. He stated:

As the Divine Life embraces in its being One and All including even the members of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, and since from the moment of the attainment of *manonash* [annihilation of the limiting mind], I have attained complete unity with that immeasurable and illimitable Divine Life, I cannot and will not identify myself with any caste, creed, religion or political party. From my point of view, *all religions are great, but God is greater*. In the same way, all political parties are, in their own

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way, noble, at least in their consciously accepted objectives. But the claims of the undivided and indivisible life are irresistibly supreme, and, as such, greater than those of any party, howsoever noble.¹

The issuing of the previous circular about participation in politics had also a practical reason. In August, 1947, after India's independence from British rule, the Nizam of Hyderabad tried to establish his sovereignty apart from India. Soon a stage was reached where the Indian government had to intervene by declaring a "Police Action" against the Nizam who eventually had to surrender, and Hyderabad state became an integral part of the rest of the nation.² A year had passed by but the communal unrest and political rivalries had not subsided. Movements of people visiting Hyderabad from different parts of India were looked on with apprehension, and Baba's companions, a group belonging to different religions and even nationalities, were sometimes unduly interrogated by the police.

In the earlier meetings with the *mandali*, Baba had hinted that during the *manonash* phase He would exercise absolute freedom from the conventional ways of life. So it was rightly presumed that if such behavior on Baba's part evoked inquisitiveness in people, it would unnecessarily bother Him and might even impede His work. Eruch thought that before the commencement of this phase it was essential to meet the Superintendent of Police and inform him of Baba's activities, especially the proposed march on foot from Hyderabad to Aurangabad, for this division was under his jurisdiction. He also planned to request the authorities to issue a departmental notice informing the police outposts

¹ Meher Baba, *The Fiery Life and Seven Other Messages*, (November 1952).

² In 1951, on the basis of linguistics, Hyderabad State was divided and merged into three existing States; Andhra, Karnatak and Maharashtra.

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along this particular route about the movements of Baba and His group.

So one day Eruch visited the Superintendent's office and tried to convince the junior officer to grant him an interview with his superior. He did not reveal his intention except to say that he had to see the Superintendent on some urgent and serious matter. The sub-inspector in charge reluctantly led Eruch to the chamber of his boss. Mr. Reddy, the Superintendent, seemed to be a fine person. He said to Eruch, "What can I do for you?" Eruch explained, "We are a party of six. My elder brother and one other member of our group observe silence. We intend to go on foot on a pilgrimage from Hyderabad to Aurangabad. During our journey my elder brother, in His own way, wishes to offer some financial help to needy persons. Besides, He wants to pay His respects to the God-intoxicated ones. We are from the Bombay area. In view of the present situation, as a precaution, I request you to inform the police stations on this particular route about our journey so that our intention will not be misunderstood and that we may not unnecessarily be detained anywhere. And sir, if you could give us a letter of introduction we shall be grateful to you."

Mr. Reddy very attentively heard each word but he asked Eruch to wait awhile and he phoned his residence to say that he would soon be returning home with a guest. Eruch thought that Mr. Reddy was preoccupied with some other work. The talk, however, continued and at the end the Superintendent unexpectedly asked Eruch to accompany him to his bungalow. With a feeling of wonder Eruch followed him to the car and in a short time found himself in a well-furnished house. Mr. Reddy asked him to make himself comfortable in the living room and he went inside the house. After about ten minutes a servant brought some refreshments and tea but the host did not return. After a few minutes more of suspense Mr. Reddy entered the room. He looked happy and was holding an old glass photo frame

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in his hand. In it was a group photo of young students, a cricket team. Pointing at Baba, Mr. Reddy said, "Is M. S. Irani your elder brother? I guess I am right." This was a great surprise to Eruch.

Mr. Reddy explained that he had studied at St. Vincent High School with Baba at Poona and that they had been on the same cricket team. It became clear that Mr. Reddy, as the Superintendent of Police, already knew about Baba's stay in Hyderabad and from Eruch's talk he had definitely concluded that Eruch was referring to his schoolmate, M. S. Irani. Eruch could no longer conceal Baba's identity. After some cordial conversation, he left the house with the assurance that he would get the letter of introduction and also a confirmation that information about Baba's activities would be issued to the police stations on the Hyderabad-Aurangabad highway. When Eruch told Baba about this unexpected response from the Superintendent, Baba looked very pleased. However, because of the New Life conditions the "two good old cricketers" could not meet each other. Within a few days Eruch collected the required certificate without any difficulty from the office. Thus, a friendly gesture from an old schoolmate saved the Baba party from any type of interrogation from the police in the state of Hyderabad.

It was about this time that another of Baba's schoolmates who was also one of His dearest disciples, Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, breathed his last. On August 20, at about seven in the evening he passed away of a heart attack, in Poona. Baba dictated a special circular about Ghani; a part of it read:

Of the many things I have had to renounce and to suffer in this New Life, the passing of Ghani is among the greatest . . . To me, more than to any of you, Ghani was unique and of all the work that still remains to be done for me by others, there is much that could have been done for me by Ghani and none else. The big head of his was truly a treasure

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house in which wisdom and wit were blended to perfection. We were intimate friends since our earliest years, and no one knows better than I how courageous, and how loyal and loving, was his heart. To me, therefore, Ghani is irreplaceable, both as a friend and as a tool for my work.³

Models Safely Reach Khojaguda Hill

Khojaguda Hill is about 15 to 18 kilometers from Hyderabad. On its top there is a *dargah* of Hazrat Baba Fakruddin who lived in the fourteenth century. He was regarded and revered as a great *wali*. At present, although this *dargah* has become a place of yearly pilgrimage, strangely, it has no roof. On inquiry one learns that in the past, quite a few times, the *wali's* admirers contributed to build a roof over the tomb, but every time, within a few days, it was blown off. This led people to conclude that Baba Fakruddin preferred exposure to the heavens for all time. On one of the hill sides there is an old temple of Vishnu, with an image of the god reclining on a big coiled cobra (Shesh), its hood spreading over his head. Another important place close to the *dargah* is a cave about 20' by 15'. The height from the entrance gradually decreases and the darkness increases as one gets inside. In the interior part there is a ledge which served as a shelf for the models which Baba kept near Him during His special work of *Manonash*.

Baba, on His first visit to the hill instructed the companions to construct two improvised rooms in the premises of the *dargah*. He asked them to keep the three places the *dargah*, the temple and the cave clean. Baba wanted to stay here for a fortnight, but the scarcity of water threatened to upset this plan. The companions, while walking about happened to notice a pond of stagnant water. Baba seemed happy to hear

³ Circular NL 30, issued on 1-9-1951

this. Having regarded this site as an ideal place for His work, He told the companions that they could use the water for all purposes after boiling and filtering it. At the foot of the hill were paddy fields and palm trees, some standing erect while a few grew close to the ground. This hill itself was barren and had no vegetation; it only abounded in big black stones.

Before the inauguration of the *manonash* phase, a month or so earlier, Baba had asked Eruch to get five models: a temple, a mosque, a church, a pagoda and a fire temple (known as an *agyari*).⁴ These respectively represented five religions of the world: Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. A craftsman from Agra was assigned the job of preparing these models. He, however, expressed his inability to carve an *agyari* the place of worship for the Zoroastrians or the Parsees because he had never seen the interior structure of a fire temple. So Eruch sent him a drawing of a fire urn which is kept in the sanctum of any Parsee place of worship. Accordingly all these models were cut in alabaster. The approximate size of each was about 7" by 7" by 7". Each one could be separated into four or more parts and could easily be fitted on a very thin plate of soft marble. The temple had a small *Shivling* and inside the pagoda was a tiny image of Lord Buddha. When Baba learnt that all the models were obtained intact at Hyderabad from Agra, He looked especially pleased. The companions, however, had no idea of the way Baba was intending to use these models.

On October 13, Baba instructed some of His companions to take the necessary luggage to Khojaguda Hill, along with the box containing the models. They packed and placed every piece carefully in the car and set out. The car stopped at the foot of the hill. Pendu, Gustadji and Baidul started to walk towards the *dargah* to inspect the site and rooms. Meanwhile,

⁴ Lit: Friendship with fire.

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Eruch parked the car, rolled up the windows, locked the doors and then followed the other companions. He had hardly gone ten to twelve meters when the sound of the moving car made him look back. He was greatly astonished to find that the car had started rolling backwards. He rushed towards the car but it had already started picking up speed, so it was impossible for him to open the locked door and get hold of the steering wheel. He helplessly tried to run alongside the car and slow it down but soon he had to give up for, unbelievably, the car started leaping over rocks and bushes. Fantastic! Sometimes, confronted with an obstacle, the car would stop, back up or turn aside. Extremely quixotic! Eruch had left the car in neutral and had put the emergency brake on. In spite of this the car started "skipping over" slanting toddy palms as if it were possessed by some spirit. This erratic movement of the car could be regarded as symbolic of the frenzied mind, waiting for its annihilation at the end of the *manonash* phase! Eventually, after this incredible display of jumping, the car got stuck in a muddy paddy field.

Pendu and others who were watching this strange phenomenon felt relieved at its expiration. Eruch, however, looked worried, perhaps for the models' safety. He knew that the other pieces of luggage were replaceable but not the alabaster models. These had been designed under Baba's instructions and it was obvious that He definitely wanted them for His work, beginning on October 16. Eruch anxiously got near the car and cautiously opened the door. He was sure that the car had been seriously damaged. He turned the ignition key and the engine started, but it made a frightful noise. With his hands on the steering wheel, Eruch was trying to think of what to do next. Just then a truck, which had brought faggots (fuel) for the Baba party, arrived. With the help of this truck, they towed the car from the muddy field onto the regular road. Eruch and the driver of the truck inspected the car

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engine and found that the paddy straw and leaves had gotten into it. When these were removed the engine no longer made a queer noise and despite its mysterious jumps there were no visible signs of damage to the car.

The pieces of luggage along with the box containing the models were carried up the hill. In one of the rooms Eruch, somewhat nervously, opened the box and had another surprise. All the models were perfectly safe!⁵ Not a piece was broken, not even a scratch was noticed on any of them, and all heaved a sigh of relief. Owing to this unforeseen event, the companions were late in getting back to Hyderabad. Baba inquired about the delay. Gustadji, one of the *mandali*, who was observing silence and had silently witnessed the whole episode, was also a great mime and exquisite story teller. He related the entire episode, Eruch interpreting Gustadji's gestures. This gave Baba many a hearty chuckle. Nevertheless, He neither expressed any surprise over what had happened nor did He make any passing remark about this mysterious happening, not even in later years.

Second Anniversary of the New Life

On October 15, Donkin drove Baba to Khojaguda Pahad (hill). Vishnu, Nilu and a *mulla* (a Mohammedan priest) accompanied Baba in the car. The five companions Gustadji, Baidul, Pendu, Eruch and Daulat Singh who were to stay with Baba during the *manonash* phase, had already arrived. Minoo Kharas, who was permitted by Baba to be with Him, could not join the party for reasons of health. It was drizzling and at 3 P.M. Donkin's car, wet with rain, arrived at the foot of the hill. All walked up and after a quiet round of inspection, Baba looked pleased with the arrangements made in the *dargah* of Baba Fakruddin. After a

⁵ At present these models are preserved in a glass case in Adi K. Irani's office at Ahmednagar, India.

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short while the *mulla*, in the presence of Baba and His companions offered the conventional prayers, and those who came with Donkin, except for Baba, returned to Hyderabad.

The next day, October 16, was the second anniversary of Baba's New Life, and it seemed that He wished to plunge deeply into His *manonash* phase "the abnegation of the personal will in the Divine Volition". This was also a day of great importance to those who had attended the meeting called in June at Hyderabad. The participants were regarded as witnesses to the Declaration made by Baba and they were ordered by Him to fast on October 16 for twenty-four hours on tea and water only. In the premises of the *dargah*, Baba offered five slightly different prayers to God, the Infinite One, who, during the *Avataric* Advents assumed the human forms of Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed. As all the companions were solemnly standing, Baba gestured to Eruch to read the following:

O Ahuramazda! In the name of your Infinite Greatness and in the name of your Beloved Self, Zoroaster, and in the name of all prophets and saints and your lovers, Meher Baba beseeches you to help him to carry out successfully his four months' work beginning from today, the 16th October, 1951 and asks you in all humility to have his desire fulfilled and the ultimate object achieved by 16th February, 1952.

With a few changes in addressing God, the Eternal One, as *Paramatma* or *Allah*, the above quoted prayer was professed in the names of the Beloved *Avatars* — Krishna and Buddha, Beloved Son Jesus and Beloved Mohammed Mustafa.

On the same day, according to Baba's earlier instructions, five of His dear ones who were in the Old Life were deputed by Him to visit Udwada (Gujarat), Mathura (Uttar Pradesh), Sarnath (Bihar), Goa (near Bombay, M. S.) and Ajmer (Rajasthan). According to the

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Indian traditions, these towns respectively represent one of the principal places of worship for the Zoroastrians, the Hindus, the Buddhists (including the Jains), the Christians and the Mohammedans. These are also the centres of immense spiritual importance. The nominated Baba lovers were to visit these places in advance to find one righteous, poor person belonging to the faith, the place of pilgrimage stood for. Baba followers were then asked to request that this person fast on October 16. On this day, after taking a bath the man was to visit that sanctifying abode — an *agyari*, a temple, a pagoda, a church or a mosque — and recite a special prayer previously dictated by Baba. At the end, on Baba's behalf, the nominees were to offer each one of these five persons a hundred and one rupees as *dakshina*.⁶

On this day, in the *dargah* of Baba Fakruddin, Baba went into seclusion at night, till the early hours of the morning, continuously for seven hours. The companions were posted outside, on watch, so that nothing should disturb Baba in His work; only the five models were keeping Baba's company. Thus began the phase of *manonash* in earnest.

Manonash means passing out of the separative self (mind) to abide in God. Baba being the God-Man, whose *manonash* did this phase indicate? He did not explain. With reference to Meher Baba's Advent as the *Avatar*, (the God-Man), Hazrat Babajan, one of Baba's *Sadgurus* (Man-God) used to refer to a Persian couplet meaning:

Of your own, you were free;
Of your own, you allowed yourself to be bound.

And any Baba lover, as an ordinary man, may dare say that Baba, out of His compassion for those who are ordained to be in the orbit of His Love, took on Himself

⁶ Cash or kind offered to a person as a mark of respect for discharging spiritual duties.

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this additional binding (of *manonash*) so that its consequent consummation could help His dear ones break the shackles of their minds to get closer to Him, in His own time. One has not to forsake one's rationality after coming to Baba. As long as one has a mind one is apt to have views whether he expresses them or not. However, after sincere and honest efforts there comes a blessed moment, when one cheerfully accepts one's inability to understand the hidden meanings behind the actions of the God-Man and one totally gives in. Perhaps with the development of such an attitude Baba lovingly reveals a glimpse of Himself in the heart of such a person that quiets the mind. The more the heart is emptied of dogmatic interpretations, the more it is filled with the light of His renewing Love. Then the apparent contradictions and paradoxes do not bother such a lover. It is love alone that counts.

Baba's visit to the cave on Khojaguda Pahad started on October 18. Eruch carried with him the box of models and according to Baba's instructions arranged them on the ledge inside the cave. The first sitting was of seven hours at a stretch. A day later, in a similar way, Baba spent three hours in Vishnu's temple. In the afternoon He contacted a mast named Gulam Hussain. Baba's work in seclusion continued for nine days on this Pahad and He felt satisfied. So He changed His previous plan of staying there for fifteen days and decided to set out on the march on foot. Two routes in India shall especially be remembered by Baba lovers for the Avatar of the Age having journeyed on foot on these roads during His New Life. One is in the north of India Benares via Sarnath (Bihar) to Najibabad (Uttar Pradesh) and the other to the south from Khojaguda Pahad (near Hyderabad. A.P.) to Meherazad Hill via Aurangabad, Khuldabad and Imampur in Maharashtra.

In the afternoon of October 24, Baba with the five companions left the memorable hill of Khojaguda with their bag and baggage. It took Him about a month to

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reach the most memorable and significant Seclusion Hill at the back of Meherazad. During this journey, depending upon Baba's mood and the urgency of His work, the party sometimes traveled by bus, goods lorry or even a bullock cart. The first halt of this march was at Lingampeta. In a *dak* bungalow the party rested for the night and the march was resumed the next morning. During the first week of tramping, Baba once noticed that dear old Gustadji looked rather tired. Though he did not complain of any fatigue, Baba, under this pretext, allowed the whole party to avail itself of the opportunity to travel by truck. In fact, it was loaded with so many odd things that the companions had somehow to accommodate themselves on pieces of luggage of various sizes.

At Jogipeta the party got some information about a *mast* of that town and got down. The companions tried to find this person but all their efforts were in vain. At the next stop, Sadashivpeta, Baba was very happy because he contacted a good *mast*. This God-intoxicated soul looked bizarre for his eccentricities had veiled the flame of love that had lit his heart. The party moved on to Chitgop and another "fool of God" named Gopal was contacted. In his divine intoxication, Gopal seemed to flout the laws of hygiene. Love indeed is self-sufficient; it does not depend on anything but itself.

In the Old Life, the *mandali* were not allowed to witness Baba's meetings with the *masts*. With the commencement of Baba's New Life the ban was lifted and the companions could watch the loving responses of the *masts* in the company of their Divine Beloved. The *masts* would often be drawn closer to Baba with sudden affection. Sometimes, overpowered with emotions, they would gaze at Him, beaming with intimacy and inner recognition. Baba's redeeming touch and radiant glances would fill the hearts of the *masts* with rare ecstasy and "blissful agony" which, I presume, later opened wider visions in their states of involved consciousness.

The next stop of the journey was at Humnabad which

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is famous for the *samadhi* of Manik Prabhu, a Perfect Master of the nineteenth century. Later, his son and disciple, Manohar, enjoined his followers to bury him alive near the *samadhi* of his dear father and Master. At midday, Baba quietly sat near the *samadhi* of Manohar Prabhu and then the party proceeded to Gulbarga.

A Delightful Diwali Day

On October 29, Baba left Gulbarga for Itgah where He contacted a very lovable *mast*. In the 1940s Baba had twice visited this village. Some years back, this *mast* in his divine exuberance, used to roam about naked; later he was persuaded to wear clothes. He usually stood near a particular well, eating roasted gram "grain by grain". At the time of the first contact, in his innocence, he implored Baba to break His silence, while during the second meeting he offered Baba a cup of tea from which he had some sips. Baba accepted the drink with love. After this third satisfactory meeting Baba boarded a bus for Gulbarga. But after a short journey He got down and with the three companions walked the distance to the *dak* bungalow at Gulbarga. The fourth companion was asked to follow a bullock cart in which a few belongings of the party were kept. Use of any conveyance or its rejection was totally at Baba's discretion. No one questioned, "Why?" Rather, such thoughts were alien to the companions.

The next day Baba visited the distinguished *dargah* of Khwaja Bande Nawaz. Arrangements were made for Him to sit for half an hour quietly in a secluded spot. After this silent sitting, instead of going back to their residence, Baba wished to contact some *masts* who usually roamed about the city. Baidul, who was with Baba, was adept at finding these God-intoxicated souls. With his tenacious memory he could remember the names of the *masts* residing in different parts of India and also the localities where they moved about. So he began to lead Baba to different parts of the city to spot

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these "men of God". In the morning Baba had entrusted some additional work to Eruch. Side by side with the work of contacting the God-absorbed and the God-communed, Baba also wished to continue His work with the poor in a special way which He had adopted from the New Life. He instructed Eruch to find a few "once rich" middle-class families, irrespective of caste, color and creed, who, owing to some unforeseen calamities, were in dire need of some financial help. Baba wanted to extend some monetary aid to the "heads" of such families.

Eruch who had previous experience with this type of work, set out to meet some social workers in the city and gathered some preliminary information. To verify the facts he started visiting different houses with a few people who volunteered to help him. This activity of Eruch's aroused an uninvited concern in a prominent businessman who happened to be one of the city fathers. Incidentally, it was at this time that the communists were concentrating on a major revolutionary move for the poor, in the adjacent province of Telangana.

The above mentioned businessman belonged to the other political party which had its base in Gulbarga. He assumed Eruch was one of the workers of the Communist Party. He was upset that Eruch seemed to be setting up some sort of poor relief program without consulting him; his political influence was challenged! He phoned police headquarters and suggested an immediate inquiry into the intentions of this stranger visiting the city. A police constable was at once sent to summon Eruch for interrogation.

The constable approached Eruch and asked him to report to the police station. Eruch refused to obey this oral order and continued his work of visiting the houses. When he felt convinced of the information gathered from the social workers, he started instructing the "heads" of the families about the formal procedure that his elder brother would observe while offering the

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financial help. Then he started for the rest house. While on his way back he met Baba and Baidul. A little later the constable approached Eruch for a second time and in an authoritative tone asked him to present himself before his boss. The Baba party already had official permission to travel throughout the State as well as credentials from the office of the Superintendent of Police at Hyderabad. So Eruch openly told the policeman, "We are staying in the *dak* bungalow. This is our address. And if your inspector needs any information about us please request him to see us there."

The constable was surprised to receive such an outspoken reply but he had to leave. The party went back to the rest house. It was late afternoon and no one had had his lunch. The walk had been quite exhausting. So the companions preferred to have a bath before the meal. By evening they felt relaxed. But just then a police van drove in. The Deputy Superintendent of Police, who felt rather offended at Eruch's reply, had personally come to the *dak* bungalow, perhaps to exercise his authority.

But the moment that he saw Pendu all the misgivings he had had about the Baba party vanished. He knew Pendu well as one of Meher Baba's closest disciples. Some years earlier he had been working as an inspector of police at Ahmed-nagar. In the beginning he had suspected that Pendu was a member of one of the leftist groups, for he had seen Pendu in close company with a political leader of Ahmed-nagar, who worked for the Communist Party. In fact, Pendu's concern in meeting him was in connection with Baba's work for the poor residing in certain villages. Baba wanted to distribute food grains and cloth to the needy villagers. The inspector, after awhile, realized his mistake and felt convinced that Baba's *mandali* were above politics, leading a disciplined and dedicated life under Meher Baba's orders. He apologized to Pendu for his mistrust of him and their relations became very cordial, especially after his having Baba's *darshan*.

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Some years passed and on promotion he was stationed at Gulbarga as a Deputy Superintendent of Police. Seeing him Pendu said, "What brought you here? Any inquiry?" And both had a hearty laugh and a warm handshake. In his conversation, he told Pendu about the departmental circular they had received from the Head office at Hyderabad. But in the route stated therein Gulbarga was not included. When he read it he even had thought how nice it would have been of Baba, had He decided to pass by Gulbarga! And he requested, "Can I see Baba, today?" Pendu went inside and explained to Baba the whole affair and it surprised even Pendu that in spite of Baba's New Life conditions, He permitted the police officer to have His *darshan* the next day.

Accordingly, on October 31, which happened to be the second day of *Diwali (Padwa)*, Mr. Ghanti, for that was the name of the police officer, came in the morning with his wife and children. He had brought a big, beautiful garland of scented flowers and a basket of sweets, for it was an occasion of great rejoicing for the family. As he did not know about Baba's recent restrictions, he prostrated before Baba and Baba did not object. After some time the family left in a very happy mood. Thus, instead of Eruch reporting at the police station, Baba made the Deputy Superintendent present himself before Him at His residence!

The same day Baba with His companions left for Yadgiri by the morning train at 10:30 A.M. In the afternoon, He walked a distance of about four miles to reach Tumkur to contact Tilgur Swami. Baba had previously met him in July 1944 and May 1949. Years earlier there was a time when the children used to stone the Swami and make fun of him. But soon the people were convinced of his Divinity and the whole village began to revere him. The headman of the Tumkur village built a special room for Tilgur Swami and also a cellar which was to be the resting place of the Swami after the dropping of his body. Baba had earlier revealed

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to the *mandali* that Tilgur Swami was a *Jivanmukta*, a Perfect One with God consciousness and Creation consciousness. He was a tall person with a regal face which radiated peace about him. This meeting, like the two previous ones, was remarkable. As they looked into each other's eyes and perhaps gazed into their infinite depths, the Swami tried to bow down to Baba who gracefully prevented him from doing so. The meaning of the Swami's reverential gesture appears very significant.

Baba, in spite of His innate wisdom of being the Ancient One, had entered the New Life phase of complete helplessness for His *Avataric* work. He had "become" an ordinary man, but Tilgur Swami, a realized soul, having recognized the infinite humility of the *Avatar* in stooping to the level of a common man, could not resist honoring this amazing *Avataric* role by paying obeisance to Him. Thus, in the New Life, Baba established His relationship with ordinary men, with the men of God (*masts*) and also the Perfect Ones, through the *Jivanmukta* of Tumkur. As soon as this perfect meeting was over, Baba briskly walked back to Yadgiri. As the party reached the town it was presented with a delightful sight. The whole town was, as if welcoming Baba, flickering with lights from small earthen lamps placed by the door and courtyards of every house. It was *Padwa*, the second day of *Diwali*, the Festival of Lights. The lights were welcoming the Light!

Arriving at the Blessed Consummation

1951 — Part IV

Father Blesses the God-Man!

AFTER offering some financial help in His own unique way to the "heads" of the families selected by Eruch, Baba left Gulbarga for Humnabad. During a short halt in this town, out of His loving concern, He made a specific provision for the essential medical treatment of a poor girl. The itinerary of the New Life provides a good many instances of Baba benevolently helping others, without divulging His identity, one of His ancient habits. The party journeyed by the high-way to Tuljapur, famous for the temple of Bhavani Devi the goddess who is supposed to have offered Shivaji the Great a sword as *prasad* which brought him victory in almost all his battles. During a two day stay at the *dak* bungalow, Baba contacted a few *masts*. In the early morning on November 4, Baba with His companions left Tuljapur on foot for Osmanabad. They had to walk continually for six hours. After a little rest the party proceeded on the journey via Bhir (Bid) and Aurangabad. Baba and the companions reached Khuldabad on November 8.

This small village was Baba's headquarters until November 15. Their quarters, adjacent to the Awalia Masjid, in what is now the VIP guest house, consisted of three rooms. This is regarded as one of the important places connected with Baba's New Life. This little village is rich in spiritual heritage. In fact, during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the area from Daulatabad to Ellora, with Khuldabad in the middle, became

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the focus of Sufi culture in the Deccan (the southern part of India), and hundreds of people aspiring for spiritual guidance migrated to this part of the country. By the end of the fourteenth century, this region boasted of fourteen hundred tombs, big and small, including those of some great spiritual personages. Amongst these the most important *dargah* at Khuldabad is of Zar Zari Zar Bakhsh, one of the illustrious Sufi Perfect Masters, a pioneer who established himself in this area.

A day after His arrival at Khuldabad, Baba began visiting the different *dargahs* of the saintly personages. On one occasion, He sat all alone by Himself in a cave associated with Zar Zari Zar Bakhsh. He concluded this silent sitting by bathing and giving new clothes to a *mast* of that place. It was in this cave where Sai Baba in one of his earlier lives was observing spiritual austerities under the direct guidance of Zar Zari Zar Bakhsh. Pleased with his love and devotion the Master bestowed on him his Grace which bore fruit after a few lifetimes and Sai Baba became not only God-realized but *Qutub-e-Irshad*, the head of the spiritual hierarchy until he handed over the charge to the *Avatar* of the Age, Meher Baba. On November 11, Baba visited Daulatabad, which is about 15 kilometers to the northwest of Aurangabad.

The next day He went to Ellora (Verul), famous for its caves, carved by Buddhists, Brahmins and Jains. These were carved between the fourth through the thirteenth centuries A.D. They are massive and magnificent, charming and most artistic. Owing to the anonymity of the artists, the spirit of selflessness and perfect dedication to the spiritual ideals shines through every cave. During His visits in later years, Baba seemed specially interested in caves nos. 10 and 16. In all there are 34 caves. The former — no. 10 — is known as Sutar's (Carpenter's) Jhopra where Lord Buddha is represented as Vishwakarma, the personification of creative power. Vishwakarma is also regarded as the "lord of the arts, executor of a thousand handcrafts," including carpentry, Buddha the Perfect Craftsman. Cave no. 16, the Kailash

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temple, is truly regarded as one of the world's wonders, a monolithic structure not built but rather carved out of a mountain of rock.

Baba's preference for this day's work was cave no. 32. This cave is known as Indra Sabha (Assembly), wherein the statue of Mahaveer, the founder of Jainism and the twenty-fourth Tirthankar, seated on a lion throne has a place of prominence. Baba sat all alone near the austere image of this Perfect Recluse. The delicate carvings, hewn with consummate skill, are meant to propagate the tenets of the Jains belonging to the *Digambar* (one wearing no clothes, nude) sect that advocate total renunciation, inner and outer. Hence this place might have been one of the ideal seclusion spots for Baba's work during the New Life of "helplessness and absolute renunciation". On the way back to Awalia Masjid, Baba met two spiritually inclined people named Pralhad and Keshav Maharaj.

On November 14, Baba called the *mujawar* (attendant) of Zar Zari Zar Bakhsh's *dargah* to His residence, washed his feet and gave him 21 rupees. Then the Baba party went to the shrine of the Perfect Master (Bakhsh) where the *mujawar* collected seventy-four people from the Mohammedan community. Baba repeated the usual formalities of washing and drying the feet of all. A special prayer from the Holy Book was recited by the *mujawar* which ended with a chorus blessing from all: "May His [Baba's] spiritual work, whatever it be, get fulfilled. Amen!" Baba then left the *dargah* for the village and went round for *bhiksha* at the doors of five Hindu families. He accepted with love and humility whatever was offered to Him. This begging was followed by serving some poor Hindu villagers in the way He had done with the earlier group that morning. On this day Baba gave over a thousand rupees as *dakshina* to the needy residents of Khuldabad. He begged for food; He distributed the riches; Baba the Beggar, Baba the Bestower!

The next day, November 15, shall be remembered

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for two uncommon incidents. In the morning, Baba with His companions left by bus for Aurangabad. As the party arrived Baba had an unusual desire. He asked Eruch whether he would be able to find a venerable Christian Father in Aurangabad who would bless Him! Eruch replied that he would try his best and Baba added, "You will know who he is when you meet him." With this hint they got into a *tonga* and the quest for finding the "blessed bishop" worthy of blessing the God-Man, took them to the churches, quarters and bungalows located throughout the city. Eruch met some priests, but none whom he thought was the one Baba wanted.

However, Eruch's visits to so many different priests aroused the curiosity of the *tongawalla* and he politely asked him, "*Saheb*, whom are you looking for?" Eruch told him that they wanted to meet "old venerable priests". The driver smiled and said, "Had you told me earlier about your intention you would have easily saved much of your time and trouble. I know the place where the old clergymen, priests and ministers live in retirement." And he whipped his horse and headed off in that direction. Soon they arrived. Leaving Baba in the *tonga*, Eruch went inside to inquire. A priest, dressed in a white robe, who was standing on the veranda came towards him and affectionately said, "My son, what do you want?" His loving tone and gracious demeanor made Eruch say spontaneously, "Will you please give blessings to my elder brother? He is waiting outside. Should I call Him in?" "Of course," was the kind reply. The priest was a short but robust person. From his accent Eruch gathered that he was not an Englishman. He was not sure whether this Father was French or Italian but he felt deeply convinced that he was the person Baba was looking for.

He turned round to go to the gate but to his surprise he noticed that Baba had already gotten down from the *tonga* — for the first time during that morning's *tonga* rides — and was gracefully striding towards the stairs

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leading to the veranda. Coincidentally, there wasn't anyone else there. A perfect Baba timing! Eruch said to Father Berger (that was his last name), "Here is my brother." Baba came up. He reverentially knelt down and touched the Father's feet and lovingly kissed his hand. The Father solemnly and whole-heartedly blessed the Son. A good *Avataric* joke! Baba got up and Eruch thanked the Father on behalf of his brother. Without any further conversation both quickly left the veranda. Father Berger, not knowing what had really happened, addressed Eruch, saying, "Son, don't you want me also to bless you?" "No thanks," replied Eruch and he followed Baba back to the *tonga*. The New Life events are incomprehensible, and infinitely inconceivable is Baba's New Life!

Baba with the companions went to the *dakhma* (the funeral premises of the Parsees, also known as the Tower of Silence). He instructed His men to offer Zoroastrian prayers and He, Himself silently joined them in praying with *kusti*. There He sat for some minutes in a *saghdi* (a place where a dead body of a Zoroastrian is placed before final disposal). On that day Baba seemed to be in a peculiar mood. For immediately after this, He asked the companions to take Him to the Christian cemetery. It was on the outskirts of the city, a far-off quiet place as it should be. Baba wanted to sit inside the graveyard, under a small neem tree, undisturbed by anyone for some time. As usual He posted the companions in different directions on watch so that no one might try to get near or try to look at Baba.

Eruch was asked to stand outside the cemetery by the main gate. It was noon and there was no possibility of anybody visiting the place at such an hour. Thus everything started well, but after just a few minutes, as if from nowhere, a long funeral procession was seen approaching the graveyard. The bearers were carrying the coffin, silently followed by the mourners, friends and relatives of the deceased. Eruch was distressed at the thought of these people entering the cemetery for

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this would disturb Baba in His work. On the spur of the moment, with his unique presence of mind, Eruch had the nerve to go forward to meet the procession. As it came closer he approached those leading it and offered his condolences. In a most natural way he began asking them questions about the sickness and the dependents of the deceased. He did this so naturally that the people voluntarily stopped; the conversation continued and the procession temporarily came to a standstill. Eruch's intention was to while away the time till Baba clapped, the signal that His work was completed. The spirit of obedience to the God-Man does not expect anything for oneself except the pleasure of the Beloved. The *mandali* carried out Baba's orders at any cost, irrespective of other people's comments.

At last, to Eruch's great relief, for this was really a severe trial for him, he heard the clap and at that very moment he abruptly stopped the conversation and hastened to attend to Baba. Those at the tail end of the procession had no idea of what had happened at the front. They wondered why they had stopped when the graveyard was so close. However, they also thought that there must have been a good reason for this delay. Baba had finished His work. All the companions joined Him and the party was ready to leave. Meanwhile the procession picked up where it had left and entered the cemetery. As the coffin passed, Baba gestured, "A fortunate soul, to be blessed with my physical presence just before the gross body is being laid to rest!" The day's work was over. Baba left the graveyard in a very lively mood. During such a mood His strides would be long, His arms would move swiftly and there would be a light jolly feeling about Him.

Incredible Imampur Incident

After the middle of November, Aurangabad was Baba's headquarters. One day after contacting two God-communed souls in the city, Baba, with his companions,

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left on foot for a place five miles away to contact a *sadhu* and immediately returned to the *dak* bungalow. On November 17, He visited Paithan specially to offer His homage to the *samadhi* of *Sadguru* Eknath Maharaj, of the sixteenth century, one of the most revered Perfect Masters of Maharashtra. All year round thousands of pilgrims visit this sacred place. Shri Janardan Swami was his Master whose *samadhi* is in the Fort at Daulatabad. Shri Janardan outwardly led the life of a perfect householder, inwardly experiencing his Oneness with God. The works of Dnyaneshwar, Eknath, Tukaram and Ramdas, written in the Marathi language, are respected as being as good as the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* by the Marathi speaking people, though in those centuries it was blasphemous to write on spiritual subjects in any other language than Sanskrit. At Paithan, Baba contacted two "fools of God". One of them was a young boy who remained naked throughout the year. Baba fed him with His own hands. A lucky lad!

The next day, Baba went to Jalna for His work with the God-intoxicated souls. One of the *masts* he met had dozens of rings on his fingers, including his thumbs. He was called Chhallelwala Baba. (*Chhalla* literally means a ring.) He was a good *mast*. On his insistence Baba agreed to call him to Meherazad in the near future. He was instructed to see Adi at Ahmednagar. Eruch wrote Adi's address on a note and Baba signed it to convince Adi of its authenticity. Baba used to cater to the various whims of the *masts*. Nevertheless, this *mast* never turned up. Baba alone knows why.

On November 19, Baba was at Nanded (Nander). He paid a special visit to the shrine of Guru Gobind Singh who was the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. His great contribution lay in giving his followers the book, *Guru Granthsaheb* (the Guide to God). He was also a militant Master and infused a martial spirit among the Sikhs. To counteract the aggression and harassment by the Moghul rulers, he raised a strong army. But eventually he had to flee to the Deccan Plateau. During his

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camping at Nanded he was fatally wounded and consequently lay aside his mortal coil. The lineage of *gurus* which commenced with Guru Nanak, the Perfect Master and founder of Sikhism, ended with Guru Gobind Singh. At Nanded a big shrine *Gurudwara* has been built in honor of Gobind Singh and the city has become an important place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. Baba visited the *Gurudwara* to recharge the spiritual atmosphere. He also contacted about eight *masts* of high and low grades in the city. Then the party proceeded by train for Aurangabad.

During this journey one of the companions, Daulat Singh, fell ill. He had very high fever which made him very weak. In view of the forthcoming work of *manonash*, Baba did not feel it practical to keep Daulat Singh with Him any longer in the party's wanderings towards Meherazad Hill. The next day Baba ordered him to return to Bangalore and stay with his family members. Baba told him that he was really pleased with Daulat Singh's resolve to accompany Him; however, without any fault of his, Baba wished to send him back home. Unlike his return from Belgaum, this time the homeward journey of Daulat Singh was not so painful as it was done expressly under Baba's order. Daulat Singh, cheerfully followed Baba's order which pleased the Master Companion very much.

Later, Baba with the four companions, (Pendul, Baidul, Gustadji and Eruch), reached Toka by a bus. This town is situated on the banks of the sacred Godavari. In the year 1918, Baba, with the *Prem Ashram* boys had stayed here from June through November. The first group of Westerners, including Meredith Starr from England and later a Russian *sadhu*, Christian Leik, had met Baba at Toka. The *mandali* living with Baba in those days liked the premises at Toka so much that they renamed the place New Meherabad. During the New Life the Baba party did not stay here even for a day. After a simple meal and a little rest they left the town for Ghodegaon.

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Here, by chance, the companions saw a truck owned by Sarosh (Irani), one of Baba's closest disciples and a businessman dealing in automobiles at Ahmednagar. The driver knew Baba and the *mandali* very well. After a little discussion with him it was decided that the luggage of the party would be carried in that truck to Imampur, which is about 12 kilometers to the east of Meherazad. Baba asked Pendu and Baidul to wait till the loading and unloading of the goods at Ghodegaon was completed, then they were to travel by the truck to Imampur. Baba, with Gustadji and Eruch, continued the march on foot. After an hour or so Sarosh's truck caught up with them. It was evening and Baba agreed to journey in the truck to Imampur. The party reached the old *dak* bungalow¹ by 9 P.M. There was no caretaker there and the place looked deserted. Baba, however, decided to halt there. The short stay in this dilapidated structure will nevertheless be remembered by Baba lovers for a symbolic, indelible event of the New Life. I wish to relate this exceptionally significant occurrence, as far as I remember, in the words of Eruch who was a party and witness to what happened in that rest house. He once narrated:

We had come some three hundred miles from Hyderabad via Aurangabad on our way to Meherazad, little knowing that this was the last leg of our New Life wanderings. Our mode of transport was by bullock carts, hitch-hiking in trucks, sometimes journeying by buses but mostly walking the distance along the highway, which was then a dirt road full of potholes and dust. The countryside has remained unchanged but the road is paved now.

At around 9 P.M. on 21st November 1951, after a long day we came upon an old dilapidated *dak* bungalow now known as Imampur mosque. Baba

¹ At present this building is no longer a rest house. It is now known as a *masjid* or mosque of Imampur.

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decided to rest here for the night. I selected one of the rooms for Him, felt around in the dark, cleared a space and dusted the area with a coarse woolen blanket which we used for everything sleeping, wearing, and as a protection from the sun and rain. Baba's blanket was then spread on the floor and He went to sleep. I was posted by the door as a night watch, just outside the room in which Baba slept. The other three companions (Gustadji, Pendu, and Baidul), slept below the parapet of the mosque.

After some time the snoring of some of the companions disturbed Baba so much that He had them moved, about a hundred yards over by the main road under a tree. Again, after half an hour or so, Baba clapped. With the aid of matches I was able to see His gestures and interpret their meaning. In the New Life we did not have the luxury of torches or lanterns. Baba gestured, "There is some sort of disturbance inside this room. Find out what it is." I waited and listened for some time and finally heard the sound of fluttering of a bird's wings. I felt around in the dark in the far upper right hand corner of the room from where the sound was coming. I found there a bird's nest. Returning to Baba, I told Him that there was a mother bird nesting in a niche. He gestured that I should throw it out. In the New Life we had to do our best to obey Baba's orders. I approached the nest, wanting to catch the bird — it was a dove. Baba, however, began to clap incessantly which meant to stop everything and come to Him immediately. "Did you throw the bird out?" He asked. "No Baba," I replied. "Good that you didn't." He gestured, and added, "Have you forgotten the order I had given you earlier? This action would have been an expression of cruelty on my part. Why didn't you remind me about it?"² I apologized, "Baba, I

² In the New Life, Baba told some of His companions to draw His attention to any of His actions if they honestly felt that He was expressing anger, harshness or cruelty towards any being. They were simultaneously expected to obey Him without questioning, irrespective of the nature of the order, good or bad, ordinary or extraordinary. Thus, in the New Life phase the companions in a way, had to be in readiness to "stand and sit at one and the same time! "

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completely forgot." Baba continued, "Well, anyway it's good that you didn't throw that bird out or it would have ruined the whole New Life career! Now, don't worry about it any more. Go and sit outside and remind me about it tomorrow."

In the morning when all woke up, I got water for Baba to wash His face and hands from a nearby well. There was a small bathroom (a cubicle) adjacent to the room where He had slept. After the wash, He called the rest of the companions and conveyed, "Now listen to Eruch who will tell you what had happened last night." After my narration of the entire story, Baba picked up the thread and repeated, "Eruch, why did you not remind me about being unkind to a dumb creature?" I replied, "That was my mistake, Baba. I thought that I should not argue with you at that time." Baba continued, "But as you had kept quiet and you all being my companions of the New Life, the only thing to rectify such a mistake is to punish myself. Now the only way for me to have the satisfaction of a clear conscience for what had happened last night is for you all to remove your sandals and beat me with them because of my having expressed cruelty to an innocent mother bird that was nesting!"

Well, here was another severe test and the companions had to obey Him. Baba then pinched His own ears and gestured, "We should be kind towards all creatures." That done, He looked quite happy and His look radiated ineffable tenderness all around. Then He rubbed His right hand over His heart region meaning, "I am satisfied." He, however, added, "I am pleased, but to crown the whole event, the last thing you all have to do is to spit upon me." And

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we did it because Baba was our Master and Companion of the New Life and we had pledged to obey Him implicitly. Thus Baba, for some unfathomable reason which He alone knew, took upon Himself His own humiliation, at the hands of His own close companions. Maybe, He was setting some sort of guidelines for all to be humble and kind and to respect life in all its aspects. What a profound lesson!

Some incidents in Meher Baba's New Life are most touching and unforgettable. The symbolic saving of the "dove's nest" at Imampur, at an incredible cost to the God-Man, is surely one of them.

Cabins Brought down the Hill

On the morning of November 23 began the last march of the New Life. It was a distance of about twelve kilometers from Imampur. Baba, with His four companions reached the lower Tembi Hill, now known as Seclusion Hill, without passing through the Meherazad estate. A couple of days back the men and women companions from Hyderabad had arrived at Meherazad. They were not permitted to see Baba. Only Mehera and Mani were called to see Him at the foot of the hill. Baba, in His white robe and green turban, looked serenely beautiful. In spite of His extreme physical and spiritual sufferings, Baba would sometimes look very radiant, beaming with a smile. He inquired about their welfare and within a few minutes He left for the hill. After a short distance He turned back and waved at His dear ones; it was a signal for them to return and for Him to speed up His striding to the summit. Across the narrow spine of a ridge, on an oval top of the hill, was Baba's cabin. On the *ashram* side there is no gradual slope but a steep drop.

According to Baba's earlier instructions, Padri had repaired the two cabins and erected a temporary canvas covering, a sort of a tent for the four companions. The

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arrangements for water and food were well attended to. Baba, however, did not like the proximity of the small tent to the lower cabin where He stayed during the day time and worked in seclusion. So the companions were asked to keep away from the tent for the whole day and occupy it only during the night. After sunset, Baba would retire in the cabin on the top of the hill. At Baba's clap the one on duty had to go up to Him but while getting to the top he had to be careful not to sprain his ankle on the rough ascent.

From the very beginning it seemed that Baba was not fully satisfied with the pitching of the tent. So He called Padri and suggested a few alterations. Whether in the Old or the New Life, with Baba, change was the order of the day, a glimpse of His ever-renewing creativity. From December 8, Baba fasted for four days, taking only water; for the next three days He had only liquid food. During the stay at Hyderabad, Baba's physical suffering was severe. Until the phase of *manonash* ended, He refused to pay any special attention to His physical complaints. The journey on foot, the irregularities in the programs and frequent fasting had an adverse effect on His physical health. During the first week of December, He conveyed to the companions that in view of the final phase of the New Life, beginning on December 16, it was neither suitable nor practical for Him to stay on the hill. He wanted to feel "at home" and yet keep Himself secluded from all the *mandali*. He wanted also to exercise His freedom of movement and actions to the fullest extent. With due consideration to the prevailing circumstances He expressed His readiness to continue the work, down the hill, on the Meherazad premises.

Padri was summoned and was entrusted with the plan of providing Baba with suitable accommodations, with a properly partitioned compound separating the present *mandali* hall from the Blue Bus. It was to be extended to the small building in front, then known as the engine room. The time limit given by Baba to complete the

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arrangements was December 14. Padri volunteered to finish the work in time, provided the cabins on the hill were immediately dismantled.

Baba suggested that if both the cabins on the hill could be made into only one room, it would be an ideal and perfect setup for His work. Baba also agreed to Padri's suggestion of staying temporarily in one of the improvised rooms at Meherazad, adjacent to the Blue Bus. To maintain the "link" with the work Baba had started on the hill, He wished to have a good God-intoxicated soul in a room behind the Blue Bus, and He wanted to serve him daily. By the time the work of demolishing the structures was done, Baidul returned from Thana with a good *mast* named Pathan Baba. Baba came down the hill. Baidul stayed with Baba and also looked after the *mast*. Daily Baba sat for some time with the *mast*. As this occasion turned out to be the concluding *mast* contact in Baba's New Life, I quote below an excerpt from an interview given by Baba in November 1936 which gives a general indication of the nature of His work with the God-intoxicated souls. He stated, "It is a 'game of consciousness.' I direct the spiritual consciousness towards material consciousness by rendering them [the *masts*] physical service, and uplift the material consciousness of others to God-consciousness by my Spiritual guidance. Thus my Infinite Consciousness links the two."³

It may be mentioned here that Baba's first stay in these cabins on the hill began in December 1947. It was for a period of 13 days. The last stay in the same cabins was from November 23, 1951, terminating in the second week of December. Since then the lower Tembi is known as Baba's Seclusion Hill, one of the dearest places to Baba lovers all the world over. Baba's presence and His special work in seclusion on the rocky summit have made this hill wholly holy, to the last piece of its rock.

³ *The Awakener*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, p. 13.

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In spite of the absence of any shelter, Baba asked Gustadji, Pendu and Eruch to stay on the hill. He added that this would help Him to retain the "link" with the work He would do during the interim period of His stay down the hill. The camping of the companions on the bare top, under the sky, automatically linked them with the sun, moon and the stars! It was very windy and hot in the day, and the nights were very cold. Raising a cot to a slanting position like a low roof of a hut, Gustadji covered it with a coarse blanket to serve as protection from the sun. At night the temperature would fall considerably, and the companions had to roll themselves in their blankets to ward off the cold. They had to be up there on the hill "sitting doing nothing", one of the disciplines of the New Life!

For the final phase of *manonash*, Baba felt that the nearness of a "pure being" — a *mast* or a saint — would greatly facilitate His work. So, through Adi, letters were sent to some of Baba's dear ones about the possibility of bringing such a person, residing in their respective areas, to Meherazad. Baba was to bear all the expenses. The following were included in the list of "pure beings": Badri Baba of Chandtara, Inayatulla of Mathura, Sobha *mast* of Katni, Merwan Baba of Kolhapur, Batwa Shah of Benares and a few others. Baidul was specially deputed to Tumkur to meet Tilgur Swami, the *Jivanmukta*. Baidul was asked to invite the Swami for a stay with Baba from mid-December to mid-February. In spite of the sincere efforts of one and all, no one succeeded in persuading any of the "pure beings" to go to Meherazad. Absence of such a spiritually advanced person perhaps intensified Baba's helplessness in the conclusive phase of the New Life, initiated on December 16.

True to his words, Padri completed the allotted work in time. He used all the material of the two cabins — asbestos sheets and stone floorings, including a door and two windows — to erect a single room on the ground

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level. On the left hand side there were two shelves used for keeping the five models. This part of the room, separated by a curtain running across the room, served as Baba's "office" and the other part was His relaxing room. At night He rested in the room in front of this cabin, now occupied by Pendu. On the other side of the partitioned compound stayed Nilu, Vishnu, Kaka and other companions of the New Life. But they were not allowed to meet or even greet the four associates residing on the other side. Food for the Baba party was brought from Meheru Damania, Eruch's sister, residing nine miles away in Ahmednagar, while the kitchen for the other companions was just nine yards away from the partitioned compound! What was outwardly close or convenient had no special preference in the New Life; whatever Baba wanted was implicitly done.

On December 15, Baba's final work began. On Khojaguda Hill, He commenced the *manonash* work keeping the five models — temple, mosque, church, pagoda and fire temple — near Him. Whenever He worked these models continued to remain by His side, till the end of this particular phase. The external use of certain things for inner spiritual work, though incomprehensible, is not too uncommon with the Masters. I am reminded of two similar instances from the lives of the Perfect Masters.

Sai Baba for some years used to keep with him, in a small pouch, a few coins of different denominations and during a certain period of his life, standing behind a coarse curtain he everyday used to rub these coins vigorously over one another, so much so that the surface of the coins eventually turned very smooth. The moment anyone peeped in or pushed the curtain aside to approach him, he would immediately stop this game! Another of the Perfect Masters of the nineteenth century named Akkalkot Swami Maharaj would keep by his side small and big measuring bowls containing food grains. His entertainment-work consisted in emptying out and refilling these measures. In relation to the nature of

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spiritual work the Perfect Masters have used some external media to accomplish the results on the inner planes. Baba, being the *Avatar* of the Age, seemed to have used these models for reviving and recharging the spiritual potentials inherent in different religious practices. The use of the models was one of Baba's mystical ways of working about which I dare not write any further.

Life of Oneness in Manyness

On December 24, a list of 124 "departed ones" who had loved Baba very dearly was read out to Him at a private program that began at 9 in the morning. A couple of days earlier He had given the following dictation, to be read on the occasion.

Today, December 24, 1951, in this New Life, knowing how unworthy I have been of the devotion, love and service of so many departed ones, I appeal in all humility to the most merciful and gracious God, that He should bestow His grace upon each of these departed ones according to their merits.

As an expression of this homage, and in memory of these dear ones and of many others, now departed who graced my life by their love and service, I shall today make an offering of Rs. 124 to a poor man of worthy character and shall bow down before him.⁴

The list was read aloud which comprised the names of 87 men and 37 women (total 124). It opened with Baba's dear father, Sheriarjee, followed by His childhood friend, Ghani, ending with Ganu Chambhar (a poor cobbler) and Kashya, a boy servant at Meherabad. The list of women was topped by Baba's dear mother, Shirinmai, succeeded by the western women *mandali* Nonny Gayley, Nadine Tolstoy and others — as well as

⁴ *Circular NL 33*, issued on 25-12-1951.

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the faithful servants Shanta and Dhondi. To Baba all those who loved Him and served Him were alike, irrespective of their social status or worldly riches. In the later years, on one occasion, He remarked, "My 'deeds' live in me." At another time He stated, "I have only love to give and all I want is love."

Two needy pious people were invited to be present at this program. While bowing down and offering a sum of 124 rupees to one of them, Eruch, on behalf of Baba, invoked the Lord as follows, "O God, by bowing down to this man, I bow down to the departed ones."

Then the next dictation was read. It was in relation to the dedicated life of selfless service led by His disciples and devotees who were alive. It was as follows:

Today, . . . in this New Life, Baba is experiencing an utter hopelessness of spirit, mind and body. He is full of weaknesses and feels himself utterly unworthy of the love, service and devotion of all those both in the East and the West who have placed their loving faith in him.

. . . Baba desires to pay homage to their love, service and devotion by making an offering of Rs. 51 to a poor man of worthy character, by bowing down before him.⁵

As Baba handed over money to the second man the following invocation was read, "O God, by bowing down to this man, I bow down to these living ones." After offering homage to His dear ones — whether dead or living — Baba asked the worthy guests to leave.

In the third dictation, Baba invoked the help of God for His *manonash* work. All His disciples and devotees who wished to join Him in this act were allowed to do so by whole-heartedly and lovingly repeating any one of the following names of God (according to their religions), for half an hour each day, from December 29,

⁵ Ibid.

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1951 through February 16, 1952. Parsees were to repeat Ahuramazda; Iranis, Yazdan; Muslims, Allah Hu; Hindus, Parabrahma; Christians, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; the rest to repeat the name of God, commonly used in their religions. Baba concluded the dictation by stating. "The One Indivisible, Infinite and Eternal God, who is in everything and everyone, . . . is being invoked by Baba through His various names to help him through the instrument of His Infinite Power, Love, and Mercy."⁶ With this concluded Baba's unique program of offering homage to His loved ones and of soliciting help of God. What a symbolic expression of the incredible life of Oneness in manyness!

By the way, it may be mentioned here that though in the earlier years Baba sometimes asked His followers to repeat any one of the names of God, after the completion of the *manonash* phase, especially from the late 1950s, He categorically asked those who loved Him and obeyed Him and also those who would want to do so to remember Him whole-heartedly, as a panacea for all the ills/problems of life, whether material or spiritual. The holy name, Meher Baba, is the legacy of the *Avatar* of the Age to the world in general and to His dear ones in particular. Out of His unlimited compassion for one and all, Meher Baba has occasionally and un-reservedly revealed to His followers,

I am God in human form . . . If you make me your real Father, all your problems will become dissolved in the Ocean of my Love . . . I like being meditated upon because then I help directly . . . If you cannot love me, don't worry, I will be loving you . . . If you cannot remember me constantly then repeat my Name before going to sleep and on waking up . . . When I drop my body, I shall remain in all who love me . . . I am the Ancient One.

⁶ Ibid.

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This is Meher Baba's clarion call to His followers; it is also an open invitation from the Awakener of hearts to all those who want to know about Him -- His Love. Sincerity in repetition is our concern; the melody and "madness" of it is His gift.

Dhuni Lit on January 31

The beginning of the new year, 1952, also turned out to be the concluding period of Baba's New Life. He continued to confine Himself regularly in the *manonash* cabin. This room⁷ was roughly 18' by 9.5' by 8.5' and rested on a wooden framework. It had no real foundation (just like the mind of man). Its walls and roof were made of asbestos sheets which became extremely hot in summer and cold in winter, coincidentally resembling the nature of the mind with its extreme changes in temperament.

During Baba's seclusions, although He appeared inactive, He was intensely busy with His inner spiritual work on different levels of consciousness.

Whenever He would come out of the cabin and rejoin His companions, He would communicate on a variety of subjects (with the exception of spiritual topics), and always with His enormous sense of humor. One day in January, as was His old habit, He casually asked each of the companions his age. Pendu while replying, happened to add that he had only four years left to live. Baba looked amused and asked, "Why?" In reply, Pendu related an incident which had taken place in December, 1926.

In that year, under Baba's instruction, a well was being dug at Meherabad. It was between the road and the railway track (and it is still there). Pendu's duty was to empty the leather bucket that was used to haul out the pieces of hard rock and murrum (soft

⁷ The room still stands on the Meherazad premises and, after the completion of His *manonash* work, Baba asked Eruch to stay there. It has been Eruch's cabin ever since.

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rock) from the bottom of the well. While hauling out the rocks, he had to lean forward to pull up the leather bucket. Sometimes, when he happened to look below, he felt as if the gravitational pull was dragging him down into the darkness of the pit. Occasionally, he was afraid that he might fall in and die. One day when Baba visited the site, Pendu told him about this fear. Baba brushed the subject aside with a casual remark "Don't fear, Pendu, you won't die for 30 years!" Pendu felt relieved, but whenever Baba asked him his age, he involuntarily recalled Baba's words. The prescribed period was to expire in December, 1956. This was the reason for Pendu's incidental comment while answering Baba's question.

Patently hearing the whole story, with a swift glance at Pendu, Baba added, "Pendu, you won't die in December, 1956!" But at the same time, He made a sweeping gesture of passing His fingers over His left side. Pendu thought that although the death was averted, Baba's sign might indicate a paralysis of the left side. He, however, did not say anything and Baba switched to another subject.

Nevertheless it should be mentioned here that in December, 1956, Baba met with the second auto accident near Satara (Maharashtra). Nilu, Pendu, Vishnu and Eruch were with Him in the car. Nilu (Dr. Nilkanth) and Pendu were seriously hurt and became unconscious. Nilu died without regaining consciousness. Pendu, as he came back to his senses, found himself in the Civil Hospital at Satara, with a cast around his entire left side, from shoulder to toe. On top of that, because of the injury to his pelvis, his right leg was also placed in a cast. With the slightest movement Pendu suffered excruciating pain and sometimes even fainted. In a sense, he was dead and yet alive! Thus was Pendu's "sentence of death" reprieved by Baba! I have specially narrated this episode to show that Baba could be mysteriously precise if He wished to be. And also to illustrate how even the casual gesture of the

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God-Man has tremendous significance.

On some days after scheduled sittings, Baba would call the companions inside the cabin. He would ask Eruch to read aloud a few passages from some selected books. The five models always remained on the shelf, and no one was allowed to touch them. This was a firm order! Sometimes, Baba Himself would observe the external rituals practiced by the followers of different religions. On the last day of this month, January 31, Eruch recalls that Baba made him write some sentences on a slip of paper. Although Eruch does not remember the exact text, he recalls that the gist was: Rites, rituals, and ceremonies of all religions of the world are hereby consumed in the flames. Baba took this note in His hand, silently glanced through the lines, and put it in His pocket. He then instructed Eruch to dig a circular pit behind the *manonash* cabin, before evening. The companions were to collect dry wood, branches, and twigs as fuel for the *dhuni*. Those on the other side of the partitioned compound had no idea of the activities conducted by Baba.

At sundown, with Baba walking in the lead, the companions came to the pit. Baba's face reflected an unspeakable solemnity as He lit the *dhuni*. The smoke slowly rose. After a while, as the flames leapt upwards, Baba stood up; the four companions followed suit. Baba folded His arms, and so did the companions. He took out the same slip of paper that was in His pocket and asked Eruch to read it, "loudly and forcefully". He then took back the note, tore it into pieces and threw them in the flames. At 7 P.M., by the light of the fire, Baba directed Eruch to read His previously dictated message — an invocation /declaration. A part of it is given below:

O Source of Infinite Knowledge, Almighty God! You know that I did all that was humanly possible for me in this ordinary state and I leave the result entirely to Your Will . . . From this moment, You

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must guide me to declare in all truth by the 16th February 1952 what you have decided. From now on I free myself from the external religious ceremonies that I observed during the New Life and the *Manonash* period.⁸

A holy hush, imbued with an indescribable feeling fell over them all.

All sat down by the *dhuni* for a second time till the fire died down. Afterwards, Baba, with His own hands, filled two big tins with the *dhuni* ash and the pit was covered. At that time, Baba specifically instructed that "this ash" should not be used by anyone for any purpose whatsoever.

Baba's lighting the *dhuni*, witnessing the rising flames and then glowing embers, offering prayers and lastly, collecting the *dhuni* ash seemed to have a profound significance, especially since this proved to be the concluding act of Baba's New Life.

It is my feeling that through this unique phase of "becoming an ordinary man", the God-Man reached and touched the hearts of His future lovers, in their inner levels of human existence. It is these souls which are now accepting Meher Baba as the Eternal Awakener of "new life". For me to narrate all the incredible stories which justify this supposition would be a large digression at this point. That this is so, however, will in time become clear to all.

Meher Baba's New Life externally began with rain (on October 16), and ended in fire (the *dhuni* on January 31). The whole phase seemed to symbolize fire emerging from water, an age old paradox, and thus an exquisite joke of the God-Man. Perhaps it was in this vein that Meher Baba once stated, "This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it."

⁸ *Circular NL 34*, issued on January 31, 1952.

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First Real Birthday

With the cooling of the *dhuni* fire, it seemed that Baba's New Life phase was over. However, a clear announcement of its conclusion was not given for a few days. On February 6, Baba dictated a profound, matchless message which was issued as the first "Life Circular". It combined the characteristics of the three main phases of His *Avataric* mission the Old Life, the New Life, and the LIFE. I quote below a relevant passage from this particular message, relating to the invocation made by Baba, on January 31. He stated:

For these last four months, according to ordinary human standards, and by ways and means known to me, I have tried my utmost for the achievement of *Manonash*, and I can say in all truth that I feel satisfied with the work done. This satisfaction is due to the feeling I have, of having regained my 'Old Life Meher Baba state,' yet retaining my 'New Life ordinary state'. I have regained the Knowledge, Strength and Greatness that I had in the Old Life, and retain the ignorance, weaknesses, and humility of the New Life. This union of the 'old and new life states' has given birth to LIFE: Life that is eternally old and new.

My efforts for *Manonash* have been positive and the result of *Manonash* will be positive. But the actual and concrete manifestation of this result, I leave entirely to the Divine Sanction: where, how, and when the result will be, I leave entirely to the Divine Decree.⁹

And within a week the *mandali* had one of the most delightful surprises of their life with Baba. It was the celebration of Baba's "First Real Birthday" on February 12, 1952, at Meherazad in a very simple yet

⁹ *Life Circular* No. 1, issued on 6-2-1952.

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buoyant mood. By this time the partition had been taken down, and the four companions - Gustadji, Baidul, Pendu, and Eruch — were allowed to greet and meet the rest of the men disciples in Baba's love. Kitty Davy who was staying with the women *mandali* at Meherazad wrote a short, graphic account of this festive occasion:

As Baba came over to our quarters at 5 A.M. on the morning of February 12th exactly to the minute, bells and gongs were rung, drums beaten and guns fired, and in the midst of all this tumult, the voices of the *mandali* rose clear and loud repeating the different names of God. The evening before, prayers were intoned and the *dhuni* (sacred fire) was lit and kept burning for twenty-four hours. Baba called this day, February 12, 1952, his "first real birthday", the beginning of the period called "Life", and He sent the following message by cable and otherwise to all His devotees:

GOD'S BLESSINGS AND MY LOVE TO YOU ALL ON THIS, MY FIRST REAL BIRTHDAY.¹⁰

On this eventful day Baba, the God-Man, implored God as follows:

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 . . . 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.¹¹

A charmingly paradoxical yet significant statement!

¹⁰ *The Awakener*, Vol. III. No. 4, p. 25.

¹¹ *Life Circular* No. 3.

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Thus Baba's Old Life and the New Life ended and blended in a graceful manner, and there emerged an everlasting phase which He named as Life Eternal: "Life that is eternally old and new."

Our *New Life* in Him

While almost all are puzzled by Baba's New Life, they are also fascinated with it. Baba's New Life has an indescribable charm of its own; there is something gloriously splendid about it, however incomprehensible it may seem. Baba's external activities during this phase — long journeys on foot, at times begging with a begging bowl, wearing a loin cloth and a *kafni*, sweeping out His rooms, washing His clothes, offering prayers and serving the poor have an austere grandeur about them. In a way, they demonstrate a simple way of living — a life of self-effacement. Was Baba laying the guidelines for a most natural, yet consecrated way of life? In the first discourse published in the *Meher Baba Journal* (November 1938), Meher Baba stated:

He [*Avatar*] is like a gauge against which man can measure what he is and what he may become. He trues the standard of human values by interpreting them in terms of divinely human life.

This does not mean, however, that one can blindly imitate Baba, or participate in His New Life by merely copying its external aspects. Baba's New Life had a specific context in His *Avataric* mission, and the various external activities were like the scaffoldings erected to accomplish His spiritual work of awakening the heart of humanity. Thus the sublime significance of Baba's New Life is immediately lost if the external activities are given undue importance. However, the New Life as a whole will ever remain as a guiding star for the sincere seeker, but no one can imitate or institutionalize Baba's New Life.

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One should very cautiously use the term New Life to describe the change in one's life after coming to Baba, for the term New Life has been consecrated by Baba and has real meaning only in relation to His *Avataric* mission where He, the Emperor (highest-Divinity), became a beggar (lowest-humility) to quicken the lives of all those who are slaves of the world.

Should we attempt to venture on a *new life* based on hearsay and a mere intellectual understanding, this would be tantamount to a mimicry of the life of the companions who were with Baba in His New Life. Living with the God-Man was never an easy affair. It was a life which tested one's capabilities to the limit, and this was especially so during the New Life. The life of the companions who accompanied Baba in this phase can be likened to the ordeal of retaining the freshness of a rose (pure love for the God-Man), while keeping it unscathed by the flames (implicit and instantaneous obedience to the God-Man). What distinguished Baba's companions was not so much that for certain periods they wore *kafnis*, or *langotis*, or begged, or did hard labor, but that they constantly lived a life of complete surrender to the God-Man, pledging their lives in obedience to any wish which God in human form might have.

Even while Baba was leading the New Life, there were those who wished to join Him. For them, Baba reissued a statement, first given six months earlier, in which He clearly declared that the New Life would be kept alive by those:

Who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust; and who to accomplish all this, do no lustful actions, do no harm to anyone, do no backbiting, do not seek material possessions or power, who accept no homage, neither covet honour nor shun disgrace, and fear no one and nothing; by those, who rely wholly and solely on God, and who love God purely for the sake of

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loving, who believe in the lovers of God and in the reality of Manifestation, and yet do not expect any spiritual and material reward; who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and whole-heartedly face all hardships with 100% cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if there is no one to live it.¹²

Herein there is no mention of emulating the external activities which are associated with Baba and the companions in the New Life. This eternal New Life is really the essence of all spiritual life. As such it is a personal intimate relationship with the Benevolent Omnipresence; it becomes defiled by the slightest imitation. It has to have an originality of its own.

This type of *new life* is not meant for the self-cherishers. Unless one sincerely longs to divest oneself from self, the game of keeping company with the God-Man (even in spirit) cannot begin. A true *new life* is the conviction of the *Avatar's* companionship in all our deeds, words and thoughts. Outward withdrawal is not necessary; one has to renounce the world within one's heart. It is not a question of ignoring or escaping from anything but of facing facts and offering the results totally to the Lord and maintaining a "clean slate."

Baba has on many occasions made it quite explicit, for example, that one should not use drugs like LSD or even marijuana. And He was equally unequivocal that sex outside of marriage was definitely alien to spirituality. It would be the height of hypocrisy for anyone, but especially so for one who claims to love Baba, to try to justify an indulgence in either, in his enthusiastic attempt to lead a *new life*. A *new life*, in fact, is a new way of living. It is an honest, sincere effort to please the God-Man by shedding all of our old selfish

¹² *Circular NL 17*, issued on 11-9-1950.

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attachments that veil us from our Eternal, most intimate Companion — Baba.

In Baba's New Life there were many instances where the companions and Baba received God's help in the form of coincidences and unexpected occurrences. But these were definitely devoid of any occult or supernatural elements. They were not miracles which Baba performed; He had adopted perfectly the role of an ordinary man, hence it was a natural unfolding of events in response to the *Avatar's* compassion in stepping down to the level of mankind. Baba once conveyed:

To guide, instruct and help humanity, which is my only mission, I have come down to the level of human understanding and consciousness, and here it is that I am misunderstood. My infinite state of God-consciousness remains unaffected even when I function at the level of normal human consciousness.¹³

Nothing happens in the life of the God-Man which is out of tune with the Infinite.

The secret of the *new life* is not to strive for anything except to respond continuously to the awakened intuition -- the Will of God. Thus, one should not venture on a *new life* guided solely by one's intellectual powers, or detailed study of Baba's New Life, which is inimitable. Hafiz, a Persian Perfect Master, who was Baba's favourite poet, has skillfully explained one of the secrets for anyone's *new life* in a couplet which freely translated means:

Dear Friend! If you wish to be our classmate, wash away all the leaves of your books (unlearn all that you have learned). For my dear, the knowledge (lesson) of Love is not found in books.¹⁴

¹³ *The Awakener*, Vol. XVI, No. 2, p.13.

¹⁴ *Beshooy aurag agar hamdarse mayee ke elme eshk dar daftar nabasshad.*

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Thus my narration of the New Life must end here. However, I am sure that it will be appropriate to conclude this volume with the words of guidance, truth and authority of the God-Man, Meher Baba. In the public programs, when thousands thronged to have Baba's *darshan*, He extended His open, loving invitation to the masses, through the following messages:

I want you to feel that I am one of you.
I am on the level of each one of you.
Make me your constant companion.
Think of me more than you think of your own self.
The more you think of me the more you will realize
My love for you.

To those who responded to His call and came in His close *sahas*, He would casually convey:

I am the One so many seek and so few find.
No amount of austerity can attain me.
Do not try to understand me. My depth is unfathomable.
Do whole-heartedly whatever I tell you to do:
do not do what I do [Don't imitate my external activities.]
If you sincerely follow me — my instructions and
teachings — you will feel that I am with you always.

And to the still smaller group who long to surrender their all completely to Him, Meher Baba, out of His unbounded compassion has lovingly revealed:

I am the way; I am the Goal.
I authoritatively say; I am the Ancient One.
If you love me with all your heart,
then you will be made free eternally
I am the Ocean of Love;
I am the only Lover;
I am the only Beloved.
I am LOVE.

May Avatar Meher Baba awaken our hearts and bless us with a *new life* of abiding companionship with Him, the Eternal Beloved.

Glossary

arti: A traditional Hindu ceremony performed in the worship of gods by moving a lighted lamp, camphor or joss sticks circularly around the idol. In the case of Meher Baba, His lovers do not necessarily follow this conventional ceremony when the *arti* (song of dedication) is recited or sung.

Avatar, an: An Incarnation manifesting a specific divine quality.

Avatar, the: The Incarnation of God in human form The God-Man, Messiah, Christ.

bairagi: A mendicant with long matted hair and ashes smeared over the body.

bidi: An Indian cigarette.

bhajan: A devotional song, or the singing of devotional songs.

bhakta: A devotee.

bhav: Ecstasy. Form of devotion (in relation to the deity).

bhiksha: Charity, alms. Anything received by one who goes out begging, especially for food.

chapati: Unleavened, flat wheat bread.

chilla-nashini: The undertaking of forty days' austerities.

dal: A common preparation made from any of several types of lentils found in India.

darshan: Formal audience. The appearance of the Master to receive homage and to bestow blessings on devotees, sometimes in the form of *prasad*, -q.v.

dharmashala: A free rest house for travelers.

dhoti. A long white cloth worn from the waist and wrapped around the legs.

GLOSSARY

- dhuni*: A fire, often fueled by faggots, which symbolizes Divine purifying fire.
- dnyan*: Gnosis, Real Knowledge.
- ghazal*: A short love poem. An ode. A special poetic composition in Urdu or Persian.
- hawa*: An aspirant who is not on the Path but is not far from it.
- jalali*: Glorious. Related to the masculine or outgoing principle. Fiery or hot tempered.
- jamali*: Beautiful. Related to the feminine or receptive principle. Quiet or mild tempered.
- Jivanmukta*: A liberated incarnate, a God-Realized One with Creation-consciousness but no specific duty.
- kafni*: A body length lightweight garment. A long robe.
- kambal*: A coarse woollen blanket.
- karma*: The law of action and reaction. Fate. The natural and necessary happenings of one's lifetime, preconditioned by one's past lives.
- ki jai*: Lit., victory to. Used in the sense of "hail to" Jai in a greeting is used in the sense of calling on the *Avatar*, or in remembrance of the *Avatar*, e.g. "Jai Baba! " "Jai Rama!"
- kirtan*: The singing of devotional songs, accompanied by music, interspersed with explanations on spiritual subjects.
- laddoo*: A sweetmeat in the shape of a ball.
- langoti*: A loin cloth.
- lila*: The "game" which God plays, which manifests the Universe. The "Divine Sport" of Creation.
- lungi*: A colored cloth wrapped round the waist, reaching the ankles.
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- majzoob*: One who is absorbed in a plane of involving consciousness.
- Majzoob-e-Kamil*: One who is God-merged.
- majzoobiyat*: The state of the God-merged soul of the seventh plane.

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mandali: The intimate disciples of a *Sadguru* (Perfect Master), or the *Avatar* (God-Man).

mantra: A sacred name or phrase.

mast: (Pronounced "must") a God-intoxicated man on the Path.

mastani: A God-intoxicated woman.

mela: A fair.

namaskar: Adoration or greeting. A salutation, bow, or obeisance.

Nawab: The title of a Muslim prince.

nazar: Lit., sight. The Master's protective glance or gaze.

nirvana: The first stage of the Real *Fana* — annihilation of the Mind (self).

pan: A masticatory, containing a few spices, wrapped in a betel leaf.

Parabrahma: The Supreme Spirit. God.

prasad: Lit., anything that is first offered to God or the Master and then distributed in His name. A small gift, usually edible, given by the Master as a concrete expression of His love. A gracious gift of the Master.

qawwal: One who sings *ghazals* and *qawwalis*.

qawwali: A special type of singing spiritual songs, usually in Urdu or Persian, intimately addressing the Beloved, sung to spontaneously improvised music.

rava: A sweet dish.

Sadguru: A Perfect Master. A Man-God.

sadhana: A practice, discipline.

sadhu: A pilgrim. An advanced soul. A mendicant.

sadra: A thin ankle length muslin shirt.

sahavas: Lit., close companionship. A gathering held by the Master or held in His honor where His devotees intensely feel His Presence.

sanyasi: One who has renounced the world.

tantric: One who seeks and possesses occult powers.

turiya avastha: The State of Divine Junction.

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* The above books have been made previously available only to the followers of Meher Baba, but not to the general public. Therefore, the publication of this material in this book is the first time said information has been made available to the general public.