

Meher Baba's Stay at Satara, 1947

"Baba is Fire"

MEHER Baba returned to Poona from Madras on Easter morning, April 6, 1947 and proceeded to Mahabaleshwar. The mail that was awaiting His arrival contained a few cables and many letters. One of His dear ones from the West Coast of the United States, who had not yet met Him physically, expressed her feelings in the following words: "Longing for you, my Beloved. Your blessed feet are the kiss of God on earth." Baba sent His love blessings in return, and also what sort of awakening through the inner planes, we do not know. A short poem, or a chant, which is given below was read out to Baba. As He heard the lines, He seemed delighted and tapped the alphabet board rhythmically, expressing His happiness.

Om to the North, *Om* to the South;
 Only one Name shall cross my mouth.
Om to the East, *Om* to the West;
 We know the Name that we love best.
Om, Om, Om, Abba, Abba, Abba;
 Holy, Holy, Holy, Baba, Baba, Baba.

Like a child, Baba appeared very pleased to hear such simple poems composed in different languages by His dear ones. Baba, also, though rarely, composed poems in various languages, rhyming simple words

Once, with reference to the responses received by Baba lovers who remembered Him wholeheartedly, Baba remarked, "Baba is fire." He was in a jovial mood and dictated some lines through His board. The poem thus composed is given below:

Baba Is Fire

When you feel cold
 And sit near the fire,
 It drives out your cold
 And makes you perspire.
 When you feel hungry
 And cook on the fire,
 It gives you your food,
 For which you aspire.
 But if you, like a fool,
 Try to play with Fire,
 It may burn you so badly,
 That would make hell admire!

After a two or three-day stay at Mahabaleshwar Baba planned to spend a score of days in seclusion at Purandar, a fort connected with the life of King Shivaji (1630-1680 A. D.) situated on the top of a mountain over four thousand feet high. This plan was set to work before leaving for Madras the beginning of April, and the *mast* Ali Shah was taken to the fort on April 10. There were unusual showers and a great gale raged for a week. Baba worked with Ali Shah until April 19 and then moved to Ajinkyatara Fort near Satara. He stayed there for five days and spent many hours all alone in a lonely part of this ruined fortress. At the end of April, He returned to Mahabaleshwar.

Mast Ashram at Satara

By the last week of May 1947, Baba had shifted His headquarters from Mahabaleshwar to Satara, where He stayed

in Mutha's newly built bungalow with the women *mandali*. Three other bungalows were also rented — one for the men *mandali*; the second for Dr. Donkin and Dr. Ghani, who were working on the final phase of the book on *masts*, *The Wayfarers*; and the third bungalow, because of the *masts* who were brought there, can well be referred to as the Satara *mast ashram*. Baba had sent letters of instructions a month earlier to some of His devotees and disciples to bring certain types of *masts* to Satara by mid-June. For one reason or the other most of them did not succeed in bringing any *masts*. Only Minoo Kharas brought two *masts*, Babaji and Payaji. They were of the moderate type, and Baba sent them back to Karachi after three days.

The *mast ashram* at Satara rested mainly on two powerful pillars, Ali Shah and Chacha of Ajmer. Ali Shah was ever available for Baba's *mast* work. The arrival of Chacha made the *ashram* activities very significant and vibrant spiritually, and he stayed at Satara for about five weeks. He was a seventh plane *Majzooob*, experiencing the "I am God" state in which "I" is neither the subject nor "God" the object; it is BEING what Reality eternally IS.

With great difficulty Baidul brought Chacha from Ajmer to Satara on June 3. After his arrival this great *Majzooob* occupied a seat in the corner of a room in the *ashram*, and he practically did not leave this room during his entire stay. He would sit for hours and hours on just a strip of matting, occasionally changing to a place a few yards away. About Baba's contacts with Chacha, particularly during this period, Dr. Donkin wrote:

Each day, Baba spent most of his time plying Chacha with tea and food, or sitting with him in silent conference. During these weeks, after sitting for an hour or two with Ali Shah, and particularly with Chacha, Baba would emerge with face pale and tired, and often with clothes

drenched in perspiration. It seemed as if, in his silent conferences with these great *masts*, he had to focus the rays of his infinite power through the lens of his body — and his body felt the strain.⁷¹

Baba generally bathed and shaved the *masts* living in the *mast ashram*, but Chacha flatly refused to be bathed. Only after great persuasion by Baba and the *mandali* was he amenable to the removal of his filthy clothes. It was a sort of miracle that in spite of his living for over two decades in an unclean hovel with such dirty clothes on his body, he kept robust health. On July 10 he was sent back to Ajmer with Baidul.

Ali Shah was the first and last inmate of this *mast ashram*. He was the "opener" and the "bat-in-hand" to return to his pavilion at Meherabad. The Satara *mast ashram* was closed by July 13, 1947.

Circular Regarding Correspondence and a Fast

On July 1 a circular was issued which banned correspondence with Meher Baba — it was mainly for His lovers in India. Only telegrams were permissible in serious matters.

Prior to this circular a letter from one of His dear ones was read to Him. The person concerned had landed himself in great difficulties and felt tortured. In directing the reply to this letter, Baba remarked through His alphabet board: "You are not the cause of your difficulties. Baba Himself is the cause of the world going wrong or right." Baba, however, pacified him by conveying at the end: "Don't worry. Everything will be all right with you. My love to you." Baba's words of love were of great help to that troubled soul in giving relief from the pressure of so many

⁷¹ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 91.

worries. It gave him the understanding that Baba was with him in all events, wrong or right. Meher Baba is as much the cause as the effect, for He is the undivided life of humanity.

On July 10, as per the circular letter, Baba people were asked to observe a fast for twenty-four hours beginning at 7:00 A.M. Perhaps it was a beginning for subsequent years when either fast or silence was observed by Baba lovers all over the world on this blessed Silence Day.

Arrival of Elizabeth and Norina

In March 1947 Meher Baba had sent a special message of cheer and hope to His dear ones in the United States. It was circulated to them through Elizabeth Patterson and Norina Matchabelli. After completing this work, these two devoted disciples left for India and arrived on July 13, 1947. Norina had been ill for a few months, so a separate bungalow was rented at Satara to accommodate them comfortably. Adi Sr. was entrusted with driving the two women from Bombay to Satara, and he arrived with them at the appointed time. It was a long-awaited meeting. Baba looked at Elizabeth and Norina with those ever-young eyes which had the splendor of the Beyond, and the years of separation passed into unreality. Kitty Davy, one of the women *mandali* living at Satara, wrote a beautiful account of this incident:

Norina, before leaving New York, had been very ill with a heart condition. Picture Baba, standing on the doorstep of the Satara house as Adi's car arrives, bringing Norina and Elizabeth from Bombay. Baba's encompassing embrace, that wipes out time ... his welcoming smile that uplifts the heart . . . his unmatched tenderness as he helps Norina up the steps . . . his subsequent care and attention throughout the two years she remained

in India, appointing Dr. Goher to look after her ... these are incidents one always remembers.

Baba had arranged a separate bungalow for Norina and Elizabeth . . .

Dear Kaka was the Major Domo in Norina and Elizabeth's bungalow ... Norina, with her wonderful sense of humor, remarked, when she found they were in a separate bungalow and not with the girls, "We, who came from the West with all our worries and troubles, seemingly had to be put into spiritual quarantine for a period."

Baba put Norina on silence for the first six weeks after her arrival.⁷²

Meher Baba's Sense of Humor

In the summer of 1947 Dr. Goher Irani joined the women *mandali* permanently residing with Meher Baba. She was given the duty of attending to Norina's health as her personal physician. Baba used to visit the bungalow, though not daily. One day after meeting Elizabeth and Norina He came to Goher's room, but she had gone out. There was a small picture of Baba in a frame which she kept on her table. Baba put it in His pocket. As Dr. Goher hurried to meet Him, He asked her, "Where is my picture that was on the table?" Not finding it in its place, Goher searched for it in different places in the room. Baba enjoyed the fun and skillfully put the small frame back on the table and stood aside. After a time Goher noticed it at its original place and cried out: "There it is, Baba! How could I not see it before, I wonder!" Baba smiled, a glitter about His face, His eyes shining all the more with a glow of mischievousness in them. He then revealed the secret!

⁷² Kitty Davy, "Recollections," *The Awakener*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1959, p. 14.

On some days when Baba did not visit this bungalow there would be a little message of a line or two for Norina from Him. One such message was: "Do not mind one percent even if you do not sleep for seven days!" Another: "You can see me, be near me, but do not talk to me." During the stay at Satara, Baba once had an outing to Ajinkyatara with the women *mandali*, including Elizabeth and Norina. On another occasion He took them for a picnic along the bank of the river Krishna. In such a lively and playful atmosphere, Norina regained her health and was able to walk to the residence of the women *mandali* without any difficulty.

Meher Baba's sense of humor and His playful nature had greatly helped His devotees and disciples feel their closeness to Him. Some people doubt and even debate over the merits and demerits of the sense of humor noticed in Perfect Masters. For us it is as much a part of spiritual growth as is the regular *sadhana*. It eliminates negative projections like dejection or indiscriminate rejection. It keeps the mind alive to take things and events as they come, expected or otherwise, with ease and composure. Baba showed us that life devoid of humor is living lacking in humanness. In its absence the devil in man gets the better of the angel — the carefree, singing spirit.

"I Am on Fire — I Am Aflame"

On August 10, 1947, Meher Baba's next tour to contact *masts* commenced. First He visited Aurangabad and renewed His contact with the two great *masts* named Mai Bap and Captain (Qutub Shah).

Mai Bap was first contacted in May 1939 when he was brought to Khuldabad. Baba bathed him, clothed him and fed him. After a while the *mast* shouted out all of a sudden: "I am on fire; I am aflame!" In January 1942 when he was

contacted for the second time, he sat alone with Baba in a room but suddenly rushed out, saying aloud: "A nail has pierced me and I cannot bear it." Such remarks from the *masts* symbolically refer to the suffering entailed in sharing the spiritual work given by the *Avatar* of the Age on the inner planes of consciousness. After this contact:

. . . Mai Bap was taken back to his home and Baba told Kaka to bring him daily for seven days. Mai Bap, although he had not been present when Baba gave these instructions to Kaka, told Kaka a few minutes later, "I will come with you for seven days," and then touched Kaka's palm with the *back* of his hand, which means a dud promise! Next day, he refused to come with Kaka, and Baba, therefore, went to him every evening at his own house.⁷³

This time, in August 1947, Baba just renewed the old link with Mai Bap, who perhaps was more cooperative than before.

Captain was an old, short fellow with dirty clothes, but he was a majzoob-like *mast* of the sixth plane. Baba felt very happy to have contacted these two highly involved souls.

From Aurangabad Baba proceeded to Parali (Vaijinath), where an advanced pilgrim named Tulsi Maharaja was contacted. Then via Tuljapur Baba went to Hyderabad, now the capital of Andhra Pradesh, and there He contacted six *masts* in all. Only one, Murshad, was a new contact. After visiting Zahirabad Baba returned to His headquarters at Satara by mid-August.

With this short *mast* tour to Hyderabad, the stay at Satara came to a close and arrangements were being made for the whole group to stay at Meherabad. During Baba's stay at Satara, many persons asked Him, through the *mandali*, for

⁷³ *The Wafarers*, p. 198.

a public *darshan* program. He generally consented to have such a program by the time He was about to leave a certain place. Accordingly, about this time, too, Baba condescended to give a few hours' *darshan* for the people residing near Satara. Only a few Baba people from outstations were permitted to come. Adi Sr. informed me in advance about this and I decided not to lose this chance, although it might be for only a few hours. At the time of this *darshan* program at Satara on August 24, Mauni, one of my friends and one of Meher Baba's dear ones, had the opportunity to meet Baba for the first time and get His instructions concerning meditation. I wish to narrate in detail how I came to know Mauni, and about his first meeting with Meher Baba at Satara.

I Meet Mauni in a Train

In those days I had some contacts with a socialist group through an organization called Rashtra Seva Dal. It had a *kala pathak* (a band of singers and actors) that entertained people and at the same time tried to inculcate love of the nation and humanity at large. I knew very little about playing the harmonium, but being a schoolteacher I could not refuse to play it if the pupils and my colleagues in Rashtra Seva Dal so requested. One such function was arranged at Modnimb, a nearby place. The program was to commence at ten o'clock in the evening.

The moon was slowly rising on the horizon, lighting the sky with silver. Most of the party had left earlier, and I hurried to catch a train in order to be in time for the cultural program at the village fair. The train whistled and started as I took my seat. I found myself facing a young man with long black hair and a beard, on the opposite seat. Since returning from Madras after spending some days in the divine *sahavas* of Meher Baba a few months earlier, I had

been so infused with enthusiasm that I could not let any opportunity go by to tell others about Baba. I did not care whether people heard me with mere curiosity or otherwise. How could I now miss such an opportunity to give the news about Baba to that bearded soul!

"Where are you going, Swami?" I asked conversationally. He just raised his finger, gesturing "a distant place." I gathered that he was observing silence, and this made me all the more communicative. The Swami, or Mauni, as he was observing *maun* (silence), took out his small slate and a slate pencil. He wrote out his replies for me, and I think it was a queer amusement for the other passengers in the crowded compartment. Our conversation continued. After a while I asked him:

"Mauni, you have roamed enough from Hardwar to Rameshwaram, from the north to the south of India. Has this itinerary served its purpose? Do you wish to move about continuously from place to place?"

To this Mauni replied, "Perhaps. I am a seeker after Truth, but I am still groping."

I found him honest and sincere in his replies, so I said to him further, "I, too, have not realized the Truth, but fortunately I have met the One who knows it, and who is the Truth (Reality) Himself."

"Who is he?" he inquired eagerly.

I did not tell him Meher Baba's name. In my experience, orthodox Hindu *sadhus* and Muslim *fakirs* disregard the status of spiritual personalities from other religions, and Meher Baba was born to a Zoroastrian family. I simply replied, "We will talk about the Enlightened One if we happen to meet again." By this time the train had reached Modnimb, where I had to get off. Reluctantly, we had to cut short the conversation so I asked him for his address and, coincidentally, learned that he lived in Kurduwadi, as did I.

Mauni Accompanies Me to Satara

After a few days I met Mauni in a temple and had some conversations with him about my association and contacts with Meher Baba. With an open mind he expressed his earnest desire to have Baba's *darshan*. He was sincere about wanting to see God in his heart, as well as in human form as the God-Man. As chance would have it, I got the news from Adi Sr. that Baba would give a few hours' *darshan*, at Satara. Hearing this, Mauni prepared to avail himself of this opportunity, and riding on the crest of a lucky wave, we left for Satara.

It was August 1947. Norina Matchabelli and Elizabeth Patterson were staying in the special bungalow in the camp area at Satara. I think the *darshan*, program was arranged to be in this bungalow, which was surrounded with blooming trees and flowers. We reached Satara shortly after noon. The *darshan* was to commence at 3:00 P.M. As we alighted from the bus it began to drizzle slightly, but then delightful sunshine spilled a delicate glow over the trees and plants and the distant hills. It seems that rain showers have some mystical connection with Meher Baba's programs! By the time we reached the bungalow, the hall was packed full. Baba, with a garland of roses, looked very beautiful and graceful. He had stretched out His legs, and heaps of garlands were lying by the side of His seat.

A Coconut Represents Spiritual Truths

I entered the hall and stood with Mauni at the back of the crowd near the doorway. Baba spotted me and signaled for me to come near. He inquired about our journey to Satara and made us sit near Him. I introduced Mauni to Baba. People were coming in a queue to take Baba's *darshan*. They brought garlands and fruits, and Baba gave each a smile

or a pat. A small *bhajan* group was singing devotional songs. As the program was going on I told Baba that Mauni had been observing silence for years. This pleased Baba, and He made a sign of touching the forehead with His fingers, meaning that Mauni was fortunate. Mauni expressed a desire to have a picture of Meher Baba. At once one of the *mandali* brought a fine picture and Baba gave it to Mauni.

After a while Baba took a coconut in His hand, and looking at us both, began to explain its symbolic significance. Catching some threads of the coir, Baba gestured: "This is like a gross body." Tapping the hard shell, Baba conveyed: "This is like a subtle body, and the inner white kernel is like a mental body." Then shaking the coconut a bit, so as to refer to the sweet water inside, Baba concluded: "That is I, Baba, Truth."

He conveyed all this through such sweet and eloquent gestures and with so few words, as He alone could do. Then Baba gave the coconut to Mauni and told him to place the Baba picture that had just been given to him against that coconut, using it as a stand. He told Mauni to concentrate on that picture for half an hour after midnight every day. Mauni was pleased — so pleased that tears of joy at having met the Perfect Master sparkled in his eyes. It was his first contact, and his sincere wish was lovingly responded to. Baba asked him to continue this *sadhana* of meditation for six months and then to inform Him about it.

"Do Sincerely What Is Told"

After some time Mauni was tempted to ask Baba a question about his diet. "Are there any restrictions about food? Am I to fast for some days during the period of six months?" Mauni wrote this on a slate and I read it out to Baba. There is a tendency in man, myself included, to show off indirectly his ability or virtue to others, even when he has the good

fortune to come in contact with a Perfect Master, who knows everything. It is a trick of the mind to express its sense of separateness in a respectable way. But on the spiritual Path one has to understand the ways of "me" and "mine" and to efface them, rather than nourish them. Upon hearing the question, Baba looked a bit indifferent and said, "What has fasting to do with what I have told you to do? If you so desire, you can please yourself You can take food seven times a day or fast for seven days! It does not matter in the least whether you take only milk and buttermilk or exclude them outright. Do sincerely what is told — that alone matters."

We sensed that it was rather silly to put such questions to Baba. Realizing the mistake, we kept quiet for the rest of the period and tried in silence to absorb and enjoy as much of His presence as possible.

The program was over by 6:00 P.M., but we still lingered in the hall. We were standing by a door leading to the veranda when Mauni felt a soft, loving pat on his back. He turned his head, and to his surprise he found that it was Baba, who had just passed by him while going to the next room. The endearing ways of Meher Baba's intimacy were so numerous! We did not stay overnight at Satara but returned straight to Kurduwadi, carrying the delightful lingering fragrance of that *sahavas* evening with Meher Baba in our hearts.

Meher Baba and His men and women *mandali* left Satara on August 27, 1947 and stayed ten days at Meherabad.

Visits to Gujarat and Rajasthan, 1947

"Strange Disease" of the God-Man

BY the end of August 1947 Meher Baba was at Meherabad — it was the first fortnight of Indian independence. India, divided into Bharat (India) and Pakistan, had obtained freedom on August 15, 1947. This moment had been most anxiously awaited. It was a period of great jubilation, unfortunately extremely short-lived, for immediately after this followed a period of bereavement due to mass evacuation, looting and slaughtering of man by man on the borders of Bharat and Pakistan. The sad part was that it was all done in the name of religion and nationalism.

It had been noted that during the *Avatar's* incarnation as Meher Baba, whenever there were such critical or crucial periods in the contemporary history of humanity, Meher Baba's body had to bear the brunt and overnight He would fall sick with some strange ailment. Baba seemed subject to this "strange disease" from the beginning of His *Avataric* work to the dropping of His body. The period of August and September 1947 was no exception. Upon Baba's arrival at Meherabad in the last week of August, He suddenly had a severe attack of bronchial pneumonia and had a high temperature. The happy mood in which the *mandali* had seen Him at Satara completely vanished, and He looked very tired and weak.

In spite of the ban on correspondence during this period, some Baba lovers could not refrain from writing to Baba, requesting Him to end this horrible homicide on the borders. Some Baba people in India felt that life was being shaken to its foundations, for basic values of culture were at stake.

Perhaps my personal reactions may give an idea of the storm raging in the hearts of others. For me it was a tense period — a mad, mad whirl that led me to a stormy sea, and I feared that I might jettison the values so fondly cherished since my contacts with Meher Baba. Every day the dreadful stories that flashed through the newspapers upset me and made me sick with horror. Mass suffering on the boundaries of India and Pakistan affected me deeply. It all kept my mind feverishly occupied. Coercive forces of communal hatred and embitterment were let loose. Those who were spared from this ghastly fate by a freak of chance were suffering equally. I did not write to Baba, but the trend of my thoughts made me doubt my own conclusions. The old mistrust of spiritual values reinfested my mind and attempted to play its game of deception. Try as I would, I could not get a clue or directive to act upon.

"Nobody Suffers in Vain"

"Who is responsible for all this? God or man or *karma*, or what?" I thought. This attitude changed the course of my reading. I glanced through some books on socialism, and during a return trip from Bombay I had communist literature, with pictures of Lenin and Stalin, in my bag. It was an added inducement, but that reading did not offer bread to my hungry soul. Again, to be frank, I was biting off more than could be chewed, much less digested. I also wished to meet Mahatma Gandhi, but he had left for Noakhali in East Bengal to subdue the wave of fanaticism. I wrote to

Acharya Vinoba Bhave, the founder of the Bhoodan movement in India. He granted my request to stay a few days in the *ashram* at Pavnar near Sevagram (Wardha). This short stay enhanced my regard for Vinoba Bhave, but somehow I felt that I must turn to Meher Baba only. His luminous presence, with its moon-like silence, had touched the deeper recesses of my heart and it retrieved me from waywardness.

After one comes in contact with Meher Baba — not necessarily in person but when the "heart clicks" — a new sport awaits you. Baba shakes you, your thoughts and feelings, perhaps violently, thus helping you to shed the peripheral view of life. The inside is revealed, the good and bad in you come out, and a thrilling romance with the Divine is ushered into your life. Through triumphs and penalties you learn to express what you are, to do what you can, and to leave the rest to the God-Man. In the end He awakens you to an understanding of your potentialities and limitations for service and the part you have to play in this world.

I am reminded of two incidents in my life with Meher Baba when I saw Him suffering for His love of humanity. In 1956, after the auto accident at Udtara near Satara, Baba's pelvis and entire right leg were put in a plaster cast. Later the cast was removed and the leg was put in traction, with weights attached. In spite of all possible medical care, the pain in the hip joint was excruciating. One day Baba "traced with His finger a little circle on the spot of the fracture and then making a wide circle in the air, gestured to say, 'the suffering of the whole universe is concentrated on this little spot. This is a tangible expression of the universal suffering I bear.'"⁷⁴

This was the period when the Hungarians were struggling

⁷⁴ Life Circular no. 33, December 21, 1956.

hard for freedom in Europe. In that fight "many were lying wounded and helpless on the roads, away from loved ones ..." and in this context Meher Baba had remarked, "Nobody suffers in vain . . . Man unknowingly suffers for God [Self-realization] and God [the God-Man] knowingly suffers for man [betterment of humanity]." ⁷⁵

The second incident occurred during my stay with Meher Baba in the late sixties at Meherazad. I was there during the winter vacation of my school. As usual, Baba came to the *mandali's* room in the morning. As the pain in His hip joint was still very serious He could not sit on a chair for very long at a time, so He wished to rest on the hospital bed that was by the side of His seat. As Baba instructed, Eruch continued reading aloud letters received from Baba lovers in the East and West. In one of the letters the writer, who was from the United States, seemed very perturbed over the burning problem and precarious situation in Viet Nam. This person expected a reply from Baba on this point. Baba rarely commented on political matters except to make a few general statements. That day in replying to that particular letter He just gestured, "Everything happens by the will of God and is *necessary*." He stressed that Eruch should underline the word "necessary," perhaps to denote that it was absolutely necessary for even the God-Man to suffer severely — even up to the end, the great event of dropping the body. To me, Baba's remark did not indicate mere fatalism and was not an indication to either justify human weaknesses or glorify virtues. It was rather a suggestion to act every moment in accordance with the deepest promptings of the heart, without unnecessarily brooding over the past. Understanding things as they are does not necessarily mean that one should continue with them as they stand.

⁷⁵ Life Circular no. 32, December 6, 1956.

A Visit to Surat (Gujarat)

On August 11, 1947 Meher Baba sent out a special circular to His disciples and devotees residing in the subcontinent of undivided India. He enjoined them to remain loyal and faithful to the government wherever they decided to stay as citizens — India or Pakistan. On August 15, engaged in His work of contacting *masts*, Baba was traveling in a car under difficult circumstances. He was fasting throughout the period of that particular *mast* tour, another strain on His body in addition to the journey through heat, rain and flood. Floods necessitated long detours and delays, which brought great pressure on Baba's health. By the time He reached Meherabad from Satara He began to suffer physically, the outward expression of His inner suffering.

By the first week of September 1947, the essential repairs to the rest house at Meherabad had been completed. On September 10, Baba, with a small group of men and women *mandali*, left Meherabad (Arangaon) and commenced His stay at Meherabad (Pimpalgaon-Malvi). On instructions from Meher Baba, special arrangements were made at Meherabad in August for the permanent residence of the *mast* Ali Shah, fondly known as Bapji, one of the delightful favorites of Baba. With Mohammed (Tukaram Chavan), another favorite, Bapji lived there until he dropped his body on December 27, 1956.

Manek Mehta of Bombay arranged a *darshan* program at Surat (Gujarat) for Meher Baba, to be held during the third week of September. The dates for the program were undecided until the eleventh hour and it was on the point of being canceled, but eventually Baba did visit Surat. There had been a little opposition from some students of the Parekh Technical Institute who were ill-informed about Baba.

Kaka, Adi Sr., Pendu, Gustadji, Baidul, Eruch and a few

more of the *mandali* accompanied Baba on this visit to Surat. Arrangements were made for Baba to stay in Mr. Vakil's bungalow. The public program of *darshan* was held in a spacious hall and was very well attended, particularly by educated people. Meher Baba's loving, radiant presence silenced the mischief-mongers and the entire event was carried out peacefully. In a special program arranged for the Parsi (Zoroastrian) community, Manek Mehta and Burjor Mehta delivered fine speeches on Meher Baba's divinity, and Baba gave a special message for His Zoroastrian followers, part of which is given below.

The Flow and Spirit of Love

As a born Zoroastrian, I can well imagine your elation to find me amongst so many of you here, who, like myself, also happen to be Zoroastrian by birth; but having realized once and for all the Truth, which is the goal of all life and the end of each and every religion, I have thereby transcended all religions. To me, therefore, every religion is equally an approach to arrive at the same infinite Ocean of love and bliss.

Selfishness is the root cause of all troubles. It is all the more dangerous because under the subtle influence of selfishness, the worst evils are apt to assume false colors of chivalry, sacrifice, nobility, service and even "love." Of all the forces, that which can best overcome all difficulties is the love that knows how to give without necessarily bargaining for a return. There is nothing that love cannot achieve and there is nothing that love cannot sacrifice. Pure love is matchless in majesty, it has no parallel in power and there is no darkness it cannot dispel. It is the undying flame that has set all life aglow.

The light of love is not free from its fire of sacrifices. Just as it can never be too late or too early to learn to love for the sake of love, there can be nothing too small

or too big to be sacrificed or sacrificed for. The flow of life, the flow of light and the flow of love are as much in the drop as in the Ocean. The smallest thing is as big as the biggest, and the biggest thing is as small as the smallest. It all depends upon the particular yardstick with which one measures.

My blessings to you, one and all.

Touching Evidence of Selfless Service

After the program at Surat, Baba proceeded on to contact *masts* in the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan instead of going back to Ahmednagar. Kaka, Baidul and Eruch accompanied Him, and the rest of the *mandali* returned to their respective duties.

Upon reaching Baroda, Baba contacted two advanced souls named Chambu Shah and Saiyid Badruddin Rafai Shah. The latter had confined himself to a second-floor room for over thirty years. He ate only once a day, but when overpowered with the welling up of his love for beloved God, he would not eat for days. Whether taking his food or going to bed, he was always seen fully dressed, as if ready to attend some function — that was his peculiarity. Badami Bapu was an initiate pilgrim who had left his job to lead a spiritual life.

From Baroda Baba went to Ahmedabad, where He contacted four God-intoxicated souls. Badshah Bapu sat with a tin pot before him as his constant "companion," so Baba nicknamed him "Tinpotwalla." He was plump and short but, spiritually, perhaps quite tall inside. Barashid Mastan had a *jalali* temperament and the contact with him was not to Baba's satisfaction. Two other moderate *masts* also had Baba's blessed touch.

Baba arrived at Abu Road by the last week of September. Owing to His poor health, it was suggested that He should have a good rest at Mount Abu, a nice health resort. Baba

consented to visit the hill station that was a few miles from Abu Road, but most of His time was spent in contacting the advanced souls, *sadhus* and seekers who resided nearby.

Meher Baba's work with the *masts* seemed to be an inseparable part of His creative life of love. Despite physical exhaustion and suffering, He did not discontinue meeting these wayfarers, the lovers of God. He wiped out stagnating deficiencies and toned up their hearts for the unfoldment of higher consciousness. The *masts* bathed in His presence and smiled and felt blessed, not knowing what Baba had to suffer to be near them! Was it not touching evidence of His selfless service, so rare and matchless? About the *mast* work Baba once remarked: "It is the process of *uncovering* . . . the original primal source within the individual, which opens the true, creative state of being — and it is a pure state of the Self within each."⁷⁶ And to achieve this work of untying the mental complexes and setting right the eccentricities in those dazed souls, Meher Baba never spared His body.

The first *mast* contacted at Abu Road was Khuda Bakhsh, who had observed silence for forty years. He was very fond of tea, as most of the *masts* in India were, and ate very little. Chawandi Maharaj, a *yogi* from Dilwara on Mount Abu, was a good contact. The place where he resided was in a way ideal for spiritual discipline — it was a quiet spot with picturesque scenery all around. Maharaj was seated in front of a small grotto with twin brooks of cold crystal water on either side. Aghori Baba from Oria, a nearby village, lived in a cave with nothing special about it. He was indiscriminate in his ways of living. He would eat anything, stale or dirty. It seemed that in the flow of creative joy and new light the *mast* overruled the normal standard of good and bad.

⁷⁶ Countess Nadine Tolstoy, "Meher Baba's Work with the God-Mad Men," *Meher Baba Journal*, July 1940, p. 551.

After contacting a few more seekers and moderate *masts*, Baba left Abu Road on September 29 and returned straight to Meherazad.

Presenting an Alphabet Board

During the above tour it was brought to Baba's attention that a towel of His had inadvertently been left in the bungalow at Surat. Baba asked Eruch to write to Adi Sr., who was at Ahmednagar, to inquire about it at Mr. Vakil's bungalow. He was also instructed to give it personally to Baba when He returned to Meherazad.

This reminds me of another incident in 1947. In April Baba stayed at Meher Bhavan in Madras. Later, the host wrote to Baba that a family member found one of Baba's handkerchiefs in the room where He had stayed. In this case Baba permitted His dear ones at Madras to keep it as His gift. Baba was very particular about even such small matters!

At Meherazad, at night Baba retired to one of the rooms in Ratan Gyara's house, which was in a nearby field. Norina, Elizabeth and other women *mandali* occupied the main rest house. A few of the men *mandali* stayed in the low, unfurnished rooms outside the compound walls. Although Baba slept, or rather rested, only a little at night in Gyara's house, by morning He would appear fresh and would return to Meherazad to attend to His work. He did not have a bath every day, but in spite of this, He always looked radiant and as fresh as a baby! Perhaps He had embraced this quality of Hazrat Babajan, one of His five Perfect Masters.

In early October 1947 I wrote to Adi Sr., inquiring about the possibility of having Baba's *darshan*. Adi replied that I could see Baba for a minute or so only, if I agreed not to ask any questions of Him, just receive *darshan*. I did not

hesitate to accept this condition, and one fine morning Adi, in his blue Chevrolet, took me to that holy place, Meherazad. A few months earlier, during a train journey with Baba from Madras, I had watched Him giving a discourse from His alphabet board, and I saw Him using it again at Satara. On my return to Kurduwadi, I thought of presenting a good alphabet board to Him during my next visit, so I got a small board of teak, strong and durable. It was polished well and then the letters were painted on it.

When I was called to Baba's room at Meherazad, I had this board with me. The room was quite small and faced the compound wall. I stood just by the door and offered my respects. As far as I remember, Baba had on a yellowish silken coat. It was so becoming to Him that I personally felt it matched His golden complexion more than did the pink coat which He later wore during *darshan* tours. Sitting in the chair, His legs apart, He looked radiant and graceful. His presence had a charm which ever remained indefinable. As I folded my hands, He smiled and gestured, "Do you know that I have been to Surat?" I nodded in affirmation. Baba continued, "I wished to call you then, but there was no time to inform you in advance." I never expected that Baba would ever think of me as one to be included in the group going with Him to Surat. I felt greatly touched by that intimate thought of Baba's.

I then presented the new alphabet board to Baba. Kaka Baria took off the blue cover, and Baba expressed His happiness and gestured that it was a very nice board. I felt proud. Again folding my hands, I left the room with the happy thought that Baba would one day use it. After a few days Baba remarked to the *mandali* about the teak board, "It's a good one and well polished, but quite heavy. And you know, if I get a whim to whack any of you with this board, as is my old habit, it would be an additional botheration to me!" Needless to say, it was never used.

The Alphabet Board, A Close Companion

There is another incident relating to the alphabet board. Once one of Meher Baba's very near and dear disciples presented a durable board to Baba. It was a metal plate, with clear block letters. Baba appreciated the spirit and devotion of the one who presented it, but later, with reference to the shining edge of the metal, Baba joked, "If I use this board, people would liken it to *Sudarshan Chakra!*" (one of the shining weapons, a disc, in the hand of Lord Vishnu, the Sustainer). Perhaps the joke implied that if a hit from the teak board would cause Him some botheration, the metal board might even involve Him in litigation!

Meher Baba's alphabet board was a light piece of plywood with a sheet of paper pasted on it printed with the alphabet and numbers. Sometimes He used the board as a toss to decide an issue; sometimes He twirled it lightly between His fingers. During musical programs He would tap on it rhythmically. In the early days if Baba noticed that one of the *mandali* was inattentive or dozing in His presence, a hit with the board would do the needful! Baba began to use the board to convey what He had to say in the first week of January 1927. Twenty-eight years later, on October 7, 1954, He discarded the board for good. In the years between, the board had the privilege of being Baba's close companion, as was the flute with Lord Krishna.

Baba stayed at Meherazad until October 15, 1947, then left again for Rajasthan to resume work with the God-intoxicated souls.

First Seclusion on Meherazad Hill, 1947

Qabrestanwala, the Cheerful Socrates

AVATAR Meher Baba's work with the *masts* will remain inimitable and paramount in the spiritual history known to man — divine Love playing the servant through Meher Baba. He poured out love and compassion to the hearts of those God-intoxicated souls and helped them arrive at inner harmony, alive with creative expression of life. He kindled in them the higher faculties and released fresh energies. Countess Nadine Tolstoy wrote that the awakening of the heart is the main key to spiritual evolution, and Meher Baba was the master Awakener.

To continue His divinely ordained work with the *masts* after a fortnight's stay at Meherazad, Meher Baba journeyed to Ajmer and arrived there on October 17, 1947. He contacted a few *masts*, including a *mastani* who was sitting under a sack awning near the station.

The *mast* Qullar Shah was of the fifth plane, the first brought to the *mast ashram* in Ajmer in 1939. At that time he used to reside in a tiny mausoleum (*qabar*), so he was known as Qabristanwala. He used to drink dirty water from the city's drainage. *Masts* have flouted the basic precepts of hygiene without ill effects, for theirs is a different world, a different state of consciousness. Qabristanwala was a short, stout person, and because of his facial appearance,

Baba nicknamed him "Socrates." By virtue of being free from any presence, he looked cheerful and happy all the time. Prior to this *mast's* first contact with Baba, Kaka Baria had to crawl into that dark mausoleum to persuade him to get into a *tonga*. After reaching the *mast ashram* he willingly stayed for a week, and at the end Baba had to induce him to return to his tiny cell. By October 1947 he had shifted his residence to a small mosque nearby. This time the contact with this highly involved soul, though short, was to Baba's satisfaction.

Chacha, the Divinely Absorbed

No one expected Baba to forget Chacha during this visit to Ajmer. Baba wished to sit alone with Chacha in silent conference in his dirty hovel near the hallowed shrine of Khwaja Moeinuddin Chishti. Chacha, in his divinely absorbed state, felt Meher Baba's personal presence and welcomed Him with his wondrous solemn eyes. Baba gave him a cordial smile, and the contact commenced. Chacha had a pleasant, clear voice. This time, in addition to the demand for *cha* (tea), he often asked for *pani* (water). He was so persistent about drinking water that Baba had to instruct one of the *mandali* to engage a special person to fetch water. This time the contact lasted for four hours.

Meher Baba once explained in Sufi terminology the spiritual state of a real *Majzooob* like Chacha:

"A true *Majzooob* — a God-merged soul on the seventh plane — is . . . a *wali*; and also, in the sense that he enjoys the blissful intoxication of a God-united soul, he is also a *mast* ... A *majzooob*, however, although he is automatically both a *wali* and a *mast*, is never a *salik*.

". . . in the *majzooobiyat* of the seventh plane *wilayat* and *masti* are already there, but not *suluk*. "⁷⁷

⁷⁷ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 27.

From another angle, the *Majzoob-e-Kamil* passes from the sensations of flesh to the Reality of Spirit. He enters Light to be Light itself, which he already was, but now he consciously *knows* it and merges in it, so he is called God-merged. On the other hand, for the purpose of discharging Divine duty, the *Sadguru*, or Perfect Master, having become Light, also has the consciousness of *tribhuvan* -- the *Majzoob* entire creation of *Maya*, His own Shadow.

One of the two seventh plane *Majzoobs* mentioned by Meher Baba was Chacha, and the other was Baba Shahabuddin of Bhat, whom Baba contacted only once, in July 1943.

After contacting his loving children, the *masts* of Ajmer, Baba turned to His work with the poor. A group of poor persons was collected and Baba gave each one some money as *prasad*, the external sign of an inner contact.

Recurrent Visits to Chambu Shah

Meher Baba, accompanied by Baidul, Kaka and Eruch, reached Baroda on October 22, 1947 to resume the contact with Chambu Shah. Baba's visits to this particular *mast* indicated His patience and perseverance in accomplishing His spiritual work with such highly involved souls. Baba used to cater to their whims and caprices, for He often remarked, "These are my dear children." Some of these children — the *masts* — were patient and obedient, others haughty and naughty. Baba, however, showered His love equally upon them all. In the case of Chambu Shah, like a loving mother Baba kept up all the appointments at particular hours as the *mast* desired. Chambu Shah stayed in Motiwada, a part of Baroda. He was residing in the house of one of his devotees, who was a landlord. The *mast* was a *wali* on the fifth plane, and it was rather difficult to predict what these comrades of God, i.e., *walis*, would ask their friend, the God-Man.

At the time of the contact on October 22, Chambu Shah first asked for cigarettes and tea. Then he had a whim to plead for clothes — a *lungi* and a shirt. When these were brought and presented to him, strangely enough he took out a few clothes, including a turban, and requested that Baba wear them at some future time. Then he looked at Baba's face and entreated Him to visit the house at 5:00 A.M. the next morning. A few *masts* had tried to evade Baba's further contacts, but Chambu Shah was an exception. He invited the God-Man back, with readiness to participate in His universal work. When the Baba party reached home, Baba wore Chambu Shah's clothes for a while. How strange He must have appeared in that unusual attire.

Next morning, with Baidul and Eruch, Baba visited Chambu Shah's residence at 5:00 A.M. as he had wished, but the *mast* would not let Baba in for the contact. Baba had to wait outside for an hour until the *mast* was in a good mood to receive Him. At the end of this second meeting, Chambu Shah requested that Baba drop in again at 2:00 P.M., so that same day Baba again sat alone with the *mast* — the third visit. At the close of the contact Chambu Shah took a fancy that Baba should revisit him at 5:00 A.M. the next day. He also expressed a desire to have more clothes — a *bandi* (waistcoat) and a coat. Early the next morning he seemed pleased to receive the clothes but wished Baba to repeat His visit at 2:00 P.M. Baidul pleaded that Saheb (meaning Baba) had to leave Baroda, but the *mast* insisted on the meeting. Thus, from October 22 to October 25, five in the morning and two in the afternoon were reserved for visiting this uncommon *mast*.

When the contact was over on October 25, Baba sent Eruch to Chambu Shah to convey clearly that Baba's work with him was finished and that He had to leave Baroda. Chambu Shah appeared pleased at this. His eyes blazed as

he chuckled contentedly and said, "Give my greetings to Saheb (Baba)." Then to Eruch's surprise the *mast* returned all the things he had asked for and been given by Baba, and he instructed Eruch to return them to where they had been purchased. Chambu Shah's wish was carried out literally, and the dirty clothes he had given to Baba were put into a tin and carried to Meherazad as a prized possession. It is interesting to note that at the commencement of one of His seclusions, Meher Baba especially put on these clothes and wore them for some time. Wonderful was Baba's relationship with the *masts* and theirs with Him.

A Mast under the Gunny Covering

A seeker named Narayan also had Baba's contact at Baroda. If anyone paused near him, the seeker used to repeat in a deep, full voice one phrase, "*Sat bolo* " ("Speak the truth"). This reminded the *mandali* of a very high *mast* named Ram Baba, contacted at Hardwar in 1941. Sitting naked on a heap of rubbish, he kept a skull by his side. He used to ask visitors to spit in it, and later he gulped the expectorations! Usually he was heard singing devotional songs in praise of Lord Ram, but if anyone stood near him, his only counsel would be, "*Beta, bachan pal*" ("Boy, keep the promise").

On October 26, Baba gave some money to a group of thirty persons, and with this distribution, the stay in Baroda was over.

Meher Baba and His disciples reached Ahmedabad on October 28. All the old contacts with God-intoxicated souls were renewed. A new *mast* named Arab Shah was spotted near the Parsi *dharmashala*. For a number of years this *mast* had not stepped down from the platform on which he lived. Two strange things were noticed about him — practically no one had seen his face, and he always kept his entire body covered with a gunny cloth (coarse jute sacking). Food as

well as water was offered to him under the gunny covering. He was seen sitting on the platform throughout the day and night. He did not lie down to rest, so he had his sleep, if any, in the sitting posture. Meher Baba contacted him at night.

After finishing His work with the *masts* of Ahmedabad, Baba decided to spend the night on the railway platform. It was a noisy and disturbing place, as all railway platforms are, and the *mandali* had to practice the art of sleeping in a sitting posture, like Arab Shah. Such discomforts did not affect them if they found Baba's face radiating satisfaction after contacting a *mast* of a high order. Early the next morning Baba contacted Arab Shah again, offered him tea, then they left for the return trip to Baroda.

Return to Meherazad

A rest house at Baroda had been reserved in advance. Ali Shah, alias Bapji, was brought there from Meherabad. Twice a day Baba sat alone in seclusion for some hours with this *jamali mast*, then after a few days Bapji was sent back to Meherabad. During Baba's stay at Baroda and Ahmedabad, an "all well" telegram was sent to Him every day from Ahmednagar, conveying the welfare of the *mandali* at Meherazad. In a way, the two words of the telegram helped the *mandali* maintain their close contact with Baba. By November 16, 1947, Baba had returned to Meherazad (Pimpalgaon).

Beginning in November, Meher Baba was apparently engaged in a special type of work. Adi Sr. had been instructed beforehand to keep Gyara's house ready for Baba's stay, to serve as a resting place for the night. The house was quite close to Meherazad. On November 7, He visited the men *mandali* residing in the rooms outside the compound of the main building at Meherazad. The women *mandali*

who lived inside were not allowed to see Him even from a distance. For them He was so close, and yet so far away.

The Film Project Avatar

Since May of 1932, which marked Meher Baba's second visit to America, He had showed great interest in having a film made which would reveal spiritual truths. During succeeding years He gave considerable attention to those who were entrusted with this work. Circle Productions, Inc., brought out two booklets (screenplays), but they were not published as they were not meant for circulation. One, "How It All Happened," was written by Karl Vollmoeller and was based on ideas given by Baba. The other booklet, "This Man David,"⁷⁸ was penned by Karl Vollmoeller and

⁷⁸ As I read the booklet, the last paragraph of this screenplay, also written under the instruction of Meher Baba, especially arrested my attention. The pertinent part of the text is:

“ Today if you come to Middlesville you will see the tree...ask anyone...and they will tell you about this tree, the strange tale of how. just a few months ago a Man (David) was lynched and how the next day the branches of the tree shaped themselves into a profile of the face of DAVID LORD, and you will look up, and you will see the face, molded by some Great Sculptor.”

This reminds me of Lord Meher Baba's image---His face with a scarf across the forehead---which appeared at Meherazad on the audumbar tree which is outside the window of Mehera's room. It was noticed by her one evening in July 1969, a few months after the *Avatar* had dropped His body. The face is a natural formation in the bark, untouched by hand, and appears slightly raised as in a sculptured plaque. Once while having a stroll in the "Garden of Allah" at Meherazad, Baba pointed at this particular tree and remarked, "I like this tree," without disclosing any reason. In January 1972, at the time of writing this footnote, the image on the tree is as clear as it was in 1969, in spite of the natural changes taking place in the bark. Since the face first appeared on the tree trunk, in place of the scarf across the forehead, a crown has become prominently visible.

I present these facts to the readers and leave it to them to feel the significance of these events in their fullness.

H. S. Craft. The scenes in this screenplay were to be photographed according to Meher Baba's instructions. I do not know whether or not Garrett Fort from Hollywood, who was the producer of famous pictures like *The Invisible Man*, *Frankenstein* and *The Last Patrol*, was also taking part in this project. He was closely connected with Meher Baba and His work. However, the distinguished personality Gabriel Pascal, the director of renowned pictures like *Pygmalion* and *Cleopatra*, had made a special trip from the United States to Switzerland to discuss some important matters with Meher Baba in connection with film work. After 1936, it seems that for over a decade there were no special efforts made to film the screenplay.

By 1946, Jean Adriel, the author of *Avatar*, was working on this project with Alexander Markey's help. Later she sent two versions of the manuscript, with personal comments, to India for Baba's approval.

In the winter of 1947, Baba sent the following cable to Jean regarding these two versions: "You say first not acceptable to the West; *mandali* (we) say second not acceptable to the East. Therefore, write for the first and last time something that will be acceptable to both."

The subsequent screenplay was written by Robert Claire in collaboration with Jean. *Avatar* was the suggested title of the film. Gabriel Pascal was then working on a project to bring out a film based on one of the dramas by Bernard Shaw and even wrote to Baba about this enterprise. Apart from this, in his letter dated October 21, 1947 to Meher Baba, Pascal expressed a desire to arrange the shooting of the film *Avatar* in Italy. This project, however, was afterwards completely given up.

Meher Baba in His lifetime showed intense interest in different matters at different times. Each time it seemed that nothing interested Him more than that particular phase of work. After some days, months, or perhaps years,

the activity would be entirely put aside with perfect detachment. Baba's main concern was not the outward working of the project, for that only served as a scaffolding to further His mission of spiritual awakening through those who came into His contact by way of the project. Whatever He did, His attention was total and His response most natural and hence perfect. God, who becomes enformed as the God-Man out of spiritual necessity, quickens life in all its aspects.

A Simple Significant Gesture

During the days of petrol (gasoline) shortage in India, Adi Sr., who stayed at Ahmednagar, would visit Meherazad in his car once a week, on Sundays. On November 23, 1947, I had an opportunity to accompany him to Meherazad. It was so very pleasant to be in that peace-vibrating atmosphere again. Baba was in the same room where I had met Him a month earlier. To say He looked beautiful would be an understatement — I found Him more radiant and graceful than I had imagined. I was instructed not to touch His person. This time I presented two notebooks to Him. They contained a Marathi translation of questions answered by Baba which had been in the *Meher Baba Journal*. Meher Baba's *Discourses* had already been translated into Marathi by Deshmukh and Mrs. Indumati Deshmukh, so I chose to do this job. For me it was a sort of meditation on Baba and His teachings. Baba asked me to read a page from one of the notebooks. The expression on His face showed "well tried." He asked me to hand over the notebooks to Adi Sr., and that was the end of the matter and my interview with Him. I folded my hands to offer *namaskar*. Baba gave a pleasant smile, and by way of a gesture put three of His long, delicate fingers on His heart. Unawares I said, "Yes, Baba," as if I understood what He meant.

As I stepped back, I wondered what that simple gesture implied. Did Baba mean that He ever resides in my heart? Or did he wish to console me that I had a place in His heart? Was it an indication that what matters is the language of the heart and not what I read to Him? I was sure that the gesture was not to indicate just the lub-dub of the heart, that most marvelous electromuscular pump encased in the pericardium. Did the three fingers point out that He is, in fact, beyond the three bodies and the three worlds? At the same time I felt that this would be a far-fetched connotation. One thing I gathered was that Meher Baba emphasized the importance of purity of heart, the seat of spirituality. I do not know why I said, "Yes, Baba," and yet He looked pleased at my madness! Whatever the interpretation, the incident provides a good theme for meditation even to this day. Meher Baba's simple gestures have sometimes revealed the treasures hidden in the heart, and His Silence, the immensity of His presence.

Seclusion on the Hill

By the beginning of December 1947, preparations were being made for Baba's work in seclusion on Tembi Hill, which rises behind "Baba House" in Meherazad. Sarosh Irani, one of Baba's dearest disciples, was successful in securing the top of the hill from the government for a nominal rent on a long lease. Padri, the engineer, was at work fixing the cement-asbestos siding sheets for the hut at the summit of the hill. The roof was covered with Mangalore tiles. The other hut was erected lower down, on the shoulder.

In the evening on December 5, Baba and a few of the *mandali* ascended the hill. December is cold and windy, and it seemed incredible that Baba's delicate body could withstand so many uncomfortable seasons, all for the work

which He alone knew. The *mast* Ali Shah was brought from Meherabad and was kept in the hut built on the shoulder, and Baba occupied the one at the summit. A small tent was pitched for the *mandali*.

Beginning December 6, Baba did His work in seclusion for ten days. Most of the time He was alone in His cabin, but daily He sat alone with Ali Shah for three hours in the morning. Baba came down the hill on the morning of the seventeenth; however, His work with Ali Shah continued for two more days and then the *mast* was sent back to Meherabad. This hill is now known as "Meher Baba's Seclusion Hill" and has become a place of world pilgrimage. At the end of 1951 the structures on the hill were removed and made into a single room on the Meherazad premises. Baba stayed in that room for some days at the close of the New Life, and later He asked Eruch to occupy it.

Baba Attends to Correspondence

In between His *mast* work and the seclusion periods, whenever Baba had a bit of leisure He would attend to the letters and cables addressed to Him. To a few of His closer ones He gave instructions about even their day-to-day activities, including visits and journeys. For example, He sent the following cable to Delia DeLeon in the West: "Only if you want to be in England return there; otherwise remain in Panama. Eternal love blessings. Baba." He directed Norina to send the following cable to Milda Charlton: "Come if you can, otherwise don't worry. Baba blesses you all the same. He is everywhere."

Baba reassured one of His devotees with the words, "My love for you will ever be the same as it was before." A contact with Meher Baba was a relationship with the movement of unconditional love. One of Baba's dear ones in the West who had stayed with Him in India wrote a letter relating

inability to visit Him. It seemed that the person was grieved over missing a chance for the Master's *sahavas*. Baba's quick-witted and consoling reply was poured into the following four lines:

"Your letter of love gave both pleasure and pain.
Joy, because you always remember me; you have always
been mine.
Pain, because physically you cannot with me remain;
Nevertheless my love in you always will shine."

The words from the Master have a unique quality of radiating His presence and serve as a medium of silent communication with Him.

It had been a long time since Baba had met His devotees who lived in nearby places like Poona and Bombay. There were many requests for *darshan* through letters, and some sincere appeals were made through the *mandali*. In response to these, Baba consented to hold a small gathering at Meherabad in the last week of December 1947. I had no inkling of this program. I casually wrote a letter informing Baba of the ensuing ten-day Christmas vacation of the school, and a few more lines which I do not recall. To my surprise, on the sacred Christmas morning I received a postcard from Adi Sr. by express delivery. It brought me tidings of joy. Adi wrote, "Baba was very happy to read your postcard ...". The God-Man reading my letter — simply unbelievable! But in His matchless compassion, impossible is made possible. Adi continued, "You, by yourself, may go to Meherabad to stay for three days — December 29, 30 and 31, 1947. Baba will be there during those three days." You can well imagine my joy, for this gave me the chance to participate in an unexpected *sahavas* with Baba. I felt it was a passport to a different land altogether.

Needless to say, I availed myself of the opportunity vouchsafed through that blessed postcard.

Heartache of a Lover

This was my third visit to Meherabad. In the morning, December 29, I saw Baba walking briskly towards the old *ashram* building and then to His cabin. On the way, a pair of luminous eyes met mine and I felt blessed.

Work on the foundation of the new *ashram* building, as is seen today at Meherabad, was being supervised by Kalemama, one of the *mandali*. Many merry faces were about, and to me Meherabad wore a gay and festive appearance. Baba called different persons to His cabin. Some gave Him a report of their work and got further instructions from Him. There were some personal interviews, also, for He was the compassionate confidant in whom His devotees trusted without reservations or fear. He was to them father and friend, mother and Master, all in one. By late afternoon, a mattress had been placed in the hall, covered with a clean white sheet, and a few cushions were laid by its side. Musical instruments — *tabla* and harmonium — were placed by the wall. I learned that Baba was to visit the hall to meet new arrivals. When He entered, He looked preoccupied. Some offered their *pranams* to Him, and a tired smile played over His face. He sat on the mattress and stretched His legs. At His signal the musicians began to play some of His favorite notes, and to the delight of us all, the sadness on Baba's face disappeared. He looked refreshed and radiant. A local *qavval* named Babu sang some songs.

Baba then asked Dattu Mahendargee, who assisted Adi Sr. in his office, to sing. After playing a few notes on the harmonium, Dattu looked at Baba and tears rolled freely down his cheeks. Dattu had been one of the boys in the

Meher Ashram. Baba did not look pleased at this sentimental outburst. He remarked:

"One should not shed tears even if the head is to be cut off, and you are shedding tears in my presence! Outwardly, always look cheerful. Inwardly, if you so wish, you may shed tears, even without a break!"

Dattu tried to check himself and with a choked voice sang one of Fani's fine *ghazals*. It commenced with a line, "*Duniya kya meri bala jane!*" ("How will the world ever understand my heartache!") After describing the ecstasies and tortures of the heart, the poet conveyed at the end:

"There was a time, O Beloved, when I used to shed tears
 profusely;
 Nay, my heart ceaselessly bled at your remembrance.
 But now, what a pity, I have not the slightest pulse of love
 beating in my heart.
 The eyes crave to shed just a drop or two of tears for you,
 but in vain!"

Baba seemed to appreciate the last two lines. He asked Dattu to stop singing and repeat the Urdu text of those lines. Baba remarked, "A lover of God has to go through so many incredible states!"

The Urdu *ghazals* have a quality of their own which expresses the ecstasies and heartaches experienced by lovers in their madness for the Divine Beloved. Meher Baba especially liked *ghazals* composed by Ghalib, Jigar, Asghar and a few others, including Seemab and Dagh.

"What Is Mind? What Is Heart?"

The next morning, December 30, I saw Mohammed the *mast*, half bent, engrossed in searching with vacant eyes for "something" on the ground. He looked pleased at Dada's

arrival (Mohammed always referred to Baba as Dada). Baba fondled him and a delightful expression lit his face. He had a standing inquiry for Baba. As he stammered to voice his wish, it was a struggle for him to push out the syllables that seemed to gag in his throat. The blocked words finally came out in the form of his usual request. "When will you take me to Falance (France)?" In 1937 Mohammed had been taken to France, and ever since then he had had a fancy to revisit that country. On behalf of Baba, Baidul replied, "We have placed an order for a chartered ship. When it arrives on the Indian coast we shall sail out on our voyage to France." I was told that this answer had been given many, many times, and every time Mohammed looked perfectly satisfied.

In the evening we sat around Baba. I do not recall how the subject was raised, but Baba put two questions to us all:

"What is mind? What is heart?"

It set us to thinking. Some tried to express what they felt on the spur of the moment. Dr. Deshmukh, Dr. Nilu, Dr. Ghani, Adi Sr. and others of the *mandali* tried to answer, each in his own way. Baba appreciated the replies, and at the end He dictated the following on His alphabet board:

"Feelings at rest and thoughts at work is mind. Thoughts at rest and feelings at work is heart."

Baba did not wish to add any more words to this laconic remark. He looked at the gathering, smiled, and put aside the board. It was a signal for no more discussion and that the subject was dismissed.

This reminded me of an incident I read about in the *Meher Baba Journal*. One morning Baba casually put a question to the *mandali*:

"Where is God?" And after getting their replies, He remarked:

"God is where you . . . are not . . . Where you . . . are, God is not."⁷⁹

In informal meetings, Baba did not like to give long explanations. Perhaps He expected us to discover for ourselves the deeper significance of His statements, for personal findings have greater influence on our thinking and living. From Baba's remark I gathered that the so-called difference between mind and heart was to classify the functions of self-consciousness, the impressed life of every individual.

The Ghadi That Counts

On the last day of the year there was a remarkable *qavvali* program. A *qavval* named Narsing from the State of Hyderabad gave a unique performance in the *darbar* (court) of the God-Man, Meher Baba. With a style that was his alone and with meaningful refrains of *ghazals*, he entertained Baba with Urdu and Persian songs — a rare treat. The sweet, soft blends of *ghazals*, accompanied by the resonances of *tabla* and harmonium, filled the atmosphere with a melodious charm. Narsing also sang some familiar, favorite airs to keep the listeners who did not understand Urdu in the spirit of the occasion. For persons like me, such a program provided an opportunity to sit before the God-Man for hours. I felt happy, for I had Baba to feast my eyes upon to my heart's content. Baba sometimes looked here and there at the assembly of His lovers with those shining, powerful eyes, and all seemed held by them.

Baba carried His tender humor with Him everywhere, and the programs were no exception. A witticism or pun would make us feel more intimate with His humanity. That

⁷⁹ F. H. Dadacanji, "Notes from My Diary," Meher Baba Journal, September 1939, p. 63.

day someone brought to Baba's notice that as Narsing had commenced his journey to Meherabad, he lost a few of his belongings. To this the qavval added, "The last thing I lost was my *ghadi* (watch)."

The word *ghadi* in Hindi has a double meaning — a watch, or a moment. Baba made a pun on this word and remarked to Narsing, "You have lost that *ghadi* (watch), but you have gained this *ghadi* (this moment, the opportunity to entertain the God-Man). Not that *ghadi* but this *ghadi* counts. That *ghadi* was quite insignificant, but this *ghadi* holds immense significance. Time will reveal it. Don't worry, but rejoice." Baba, however, arranged to pay Narsing an additional sum to replace the lost belongings, over and above the remuneration which had been fixed for this program.

By 11:00 P.M., all the programs of this get-together were over and the buses were ready to take the visitors to the station or to town. I purposely hesitated at getting into the bus, but as they moved out I felt that I had failed to follow Baba's instructions to the letter. I had been asked to stay at Meherabad until December 31, and now I would be there still on January 1, 1948. In a way I was disobeying Baba, so I could not sleep but only wept. Mentally I asked Baba's forgiveness a number of times.

It was fairly early the next morning when I saw Baba, His head covered with a scarf, coming toward the old *ashram* building. I approached Him when He was about halfway. I looked at Him in an appeal, but I could not speak. Baba patted me and led me to a room. Somehow I managed to relate the details of my lapse. He gestured, "Now forget about it completely. I forgive you. But henceforth be careful in observing the instructions." As He conveyed this, I noticed an unusual flash of sternness in His eyes, along with the usual glow of compassion. In one's life with the Master, obedience matters most — this was the lesson I learned on that New Year's morning.

18

Threefold Spiritual Work, 1948

The Tripartite Phase

AVATAR Meher Baba adored the God-intoxicated souls, the *masts*, He loved immensely everyone who came into His contact, and He was intensely devoted to the service of the poor. In the year 1948 we find a delightful blending of this tripartite phase of His work.

The journeys to contact *masts* extended from the Himalayas in the north to Madras in the south, and from Calcutta in the east to the Girnar in the west. After washing and bowing down to the feet of the poor in Ahmednagar district, Baba distributed over four thousand bundles of food-grain to them. He once remarked about this method of contacting the poor: "Nothing makes me happier than opportunities to bow down to God in all these forms."

The formal opening of the Baba House at Meherazad and the new *ashram* building at Meherabad took place in 1948. After the middle of the year there were small-scale *darshan* programs at Meherabad every month. Above all, this year marked the active participation in Baba's great spiritual work by His lovers in the East and West. This participation lasted for around two months, twice for about two weeks each time, and we do not find anything like this in succeeding years.

The Sufi School in America

Significantly, the beginning of the year 1948 marked a short visit to Meherazad by Mrs. Ivy Duce and her daughter Charmian. They had left America toward the end of 1947 with the specific intention of meeting Meher Baba in India. From childhood, Mrs. Duce had had a religious mind which was sorely tried as she worked with the Red Cross in France during World War I. Later, she met Ada Martin, the *Murshida* of the Sufi Order in America. The Sufi message was first delivered to the West in 1910 by the great mystic and musician Hazrat Inayat Khan of Baroda. He later appointed Ada Martin of San Francisco, whom he lovingly renamed Rabia, as *Murshida*. Hazrat Inayat Khan passed away in 1927, so Rabia Martin, who believed in the spiritual hierarchy, was in search of a Qutub, or Perfect Master. She heard of Meher Baba in 1943 through Norina Matchabelli. Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff, one of Baba's intimate disciples, corresponded with her about Sufism in general and Meher Baba, the Perfect Sufi, in particular. Murshida Martin felt so convinced of Meher Baba's divinity that she expressed her readiness to place her Sufi school under His guidance. She expected Baba to visit the United States in 1947, but Baba changed the plan and postponed the visit.

The Sufi Order under Meher Baba's Wing

Dr. Allan Y. Cohen writes:

"Murshida Martin carried out her dedicated work until 1947, when she dropped her body after appointing Ivy O. Duce as her successor. Murshida Duce was quite aware of the spiritual hierarchy and the necessity of an illumined or a Perfect leader of the Order. Not experiencing illumination or Perfection, she naturally turned to find the Qutub. Of course, before her death, Murshida Martin told Murshida

Duce about Meher Baba. Murshida Duce was determined to meet Him.

"Murshida Duce first met Meher Baba at Meherazad in the first week of January 1948. Immediately struck with the conviction that Baba was the Qutub, she posed to Him the problem of her leading the Sufi Order in the West, which she was reluctant to do. At that time, Baba told her that this was her destiny, that he confirmed her title, and said that He wanted her to continue the Sufi work; that as long as she remained honest, He would do her work for her; that He would protect her students from her making any mistake with them, and that He would protect her from taking on any of their *karma*. The next day, Baba told Murshida Duce, 'You have to go home and reestablish this work all over again, and I want it on a safe, sound and stable basis so that it will last six hundred to seven hundred years.' (Until Baba comes again.)"⁸⁰

Reorientation of Sufism

A few years later Meher Baba reoriented Sufism. With reference to this "reorientation," I will quote the following statement which Baba made in America at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. On June 17, 1952, He dictated on His alphabet board:

"Meher Baba is equally connected with Islam and its Sufism, Christianity and its Mysticism, the Orient and its Vedantism, broad Buddhism, practical Zoroastrianism, Jainism and many other such *isms* which all speak the same divine Truth and lead to the same divine Goal. Meher Baba is also detached and above all these divine paths. He has

⁸⁰ Allan Y. Cohen, Ph.D., "Meher Baba and Sufism Reoriented, Inc.," *Sufism* (San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 1971), p. 28.

to awaken the followers of these paths to the real meaning of these *isms*, in their true spirit, by reorienting these *isms*, and in this capacity He has reoriented Sufism in the charter to be universally adopted."

The details of the reorientation of Murshida Duce's Sufi Order contain instructions regarding the principles, practices and corporate organization of the Order. In November 1952 Meher Baba sent His document from India called "Chartered Guidance from Meher Baba for the Reorientation of Sufism as the Highway to the Ultimate Universalized." Sufism Reoriented has verily rendered great service to the cause of disseminating Meher Baba's message of love and truth to English-speaking people by publishing His books, such as *God Speaks*, *Beams*, *Discourses*, and *Life At Its Best*.

Thus in the first fortnight of January 1948 the seed of reorientation was sown by Meher Baba. During this short stay at Meherazad, Murshida Duce had the conviction that she had met the Perfect Sufi, God in human form, Meher Baba. She and Charmian left Ahmednagar in the morning on January 12 in Adi's car, driving to Poona to catch a train for Bombay, and from there she returned to the West.

For all, Meher Baba is, indeed, One in all and All in all. Dr. A. Ghani Munsiff wrote: ". . . Meher Baba . . . on all counts, is the spiritual index of the time and if looked at dispassionately is assuredly the common denominator, who can be approached and claimed by all, without loss of prestige — cultural or religious." How true!

A Circular Containing Five Orders

On January 21, 1948 a special circular was issued wherein five orders were stipulated by Baba. All His followers were given a choice of observing any one or more or all of the

orders for a period of twenty-five days, provided he or she could do so without jeopardizing household responsibilities, job or business affairs. Baba was very practical and yet very particular in asking His dear ones to follow the instructions. It had been the experience of many Baba people that a sincere desire and a suppliant heart made things favorable, whether at home or in the office. Observance of the orders was to commence February 1, 1948. They were:

1. To take one meal a day, and tea or coffee only twice.
2. To observe silence.
3. To feed every day one poor person with one's own hands, a different person each day.
4. To abstain absolutely from any sexual relations whatsoever.
5. To meditate one hour each day.

Baba's followers were asked to think thoroughly about the orders and then inform Baba of their decision before February 1. They were to fill in the slip attached to the circular, stating the number of the order or orders which they wished to observe, and sign it.

The Westerners received this circular in the last week of January. Since there was little time, those in America, England, Switzerland, France and other countries informed Meher Baba of their decisions by cable.

On the East Coast of America a group of stalwarts in New York was carrying Meher Baba's message to sincere seekers. On the West Coast, Malcolm Schloss and Jean Adriel in California had been instrumental in bringing earnest souls to Baba. The day Malcolm received the circular, he held a meeting. Coincidentally, Margaret Craske, one of Baba's dearest disciples, arrived in Los Angeles for a week's stay, on detached service for a ballet theater. It was a happy get-together. Malcolm wrote a very promising report about the responses of the group. By the way, I may mention that Baba liked to read or hear Malcolm's letters, but his hand-

writing was so peculiar that one of the *mandali* had to go through it patiently and type it out for easy reading.

Inquiries About Observing the Orders

Many people expressed their feelings of joy and gratitude for this Baba-sent opportunity. One from the West wrote: "My heart rejoices that during these twenty-five days of February, I am to be a part of your great spiritual work. It's a privilege and honor to be included in this spiritual undertaking." Some expressed their heartfelt thanks to Baba for this unique participation in the divine discipline, collaborating with the Master in His work, in however small a degree.

There were inquiries regarding the meaning of the orders. One person asked if "tea" meant breakfast! Baba conveyed: "Tea means plain tea, that's all." Some wrote letters to Adi Sr. requesting that Baba clarify the order about feeding the poor. Baba explained: "You have to feed one with your own hands as a mother would feed her own child." Personally, I interpreted the order to mean serving food to the poor with my own hands. One of my friends felt that I was wrong in my interpretation, and in the first week of February, without my knowledge, he wrote a letter to Adi about the order. Adi brought the matter to Baba's notice. I received an unexpected postcard from Adi Sr. with Baba's instruction to "continue serving food to the poor as you seem to have been doing." Replying to a letter of mine, Adi wrote: "Baba is too benign to mind seriously any shortcomings in us provided we are prepared to obey Him implicitly and wholeheartedly. Of course, we must try to get over the weaknesses, but on no account should we brood over them."

Baba allowed a few individual exceptions to the general rules. Ruth White from America wrote: "In our place no

one is hungry or without food." She sent tins of food — a soy bean product reinforced with powdered vegetables and vitamins — to be fed to the poor in India. The tins were accepted, as that was the only way for Ruth to observe the third order.

Try Your Best

The house where I stayed was quite small. I was trying to observe all the five orders, including that of silence, so I preferred to pass most of my time on the enclosed veranda of my neighbor. Even there, a few distant acquaintances dropped in to see me in my "dumb state." It was a test to remain silent, but the humor of the situation brought in joy which my heart savored to the full.

One of the boys who had stayed in Meher Ashram at Meherabad, from May 1927 through 1929, wrote to Baba about his inability to observe any of the orders for the first few days. At that time, only letters regarding the orders were brought to Baba's notice. Adi Sr. replied: "Baba read your letter and felt displeased; you, who have been connected with Baba since childhood, ought not to have treated the circular so lightly. But now, anyway, Baba is glad that you have realized your mistake." In a sense, Baba's love was very personal. Once He accepted anyone as His own, the sincerity of that person would please Him and any negligence would displease Him. Baba often remarked: "Try your best and do not worry over the results."

Regarding the fifth order, a few devotees asked if they could conveniently divide the hour of meditation into parts. Baba made it clear that it had to be done at a stretch. As for remaining celibate, one of my friends later related to me how sorry he felt, for his wife failed to cooperate with him. Poor soul!

First Phase of the Tripartite Work

Meher Baba entered upon His tripartite spiritual work on January 18. That day He started taking one meal a day and tea twice, and He continued this until February 25, 1948.

The first part of the work was related to *mast* contacts. Baba had Ali Shah brought to Meherazad from Meherabad, and silent sittings with this unique fifth plane *mast* continued for ten consecutive days. There was in him an appealing restlessness and poise peculiar to those in love with God. He received Baba's divine presence in the spirit of innocence, and it was a benediction in disguise for his intoxicated and dazed being. He would stop talking as abruptly as he had begun. He did not speak much but he had an unspeakably soft voice, for the sweet glance of God had pierced his heart through and through. No wonder he has been the first in many phases of Baba's spiritual working. At Mahabaleshwar some months earlier, while standing before Meher Baba, Ali Shah mumbled, "*Bolenge, bolenge, lekin kab bolenge malum nahin*" ("He will speak; He will speak, but when He will speak is not known"). The depth and profundity of Meher Baba's silence was and is beyond the understanding of the saints, also. At Meherazad, Baba sat with Ali Shah daily for three hours each day. On January 27 Baba bathed him and the next day sent him back to Meherabad.

A *sanyasi* (mendicant) and a seeker were then brought from Poona. The *sanyasi* was sent back the next day. The seeker presented a pathetic figure. Baba shaved and bathed him. After the bath he was given new clothes to wear and he looked a changed person. This seeker generally preferred to sit in the sun for most of the day. Baba sat alone with him for an hour in the morning and for a few minutes in the evening. On January 30, a Muslim who appeared to

be mad was brought to Meherazad from Ahmednagar. After the regular procedure of shaving, bathing and presenting new clothes, he was sent back to the city. The seeker was sent back to Poona on February 3. Ali Shah was brought again on the morning of the fourth, and with this contact Baba completed that phase of His work with *masts*.

Kumbha Mela, a Retrospect

The second phase of Meher Baba's tripartite work was to contact *sadhus* at Allahabad — they had assembled there for the *Ardha Kumbha Mela* (fair).

A few years previously, before Baba began His work with the *masts*, He had visited the Nilgiri Hills in the south of India. While there, he casually remarked that He intended to contact about seven thousand *sadhus* in one day, which was a surprise to those who were with Him. Later He commenced His work of contacting *masts*. In 1941 the occasion of the Allahabad *Maha Kumbha Mela* had provided an opportunity for the fulfillment of Baba's wish. The *Kumbha Mela* is connected with the astronomic positions of the different signs of the zodiac in relation to the sun, and it also has some mythological background. This is the greatest fair held in India — at Allahabad, Hardwar, Ujjain and Nasik. Meher Baba decided to visit Allahabad the end of December 1941 for the purpose of contacting the seven thousand *sadhus*.

At Allahabad, the main place of pilgrimage is at the confluence of two rivers, the Ganges and the Jumna. It is believed that the mythical Saraswati river also joins the flow, so it is called *Triveni Sangam* (the confluence of the three). According to the Indian almanac, the day of the new moon in the month of Magh is the momentous occasion when

thousands of *sadhus* and pilgrims dip into the holy current during the stipulated time. This is believed to be beneficial spiritually.

Baba reached Allahabad in the morning on December 29, 1941. First He went around the *Mela* grounds that stretched for over two miles on the sands of the riverbanks. At sunset, He commenced the great work as he coincidentally encountered a *sadhu* whose beaming face failed to hide the exuberance of his heart. He was intently gazing at the setting sun, shouting with joy, "*Jap! Jap!*" ("Meditate! Meditate!") He had put on Indian clothes and on his head was an old British *sofa* (pith) hat — perhaps this combination was a symbol showing that Meher Baba's work of spiritual upliftment was intended for both East and West.

The second contact was a young, handsome person, completely naked, his body covered with sand and dust. This was a *mast* whose like the *mandali* had not seen before. His eyes looked alive with joy and he seemed absorbed in communion with God. But when from a distance of about fifty feet he saw Baba, the divine Beloved, he began to dance, gracefully moving his hands. Suddenly there came over him a rushing emotion that engulfed his being, and he sat down. Baba quickly walked up to him and extended His hands. The *sadhu* got up and gazed at Baba dumbly. Baba looked immensely pleased and embraced him most lovingly, unmindful of the dirty body of the *sadhu*. Baba later remarked, "Just as the state of the soul's union with the Oversoul is beyond the realm of understanding, so also is the state of this perfect lover of God indescribable." After contacting over three hundred *sadhus*, Baba returned to his residence. During the next day, from six in the morning until nine at night, He completed the Herculean task of contacting seven thousand *sadhus*, as He had earlier indicated He would.

Second Visit to *Kumbha Mela*

Meher Baba left Meherazad for Bombay on February 7, 1948, with a few of the *mandali* where they boarded a train for Allahabad to contact a number of *sadhus*. It was the period of *Ardha* (half) *Kumbha Mela*, and in honor of this periodic astronomic occurrence, hundreds of *sadhus* of different sects — *sanyasis*, *bairagis* and some others — had collected and camped at different places over an area of three miles on the banks of the Ganges and the Jumna. This was Baba's second visit during the *Kumbha Mela*.

At the touch of dawn on February 9, Baba and the *mandali* left their quarters for the *Mela* grounds. Over a million pilgrims and thousands of *sadhus* had flocked together. The different camps of the *sadhus* were known as *akhadas*. Some *sadhus* had matted and braided hair reaching right to their knees; some had topknots, and some were clean-shaven. Some, especially the *mahants* (the heads of *ashrams*) wore rich and costly clothes, but most had plain white or ochre colored *kafnis*, and a few had no clothes at all. Some were short and plump, some tall and thin, some strong and hefty, and a few were lean and emaciated. Some had applied vermilion to their foreheads, while the foreheads of others gleamed with different colored powders and pastes. Most of the *bairagis* had ash-daubed bodies.

Through different sects, the ancient Indian culture has provided a variety of traditions and rituals that aim to invoke real devotion to God. But the rituals, instead of making things easy, often make the heart hard and unreceptive. When followed blindly, the outward forms of the rituals are prone to invite deception. You can put flowers in a vase but not the fragrance! Rituals of some kind seem necessary, but ritualism becomes a hindrance. In fact, one has to discover for oneself the way of life as a wakeful meditation — to make God one's constant companion. In spite of the kaleidoscopic

pomp and show of different sects at the *Kumbha Mela*, there were some spiritually advanced souls and many spiritually-minded persons assembled on this occasion. So it was a fair field for Meher Baba to give a spiritual push in that religious atmosphere. He also remarked that from the days of old, Allahabad has been known for its spiritual atmosphere.

Contacting *Sadhus* and *Masts*

Baba made a rapid survey of the *Mela* grounds that morning after reaching the main premises. The *mandali* were acquainted with the location of different camps or *akhadas*. At Baba's discretion, He was taken to the entrance of the different camps. The *mandali* stood at the gates and Baba moved briskly in the soft sand to contact the *sadhus*. He had to bend down in quick succession to touch the feet of each — an ordeal for His delicate frame. Selection of *sadhus* was left to Baba's on-the-spot discretion. Some were moving around, some were squatting, some praying, others resting. Baba moved like lightning through the camps. Some of the *sadhus* were greatly impressed by Baba, for He carried some incredible power in His presence. But by the time the amazed *sadhus* regained their senses, Baba had gone far ahead, perhaps even out of sight. Within three hours Baba had touched the feet of about four thousand *sadhus*, and by ten o'clock He declared that His work at the *Kumbha Mela* was over. He also remarked that He felt happy to have contacted seven really advanced souls among the *sadhus*. He looked fatigued but soon felt fit and fresh as ever and expressed a wish to contact some *masts* in the city.

In Allahabad Baba contacted four *masts*. Vishwanath was adept in closely imitating the sounds of the harmonium and *tabla*. This mimicry pleased Baba as much as it did the *mast* himself. Shah Saheb had a gypsy streak in his blood. He

roamed about the city with a book under his arm and glasses well down his nose. The glasses were used neither for reading nor for better vision — it seemed that he was just fond of wearing them. Baba also contacted the naked Qamruddin Mast, who loved dogs as pets. About each of these three *masts* Baba remarked, "A good *mast*, a good contact." Sheikh Mardan smoked excessively and was a moderate *mast*. He, too, was blessed with Baba's touch. Then, having completed the great work at Allahabad, Meher Baba left that same night for Bombay.

The Great *Masts* of Bombay

En route to and returning from Allahabad on February 7 and 11, Baba passed some hours in Bombay. He had, in fact, gone through this city a number of times, but these two short stays have a special significance. With His first group of *mandali*, Baba had stayed at Dadar in Bombay at Manzil-e-Meem from June 7, 1922, to March 25, 1923. During this period He contacted some advanced souls in Bombay, then there was a long break in this type of work, which was resumed by Baba after twenty-five years when He contacted some high *masts* there. In a way, it was a Silver Jubilee celebration of His stay at Manzil-e-Meem.

Baba reopened His *mast* work on February 7, 1948 by visiting a unique God-intoxicated family of seven sisters and two brothers, all of whom were born as *masts* and *mastanis*. The family lived in Mahim, a locality near the shrine of Maqdum Shah. The eldest brother, who lived a normal enough life, was able to provide for and attend to the material needs of his wonderful brothers and sisters. The *mastanis* never came out of the house but could manage to cook food and wash the clothes. One of the brothers had shut himself in a room and the food plates had to be pushed inside. The other, Ali Asghar, lived on the veranda — formerly

he had been very aggressive and kept in chains. At the time of Baba's contact he was quiet, and he looked very filthy. He belonged to that holy band for whom even any filth was a thing of beauty. It can well be said that he was fond of filth, for if sweets were offered to him, he would not eat them unless they had been plastered with some sort of dirt. Baba visited the house and was with Ali Asghar for some minutes.

Baba then motored to the southern part of Bombay -Colaba to see Pathan Baba. This *mast* had a stately bearing, and with his long, white flowing hair and beard, he was an impressive personality. His peculiarity was to anoint his hands and feet with a paste of flour and butter, and his choice of a seat was behind the Municipal Conservatory Carts and just by the public urinals. How these souls could live in such reeking places for years, God alone knows! Pathan Baba was on the fifth plane, and Baba remarked that he was three-fourths *salik-like*. Prior to this visit, Baidul had tried to take him to Meherazad for Baba's contact, but Pathan Baba knowingly turned his sparkling eyes to Baidul and replied, "I am always with Him (Meher Baba); let Him be here once." In fulfillment of this wish, Baba visited him twice on the same day.

When they returned from Allahabad on February 11, the Baba party arrived at Bombay early in the morning. It was a long, tiresome journey, but at the station itself Baba expressed a wish to contact Umar Baba, a *mast* of the sixth plane. He was in a complete *majzoob-like* state and resided in the old graveyard (*qabrestan*) on Grant Road. During the day the *mast* could be seen pacing to and fro like a restless tiger. When Baba reached the graveyard, it was still dark and Baidul had to wake the *mujawar* (attendant). From his wide experience Baidul had learned that the attendants knew the ways to bring *masts* into a good mood. Often this way of approach had worked well to save time. Baidul asked

the *mujawar* to persuade Umar Baba to sit with Meher Baba for a secluded contact. Soon the *mast* drew himself up to his height, glanced at Baba and agreed to the contact. This significant silent meeting with Umar Baba must have been very satisfying, for Baba looked extremely happy and seemed to radiate cheer all around as He came out.

Baba then contacted three more *masts* in different localities of Bombay, and without having had a good rest, He immediately left by car for Meherazad and arrived there before evening.

A Choice for the Mandali

In the early years, Meher Baba's birthday was privately celebrated according to the Zoroastrian calendar. Some Baba devotees used to inquire of the *mandali* the date of Baba's birthday, which varied every year on the English calendar. In 1948 it was on February 13. When replying to the loving inquiries, Baba was pleased to add a line by way of a message: "Here, there and everywhere, my love and blessings."

Because the Baba House at Meherazad was to be reconstructed, by February 15 Baba and all the men and women *mandali* left for a stay at Ahmednagar in Rustom (Rusi) Jehangir Irani's bungalow. Soon one more bungalow adjacent to this house was hired — it was on the premises of an old ice factory. Baba broke his partial fast of forty days on February 26. While attending to correspondence, He dictated the following cable to Delia DeLeon: "If your coming to India in July is difficult, cancel coming. We will meet sometime, somewhere." Delia, however, managed to visit India in July with Jean Adriel.

The great Indian leader and father of the Indian nation Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated at Delhi at 5:30 P.M. on January 30, 1948. He had been on his way to the prayer

ground at Birla House. According to Hindu funeral rites, after the period of nationwide mourning, his ashes were immersed in the confluence of rivers at Allahabad (incidentally, following Baba's sanctifying visit to that place), and newspapers published special articles on Gandhi's life and work.

Gandhi first met Meher Baba in September 1931 on the steamer *Rajputana* — he was on his way to London to attend the Indian Round Table Conference. Baba always praised Gandhiji's sincerity and honesty in life. In February 1948 in an informal sitting with the *mandali*, some articles on Gandhiji's life were brought to Baba's attention. He casually remarked, "People regard Gandhi as a *mahatma*. What do you take me to be? And do you wish to hold on to me till the very end?" He also added, "If any of you really feels confused or disappointed (over my status), he would be rendering me a great service by leaving me. I want you to be honest to yourself and to me. I am what I am, what I really was and will ever be. So once and for all, think well before you decide." He instructed each of the *mandali* to give Him a written and signed reply.

Baba Is All in All

Some of the *mandali's* replies to this choice are given below:

Norina: In you . . . I believe. For you, I am ready to live and die.

Elizabeth: One thing I know: if you had not come into my life there would have been no other Master for me. Having come, there is no other way for me.

Kitty: Your love brought me to you, your love has kept me with you, and your love will bind me to you till the end.

Rano: The one certainty in my life is you, beloved Meher Baba. I am yours and always will be yours.

Kaka: Happen what may, I will always stay with Baba, I say.

Feram W: Baba is BABA, so there is nothing to be said.

Pendu: I know one thing — that I have to serve Meher Baba.

Padri: For me, Meher Baba is God. I am born to serve Him.

Vishnu: To me, *Avatar* means God. Meher Baba is God.

Nilu: I do not doubt the *Avatarhood* of Meher Baba.

Sarosh: Philosophy or spirituality is not my line. The only one to whom I bow down with open heart, as God, is Baba.

Jal S.: I shall stick to Meher Baba till the end.

Meherjee: I have totally surrendered to you. I will never leave you.

Nariman: Beloved Baba, I had pledged to be yours and for you forever.

Adi K.: Meher Baba is the *Avatar*. I am dedicated to Him and will continue to serve Him till the very end.

Eruch: For me, Baba as BABA is all in all.

It was this deep, unshakable conviction that Meher Baba evoked in the *mandali* which had helped them to lead the life of literal obedience to Him as God in human form.

Personally, I hold Gandhiji in high regard — his faith in God and his sacrifices for the country were matchless. His autobiography *Experiments with Truth*, his utterances and explanations about the importance of remembering God and the significance of prayers in everyday life, had influenced me to a considerable extent. When I heard the news of his assassination, I felt very ill at ease, for his violent and brutal death upset me considerably. I remember it was a Friday. In some way I was reminded of the life of Abraham Lincoln. Coincidentally, just a day after this tragic event, I commenced observing silence as per Meher Baba's circular. Reading Baba's words of wisdom poured sunshine into the dark, confused chamber of my heart, and I felt much relieved. When one comes into contact with Meher Baba,

one's love for the great personalities of the world slowly gets transformed in love for the God-Man, who is the One in all and who represents the Divine Life.

Distribution of Bundles at Katol

After the first two phases of His tripartite work, Meher Baba commenced the third phase, connected with the poor. At the beginning of January 1948, the *mandali* at Meherabad were given the duty of tying up bundles, each one containing eight pounds of *jowar* (millet) wrapped in a yard and a half of white cloth. Within a month, more than four thousand bundles were bound and neatly stored in a room at Meherabad. Baba instructed some of the *mandali* to select different parts of the economically undeveloped areas in the district of Ahmednagar, and through local contacts of responsible persons and social workers, they delivered over four thousand tickets to needy persons, irrespective of caste or creed. The word "*prasad*" was printed on each ticket. These individuals were instructed to collect their *prasad* at selected places on different dates. The name of Meher Baba was not disclosed — they were under the impression that a wealthy philanthropist was offering the food-grain to them as charity.

The work commenced on February 16 with a visit to Katol, which lies at the foot of the Western Ghats eighty miles to the north of Ahmednagar. The advance party reached the town fairly early. In the compound of the *dak* bungalow there were giant mango trees, under which the invitees began to gather in groups. In one of the corners, water was being warmed for washing the feet of the poor. Meher Baba arrived by 8:00 A.M. Each person was first led to the bathing room and asked to stand on a low stool. With one hand Baba poured a mugful of lukewarm water over the feet as the other hand swept over them. One of the

mandali, sitting at the exit, would dry the feet with a soft towel. Some of the *mandali* then requested that the people sit in lines to get the bundles of grain. When Baba had washed the feet of all the ticket holders, He went into the next room where the bundles were piled, occupying a seat midway between the narrow corridors by which the villagers were to enter and leave. None of the *mandali* was allowed inside the room — Baba distributed the bundles in absolute privacy. Over a thousand people were benefited and blessed at Baba's hands.

Just Like Christ

Baba paid a visit to Parner, twenty-five miles to the west of Ahmednagar, on February 18. Here it had been arranged to do the work of distribution in the local primary school. The procedure of washing the feet of the poor and giving out the bundles was outwardly the same as at Katol, but one small incident is worth mentioning. "While waiting for the washing of feet, one of the crowd — an old man in rags — was overheard to say in English (pointing to Baba at work), 'Just like Christ.'"⁸¹ It was very rare to find English-speaking poor persons in the Indian villages.

On February 20 Kharda was visited, a remote village to the southeast of Ahmednagar, where the school again provided the place for the work. Two days later a similar program was arranged in a refugee camp at Visapur. The people were mostly from Hindu families from Sind who had migrated to India from Pakistan. At Visapur, the secret somehow leaked out to the poor that a saintly personality was going to wash their feet prior to their being given the *prasad*. The refugees argued that, in fact, they should be allowed the privilege of washing *His* feet. When Baba arrived

⁸¹ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 402.

He was told of their intention. He canceled the program and instead donated a goodly sum as a contribution toward the camp welfare fund.

About eight hundred villagers were collected on the premises of Meherazad on February 29, and they received bundles from Baba's hands. One humorous event in the solemn program gave Baba a hearty laugh. An elderly person, after receiving *prasad*, very gravely blessed Baba. Later Baba remarked with a smile, "For a long, long time I have been wanting someone to bless me!" His humor was a delightful, inseparable aspect of His life.

To compensate for the work that He had expected to do at Visapur, Baba instructed the *mandali* to choose some other place, so Vambori, twenty miles off to the north, was selected. On March 7 Baba visited the village and completed the distribution of the four thousand bundles of grain to the poor. At the four villages He also gave money as *prasad* to more than two hundred people. Thus the tripartite work of forty days, which had been expected to be finished by February 25, was concluded ten days later. Meher Baba once remarked regarding such work: "As Baba I gave; as the poor, I received." His is the non-dual life — a life of love that knows no separation.

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Visit to Uttar Kashi, 1948

Ordained Mission of the Avatar

AS one reads the account of Meher Baba's contacts with the God-intoxicated souls, the *masts*, at the outset as well as in retrospect one comes upon a phase unmatched in spiritual history. The work seemed so simple in its outward expression, yet in effect it was profoundly deep — so visible, but abundantly penetrating. Especially in the forties, the work with *masts* was "the must" in Meher Baba's life; it far outweighed other phases to which He gave attention. The inner life of the *mast* tendered a mystery, and so the channels through which Meher Baba reached his dazed being were inherently mystical. Baba underwent great inconveniences and hardships to reach the places where they dwelt. With ease of manner and the gentle love that was evident in Him, He carried on His divine work as an ordained mission that none can take over until the *Avatar* again becomes enformed. This Advent occurs when humanity feels adrift and is in need of the Star to sail by on the shoreless sea of life.

India, Nearest to the Creation Point

Masts, with their mysterious states and peculiar traits, as explained by Meher Baba, are mostly found in India. Very

little is known about them in other countries — if anything, it is in the form of distorted interpretations. Why should such God-intoxicated souls be found in India mostly? It is a fair question. Instead of attempting to answer it myself, I will quote two paragraphs from *The Wayfarers*, perhaps the only book on the *masts*:

A person of inquiring mind may wonder whether *masts* may be found in other parts of the world, and if they are not, then why it is that India alone is gifted with such souls. Baba, in explaining this paradox to his disciples, told them once that India was nearest to the "creation point," and was, therefore, the most significant country in the world in the realm of spirituality. It was for this reason, he explained, that there were very few *masts* outside India, and none in Europe or the Americas, although there were mystics, saints and God lovers there. He told them, however, that there were a few *masts* in Arabia, a few in Egypt, a very few in Iran (mostly in Meshed and Tabriz), and a very few in Tibet.

It is, therefore, not surprising that in the western world there are, as far as I am aware, no traditions about these God-intoxicated souls, and that when a Westerner is confronted for the first time by the eccentric characteristics of a *mast*, his reaction is, quite possibly, one of incredulity and even abhorrence.⁸²

Meher Baba did not feel it necessary to explain much about the subtleties involved in His work with the *masts*. Again, there was no rigid method employed in contacting them except that He expected them to be in a good mood at the time of His meeting them. Some high *masts* were contacted only once, while a few had recurrent Baba contacts. Sometimes there was a seeming regional concentration, as in Hyderabad and Baroda and the states of Uttar

⁸² William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, p. 32.

Pradesh and Punjab. In 1948 this was also the case in Bombay. Baba paid a visit to that city in February 1948 and revisited it in March to contact those comrades of God, the *masts*.

Masts of the Multifarious City

Immediately after the tripartite phase of forty days mentioned earlier, Baba recommenced His work with the *masts* in full swing. He visited Poona on the first day of March to contact Shastri Kher. This advanced pilgrim chose as his residence the open space near the vegetable market in the heart of the city. Once he had been a *shastri*, meaning well-versed in the scriptures, and his knowledge had attracted crowds of people to him. Later he discarded the load of learning, and the God-Man felt impelled to visit him.

The second series of *mast* contacts in Bombay commenced March 15, 1948. The first one was Haji Nur Ahmad Baba, a Pathan in his sixties. He, like Shastri Kher, had once been a religious teacher. All of a sudden he realized the worthlessness of the intellectual approach to God. It was at this propitious moment that he was hit with the arrow of God-love. The impact was so tumultuous that Nur Ahmad began to roam naked in the streets. What blessedness to get lost in the wonder of that blissful Presence!

Meher Baba referred to this type of *mast* as "*ittefaqi*." He explained: "An *ittefaqi* is a *mast* who, without any love or longing, becomes suddenly, and accidentally, intoxicated by Divine Love ... The dominant mood or behavior of an *ittefaqi* at the very moment of becoming intoxicated by Divine Love, colors all his subsequent behavior as a *mast*."⁸³ At the time of contact Nur Ahmad was at Kurla, a suburb of Bombay, and he was held in great reverence by his kinsmen, the Pathans.

⁸³ *The Wayfarers*, p. 30.

In all, Baba contacted eleven *masts* in Bombay. Shah Saheb was an advanced pilgrim. He always preferred to move about and wore a long black *kafni*. One *mast* located in Bhendi Bazar was a great *pan* chewer, and the red spittle had colored his clothes to a large extent. He had remarkable eyes. They reflected a blending of sights of the far-off horizon and the heaven within. The naked Dhuniwala Baba was unmindful of the seasons that passed. All day long he sat by the fire of the *dhuni*. Ahmad Mastan was a good *mast*. He was always seen with a gunny sack around his belly — he had, in his *masti* given up all other "worldly riches." Saiyid Nur Ali Shah, with rings on all his fingers, was in the habit of constantly murmuring something to himself or to others. At the time of contact, Baba seemed to enjoy every bit of his nonsensical talk. It is said that the irrelevant words of *masts* sometimes display mystical foreknowledge, though rarely. Nuruddin Mast Baba, swathed in dirty rags, roamed about everywhere in the city and slept anywhere he liked. Another *mast*, Ali Hussein, would sit silently at different places, gazing mostly at the blue sky as the years passed by.

After contacting these diverse types of *masts* in the multifarious city of Bombay, Baba returned to Ahmednagar. But within a week He left this headquarters for an extended tour, to visit the eastern and northern parts of India in search of God-intoxicated, God-communed and God-absorbed souls.

Calcutta, the Eastern Gate of India

The main target on this tour was a visit to Uttar Kashi in the Himalayan region. Gustadji, Kaka, Baidul, Chhagan and Eruch accompanied Baba. On the way to Calcutta the party stopped at Ambikapur (Madhya Pradesh), where Baba was received with a great ovation by Jal Kerawala, who held a high government post as Commissioner at Ambikapur. I never had the opportunity to have an intimate

talk with Jal Kerawala, but he was one with whom I wished I had some acquaintance. With his noble face, he looked so personable that one could not but grow fond of him. He was one of Meher Baba's endearing disciples, and he was also one of the few persons whose residence was visited by Baba during the *mast* tours. This tour was no exception, and Baba stayed at Ambikapur for a day and even agreed to hold a small *darshan* program.

On March 30, 1948 Baba arrived at Calcutta, the eastern gate of India. There He boarded a train for Dacca, then the capital of East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. But as the train reached Rana Ghat, the frontier station, Baba decided to change to a train that would take them back to Howrah (Calcutta). The *mandali* dared not question Baba about this. They knew that they had to play their parts blindfolded, as it were, with the conviction that the God-Man knows best. This apparently indecisive and restless mood of Baba's continued even more during His stay in Calcutta until the first *mast* had been contacted.

An Out-of-the-Way Condition

By the time the return train reached Calcutta it was seven thirty in the evening and Baba consented to stay in a hotel for the night. Eruch knew the hotel where Baba had lodged during their last visit, but this time Baba put forward an out-of-the-way condition. He proposed that His room should be at the end of a corridor and that there should be a vacant room between His room and the *mandali's*. It was expected that the manager of the hotel would not charge the party for the vacant room. Eruch was entrusted with this task. To his surprise, he found that one hotel had three vacant rooms on the fifth floor. He told the manager that his elder brother (Baba) was very sick and was in need of a quiet atmosphere, so the manager agreed to give them

the requested accommodations. Eruch had to spend more than an hour on this hotel hunt. When the party arrived from the station, the *mandali*, though exhausted, felt happy that Baba had gotten the rooms He desired.

At midnight Baba complained that the banging away at anvils in a nearby workshop caused too great a disturbance. Eruch, who was the night watch, went down the five flights of stairs and implored the proprietor of the workshop to discontinue the clanging, for the sake of his elder brother who was very ill. The man consented to stop the noisy work. After an hour or so, Baba, who had a very sharp ear, detected some soft movements in the adjoining room. He told Eruch to inquire of the manager regarding this breach of promise. Eruch was told that a respectable couple had unexpectedly arrived at the hotel, and as the room was vacant and the Baba party was not paying for it anyway, the room was given to them. On his way back Eruch knocked at the door of the occupants and explained to them about the delicate health of his elder brother, and they agreed to be as noiseless as possible.

The Master, the Wisest of the Wise

A few minutes passed and there was a tap-tap on the door of Baba's room. Baba looked irritated, and Eruch opened the door. He found a waiter with ice water! Perhaps the waiter mistook the room and it was intended for the newly-arrived couple. Whatever it was, by this time Baba firmly announced there would have to be a change in hotels. He gestured, "I cannot bear this commotion. We must move on to some quiet hotel." After a certain point, none of the *mandali* would argue with Baba. Being convinced of the spiritual burden that Baba bore for humanity, they kept quiet and humble, whatever He did or ordered in His agitated moods.

Eruch woke up the *mandali* resting in the other room and conveyed Baba's decision to change their hotel. Without raising any objection, they all started packing up the bundles of luggage. Gustadji, who had been observing silence for over two decades, began to convey something to Eruch through gestures. Eruch, in exasperation, said, "God bless me! I have to attend to two 'dumb' persons!" Just at this moment Baba stepped into the *mandali's* room. Looking at Eruch, He gesticulated, "Am I dumb?" Eruch felt very sorry. He apologized, and Baba smiled away the remark.

Half asleep and half awake, the party descended the stairs. At the time of settling the bill there was some haggling at the counter. The man at the desk wondered at the behavior of this group, for they seemed to come from noble and respectable families. While the luggage was being loaded into *tongas*, the proprietor of the nearby workshop recognized Eruch and said, "You asked me to stop the noisy work of molding the iron. I agreed to it for the sake of your sick brother. Now you are leaving the hotel at such an odd hour! How wonderful!" What could the *mandali* do except apologize again and again to appease the man? Perhaps Baba, who was sitting on the back seat, enjoyed this joke.

Because of Baba's strange condition regarding a vacant room, it was difficult to get the required accommodations and the cabs moved on from hotel to hotel. At last, by 6:30 in the morning the party was lodged in a hotel. The previous night the *mandali* had had no supper, so Baba allowed them to have a fine feast and all felt refreshed. But within two hours, Baba, on one pretext or the other, wished to change the hotel again. Why? He had His own reasons, that's all.

This incident is given in detail to show that while engaged in His spiritual work, sometimes Meher Baba would be, to all appearances, extremely restless. The *mandali*

accompanying Him had to bear the brunt of His moods in the form of inconveniences, but with a cheerful spirit. Only after contact of the first *mast* in Calcutta did Baba's mood begin to show signs of His usual calm and gay nature.

Here I am reminded of two couplets that Dr. A. Ghani Munsiff once explained to me. The lines were in Urdu, and a free interpretation follows:

However humiliating it may appear, in the company of the Master the real life lies in annihilating your ego — the center of intellectual reactions.

Whatever the Master does, do not question His wisdom. He is not mad but the wisest of the Wise.

He is that moth (*paravana*), God in human form, through whom, strangely enough, the flame (*Shama*), the Light of lights, is revealed.

Oh, worldly wise, you have no idea of the life of Love which includes infinite contradictions!

Contacting *Masts* in Calcutta

In the morning on March 31, the first *mast* Meher Baba contacted was Mastan Shah. He was a rough, tough person with the sunburned skin so common with the *masts*. He would loiter in the locality known as Central Avenue, muttering. Words as they come from *masts* do not make sense to us, but in some cases they sound like notes from a deep bell, with pleasing intonations. Baba appeared happy with this *mast* contact and there was a marked change in His mood. Ramdas, Samsher Data and Rahim Shah were old and moderate *masts*. It was said about Sufi Saheb that for over a decade or so he did not sit or even squat but either walked or remained standing. At the time of Baba's contact, however, there had been a marked change in his outward behavior. He preferred to stay in a tiny room, where he sat all day.

On April 1, Baba woke up very early and resumed work, contacting a *mast* at 4:00 A.M. The next was a moderate *mast*, Abdurrehman, who was very fond of cats and dogs. Shah Jehan was a high *mast* of the fifth plane. He had beside him heaps of dusty, musty books only good as junk. The room had no windows, and any possible ventilation through the door was blocked by a thick curtain. It can well be stated that the life of a *mast* is not a life of stoical suffering or self-denial but of God-reliance. Divine Providence alone protects them. Baba visited last one God-intoxicated soul who was abnormally fond of sweet oil. His body was smeared with oil and his clothes were drenched with it. He drank oil with fervor in the ample quantity of sweet drinks. In short, the *mast* looked very filthy. Baba sat alone with him, and the quiet appeal made in silence had a good response. The *mast* beamed with joy, and Baba also looked happy and remarked that it was the best contact in Calcutta. With this meeting Baba's work in that great city and His restless mood, too, were over.

Seek God with Intense Longing

By evening the Baba party boarded the Doon Express at Calcutta, West Bengal, for Hardwar, Uttar Pradesh. They reached there on April 3, 1948, and Baba wished to proceed to Uttar Kashi, a sacred place in the hallowed Himalayas four thousand feet above sea level. It stands on the banks of the river Bhagirathi, which further downstream is known as the Ganga (Ganges). From days of old this center of pilgrimage has been regarded as the reputed seat of Sanskrit learning. Its religious atmosphere has become sanctified by the advanced souls who have dwelt there over the years. At present, buses can take one right to this place, but in 1948, to reach Uttar Kashi pilgrims had to go on foot

or ride on mules from Tehri Garhwal. The road was very unsafe and unprotected.

At Hardwar, Kaka and Chhagan were entrusted with the work of buying provisions for the journey to Uttar Kashi and back. With Baidul, Gustadji and Eruch, Baba set out to look for advanced *sadhus* and the *masts*. As they were moving through the crowded lanes, Baba pointed out an old man in rags sitting on a wooden platform. He told Eruch to ask this person about the *masts* in Hardwar. After collecting the information, the Baba party went on. Soon it was noticed that the man in rags was following them. Finding him rather persistent, Baba asked one of the *mandali* to ascertain the reason for his pursuit.

At first the man responded by saying, "I am in search of the Master, the *Sadguru*." In the next breath, directly addressing Baba with all humbleness, he said, "I feel you are my Master." He gazed at Baba and waited for His answering look. Baba appeared pleased at his frank remark, and the man was overjoyed. Baba blessed the old man and asked him to love God with intense longing and He would help him. After contacting some *masts* and *sadhus* in the city, Baba Himself reopened the topic of the old man and praised how silently and deeply he longed for the sight of God. Just then the same old man reappeared. Baba called him close and gave him three oranges as *prasad*. Baba again advised him, "Seek God within you, with ever-increasing love. One day you shall see Him. My blessings." Meher Baba's name was not disclosed to this old man, but His august presence did what was needed.

A Teenager Athirst for God

While moving incognito through all India, Baba had blessed and guided many a sincere soul. Rarely was His

identity disclosed. Here is the story of a teenager who had left his home to find a *Sadguru* of his own choice. It was in 1942, the year when Meher Baba traveled over fifteen thousand miles from Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) to Tanjore (Tamilnadu) to contact about two hundred *masts*. In June 1942 He was at Rishikesh, which is about ten to fifteen miles from Hardwar. Baba was then staying with His eastern and western disciples in the bungalow of Rani Singhai in the area known as Swarga Ashram, a sort of forest ground. In those days, in this particular location there were some huts in which *sadhus* lived and practiced *sadhana* (discipline). One day while returning to the bungalow, Eruch noticed a handsome boy about fourteen years old lying in one of the dilapidated huts. Eruch remembered Baba's instruction to find one ideal boy for His contact, so naturally Eruch asked Baba if He would visit the hut. Baba agreed and accompanied Eruch there.

Baba instructed Eruch to ask the boy his background and his intentions in being there. The boy spoke in Hindi and told Eruch that he was from Ambala, where his parents resided. Because of an insatiable longing to see God, he felt impelled to leave his home and decided to live in Swarga Ashram. Eruch asked him if he had a Master. The boy answered, "No. There are many auras who only talk, and the mere words mean nothing. I earnestly desire a *Sadguru* who *knows* but does not speak." At this Eruch gave him some information about Meher Baba and His silence. The boy said, with dignity, "Yes, I have recently heard about Meher Baba. I also learned that He is residing somewhere in the neighborhood." He added, however, "But Meher Baba is too great to accept me." Just then Baba came forward, and it was the most delightful moment in that young boy's life. There opened up within him a great awareness, and the beats of his own heart convinced him of Baba's Godhood. He knew that God was compassionate,

but now he was even more sure. When one is sincerely receptive to the will of God, he finds a shower of grace pouring upon him.

The Four Orders

Meher Baba conveyed through gestures that He was ready to be the boy's Master but he would never see Him again in His physical form. If he was willing to abide by this condition, Baba wished him to obey four orders during his lifetime. Then would come a timeless moment, Baba assured, when the boy would find God in his own heart as the eternal Companion. Without any hesitation whatsoever, the boy happily consented and Baba stipulated the following four orders:

1. In your entire lifetime, never touch a woman with the intention of lust.
2. Constantly and earnestly crave to realize the divine Beloved — God.
3. Don't touch money. Beg for your food.
4. Repeat all the time, "*Om Hari Narayan.*" (Baba had asked the boy his choice for repeating the name of God, and he chose this. Baba confirmed this as a *guru mantra.*)

The meeting was over. Baba smiled and thus assured the boy of His inner help. The teenager smiled with Him, expressing that he would wholeheartedly abide by Baba's orders to his last breath. Baba left the hut, and the boy, with all love in his eyes, continued to watch Him until He was out of sight, for he was not to see that beloved form again. The next day Baba sent the boy a photo-medal (with Baba's form engraved on it) and a small booklet which gave information about Baba's life. A mat was also delivered to him, along with some flour to be eaten as Baba's *prasad*. The boy felt overwhelmed with these gifts. He continued to live in

the woods of Rishikesh, famous for black scorpions and poisonous snakes, but now he was all the more fearless, for he had taken refuge in the omnipresent and omniscient God-Man, Meher Baba. Wonderful were Baba's ways in meeting and guiding His dear lovers, and after the dropping of His body, His ways continue to be even more incredible and full of grace.

Seekers and Pilgrims of Uttar Kashi

After a very short stay in Hardwar, Baba reached Rishikesh on April 4, 1948. Nine porters were hired to carry the luggage of the party to Uttar Kashi via Tehri Garhwal, the last outpost for bus traffic. Tehri was a town lying in a hot, steamy valley, and the track to Uttar Kashi was narrow and rough. It was traversed at one's peril. The walk often raised blisters on the toes, and in summer the sun beat down on one's back. In short, it was a hazardous and wearisome march, but contacting the love-thirsty seekers and pilgrims of Uttar Kashi was the need of the time.

On April 7 the party set out on foot from Tehri Garhwal. The first stop was the forest bungalow at Syansu, and the second was the Kali Kambaliwala Chetty (*dharmashala*) at Dharasu. Baba reached Uttar Kashi on April 9, and all made themselves comfortable in Birla House, a massive *dharmashala*. The "divine outings" to contact pilgrims and *sadhus* commenced the next day.

Falhari Baba was an initiate pilgrim. He subsisted only on fruit, flowers and roots. He wore just a loincloth, irrespective of the cold weather in winter. Ramanandji, another advanced soul, went a step further — he used to remain naked all year round. He was also observing silence. He lived in a hut a few miles away but visited Uttar Kashi to collect his daily bread. Ganganand Maharaj lived in Kailas Ashram. His room was quite dark, but this advanced soul, who was

fairly old, spent most of the time reading one book or another. Baba liked Ganganand and so paid him a second visit. The old man looked overjoyed and his happiness was redoubled.

To contact some other seekers, Baba had to tread narrow footpaths over hills and through valleys. Among the ten seekers and *sadhus* contacted at various places was a centenarian named Mangalgiri Maharaj. "His back is so bent and his body so thin that when he squats his head almost touches his feet."⁸⁴ This visit of Baba's made Mangalgiri feel that his long life was amply rewarded and that he was blessed.

Loving Gestures of "Flying Kisses"

A contact with a *mast* from Bengal who had decided to stay in this far-off place should be mentioned. This God-intoxicated soul, Nirgunanandji, was in his eighties. His face, or rather his whole frame, was as wrinkled as a walnut. His shabby clothes, seemingly unwashed for days, showed signs of long use. In spite of his age, his blithe spirit and energy were admirable. He lived in a small, low room in the Durga Devi temple. Welcoming Baba, the *mast* personally led Him to the room. It was late evening and darkness prevailed inside, so Nirgunanandji lit a match and began to look at Baba — the Light enformed. Beholding the divine luster on Baba's face, he seemed immensely delighted. Baba joined him in his gay mood — perhaps for Baba this was the last and the most pleasing contact of the day.

By daybreak the next morning Baba was once again visiting huts and cottages to contact ardent aspirants and God-mad *masts*. Vishnu Datt Digambar lived in a nearby village

⁸⁴ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, "The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls..." (March to May 1948), p.11.

named Tilot. He was an outstanding personality, and Baba remarked that he was *mast*, saint and child rolled into one. It may be that as a *mast* he wore no clothes, as a saint he was observing silence, and as a child he begged for food at one of five houses, and only at those five. He ate with pleasure whatever he received. Baba gestured that he was a *mast* of a very high type. They seemed extremely happy to meet each other and it was a comfort for them to be in each other's arms. After the meeting, as Baba departed, the *mast* made very loving gestures of "flying kisses" towards Baba. To witness such love signals was an unforgettable sight.

The Rich Spiritual Inheritance of Uttar Kashi

On April 12 Baba visited a seeker named Ramanandji. He had long, ash-daubed hair. Being naked, he was also known as Nanga Baba. The last meeting, but not the least, was with Devigiri Maharaj. In a way it was the first and the foremost contact of an advanced soul in Uttar Kashi, because while journeying by train from Calcutta to Hardwar, Baba pointed out at Benares a venerable old man in ochre-colored robes who was flanked by two young *sanyasis*. Referring to him, Baba remarked, "A very good soul." He then asked Eruch to make inquiries about the man. It turned out that he was from Uttar Kashi, where he had an *ashram*, and he was on the return journey. Owing to the request of some of his devotees, Devigiri Maharaj left the Doon Express at Ayodhya. However, perhaps as wished by Baba, he returned to his headquarters in time to receive the blessed and redeeming touch of the Real One to whom he was wholeheartedly devoted, albeit under a different name and in a different form. Because of the presence of such rare souls as Nirgunanandji, Vishnu Datt, Devigiri Maharaj and

a few others, Uttar Kashi maintained its rich spiritual atmosphere.

On April 13 Baba left Uttar Kashi. By the eighteenth He had reached Agra, via Delhi, and He remained there for three days. The main motive, of course, was to meet *masts* and feed them with His love. A few seekers, also, had Baba's heavenly and healing touch. One prominent *mast* was Majzoob Baba. He considered himself to be the emperor of Agra, but his choice of residence was close to the mental hospital! Baba told the *mandali* that in spite of his nonsensical talk and his seat near the asylum, he was a good *mast*. Haji Baba lived in a mosque and was fond of giving away money — whatever he had at hand — to the people. He referred to his room in the mosque as a tavern and to himself as a drunkard. He meant that the wine he had was the wine of love for God.

By April 22, 1948, Baba had returned to Ahmednagar, and He brought with Him a lively, appealing creature. In succeeding years it reminded the *mandali* of those thrilling and perilous outings near Uttar Kashi in search of earnest seekers and spiritually advanced souls.

Meher Baba's Love for Animals, 1948

Bhuti Joins the Baba Party

WHEN Meher Baba set out from Ahmednagar on March 25 for the memorable and significant tour to Uttar Kashi in the Himalayas, five of the *mandali* accompanied Him. When they came back, there had been an admirable addition — a blinking black puppy, lively and light-footed. How did it come to join the party? In the course of visiting the hilly region of Uttar Kashi, Baba had to walk for miles over narrow footpaths — a few of the trails at higher elevations were steep and perilous. On one such walk, the puppy was purchased for five rupees from a Bhutani trader. While returning to Birla House, where the party was staying in Uttar Kashi, Eruch had to carry this smart, tiny dog over his shoulder in a sling.

While climbing along a dangerous narrow track on a high range, the party came to a deep valley and had to cross over on an improvised narrow bridge made of bamboo sticks. It was hardly a foot wide. On such a risky crossing it was dangerous to have anything unsteady on one's back, so Eruch felt compelled to let the pup loose. As it followed them, the puppy just missed a fall and somehow clung to the edge of the rock with its little claws. Fortunately it could be rescued, and this lucky, fluffy rolypoly continued with the Baba party right to Ahmednagar. Baba personally

looked after it on the journey. It was first named Gol-Gol (*gol* in Hindi means "round"). Later it was named Bhuti,⁸⁵ as it came from pedigreed stock in Bhutan, a small state to the north of India in the Himalayan region.

Beautiful Bhuti, a Dutiful Watchdog

In due course Bhuti grew into a watchdog. She had a collar of soft, long black fur which made her look very graceful. She developed a shapely body and her gait was elegant, like a dancer's. But with all her beauty of form, she was a terror to strangers and intruders trespassing on the Meherazad premises. In the early fifties when Baba would go out on *mast* or *darshan* tours, Bhuti would be the trusted watch at Meherazad and the companion of Kaka Baria, the manager of the Meherazad estate.

Bhuti had a peculiar way of guarding the premises at night. She would begin her rounds at the main gate and bark loudly for a minute or so. Then with measured strides she would go to the other corner near the well and growl. In this way she would finish the other two corners, rest for some time, and then repeat the round. Perhaps she had evolved her own Code of barking! In those days the farms and fields around Meherazad were not inhabited as they are at present. In the daytime few men or cattle would be seen moving about in the fields, and this being a semiforested area, a fox or a hyena would sometimes sneak into the Meherazad compound. Bhuti had fought with and killed more than a score of hyenas. She would lift the dead animal and place it before Kaka's door as a trophy.

Whenever Baba was away on tour, someone had to report to Him on the welfare of the resident *mandali* at Meherazad, including Bhuti. Bhuti loved Baba very dearly,

⁸⁵ She was called Booty because she had brown paws.

and the pictures of her taken with Him remind us of those lovely days when she lived and played with the God-Man. It was a perfect companionship. Baba once stated that when God becomes man to give a spiritual push to mankind in His divine status as *Avatar*, he simultaneously becomes a perfect friend for each and every species in Creation. When Bhuti died, she was buried on the Meherazad premises, the place she had guarded so well and loved so deeply. Baba was the first to cast some flowers and earth over her body. Indeed, Bhuti was a blessed soul.

Chum Resigns to the Master's Will

Reference to Bhuti's life in the company of Meher Baba summons to mind Baba's tender affection and sympathetic admiration for the animal world. His love for pets demonstrated a remarkable aspect of His life. In different periods He had different pets with Him. He had a deer named Lily, a pair of bullocks named Raja and Vazir, a camel named Bhola, monkeys named Lucky and Jhampoo, a mynah bird, a parrot, a peacock named Moti and pigs named Nutty and Guppy. He also loved cows and had a water buffalo named Masi. He had a mare named Sheeba. Baba paid personal attention to the needs and feeding of each animal. His coat pockets, which sometimes bulged with letters from His dear ones, would also overflow with carrots when He visited Sheeba. He once observed, "I love animals. They are a part of my Creation." Nevertheless, it seems that Baba loved dogs most. He had pairs of dogs named Jingo-Bingo, Raja-Rani and Sunny-Bunny. I will give a short account of a few of the dogs prior to 1948 who had the good fortune to be in His company.

Chum was brought to Meherabad as a pup, received from a Baba family at Akbar Press in Ahmednagar, a place Baba often visited, beginning in the early thirties. Somehow or

other, He liked this pup and very carefully and lovingly brought it up, at times feeding it with His own hands. Soon it grew to be a big dog. Baba's arrival at Meherabad was an occasion of great delight to Chum. He had a huge, handsome frame and would play with Baba while keeping his forelegs right on Baba's chest. In short, Chum seemed to be Baba's favorite chum. He was also the trusted watchdog on Meherabad Hill.

In August 1935, Baba returned from Mount Abu and the Ambika Hills in Rajasthan. On His arrival He wished to continue His seclusion in the cabin that was specially built on Meherabad Hill. Chum would lie at the door of the cabin, and no one dared to enter the room and disturb Baba. When the period of seclusion was over, Baba would visit the kitchen for lunch and Chum accompanied Him. Even there he would not allow anyone to be near Baba. Baba casually remarked that as a watch at the door of the cabin, Chum had had an uncommon experience. Baba did not disclose the nature of the experience, but He said that it had made Chum overfaithful in not allowing anyone to go near Him. Baba soon broke him of this habit. One day when Baba's sister Mani visited Him, Chum tried to pounce on her. At this, Baba got up and gave Chum a light drubbing with a small stick that lay at hand, and all the time Chum kept his head bent down towards Baba's feet. Perhaps he was bowing down to Him as an act of confession for the crime committed. It was all in the spirit of complete resignation to the Master's will. Chum's attitude and behavior vividly brings back to my mind one of the significant and suggestive discourses given by Baba.

Stone Stage, Worm Stage, Dog Stage

Once Meher Baba was asked about the principal mental stages through which His lovers have to pass in order to

see Him as He really is. Upon hearing the question, Baba broke into a gay smile at first, but because of the profundity involved in answering, He then looked solemn. With a tender, beautiful radiance on His face, His eyes glowing with benevolent love, He conveyed:

I am the eternal Beloved, drawing the infinite number of lovers to Myself in infinite ways. So they have experiences of innumerable types; they have to pass through endless stages. However, for the sake of intellectual understanding, these can be broadly divided into the following three stages:

The first is the stone stage. One feels unconsciously drawn towards God or the God-Man. Here, the initiative is entirely with me. One feels attracted to me as a particle of iron to the magnet.

The second is the worm stage. Herein the mind constantly wriggles like a worm. The person worships me, yet sometimes disbelieves me. He adores me; he distrusts me! Doubts and devotion go together. The pull of love, however, prevails in the end. In this phase, various types of impressions are executed.

The third is the dog stage. The dog has absolute faith in the master. He just moves with his master here, there, anywhere. In a sense, he has no will of his own. He only knows to follow the master without ifs and buts. Once a lover arrives at this stage, he is blessed.

Meher Baba's beloved pet Chum literally demonstrated the third stage mentioned above until the end of his life, when he died of cancer. Befitting the faithfulness he had shown, he was buried on Meherabad Hill. At present we find his little tomb under the banyan tree, by the side of the tomb built in the memory of Meher Baba's intimate ones who have dropped their bodies while serving Him as the eternal Beloved.

Lovable Kippy and Worthy Warrior

Kippy was Elizabeth Patterson's pet Boston terrier. In July 1937 Meher Baba stayed with His eastern and western women *mandali* in the Villa Caldana at Cannes on the French Riviera. During this period Kippy was privileged to be near Baba for a long time and have *prasad* at His hands. In November, Baba left Cannes for India and Elizabeth was asked to return to the United States. Irene Billo from Switzerland, who was to visit India shortly, was asked to bring Kippy with her. Later she related that after Baba's departure from the villa, Kippy got on Baba's seat on the sofa and rarely left it for three days. Kippy sorely felt the separation from Baba — she was one of His lovable pets.

Warrior, another dog worth mentioning, was a black Alsatian. In 1941 Baba's life consisted mostly of a long period of seclusion. In August that year He confined Himself in a small room on Meherabad Hill and no one was allowed to enter. The room had only a small slit through which Baba would hold out the alphabet board and convey instructions to Vishnu, who was entrusted with the work of attending to urgent correspondence. In those days only the worthy Warrior was allowed into Baba's room and to sit or rest in His physical presence. By the time this phase of strict seclusion was over, Warrior fell sick. In spite of the best of treatment, he died within a week or so. Finding one of His dear disciples almost in tears over the loss of this favorite pet, Baba conveyed to the *mandali*: "Warrior was a fortunate dog. During the phase of strict seclusion, I wanted the company of a faithful soul other than human in my room. Warrior fulfilled that exigency as was expected of him. Now his work is over and he is gone. No one should feel sorry for his death. He is fully rewarded. Henceforth he will not incarnate as an animal but as a human." Today we find the small tombs of Kippy and Warrior in line with Chum's.

"Love Life in All Its Forms"

Some may be interested in knowing more about Meher Baba's relationship with animals, so I will add a few excerpts from letters on the subject. In 1957, one of Baba's dear followers from the West wrote to Him about the ill treatment given to dogs in India. She also wished to know Baba's attitude toward animals. Deshmukh was asked to reply to her letters, based on some points given by Baba. These replies were read to Baba at Guruprasad in Poona before they were mailed to the lady. Some of the remarks are given below:

I have noted with much interest and great concern your comments about the general treatment of dogs and other animals in India. I must frankly concede that dogs are not as well looked after in India as they are in the western countries, but it is partly a side effect of the general low economic standard of living in this country. To regard the condition of dogs as indicative of the Indian attitude would surely be misleading. There is in the heart of Divinity a thought for all that breathes — bird, animal or man. Beloved Baba, in His impersonal aspect, is concerned not only with the well-being of man, but also with that of all other forms of life.

According to Him, all animals, and even plants and trees, are an inalienable part of the larger brotherhood to which we all belong. As a natural corollary of this, we have to be affectionate and considerate toward birds, animals, etc., not out of any sense of duty or even obligation, but out of the spontaneity of recognized values. Thus, according to beloved Meher Baba, love for animals or birds would be more than sympathy or consideration. It is a natural coordinate of acknowledged kinship with them. To deny love to birds or animals is, according to

Him, to repress one's own divinity. Beloved Baba's often repeated mandate to humanity is: "Love life in all its forms."

I now come to another of your important questions, "What is Meher Baba's attitude toward animals?" Beloved Meher Baba is God, and, as such, experiences Himself in all living beings, including birds, animals, vegetables, etc. We cannot adequately raise any question about what God's attitude is toward animals. God cannot take up a specific attitude in relation to His Creation, because He has Himself become that Creation. Since beloved Meher Baba is an incarnation of God, there can be no question of His taking up any attitude toward any forms of His own being. However, many persons would be interested in knowing how beloved Baba treats animals. In this respect, all who have had the opportunity to be with Him have invariably observed that He loves birds and animals as much as He loves human beings. He often feeds them with His own hands, gets all their ailments attended to by competent doctors, and looks after them with the same parental care and love which we find expressed in relation to those humans who have the good fortune to come within His personal environment.

Having said all this in favor of kindness to animals, I think it might be advisable to sound a note of warning against the possibility of making an "ism" out of it ... From the point of view of evolution, the vegetable kingdom may be regarded as offering itself for the use of animals, and the animal kingdom as offering itself for the use of mankind. We could not pitch "animalism" against "humanism." But this is just to bring out beloved Meher Baba's dispensation of the only Truth, which leaves no room for separative thinking and requires us never to forget the inviolable unity and the inalienable divinity of life in all its forms.

Maharaj, an Animal-Mad Mast

Meher Baba returned from the tour of the eastern and northern parts of India by the end of April 1948. During the month of May, He stayed mainly at Ahmednagar, with some short visits to Meherabad and Meherazad. In May Babadas brought a *mast* from Nagpur to the ice factory bungalow where the men *mandali* resided. His name was *Maharaj*. *Maharaj* means "Emperor." It is also a term used to express respect for a person. People in India generally refer to a *sadhu* as *Maharaj*. The principal characteristic of this *mast* was his deep love and close sympathy for animals. Some animals develop strange affection for humans, but here was a *mast* who had an unusual fancy for animals.

Maharaj was over eighty years of age. His beard was completely grey but the hair on his head was black. At Nagpur he used to keep over two dozen dogs around him. After his arrival at Ahmednagar, on the very first day as he returned to the bungalow from roaming about the roads, he gathered around him a few cows and half a dozen dogs. The animals followed him in response to some inner appeal, and their number increased as the days passed by. During his six-day stay, Maharaj spent most of his time under a tree near the bungalow. He seemed genuinely happy in the company of the animals. His favorite occupation was to feed these dumb souls with food supplied by Baba. Around him lay buckets of fodder for the cows and plates ready for dogs. Some saucers with crumbs of bread in them were seen hanging from the branches — they were meant for birds. The animals would fondly lie and rest around him, without any reservations.

One bullock showed special affection for Maharaj. William Donkin wrote, ". . . there was one spirited brown and white bullock that would lick him all over with his tongue. The *mast* would screw up his eyes when his face was being

licked, or would lie supine between the forelegs of the bullock while the front of his body was licked from head to foot. He seemed, indeed, to take pleasure in these abrasive yet loving baths, for while they were in progress he would lie with his eyes closed and his hands behind his head."⁸⁶

Baba remarked that Maharaj was a freak *mast* of a high order. He was very cooperative in Baba's spiritual work. As the *mast* did not eat on his own, Baba would feed him daily with His own hands, morsel by morsel. As he was being fed, the *mast* would lift his eyes to Baba's and then would hastily look away. On May 14, Babadas was asked to take Maharaj, this animal-mad *mast*, back to Nagpur.

A Girl Meets Her Beloved Father

Meher Baba's visit to Uttar Kashi in the month of April 1948 kept Him away from his headquarters for about a month. During this period, mail was regularly received at Ahmednagar. In accordance with Baba's standing instructions, many of the letters were attended to by the *mandali* concerned. Some letters required Baba's special attention — they were kept aside. The letters of those who had recently heard about Baba and who had written to Him were especially brought to His notice. By way of illustration, I wish to cite here the case of a young girl who heard of Baba in 1948, and how Baba responded to her lovingly to help her develop the right attitude toward life. In this respect, a few fragments from the letters may reveal something of this beautiful relationship.

The girl was residing at Poona. She was of a religious mind. By chance she heard about Meher Baba and was

⁸⁶ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, "The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls..." (March to May 1948), p. 15.

greatly impressed by His mission of awakening the heart of humanity. She felt deeply drawn to Him and decided to write directly to Him. Of her own accord, she addressed Baba as her beloved Father, and in her loving letter she requested that He free her from the fetters that bound her to this *mayavic* world. She also expressed her intense desire to have His *darshan*. This letter was read out to Baba, and He permitted her to see Him in the month of May 1948 in the ice factory bungalow at Ahmednagar.

With great joy she came to Ahmednagar to meet her beloved Father, Baba. With a deep feeling of delight, her spirit seemed to leap out to kneel at Baba's feet and she tried to pour out her aspirations. Baba sat silently, His eyes gleaming with light. In the end He gestured, "I know, I know." Baba's compassion drew out in her a fresh quality of faith, and with fresh enthusiasm she began to think about and meditate on her beloved Father as much as she could. It was a great joy to her. This first contact with Baba set all her pulses throbbing Godward. Clearer became the call that lay within her heart. She developed a great interest in reading the available books by and about Meher Baba. The small book *Divine Theme*, with its lucid explanations of the charts contained therein, impressed her the most. On some occasions, she began to feel the divine brilliance enveloping surrounding objects.

The girl wished to convey her jubilation and exuberance to Baba. In one of her letters she wrote, "Father, I feel the presence of God, but how will I see Him?" As Baba heard the contents of the letter, He seemed pleased and gestured, "A lucky one." After her regular morning meditation one day, as this lucky one rested on her bed, half asleep and half awake, she had a remarkable experience. About this she wrote: "Beloved Father, one day in my half-awake state I saw my subtle body going up and up, crossing rivers and jungles. It darted faster than the fastest train. In the beginning

as it was going up, my gross body lay on the bed enjoying a delightful breeze. But as the subtle body continued to soar higher with greater speed, presently my gross body felt that it was going to fall down from the cot where I was resting. In my attempt to prevent the gross body from falling down, I woke up." In reply to this letter, Baba conveyed by way of a hint that it was just the bare beginning of a long, long journey.

Celibacy and Married Life

As the girl felt more intimate with Father Baba, she asked His counsel on the problem that girls of her age with spiritual inclinations have to face. With overflowing love, she wrote to Baba: "Is it necessary for a girl to marry when she finds that the marriage is based more on money than on pure love? Can she not live alone and lead a pure life, relying on the grace of the Master? Can a girl get Self realization?" In another letter she mentioned a conflict that caused confusion in her mind. She was prepared to renounce this world, if necessary. She stated: "Dear Baba, sometimes I get such a strong feeling that I should leave my home and go to some quiet place for meditation. Would that be good? But at the same time I remember your words, 'Be in the world but not of it,' and I stay back."

After Baba's return to Ahmednagar from one of His *mast* tours, Adi K. Irani sent replies to the girl based on Baba's instructions: "Baba says that a married life strictly in adherence to one partner is not bad; but a single life, with the grace of the Master, replete with aspirations Godward, is infinitely better... Baba told me to inform you that constant remembrance of the One, whom you consider to be your Master, will go a long way toward lessening the mental tension and bringing about peace of mind. He wishes you to know that not by leaving the world and your dear ones

will you be able to progress on the Path. It is only by living in the world and trying to develop as detached an outlook on life as possible that you will gain equipoise and make real progress ... Baba desires that you remember Him always, in good times and in bad times, and thereby increase your faith in Him, which alone will make you impervious to the ups and downs of life ... Baba sends you His blessings, which will impart to you strength, patience and courage." Meher Baba's words of advice have brought about many changes in outlook in the lives of His dear ones.

About the problem of sex and married life, Baba stated: "Promiscuity in sex gratification is bound to land the aspirant in a most pitiful and dangerous chaos of ungovernable lust ... Sex in marriage is entirely different from sex outside marriage."⁸⁷

"Just as the life of celibacy requires and calls forth the development of many virtues, married life in turn also nourishes the growth of many spiritual qualities of utmost importance ... The path of perfection is open to the aspirant whether in celibacy or in marriage, and whether he begins from celibacy or from marriage will depend upon his sanskaras and karmic ties."⁸⁸ ". . . it should be borne in mind that the life of freedom is nearer to the life of restraint than to the life of indulgence (though in quality it is essentially different from both)."⁸⁹

Meher Baba has come amongst us to quicken this understanding which will lead us all to the life of freedom, beginningless and endless.

⁸⁷ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 1: 146.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

Interviews at Meherabad, 1948

Sadguru's Grace, the Matchless Choice

ONE of my friends, an ardent Baba lover named Mauni who was keeping silence, had first met Meher Baba at Satara in September 1947, as mentioned previously. At that time Baba had given him a six-month *sadhana*, which he sincerely practiced. During that period he had some blissful visions of Baba. As he went out for walks in the morning, he would see Meher Baba's smiling face keeping him company. Once he saw Baba's full form. It grew so tall that it almost touched the skies, then vanished. Perhaps that was an indication of Meher Baba's all-pervading presence.

After the period of six months, Mauni began to inquire about the possibility of seeing Baba again. In February 1948, I conveyed to Baba, Mauni's earnest desire to see Him for the second time. Adi Sr. asked me to visit Meherabad with Mauni on May 15, 1948. Later, I received a telegram to the effect that the date fixed for the visit had been changed to June 1, 1948, and accordingly, we arrived at Meherabad a day early.

Next morning Baba arrived at Meherabad from Ahmednagar. It was such a joy to see Him moving around on the veranda of the new *ashram* building. In one of the rooms adjacent to the hall, a green carpet covered the floor. Facing

the door lay a mattress covered with a spotless white sheet. Soon we were summoned into the room. Dr. Abdul Ghani Munsiff was with Meher Baba. We offered our respects, and Baba motioned us to sit down. It was the first occasion I had to sit so close to Baba, on the same carpet with Him. I was delighted but felt a bit shy, too.

At Baba's behest I related to Him in a nutshell Mauni's wholehearted efforts to abide by His orders. Baba expressed His happiness and dictated on his board, "What I heard just now has made me happy. Tell me, Mauni, what you want." Dr. Ghani read Baba's board, and I conveyed it to Mauni in Marathi. Mauni felt greatly elated. He took out a piece of slate from his bag and wrote on it, "*Sadguru kripa*" ("the grace of the Perfect Master"). As I read these words, Baba's smiling face wore a profound expression and He spelled, "What a wish! Even seeing God is less important than the grace of the Perfect Master. But mind, grace is not a cheap thing. It's a rare, spontaneous happening. It is an unconditional benediction. To receive it, you have to prepare yourself to obey me one hundred percent. Are you ready? Wholeheartedly?"

A Meat Dish and a Bottle of Wine

At Baba's words, Mauni moved his fingers over his neck, meaning that he was ready to cut his throat if so ordered. At this Baba replied, mostly through His lively gestures, "But that is very easy! I am not asking you that. Cutting one's throat, leaving family and home, are very easy things compared to obedience of my orders, which may at the outset appear very simple. Are you really ready to obey me! Think well before you say yes." Mauni, with a new-born ardor, moved his head from right to left, meaning yes. Noticing this, Baba conveyed, "If so, for one month begining

tomorrow, have a non-vegetarian dish every morning and evening." As I translated these words in Marathi, there was a marked change on Mauni's face which reached the climax as Baba added, "and a bottle of wine at noon."

Mauni is an ascetic type. He wears just a long *dhoti*, and his needs are few. As far as possible, he does not allow people to touch his body — only when he visits Baba places or Baba lovers are these restrictions not literally observed. He has only one meal a day, and no tea or coffee. He does not like to drink water at public places. With such a background, the very thought of having a non-vegetarian diet shocked him deeply. He appeared to be very confused. Casually, perhaps purposefully, Baba changed the subject and began to discuss other matters with Dr. Ghani. Was it a pretext to provide time for Mauni to think for himself and decide? Mind is very tricky indeed. It does not admit an open defect — it is adept in wearing veils and putting forth excuses.

Mauni, instead of frankly confessing his inability, wrote on his slate, "Baba, I keep no money. I am a poor person. How can I buy a meat dish and pay for a bottle of wine every day?" Hearing this, Baba solemnly replied, "That is your lookout! You agreed to obey me one hundred percent, and I have given you the orders. Just tell me if you can follow them willingly or not. I know that in this state of Maharashtra there is prohibition and wine cannot be had without obtaining a permit on medical grounds. If you obtain wine in some other way and drink it, you will be put into jail. But that is your problem." Mauni appeared even more puzzled. At this juncture Baba added, "However, as you have expressed your inability about money, I assure you that it shall not be your problem. I shall arrange for it. But is that the main issue? Be frank. Say whether you are ready to obey me voluntarily and happily."

Hesitation in a Decision

Mauni did not know that until 1932 Meher Baba did not allow His *mandali* to have eggs, so they could not even eat cakes or chocolates. Because of that restriction, during Baba's first visit to the West the *mandali* who accompanied Him had to appease their hunger mostly with bread and butter, and it was winter. Nevertheless, Baba gradually granted them permission to have eggs, and after a few years, fish and meat if they so desired. There was no "must" regarding diet from Baba, except on grounds of health. It is not the diet that necessarily binds, but the thoughts of superiority and spirituality which are generally associated with it do bind. Deep down in Mauni's mind there might have lurked such thoughts. Perhaps it was to work on deep layers of impressions that Baba gave such orders. What Baba expected was one hundred percent dedication of the actions — good or bad — to Him, with no reservations. Was such a state essential for the descent of *Sadguru kripa*? Whatever it might be, Meher Baba, as the master psychologist, always knew the best way.

After Baba's assurance about money, there was a fresh surge of thoughts in Mauni's mind. He was on the point of conveying yes, but just then Baba intervened and explained, "Remember one more thing. Ninety-nine percent readiness with one percent hesitation is not desirable, much less expected. In that case it will be better for you to express an honest no. The obedience has to be unadulterated, total. Be frank; be quick. There are others waiting and I have to call them."

Now there arose a fresh countercurrent of thoughts in Mauni's mind — he felt nearly lost in that tempest. Presently, he nodded no. Baba flashed one of His old, penetrating looks at him and conveyed through the board, "Did I not tell you that you have aspired for the best, but that it

is not so easy? Yet I am happy that at the end you have been honest enough to express no. Now forget completely these orders. Here are some fresh ones for you which you must obey. No choice. For one year, go on a pilgrimage, visiting the holy places in India. Don't ask for money; don't touch money. Be careful not to touch any woman. In trains or on crowded streets, if you happen to touch any woman, remember your dear mother. Beg for food; don't cook food. Take *darshan* of saints you meet, but don't run after anyone."

He Knows His Game Well

Mauni felt relieved and very happily agreed to obey Baba's orders. He had been, in fact, leading such a life for years. Fasts, physical hardships and travel were no problem for him. At the end, Baba blessed Mauni and conveyed, "When you finish with the year's itinerary, come and see me." We folded our hands to Baba with due reverence and left the room.

We then had a discussion as to whether it was right on Mauni's part to convey "no" regarding the non-vegetarian diet. "What on earth led me to such foolishness?" Mauni thought. He felt that it was just a test and he had miserably failed. He realized that whatever order the Master gives brings the highest benefit to the person concerned. We agreed on this point, and I was to tell Baba that Mauni was ready to obey the first set of orders.

We were about to reenter the room when impulsively I felt that before going inside to Baba, it would be advisable to tell one of the *mandali* about this situation. I do not recall the person to whom I told this, but I remember very well the gist of his reply: "Past is past, and that game is lost! With the Perfect Master, every moment has an ever-renewing significance. As for eating meat, even if Mauni is now

ready to devour a live lamb, Baba should not be expected to reconsider the matter! In a way, that would be against the spirit of the next orders." He further explained, "It was Meher Baba's wish that Mauni ask for *Sadguru kripa*, and it was equally His wish that Mauni prefer the second set of orders. Everything happens according to the divine will of Meher Baba. He knows His game well. It holds a deeper significance of which we are not aware."

Dislikes Bind As Much As Likes

The above explanation was enough for us to drop the idea of seeing Baba again, and the next day we returned to Kurduwadi. To Mauni, it was nothing to make preparations for a year's journey to holy places in northern and southern India. He had only to pick up an extra *dhoti* and a begging bowl. Money — he already had none. He was also to continue observing silence. He in fact enjoyed a hard life in which everything was taken in the spirit of sportsmanship.

Regarding diet, I am reminded of an incident at Guruprasad, Poona, when I had an opportunity to stay with Baba. Every day after lunch Baba would ask us what we had and how it tasted. Once He casually put a question to me, "Do you eat meat? Are you a non-vegetarian?" I replied, "Baba, mine is a buffer state. Personally, I do not relish meat. I prefer a vegetarian diet." Baba smiled and indicated, "Some make much about diet. Everything has its merits and demerits."

It is true that what comes out of the mouth matters more than what goes into it, yet it is hard to disbelieve that diet and drinks do not influence one's thoughts and feelings. I have an acquaintance for whom spirituality without eggs and meat is far too primitive, whereas one of my friends holds a view that even the sight of meat defiles spiritual life.

Personally, I think that one should cautiously discriminate between the pampering of palate and the needs of the body. Whatever be the diet, it should keep the body light and consciousness fresh and alert. Once when Baba was sitting with a group of His closer ones, He conveyed, "Here are some who dislike meat, and here are others who like it the most. Dislikes bind as much as likes. My concern is to free you from both. Love alone frees. But where 'self' is, love is not, and where 'you' are not, Love is." Meher Baba's words are as fresh as blooming roses, though they were conveyed years ago.

"I Am the Real Businessman"

Besides Mauni's meeting with Baba on June 1, there are a few other incidents which remind me vividly of that blessed day. It was the first occasion for a newly formed Baba group at Poona to have Meher Baba's august *darshan*. I noticed that the persons in this group represented different religions. H. E. Hakim, the head of the group and a double graduate, was a Muslim. I vaguely remember that there was also a Christian youth. On an earlier visit, we had exchanged views on the beginning of Creation. By the end of the conversation, it was difficult to know who was more confused. We dropped that subject and turned to the weather — from heaven we landed on the gross plane! Even to this day I do not dare talk with anyone on the subject of Creation.

As I sat in the Hall at Meherabad, a person in his early forties was by my side and he talked fluently with me in different languages. Later he asked me to guess his religion, but I failed. He was Mr. Aaron, a Jew. There were a few Parsis (Zoroastrians), and the rest of the lot consisted of Hindus. Most of the visitors, excluding a few businessmen,

belonged to the middle class, serving in some of the offices in Poona.

After consenting to this *darshan* program, Baba sent a telegram through Dr. Ghani to inform those who would come from Poona that Baba had agreed to give a few minutes' interview to each. This made them all the happier. After their arrival at Meherabad, Baba commenced meeting the Poona group, one by one. As each entered the room for his personal interview, Baba would greet the person with His wordless, lovely smile which wiped out bitterness and sorrow from the heart. To one of the visitors, a cloth merchant, Baba suggested that he repeat any one name of God 7,000 times a day without fail. The person somehow feared that his family and business responsibilities might cause a lapse in carrying out the Master's order. Such a breach he regarded as the greatest sin, so he frankly expressed his inability to carry out the order.

When the master gives any instruction, He definitely confers power on the person to carry it out in spite of himself. So Baba had a meaningful smile as He conveyed to the person, "All right. Forget about 7,000 times. Can you do it 700 times? At least do not forget to repeat the divine name 70 times a day, without an exception." The visitor of course very lovingly agreed to this. In a playful mood and with a bit of humor in His eyes, Baba added, "You are a businessman and you did good business with me, too. But mind, I am the Real Businessman!"

"I Draw My Dear Ones to Me"

Tejupal was in his late fifties and a bit crippled. Years earlier he had read *The Perfect Master*, by Purdom. It created in him an intense desire to meet Avatar Meher Baba in person, but at that time he was living in Sind, hundreds of miles from Ahmednagar, so he could not avail himself

of the opportunity to see Baba, the Word made flesh. Partition of India into Bharat and Pakistan in August 1947 brought him to Poona. There he gathered more information about Baba and His activities. When he learned about the *darshan* program, he decided to join the group in spite of his ill health. Thus, June 1 turned out to be the most sanctifying day in his life.

At the time of his personal interview, Baba gestured, "Any questions?" Tejumal answered, "No questions, Baba. But I implore you to bless me with your love." Baba looked pleased with his attitude and conveyed, "A fortunate soul." After some informal and personal talk, Baba instructed Tejumal to repeat the word "*Baba*" for five minutes every midnight for a stipulated period. Tejumal willingly agreed. A deep look passed between the two, Baba smiled, and the interview was over. After his return to Poona, Tejumal wrote to Adi Sr. about the observance of Baba's order, his personal experience and its interpretation. In reply to this, Adi wrote: "In regard to the repetition, it would be in one's interest to understand that in so far as the Master's instructions go, they should, as far as practicable, be followed literally. What is needed most in spiritual enlightenment is the grace of the Master ... It does not mean that your own tastes should not be encouraged ... They may be striven for, but whatever comes to you from the Master, after a depth of longing, should be regarded as a potential to take you towards the finale of all spiritual experiences."

It goes without saying that Tejumal followed Baba's instructions and reaped a rich spiritual harvest. In the case of spiritual experiences, the fact seems to be that Baba has first to lay His finger on a person's heart under the pretext of His glance or gesture or a simple instruction, and then a remarkable change takes place. In the case of some who have not met Him personally, just hearing His glorious

name or the sight of His pictures has worked wonders. In this sense, perhaps, Baba used to remark, "I draw my dear ones to me, in my own ways."

An Uncommon Phone Call

One of my close friends, Laxminarayan B. Thade, had Baba's first physical *darshan* on June 1, 1948. He was in his early twenties, a science graduate, and served as a clerk in one of the government offices. In late 1947 he attended a meeting in the East Lodge of the Theosophical Society in Poona, where the late R. K. Gadekar, one of Meher Baba's dear disciples, delivered a talk on "Meher Baba, the Awakener." It aroused considerable curiosity in Thade, but his mind rebelled against regarding Meher Baba to be the Avatar as were Rama and Krishna. It seems strange, but a chain of coincidences commenced that day. In this run of luck, when he visited his grandfather Yellappa (Dada), he found a Marathi biography of Meher Baba written by Deshmukh. After reading the book, Thade felt himself suddenly and deeply drawn to Baba, though he could not precisely fathom or unravel the reason for this inner pull. After that he did not miss any meeting that gave information about Baba and His life Divine.

When Dr. Ghani Munsiff, with the help of some Baba people in Poona, arranged the above-mentioned program at Meherabad, the date of *darshan* was first fixed for May 15, 1948. Unfortunately, by that time Thade had fallen sick with typhoid. He felt sorely grieved at missing the rare chance to meet the Master. "I must be a first-rate sinner," he thought, for it was then physically impossible for him to accompany the group. Within a few days, however, the news came that the date of *darshan* was changed to June 1. Thade felt greatly relieved, but then another difficulty cropped up. He was a newly appointed clerk, and in his

illness he had exhausted all the leave to his credit. His immediate supervisor seemed unwilling to sanction even one day off. What a pitiable predicament!

At this point, a miracle, if one may use that word, occurred. A few days prior to the *darshan*, Thade's boss had an informal phone call from one of the superior officers. He suggested that if anyone in the office wished to visit a saintly personality, he should not, as far as possible, be refused leave. Casually, the boss inquired if there was anyone in his section who wished to visit a saint. When Thade had asked for leave, he had not disclosed his intention to visit Meher Baba at Meherabad. Now he felt bold and proud enough to reveal his purpose, and he was all cheers when his supervisor very happily sanctioned the leave. Thade learned later the reason for the change in attitude, but even to this day, he does not know who talked with his boss on the phone and to whom he owes the divine debt. At any rate, he got the leave and with great joy joined the party going to Meherabad, his heart singing. June 1 marked the most eventful day in his life and opened a splendid spiritual avenue.

"Be Good to Others"

When Thade was ushered into the room for his interview, Baba made him sit very close, almost touching the low mattress on which He had His seat. Baba flashed His usual smile upon the young man, and Thade felt that it filled and lit the room with heartwarming love. In Baba's presence he felt like shedding tears of unspeakable relief. Baba asked him through Dr. Ghani if he had read any of His literature. When Thade mentioned the names of some books, Baba seemed pleased. With an air of a proud father, He communicated to Dr. Ghani, "Look, he is so very young and yet he has read the books about me. He loves me." Thade

could hardly restrain his tears of joy at these words of unexpected admiration.

In these moments of felicity, Thade remembered his dear father and mother and had a passing thought, "Would that they, too, were here." Just then Baba conveyed the following, "You are blessed. Your parents, too, are blessed. Don't worry about them. They will share your happiness." Thade was thoroughly taken by surprise at this incidental remark. The statement about his parents has come true, word for word — at present, all their children (now graduates) and grandchildren are active members of the Baba family, and they lead their lives with deep conviction in Meher Baba as the Ancient One.

At the end of the interview, Baba asked Thade if he had anything to say. The young man gathered courage against his shyness and said, "Baba, at present I am serving in a government office. I have passed my B.Sc. examination. Should I leave the services and return to college to get a Master's degree in science?" Dr. Ghani read the reply: "Do whatever you feel best, but do remember one thing. Be good to others and I am always with you." As Thade rose, he looked down at Baba's holy feet and felt like touching them, but everyone had been forbidden to do so. Unawares, his heart silently "rolled out" of his bosom to lie at Meher Baba's feet permanently. After his return to Poona, Thade was soon posted as the superintendent of the boys' hostel, where he had ample opportunity to be good to many students by revealing Meher Baba's name to their blossoming hearts.

"I Sign on the Heart"

By late morning on June 1, the interviews were over. It was pre-monsoon time, but the humid weather was made cooler by the morning wind that accompanied Baba's arrival.

When the session was over, there was plenty of laughter and lightheartedness amongst us all. In Baba's *sahavas*, minds were unburdened of so many worries. At the time of the interviews, Baba said little to them but each one felt astonished at the intimate relationship that developed as a result of the few moments passed silently with Him — the Silence in action. Was there a new cultivation in the inner life of each? Quite possibly. In the case of some visitors a few embarrassing incidents had happened prior to their meeting with the Master, but after meeting Him, the situations changed and they began to perceive order in disorder. After lunch the party left Meherabad for Poona, with the exalted memory of precious moments spent in the company of the God-Man.

Suffused with Baba's glance of compassion, which had been like a shower of love upon him, Thade later tried to contact various people to learn of their life with Meher Baba — God in human form. He approached practically all of the men *mandali* with a small, pretty, card-size album and requested each to write a few lines about Baba — what they take Him to be and what they personally feel about Him — and sign it. During one of his next visits to Meherabad, Thade held this album before Baba and very lovingly implored Him to sign on the first page. Baba's eyes looked brilliant and shone with wisdom and compassion. Through His meaningful gestures, He conveyed, "I sign on the heart. When you first met me I signed on it. What need is there to sign on this paper?" Indelible words of the Eternal One!

Self-Destroying Rage

I wish to conclude the narration of this blessed day with the account of Kishan Singh's interview with Baba. He is one of Avatar Meher Baba's dear ones and had the enviable

good fortune to stay with the Master for many days at a stretch and maintain a day-to-day diary of that period. In 1953, Baba's headquarters were at Dehra Dun for over nine months. During that period, one of the two bungalows occupied by Baba and the *mandali* was Kishan Singh's residence, so he had Baba's *sahavas* practically every day. However, for his first glimpse of the God-Man he had to pass through a crisis touching his faith in life. He had Baba's first *darshan* on June 1, 1948. As these "firsts" are closely linked, the account of how Kishan Singh came into Meher Baba's contact deserves to be mentioned.

In the late thirties some of his personal problems became so acute that he had to undergo a crucial phase. He became morbidly depressed and apprehensive. The restlessness was so terrible that he became possessed by self-destroying rage. There has to be winter before spring sets in!

He had first read Meher Baba's name in 1937 in the *Tribune*, a daily published in Lahore (Punjab-Pakistan). It was a short report on the lectures given by Princess Norina Matchabelli and Deshmukh about Meher Baba. Kishan Singh got the impression that Meher Baba must be a very great saint and that He belonged to a Parsi (Zoroastrian) community. That was all. For months afterward he did not come across any further news of the Master in any other daily. No books on Meher Baba were available to him.

In the early forties, in spite of a good post in the government office, certain problems entailed great mental strain which became unbearable. He feared a total nervous breakdown. Under these circumstances, one morning in 1941 he remembered Meher Baba all of a sudden and felt that Baba was the only one capable of giving him relief from that state of intense agony. In the first part of that year, Baba visited Rajasthan and Baluchistan (Pakistan) and for over a month His headquarters were at Dehra Dun. Soon, however, he left for Meherabad for work connected with the *masts*. At

this time Kishan Singh was at Rawalpindi, but somehow he got news of Meher Baba's stay at Dehra Dun. Thinking that Baba would be there, Kishan Singh in his desperate state impulsively decided to take the long journey by train to Dehra Dun. There was no one to compel him except himself. He resolved to meet Meher Baba and surrender to Him or else throw himself into the Holy Ganges — a self chosen watery grave.

The Waiter with a Baba Button

After reaching Dehra Dun, Singh inquired of local people where Meher Baba's residence was, but they did not know. It was Sunday. On the spur of the moment he remembered that Baba was born of Irani (Parsi) parents. He visited one Irani hotel, where he met a young man who looked like a waiter. Impatiently, Kishan Singh asked him if he knew where Meher Baba was. The boy gave him an address and even showed him a Baba button (locket) on his coat. It was the first time Kishan Singh had seen his Master's smiling face. Overjoyed, he hurried to the address, but to his utter surprise he found that it was incorrect. He inquired about Meher Baba at the house, but instead of giving any clue, the man living there started jeering at him for having come so long a distance to Dehra Dun in search of a Parsi, disregarding the many Hindu saints and sages. There was no time to spare to convince the man, so Singh made his way back to the hotel, looking in vain for the boy who had given him the address. He approached the manager, who told him that there was no such waiter employed in his hotel. Kishan Singh wondered who he was.

He felt dejected and very confused. With some hesitation he contacted a Parsi gentleman, who welcomed him and gave him the right information about Meher Baba. He offered Singh a printed pamphlet containing Meher Baba's

message and directed him to write for particulars to Adi K. Irani at Ahmednagar.

The young man's locket and Baba's message bestowed a sort of consolation, but at the same time the devil began to play his pranks, quoting the Bible and reminding Kishan Singh to be true to the resolve he had made when leaving Rawalpindi — to end his life if he failed to meet the Master — and Singh arrived in Hardwar in a state of utter indecisiveness. He visited the bank of the Ganges with the thought of suicide lurking in his mind. The hope of Baba's immediate *darshan* had left him. It was a shock to him, and although he felt greatly annoyed, somehow he managed to control himself.

There by the river, most unexpectedly, he saw a person who had great affection and love for him. "It's a day of surprises," he thought. With the idea of avoiding this friend, he ordered a *tonga*, but the person had spotted him and hurriedly got into the same vehicle. Though Kishan Singh did not disclose his intention freely, his dear friend guessed that he was very much overpowered with unwanted emotions and so skillfully tried to pacify him. Sympathy is never one-sided, and Kishan Singh, was, in a way, won over. With deeper trust in Meher Baba and relying more on His merciful ways, he left Hardwar for Rawalpindi.

Distant but Momentous Darshan of the Master

After reaching home, Kishan Singh wrote a letter to Adi Sr. asking him for some books on Meher Baba and, above all, earnestly requesting Meher Baba's *darshan*. After a short period, he received some Baba literature. Reading brought him the tidings of hope and a new way of understanding life. As the correspondence continued, he received happy news about the possibility of meeting Meher Baba in person, but this program was later canceled and

he was asked to attend a congregation of Baba people at Lahore (Pakistan). There he personally met Adi Sr., and the free talk they had was of great help to him. His heart was incessantly clamoring for Meher Baba's *darshan*, however. Agog with this thought, he became prey for a *fakir* who duped him for over one hundred rupees — the man promised him Meher Baba's *darshan* in a dream! With increasing eagerness, appeals for *darshan* were made to Baba, but Adi, for one reason or the other, had to ask him to wait for the opportune moment.

From one of Adi's letters Kishan Singh got the information that Meher Baba was staying in Jubilee Hills at Hyderabad, now the capital of Andhra Pradesh. He thought of making a fresh attempt and sent a telegram directly to Meher Baba requesting Him to grant *darshan*. He expected to get a reply at his address in Delhi, so he left Rawalpindi and waited for a couple of days at Delhi. Then he could bear the delay no longer and proceeded to Hyderabad, hundreds of miles to the south. After reaching this great city he encountered many difficulties in getting to the *mandali's* quarters. The place was quite new to him, and Jubilee Hills was an extensive area with bungalows spread wide apart.

Vishnu, one of the *mandali*, met him and lovingly inquired about him, but when Kishan Singh opened the topic of Baba's *darshan*, Vishnu was entirely uncompromising. He tried to dissuade Kishan Singh from expecting *darshan*, even though he had journeyed over a thousand miles. Baba was on a ten-day fast and He especially wished to remain undisturbed during that period. In the course of the conversation, it was disclosed that Kishan Singh's telegram had been received with garbled words and was sent back to Rawalpindi for confirmation, hence there had been a delay in sending the reply to Delhi. The telegram was the bearer of a golden summons — that Meher Baba would permit him

to be present at Meherabad on May 25, 1945. But in the meantime, Kishan had left for Hyderabad. His long leave was to expire by May 25 and the service rules did not permit him to extend it. Hundreds of miles stretched between Rawalpindi and Meherabad, which was a genuine difficulty. Vishnu dared not ask Baba to grant *darshan*, so he suggested that Kishan Singh write a note which he would bring to Baba's notice, if possible. Vishnu left for Baba's bungalow and Kishan Singh, with a mixed feeling of fear and delight, awaited the decision.

To his great delight, Vishnu brought the news that Meher Baba would allow *darshan*, provided he did not enter the bungalow. He was to have a glimpse of the God-Man from the gate of His residence, a distance of over three hundred feet. Kishan Singh readily agreed to this, as it was *darshan* and not distance that mattered to him. Baidul took him to the bungalow and instructed him a number of times not to bow down his head to Baba by way of paying homage — he could, at the most, fold his hands. Kishan Singh was not in a mood to understand such details. No sooner did he see Baba standing on the veranda than he prostrated himself on the ground at the gate, unaware of himself. Baidul got annoyed and helped him to stand erect. Meher Baba's brilliant eyes had a magnetic effect on Kishan and in that state of ecstasy he somehow folded his hands. He was overwhelmed with joy by Baba's radiance and His love, so tender. After a minute or so, Baba clapped, meaning "time's up." Kishan Singh felt that the time was over practically before it had commenced. The *darshan* left him dazed. Was it a dream? He rubbed his eyes to be sure that the Light he beheld was no illusion.

He was brought to his senses as Baidul admonished him for disregarding the Master's instructions. Kishan Singh could not understand why Baidul or Vishnu made so much of Baba's orders, when the Master Himself was all love and

all kindness. He did not know then that the smallest instruction of the Master had to be literally followed, as it had its own bearing on His spiritual work. As they reached the *mandali's* quarters, there was a message from Baba. He sent His blessings to Kishan Singh, who was then asked to have lunch with the *mandali* and to leave Hyderabad by the first available train.

Interview, an Unforgettable Event

Meher Baba's *darshan* had a penetrating effect on Kishan Singh. He made up his mind to retire from government service at the earliest moment, to live a life dedicated to Meher Baba and His cause. He wrote to the Master: "I have decided to dedicate my life to you and serve you, but my inner self is not ripe to receive you. Let me drink a drop of Thy compassion."

In May 1947 he was asked to bring two *masts* from Rawalpindi to Mahabaleshwar, near Poona. He could not succeed in this undertaking, so in a letter to Baba he expressed his deep regret over this failure. Eruch replied: "Baba says you need not worry for not having been able to bring the *masts*. Later on, an occasion may arise when you will be able to render Him important *seva* (service). Till then, go on with your present services in the office."

The occasion hinted at did occur, though after a period of some years. In the summer of 1948, Baba agreed to give audiences to His dear ones from the outstations. Kishan Singh was informed about this. With great joy he reached Meherabad on May 31 to meet the Master the next day. It was a long-awaited and momentous meeting — indeed, overdue.

As Kishan Singh entered the interview room, he experienced a unique quality of love in Meher Baba's presence and saw a radiant halo around His face. During their

talk, Baba intimately inquired about the long journey by rail and his health — physical and mental. Kishan Singh availed himself of this opportunity to open his heart to the Master. He was caught off guard when Baba put to him a direct question: "What do you want?" He replied, "Is it for me to say what I need? My Master is to decide what I should have." Baba looked serious and conveyed, "The Master knows everything. But He wants you to reply to the question." At this Kishan Singh humbly answered, "Then, please bless me with love, and devotion at your lotus Feet. Will you not, Baba?" Baba just smiled, His eyes glittering, but did not say anything. Perhaps the silence meant something deeper. With a rare feeling of jubilation, Kishan Singh managed to leave Baba's presence, and shed tears of joy later, all to himself.

Thus this day of interviews, June 1, brought tidings of new life to various souls eager to meet the Master. In Him they sought the consolation of Life. During these short interviews, Meher Baba's silent presence with its non-verbal communication awakened their hearts. He used the board sparingly, but when He did, it seemed that what He had in mind swept His fingers along as they gracefully moved over the letters. These simple words and instructions followed His dear ones like sweet hummingbirds singing the notes of the moments spent in the company of the God-Man. Such were interviews with Meher Baba, whether at Meherabad or Meherazad or Myrtle Beach. An interview with Avatar Meher Baba was an unforgettable event.

Special Circular for Baba People, 1948

Visit to Baroda and Ahmedabad

AFTER the refreshing day of interviews on June 1, 1948 at Meherabad, Meher Baba wished to resume work with the *masts*, a profound and mysterious phase of His life. The *masts* outwardly appeared to be extremely dirty, adamant and unhygienic. Some people, not without reason, regard them as mentally deranged, beyond any treatment. But are not appearances often deceptive? We have to be careful. Let not the shell decide the pearl! The precious pearl in these dirty molds is their undaunted love for God, the Beloved, and naturally the only cure and restorative for them is through the contact of the One who is one with God. Their ways of living are queer and unpredictable because theirs is not the mind-made passage of definite plans or conclusions. They keep themselves forever open to the will of God. They are the free people. Theirs is the heart-led track, mostly off beat, on the expanse of life. That is why in the company of the *Avatar*, who is Life itself, they felt relieved and secure in His embrace. Just as a botanical preserve is maintained in some parts of a country, I feel that India is divinely ordained to be a spiritual preserve composed of the *masts* of various traits — repellent or pleasant, distressing or delightful.

The first week of June 1948, Meher Baba left the head-

quarters at Ahmednagar for a short tour to visit Baroda and Ahmedabad. Baidul, Eruch and Gustadji accompanied Him. At Baroda, He renewed contacts with the two great *masts* of the city — Chambu Shah, a fifth plane *mast*, and Rafai Shah. This time Chambu Shah was accessible without much difficulty. It was to Rafai Shah that Baba wished to present His coat, and He held it in His own hands until the *mast* willingly slipped it on.

From Baroda, Baba moved north to visit Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, with a short break at Nadiad to contact Janakidas Maharaj. On June 10 the main contact was Jagannath Maharaj, who had a spacious *ashram* on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. Jagannath's original place of residence was not known — one fine morning he had visited Ahmedabad and people began to treat him with respect. As time passed, he founded an *ashram*. By the time of Baba's visit on June 10, he had two hundred cows and had opened a free kitchen for Hindu *sadhus* and *Muslim fakirs*. Though Meher Baba's identity was not disclosed, Jagannath Maharaj somehow sensed His spiritual greatness. He very lovingly and cordially received Baba and they embraced. Jagannath offered Baba packets of fresh rich food and a few shawls, one for each of the *mandali*.

Baba stayed in Ahmedabad for two days and contacted about ten *masts*. Baidul and Eruch collected information from local people about these God-intoxicated souls, and Baba spared no pains to meet them. Mohammed Hussain was spotted in a urinal enclosure, where he happily passed most of his time. There he ate and rested, too, undisturbed by the stench. Previously he must have stayed in different parts of India, for in his unconnected talk he used many different Indian languages. Karewala was a mediocre *mast* who enjoyed wearing iron rings on different parts of his body — common with the *masts*. Majzoob Shah sat quietly in a shrine and had to be fed by others. Some *masts* ate

whatever was offered to them, a few demanded food whenever they liked, and occasional rare ones were fed by their *majawars* (attendants), morsel by morsel.

Catching a Bus Provided a Dramatic Situation

During this stay in Ahmedabad, Baba contacted a few seekers also. One of them was a schoolteacher. A contact with an advanced pilgrim named Baitullah Shah was well remembered by the *mandali* not as much for the pilgrim himself but for the incredible incident connected with the visit. This person had a greying beard that shadowed his otherwise youthful face. He used to offer prayers to Allah five times a day, and every invocation kept him busy for two hours at a stretch. On Fridays he would read the Koran continuously for sixteen hours. Baba and the *mandali* reached the suburb of Ahmedabad where Baitullah Shah resided. They found the pilgrim engaged in his prayers, hence Baba decided to visit him the next day and Eruch and Baidul hurried ahead to reserve seats in a bus. Baba, too, walked briskly, but Gustadji, because of some physical ailment, proceeded slowly and easily. Baidul gestured to Baba that the bus was about to start, and Baba clapped His hands and gestured for Gustadji to walk quickly to be in time for the bus. "Gustadji broke into a trot . . ." and the dramatic situation that followed is well described by William Donkin.

But first, the following information regarding the political situation that prevailed in those days in the state of Hyderabad has to be explained. In August 1947 the British regime in India was over. With the departure of the British, the internal problems of some former states ruled by *rajahs* (kings) became acute when a few tried to claim their sovereignty to rule. The *Nizam* of Hyderabad, a Muslim ruler, was one of these. In support of his claim, an organization under the name of *Razakars* was formed. It was headed by

a fanatic Muslim lawyer. The members of this organization, the *Razakars*, started harassing Hindus in the state, looting their properties and even kidnapping the children and women. The news flared up in the papers, particularly in the adjoining parts of Maharashtra and Gujarat, and people began to look down on the *Razakars* with great disdain. An Arab from the organization, who was also known to people by the word "*Chaous*," was the most detested for his inhuman and brutal activities, so much so that the very word "*Chaous*" evoked ill feelings, as the word "murderer" does.

To continue with the incident: "Gustadji broke into a trot at once, but did so at the very instant that a small boy was coming towards him. This boy was somehow seized with the idea that Gustadji was running at him, and he uttered a yell of terror and turned on his heels and fled in front of Gustadji, screaming as he ran. Bystanders saw, as they thought, an innocent child being chased by a wicked little man in a black cap, and one or two shouted, '*Chaous*' ('Arab') — and to shout this word at this time was as much as to shout 'murder' . . . Gustadji [was] intent only on running and thus utterly unaware that a score of people were girding up their loins to pounce upon him. Baba, however, the Master of every man and every situation, made a lightning signal to Gustadji to stop still in his tracks, which he did at once. This freezing of Gustadji allowed the onlookers to see not a villain, but a man clearly more incapable of violence to the innocent than the very child who had fled from him. The critical tension having been thus relaxed, Eruch and Baidul dissipated what was left of it by explaining with vigor that Gustadji was neither killer nor Arab, but simply a man running to catch a bus."⁹⁰

"Those who know Gustadji's amiable face and figure —

⁹⁰ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, "The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls..." (June to August), p. 4.

the kind of face Rubens would have loved to paint — may wonder how on earth Gustadji could be mistaken, even for a second, for an Arab out for blood."⁹¹ But was not life with Meher Baba unpredictable?

A Month of Observing the Order

An important period for Baba people all over the world commenced on June 21. About a month earlier, on May 4, 1948, a circular had been issued to all in the East and the West. It contained the information that Meher Baba would be engaged in a special type of spiritual work from June 21 to July 20, 1948. All His disciples, devotees and followers, both men and women, were to carry out any one of the following five orders for a period of one month:

1. Observe silence.
2. Fast, with one meal a day. Tea or coffee to be taken only once during twenty-four hours.
3. Feed a different poor person every day with your own hands, morsel by morsel.
4. Repeat orally every day, 100,000 times, any one Divine Name cherished by you.
5. a) Do not touch or carry money.
 - b) Do not touch any member of the opposite sex, excluding children under seven.
 - c) Do not hit anyone under any circumstances, even in jest.
 - d) Do not insult or abuse even when provoked.

Every Baba follower was free to select any *one* of the five orders, but once it was decided upon, he was expected to follow it literally and without any compromise. Those in India were asked to communicate their decisions to Meher Baba by May 21, while those abroad had until May 31.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Most of the acknowledgment slips from the United States, England, Australia and other countries were received in time. To some of the Westerners, this was an opportunity to write directly to "Baba Dearest" and send their hearts' love, and also to request the privilege of meeting Him in person. In England, Will Backett did most of the work of informing Baba followers. The head of the Sufis in Australia was F. E. von Frankenberg. He had formed a small group interested in Meher Baba. Francis Brabazon, Ena Lemon and a few others were members of this early group. About ten persons from Australia sent in their willingness to follow Baba's orders.

In one of his letters, Frankenberg requested that Baba clarify the spiritual significance of the circular. The reply sent to him through Dr. Ghani stated: "To try to understand a Perfect Master from a limited, egoistic human standpoint is a sheer impossibility. By one action of His the Master perhaps serves many purposes on different planes. The only thing worth doing is to carry out the Master's behests most sincerely."

Malcolm Schloss from the West Coast of the United States wrote that he had a dream about the Master (Meher Baba), who conveyed to him that He was busy working hard for the spiritual upliftment of humanity. Malcolm wondered what the significance of the dream could be. Coincidentally, that day's mail brought him copies of the above-mentioned circular, which was a comforting corroboration. Malcolm distributed the circulars to the Baba people in California. Over a hundred disciples and followers from the West were in readiness to join Baba in this divine vigil.

"Worry Not Over the Past"

Meher Baba had mentioned in the circular that He should not be disturbed in His special work by any correspondence from his people until July 20, 1948. Nevertheless, letters

concerning the five orders were brought to His attention. After sending in their choice, some Baba devotees sought His advice on practical problems they faced while carrying out the orders.

The first order was to observe silence. The number of participants was small and they did it sincerely. The second was a partial fast and a cup of tea or coffee. One devotee unwittingly joined his friends in drinking lime juice. He felt very sorry for the breach of the order and he wrote to Baba, who pardoned him and asked him to continue the partial fast in right earnest. He was also to be on guard and not commit the mistake again. There was one who inquired about the size of the cup, and Baba, with gay mischief in His eyes, gestured, "Any size, but only one cup a day and no more!" In an earlier period, some of the devotees had been asked to observe a fast once a week. During this June July period, the previous order was suspended. A young Baba lover informed Baba that in the beginning he used to have some slices of bread with his tea as "a part of the morning tea." Later on he felt that it was not literal obedience and wrote to Baba about it. The reply conveyed, "Worry not over the past. Be vigilant in the present. Commit not the same error again."

The third order concerned feeding the poor. One of my friends, who had agreed to abide by it, fell sick. The poor man who was brought to his house refused to be fed morsel by morsel, but my friend's health did not permit him to go out in search of other persons, even on the successive days. Baba directed him to try as best he could and leave the results to His divine will.

Repeating the Divine Name

The fourth order was to repeat one name of God 100,000 times a day. At the outset, one of Meher Baba's devotees did not realize the time required for it. On the very first

day he discovered that it was impossible for him to exceed 25,000. He frankly confessed his mistake and with great remorse begged Meher Baba's pardon. Baba seemed touched by his words and asked him to repeat the cherished Name only 15,000 times a day, and also added that if he carried out this new order, Baba would consider the number equivalent to the one originally required. Some persons felt a bit confused over selection of the Divine Name, as no specific name was mentioned in the circular. One of Meher Baba's very dear ones wrote to Him: "I believe Om refers to 'the *Nirguna* -- the Formless', whereas Meher Baba signifies 'the *Saguna* — God-in-human-form state'. Since the day I heard about you I have adopted 'Om Meher Baba' as my divine *mantram*." In later periods, I have come across some Baba people who repeat, as and when time permits, the Divine Name of God. I feel that wholehearted remembrance is more important than the selection of the name. In fact all those who repeat the cherished name are invoking the same Infinite Consciousness that periodically becomes human in the form of the God-Man, the *Avatar*. One of Meher Baba's devotees inquired if he could repeat in his natural course of breathing the Sanskrit word "*So ... ham*," meaning "I am That," as the cherished Divine Name. He was permitted to do so. Here I am reminded of an incident in the late sixties when Meher Baba Himself demonstrated silently to one of His lovers how to repeat "BA . . . BA" as one inhales and exhales. But this has to be done, He especially mentioned, in a very easy and delightful manner. BABA, the unique Divine Name!

A group of four women in Bombay decided to repeat the Divine Name 100,000 times, and they carried out the resolve successfully. As they were closely associated with Meher Baba's women *mandali*, Baba got this news and felt pleased. By the end of the first week, the group was specially ordered by Baba to observe silence for a week. They

gladly did so. The third week they were instructed to feed one poor person a day, and at the end they were asked to observe the partial fast. A lucky group indeed. During this period, Dina, one of the women, had a remarkable experience. One day she suddenly became deeply unconscious and remained so for a long time, so long that the outward symptoms of "death" were noticed by her friends, including a doctor. They felt greatly concerned and wholeheartedly called on Meher Baba's help. Soon the "patient" awoke as if from a deep, rather too deep, sleep, but with the experience of a rare ecstatic calmness.

A Delightful Trial

The fifth order was a composite one with four injunctions. One was: "Do not touch money; do not carry money." One businessman could not decide whether in the literal sense of the order he could handle bank drafts and checks or not. Adi Sr. conveyed to him that the signing of checks or drafts was permissible. Another one, who had to handle money as a part of his duty, was exempted by Baba from that restriction during office hours. He was instructed to carry out faithfully the rest of the injunctions contained in the order. I, too, was observing the fifth order. As a teacher, I had to collect the fees of my class, so I used to ask one of the pupils to count the money. He happily did so, and then he would hand over the amount to one of my colleagues, who would credit it in the office. While teaching the mixed class of boys and girls, I had to be attentive that while distributing or accepting notebooks I did not touch any of the girls. The problem of using the cane was easily solved by not carrying it in the classroom at all, but I had to be mindful of not hitting anyone lightly, even in jest. Because of my nature, it was not so difficult for me to check myself in using harsh language in my dealings with the

pupils. I personally wished that all these injunctions should be observed without letting the pupils know that I was carrying out Meher Baba's order. It was a delightful trial. Of course in many ways, at the opportune moments, Meher Baba's inner guidance saved me from slips. It was indeed a game of meditation, wakeful and lively.

One woman, a Baba devotee from Bombay, expressed her inability to follow any of the five orders because of certain household responsibilities. Another was expecting a baby during that period. Baba sent His blessings to both of them and exempted them from observing the orders. In short, any honest difficulty was lovingly considered by the Compassionate Father, Meher Baba. There was no monotonous regimentation in the observance of these orders. I had been sent some extra copies of the circular and I informed my friends about it, but I never insisted they fill in the acknowledgment slip. The few who did are Meher Baba's followers to this day, with deep conviction in His divinity. Can you command a bud to bloom? Coming to Meher Baba is a spontaneous response of the heart. To me, the issuing of that circular was a call of Love to those who wished to follow the One who was and is Love itself.

Extreme Prejudice Against Meher Baba

Every circular issued had drawn new persons to Meher Baba. The experiences of the old and new Baba followers, whether pleasant or trying, as they observed Meher Baba's order, definitely linked them closer to His universal heart. Instead of relating the experiences of so many Baba people, I will give an account of one person who had not until then met Meher Baba physically. He had no faith in Baba's *Avatarhood* and yet had agreed to abide by one of the orders. The experiences of others who did believe in Baba's divinity can well be guessed.

Keshav Narayan Nigam is one of Avatar Meher Baba's very dear ones. He has a B.A. (Gold Medalist) and is a law graduate, also. He relinquished his position to serve Meher Baba's cause, and at present he is the editor of *Meher Pukar*, a Hindi monthly dedicated to spreading Meher Baba's message of Love and Truth. Since July 1954 it has been published at Hamirpur. In the early forties Keshav was a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi and a sincere devotee of Lord Krishna. He first heard of Meher Baba in 1942 from one of Baba's devotees named Babadas. Once during a casual talk Babadas said to him, "Meher Baba is Lord Krishna, who has come down on earth in the form of Meher Baba." Keshav smiled ironically and scornfully turned a deaf ear to this statement. Babadas gave him some beautiful pictures of Baba and some literature about Him. Keshav did not care to read a single page, so biased was his attitude. Out of extreme prejudice, he threw away the Baba pictures on the public road, to be trampled by people. With such scorn and malice was Meher Baba received by Keshav, who later regarded Him as the only Beloved, the eternal *Avatar*.

In 1943, Keshav Nigam was put in jail on political grounds. He was among those patriots who were staking their lives for the independence of India. In jail he met Shripat Sahai, one of his old colleagues, who brought to him fresh news about Meher Baba. In 1942 Shripat Sahai had absconded in connection with a violent political movement. From a young age he had also been interested in *ashtang yoga* and would practice *yogic* exercises daily. In the period of hiding, one of his friends, noticing his spiritual temperament, told him to meet Meher Baba. Baba was in partial seclusion at Meherabad, but He granted *darshan*. During the meeting Baba asked Sahai to relate the main incidents in his life. After hearing all that was said, Baba blessed him and assured him of guidance on the spiritual

Path. He also asked him to end his underground activities and surrender openly to the authorities, leaving the results to His divine will. In that short interview with Meher Baba, Shripat Sahai felt so convinced of His divinity that he proceeded straight to Hamirpur, informed the District Superintendent of Police and willingly began jail life. Sometimes he would tell Keshav about Meher Baba's *Avatarhood*, to which Keshav never agreed. Instead, there would be a hot discussion in which Keshav always asserted that Meher Baba lived idly, without doing anything, and took pleasure in declaring Himself to be the *Avatar*.

Light Dawns on Keshav Nigam

After some months most of the political prisoners, including Keshav, were released from jail. He went to Hamirpur to live. In spite of his antagonistic views about Meher Baba, he continued to receive Baba circulars from Adi K. Irani. Being prejudiced, he would throw them into the wastepaper basket without opening them. In May 1948 he received the circular about Baba's five orders. This time, through an inner urge he opened it, and read it, too. He did not find anything inconsistent in it. On the contrary, the contents somehow appealed to him. Meher Baba had asked His people if they would follow willingly any one of the five orders for a period of one month. Keshav somehow felt impelled to fill in the acknowledgment slip, expressing his readiness to follow the fifth order. At that moment, his biased attitude vanished and he wrote the following letter to Baba:

Revered Shri Meher Babaji,

At last your light seems to have dawned upon me. I paid no heed to your circulars prior to this. But now I sign the fifth order of your circular most voluntarily and

the above order shall be followed by me, literally, most faithfully, and without any compromise. I have a daughter about eight years old. I do not know how I would be able to avoid touching her, as she remains with me for the major portion of the time when I am at home. I rely on your help in this matter.

Part of the All-pervading Soul,

(sd) K. N. Nigam

This short letter linked Keshav to his Beloved, Avatar Meher Baba.

Violation of the Master's Order

At this time Keshav quite unexpectedly received a call to the post of Director of Public Information in the newly formed government of Vindhya Pradesh. He had neither applied for the post nor had he expressed a desire for it, so the appointment was a great surprise to him — some of his close friends had recommended him. As a lawyer, Keshav had a good practice in Hamirpur. He was about to refuse the offer, but it seems that the divine will inwardly persuaded him to accept. He acceded to the proposal on June 21, 1948, the first day of observing Meher Baba's order. This decision had a far-reaching effect in his personal life, too, for on the day he began his duties, his ties with politics ended for good. He never reentered the political field. To meditate on Meher Baba and to serve His cause appealed to him the most for the rest of his life.

Keshav had sought Meher Baba's help in keeping his daughter from touching him during the stipulated period of one month. His reliance on Baba worked out in a wonderful way. Keshav's new position necessitated moving to Nowgong, and for one reason or another, his wife and daughter were not able to join him before July 20, although

they wished to. But Keshav failed in his pledge to Meher Baba to follow the order faithfully and without compromise. It so happened that while departing for Nowgong, he knowingly allowed a girl over seven years of age to apply *tilak* (red powder on the forehead, which is regarded as auspicious and a happy farewell), as was the current custom. He lovingly caressed this girl, which was against the spirit of the order. He also touched money and carried it on his person on his journey to Nowgong. The worst part of the affair was that he knowingly violated Meher Baba's order. He did not know then that he was playing with fire.

After a few days an abscess developed on Keshav's right palm, the one which had fondled the girl and handled the money. The abscess turned septic and there was a huge swelling right up his arm. The pain was so severe that the abscess had to be incised. Even after the operation the pain did not subside, but now it helped Keshav to remember Meher Baba intensely and wholeheartedly. The wound healed slowly until the last date of observance of the order, and then this strange suffering ended.

It has been noticed that if one forgets to observe the order of the Master in spite of the best of efforts, the ill effects are practically nil, for the Master's all-pervading presence is full of compassion. But to disobey Him purposefully is definitely harmful — physically and spiritually — as it indicates a deliberate attempt to go against the divine will. This does not mean that the Master is a despot or dictator, but it seems a fact that His order releases specific power for the spiritual advancement of that particular person. But if in place of cooperation and obedience one tries to go against the "current," one is bound to invite suffering. In a sense, that, too, is the *jalali* aspect of His compassion. Every moment of ours is a leap into the unknown, a vague attempt to find one's Self. An order from the Master, which is practical and practicable, directs one's

journeying toward Him, the Self of all. He is the divine director!

Keshav Nigam Translates Avatar into Hindi

It was during this period that Keshav received a letter from Adi K. Irani requesting him to honor, by paying the eleven rupee fee, a registered-mail parcel containing the book *Avatar*. Adi also wrote that the book was sent on the express wish of Meher Baba and mentioned that a wish of the Master has a deeper significance. For the moment, Keshav failed to sense any significance in Adi's letter. Instead, the old mistrust of Baba flared up in his mind. He thought that Baba and Adi were befooling people to exploit the credulous for money. After a while he realized his folly, and on the last day of the stipulated period, July 20, 1948, he gratefully paid the postage due.

Thus the first and last days mentioned in the circular made remarkable changes in Keshav Nigam's life with Baba. The book *Avatar* was instrumental in developing in him an invincible faith in the *Avatarhood* of Meher Baba. He felt so impressed by the book that he asked permission from Jean Adriel to translate *Avatar* into Hindi. It was later published as a series in *Meher Pukar*, the Hindi monthly, for the benefit of Baba lovers who could not read English. In short, every circular issued from time to time during Meher Baba's lifetime was an occasion for Him to bestow His grace, love and compassion on His dear ones spread all over the world.

Tea Flavored with Rusted Tin

In the last week of June 1948, Meher Baba left Ahmednagar for a short tour to contact *masts*. He first visited Nasirabad, a place over three hundred miles north of Ahmednagar. It

was a special trip to see Jhipra Baba, a *mast* contacted about five years earlier. This particular *mast* was first an *ittefaqi* but later developed characteristics of *jalali* and *madar-zad* types. Such a change is not common with *masts*, so Baba had put him in the category of a "freak *mast*" of a high order. Repeatedly, Jhipra Baba would partake of just a little of the food offered to him, then throw away the rest and simultaneously demand more; he would take just a puff or two of a cigarette, then lay it aside and ask for another — a peculiar characteristic.

From Nasirabad, Baba journeyed towards Bombay. En route He contacted a *mast* who always repeated aloud just one word, "*karak*," which meant anything or nothing. He was named Karak Mastan. It was difficult to know whether some *masts* were Hindus or Muslims, and this was true of Karak Mastan. The resident *mast* at Meherabad is a Hindu, although he is known to everyone by the name "Mohammed." But has *masti* — the intoxication of love for God — any connection with so-called religion?

Baba reached Bombay on June 30. The monsoon was in full swing. On that night the rains did not come in a gentle downpour but lashed the city in torrents, yet by early morning Baba was ready to go out to meet Marhatan Mai, a *mastani* who lived near Carnac Bundar Bridge. As Baba, Baidul and Eruch reached this place, they found the old woman, in her late seventies, soaked to the skin, nonchalantly lying under a tree. Her uncared-for hair looked like a solid thatched roof over her head. She was offered nice hot tea. She directed that it be poured into her old, rusted tin pot, and then she drank it. What flavor it must have had was beyond comprehension! Then Baba visited Kolaba to contact Ramdas Maharaj, who originally had lived in Sind (Pakistan). After the partition, hundreds of Sindhi Hindus migrated to India, and with them they brought Ramdas Maharaj, whom they loved and revered dearly. Meher Baba described him as a rare type of *dnyani salik*.

Meher Baba Ate the Powdered Leaves

In the afternoon on July 1, the Baba party visited Mahim where the family of *madar-zad masts* and *mastanis* lived. Ali Asghar, the gem in the family, was an advanced majzoob-like *mast* first contacted in February 1948. At that time Baba had offered him a cigarette and had been with him for some minutes. This time Ali Asghar bluntly refused to see Baba, for it was a period when he was experiencing a strange phase of *masti*. He had not had food for days and had not slept for many nights. After Baba's arrival the *mast* closed the door of his room, so through the window bars the *mandali* entreated him to let Baba in for the contact, but in vain. Even after they waited and implored him for over an hour and a half, the *mast* would not budge but clearly expressed that Meher Baba should leave the house. Baba had never contacted *masts* against their will. He at once left the place but conveyed that it was extremely necessary to contact Ali Asghar as soon as possible. The party returned to Ahmednagar by July 2, 1948.

When he left Bombay, Baba instructed a few of his disciples to meet the eldest brother of Ali Asghar and get regular information as to whether the aggressive mood of the *mast* was over and if he would permit Baba's contact. After a week, a telegram from Bombay was received conveying good news about the required change in the mood of the *mast*. The next morning, Baba and the same *mandali* left Ahmednagar and reached Bombay by early afternoon. He instructed His party that in order to maintain the link with His last visit to Ali Asghar on July 1, the same route and routine should be followed. This was done, and the party reached Mahim accordingly. Upon visiting the house, it was noticed that the *mast* was still unwilling to receive Meher Baba's "spiritual touch." Again, a good many appeals were made through the window. After half an hour, Ali Asghar came out of his confinement and Baba sat alone with him

for a secluded contact. What transpired in the meeting the *mandali* did not know, but when Baba came out He looked exceptionally radiant and pleased. The *mast*, as he walked out, went into the next room, picked up a pair of big scissors and snipped off seven small leafy sprigs of a mulberry bush. He somehow bound them into a little bunch and presented it to Baba. Perhaps this was a spontaneous gesture of love, an outcome of the significant contact. Then, patting Baba on the back, he muttered, "Now you can go." What a wonderful meeting.

After this contact the Baba party left Bombay for Ahmednagar. Baba gave the precious mulberry bunch to Eruch and instructed him to keep it well preserved, leaf and stem. On the way back, Eruch left the train at Bindra House, Poona, where his parents stayed. He put the seven sprigs into a small pot. As the leaves dried up, he collected them and kept them safe — Baba's instructions had turned these leaves into a treasure. A few days later, Baba asked Eruch to visit Ahmednagar and bring the sprigs and leaves. When this treasure was placed before Baba, He looked immensely delighted. He instructed that the leaves be powdered, and later He consumed them. The seven stems were preserved as a souvenir of His meeting with Ali Asghar. What love for the *masts* — what mystical give-and-take!

Baba Alone *Is*

MEHER Baba's meeting with Ali Asghar at Bombay on July 12, 1948, seemed so satisfying that He did not leave Ahmednagar again for *mast* contacts until August 10. A period of special working by Baba was over by July 20. A few days earlier, two of Baba's western disciples, Delia DeLeon and Jean Adriel, arrived in India. Their last stay with Baba had been in 1937 at Cannes on the French Riviera. A decade had passed, and after such a long time they were naturally eager to see the Master when they arrived in Bombay on July 15. They were warmly received by Baba's people. Although they were anxious to reach Ahmednagar as soon as possible, they were told Baba's instructions: They were to be at Meherabad on July 19 and they would not see Baba before August 10. Thus, out of their three-month stay in India, three weeks were to pass without seeing Baba! The Master has His own ways of arousing and composing the feelings that lie deep within.

In accordance with Baba's wish, the two women reached Meherabad on the nineteenth, and Kitty Davy disclosed the happy news that Baba would see them on July 23. A joyful surprise! To make it more marvelous, Baba paid a special visit to Meherabad with Mehera and Mani a day earlier, to meet Delia and Jean. Delia has recorded her impressions

about this trip to India, and particularly this first meeting with Meher Baba:

July 22. The great day dawned, a lovely sunny day. The *ashram* had been like a beehive from 5:30 A.M. Garlands were made and rooms cleaned. Everyone put on their best clothes. At 9 A.M. we heard the car coming up the hill, so we all lined up at the gate. Jean held a mauve garland and I a white one. The car stopped and out came Mehera and Mani, but no Baba. Our hearts sank, but they smilingly told us He had stopped off at the men's quarters down the hill. The car went back, and five minutes later Baba appeared at the gate. He held out His arms and a beaming smile appeared on His face. We ran to embrace Him, and the years fell away and all our problems and heartaches. Time stood still — here was Reality. Only those who have had the felicity of being thus embraced can understand the extraordinary feeling of happiness it brings to be thus enfolded in love. He walked towards His room, and at the steps, Masi was waiting to perform the ceremony with the coconut — symbol of sacrifice.

We were told to come in with Mehera and Mani. Baba said He was so happy to have us with Him. We would stay at Meherabad for six weeks and during that time we were to rest, eat, not worry, and think of Him, and when we moved to Pimpalgaon we would be kept busy all the time. He said He was very, very tired with the weight of the universe on His shoulders; but soon that would change, and also conditions in the West. He continued, "Everyone is Baba, everything is Baba, and everywhere is Baba and all else is zero." He intended going on two *mast* trips. He was really happy with the *masts*, but the six weeks we were at Pimpalgaon, He would be with us all the time. Discussions of work would take place from August 1. All the other women were then called, and He jokingly asked if I still liked eau de cologne. This recalled

my previous visit to India when I was always using it, owing to the very hot weather.

Baba walked around to inspect our quarters, and with that sweetness so characteristic of Him said we were to have everything we really needed. He showed us the inside of the dome [the present tomb] which had been built over the spot where He had stayed seven months in seclusion, taking only coffee. He inspected the rest of the *ashram*, embraced us and drove off. We stood outside the gate and watched the car disappear.⁹²

Mehera, the Chosen One

Delia continued:

Not having seen Him for so long, we noticed quite a change. Physically, He looked more powerful, and though the love and humor were still in evidence, we felt that the emphasis was on the impersonal aspect of God. His hair was less thick, and His face seemed very suffering at this period of working, though full of power. With the exception of Mehera, all were told that they were not to touch Baba. Some say that spiritually Baba works on all femininity through Mehera, and others say that she represents His feminine aspect. Certainly He has always said that while others are very near and dear to Him in varying degrees, she is the Chosen One, the purest of the pure.

After this meeting I felt so calm and happy. A feeling of peace pervaded my being as if a benediction rested on my head. I knew it was right for me to be there at this moment but not before. I just had to be plunged more deeply into *Maya* and come to terms with certain aspects of myself. Had not Baba written to me during the war: "You are nearer to me where I want you, than if you were

⁹² Kitty Davy, Recollections," *The Awakener*, vol. 6, no.2. 1959, p. 28.

next to me physically where I did not want you. When we meet again you will be a changed Leyla (the Persian name Baba gave me meaning Faithful One), and yet the same."⁹³

The significant statement of Meher Baba quoted above by Delia revealed to me, and may reveal to some Baba people, a secret — why only a few persons were allowed to stay with Baba for their lifetime, some stayed for intermittent periods, many just had a glimpse of Him and the remainder did not see Him physically. This does not mean that all those who stayed with Him were spiritually more advanced, while those who did not were spiritually backward. Whatever was in His divine plan has come to pass. And what else could be His perennial plan than to enkindle the latent spark of divinity in each at the ordained time, befitting the *sanskaras* of each? Nevertheless, we are all equidistant from the Center — Baba, the Infinite.

Meher Baba, the Real Refuge

On July 20, 1948, hundreds of Baba's followers concluded the period of observing one or more of the orders in the circular previously mentioned. Now they felt all the more eager to meet Baba in person. Requests and appeals for *darshan* started pouring in through letters and through the *mandali*. Baba, however, permitted only a few persons, mainly from Poona and Sholapur, to be with Him for about an hour at Meherabad. Those a long distance away were not summoned. The day set for *darshan* was July 23.

Once a person had received Baba's *darshan*, he would feel greatly drawn to Him and wish to see Him again and again. At least I felt that way. After five days with Him at Nagpur

⁹³ Kitty Davy, "Recollections," p. 28-29.

and staying under the same roof with Him at Madras, I was always anxious as to when I would see Him next! Baba's presence exerted a pleasant pull over my entire life. As far as I remember, during the years 1947 and 1948 I did not miss a single opportunity — and fortunately they were many — of being in His company, whether for a few days or a few hours. I particularly remember July 23, 1948, however, for it gave me a passport to see Baba on *any* day.

By the third week of that July, I had learned that a small group of Baba people from Sholapur, eighty kilometers south of Kurduwadi, was to visit Meherabad for Baba's *darshan*. I wrote to Adi Sr., who directed me to contact the group leader at Sholapur — I did so by letter and asked about the possibility of my joining his group en route to Ahmednagar. I also put in an application to the Headmaster for a day's leave. He did not approve it, on the grounds that a school inspection was due on any one of the coming days. He was newly appointed and I was not well acquainted with him, so I did not tell him that I wished to visit Meher Baba but just said that I had some urgent work and would he please grant the leave. My last words ended on a pleading note, but he flatly refused. Something inside me crumbled and it was hard to pull myself together. "Will I not have your *darshan*, Baba?" I implored inwardly.

The passenger train carrying the Sholapur group was to pass through Kurduwadi at midnight. Greatly disappointed, I went to the station to bid farewell to my friends and to request that they convey my salutations to Meher Baba. As I told them of my inability to join them, they expressed regrets at my bad luck in missing the august *darshan* of the Master. When the train was about to start off, one elderly person in the group spontaneously said, "The Headmaster has no right to deprive you of the blessed *darshan* of the Master. Is a day's work at school so weighty

and the opportunity to meet Meher Baba so petty? Get into the train. Is not Baba capable enough to convince your boss ?"

Just then the train whistled and I impulsively got into the compartment. As we moved out, I shouted to one of the railroad employees, whom I chanced to see and who knew my mother, to tell her of my departure for Ahmednagar. As the train sped on, thoughts of school and home were brushed aside and the delightful prospect of seeing Baba made me immensely happy. I had no ticket, no money, and just the ordinary clothes I was wearing, but that did not worry me. My friends were there to help, but above all, confidence in Meher Baba was my real refuge.

An Hour of Darshan at Meherabad

At Dhond junction we had to change to the train for Ahmednagar. By early morning I was able to send from Dhond a telegram to the Headmaster regarding my absence, and there we met the Baba *bhajan* party from Poona, led by the late R. K. Gadekar. It was an added joy to hear them singing so devotionally, even in the train compartment. Because of some mechanical fault, the train stopped that day just in front of the Meherabad *ashram*, which is neither a flag stop nor even a level crossing. With cheers of "Meher Baba *ki jai*," we left the train. Upon hearing the cheers, a few people from the *ashram* came out to receive us and give us the good news that Baba had already arrived from Ahmednagar. The handshakes and embraces continued until we reached the main building.

We were asked to assemble in the hall at Lower Meherabad by 9:00 A.M. One or two benches near the doorway were reserved for the women. Baba arrived with divine decorum and took His seat in a corner, facing the big picture of Him that we find today in the hall. To see Baba was

to see beauty enformed, and as He sat there, He looked radiant. In His vibrant presence, our senses were made active and alert, particularly seeing and hearing. Every eye was on Him to catch His loving glance or gesture. He had a handsome countenance, with delicately chiseled lips. One may state that He had a charming Persian heritage — a straight nose, thin and shining skin and a broad forehead — yet He appeared to belong to no race in particular. His eyes seemed to pour out a soothing radiance. They had a quality of timelessness reflected in them, hence they seemed so knowing, yet so oblivious, as well, of everything.

The visitors paid their homage to Baba. A few garlanded Him. No one was allowed to touch His feet. I had nothing tangible to offer Him. From a distance I folded my hands, but Baba was busy with someone else. For a moment I thought, "Has He ignored me?" The next thought was, "Whatever Baba does has deep significance!" When all were seated, we chanted in chorus the divine names of God: *Hari, Paramatma, Allah, Ahuramazda, God, Yezdan, Hu*. In 1941 Baba had given these names to His devotees for repetition. Our chanting created a heartwarming atmosphere, and despite efforts for self-control, a few sobs escaped now and then from persons such as Gadekar.

While we were in the hall, someone told me that the author of *Avatar* was sitting among the women *mandali*. I glanced in that direction, but since I knew none of them, I derived only slight satisfaction in the thought that I had seen the author of such a beautiful book on Baba. Jaju, from Sholapur and an adherent of Gandhi, spoke a few words about Baba's divinity. As he delivered his speech, jubilation sounded in his voice and occasionally it flashed in his eyes. In all, it was as lovely an hour of delight and *darshan* as one could hope to experience. At 10:00 A.M. Baba returned to His cabin and later proceeded to Rusi's bungalow, His residence in Ahmednagar.

Permission to See Baba Any Day!

During our short visit, someone from the group had hurriedly conveyed to Adi Sr. how I had gotten into the train on the spur of the moment upon hearing Jaju's words, without previously informing the Headmaster or my family. Adi wrongly presumed that I had hesitated to come until receiving Jaju's consent, when his letter to me had only said to contact Jaju for the details of this visit to Meherabad. Somehow he felt himself responsible for my plight and was sorry. He had to leave Meherabad with Baba so he had no time to speak to me, and I left Meherabad with the group that same day by the afternoon train.

The next morning, July 24, Adi reported to Baba about my inconvenience. Baba, in His compassion, granted me — the one to whom He had not directed a single gesture during the hour of *darshan* — longstanding permission to see Him any day. Adi wrote me the following lines about this incident:

"I am so sorry you were put to great inconvenience and discomfort in coming over to Meherabad for *darshan* on July 23. I seem to have made a mistake in informing you that you should contact Jaju and come with him. This morning I informed Baba everything about this. He answered that from now on you are free to come and see Baba whenever you like . . . So far as Baba's *darshan* or *sahavas* is concerned, you have your contact directly established and are given liberty to come for *darshan* any time you like. The only thing you must do is inform us of your coming two days before your arrival. Baba sends His dear love and blessings to you."

This letter was a surprise, a sweet surprise! Baba was clearly conveying to me that I had established a direct contact with Him. What a consolation and good fortune. Baba could use any situation for the showering of His grace. As

I look back, I find that Baba did not deny me *darshan* or *sahavas* even during the periods of His strictest seclusion, including the one prior to the dropping of His body. In a way, the most precious and delightful days of my life in the company of the God-Man owe their origin to the passport given to me in that letter, which is a part of my personal Baba treasure.

On my return to Kurduwadi, before going to class on July 24 I approached the Headmaster to explain the circumstances affecting my decision to go to Meherabad. I feared that he would be angry with me and that I would find him in a bitter fury. But as I entered the room, I was amazed to hear him say, "I received your telegram. You were absent in spite of my explicit refusal to grant leave. But this is enough to explain that you had a very strong reason to leave Kurduwadi!" My spirits rose as he concluded, "I officially sanction your leave. Go and attend to your work." He did not know anything about Meher Baba, nor did he ever ask me why I had been to Him. He was not in the least interested in saints and Masters. His unexpected acceptance revealed to me an outstanding aspect of Meher Baba's help through those who do not know Him. Was it at the same time that Adi Sr. referred my case to the Master? I do not know, but any time can be Baba time!

Masts Present Loaves and Mangoes

During the last week of July and the first week of August 1948, Baba paid some visits to Meherabad. On August 5 Elizabeth Patterson, who had been to the United States, returned to India. Baba was mostly busy with the Westerners, perhaps in connection with the Myrtle Beach Center and His impending visit to the West. With the usual *mast* team, He left Ahmednagar by August 9 to contact the *masts* in the south of India. Baba's favorite areas for contacting

God-intoxicated souls were in the north of India — He would be visiting the southern part again after a period of three years. Baba's work in contacting these souls in different parts of India was not indiscriminate travel — it was to help them in their journey of the heart to the innermost Being. In these meetings, the *masts* would perhaps stare at Baba, trying to feed their hearts upon His divine face. Some gazed intently and intensely at Him and seemed merged in the sight. Words seemed unnecessary. Silence prevailed and there was free expression of love between the lovers and the Beloved.

Baba was in Madras on August 10. A mast named Kalgiri Pir lived in a Parsi's house in Royapuram, a suburb. At the time of contacting him in 1945, he had given a loaf of bread to Baidul — this time he presented Baba with two fresh loaves of bread, but they were wrapped in dirty paper. Unmindful of the outer covering, Baba consumed the loaves to the last crumb. The next contact was Maulvi Saheb. He was regarded as the chief of the *masts* in Madras. At the end of the secluded contact, he presented the Master with six mangoes which lay by his side. Unfortunately they were not very sweet, but Baba relished all of the fruit and asked the *mandali* to preserve the skin and stones.

After the group's return to Ahmednagar, Baba instructed one of His men to plant these stones in seed boxes and He personally watered the seedlings. Later, these were transplanted into open ground on the premises at Meherazad, and they have yielded much fruit. I found them a bit sour but quite tasty. Regarding such offerings from the *masts* during this trip, Baba mentioned that it was His last visit to contact certain *masts* for His work, so they were expressing their love through such gifts.

On the same day that Baba ate the loaves and mangoes, He contacted three more *masts*. One was Ghafur Saheb, who had some traits of a *mahabubi* type. There are not many *masts* of this kind, and Baba explained their characteristics: "A

mahabubi mast invariably wears some article of feminine attire, such as a few bangles, a ring on his finger, earrings, or an old *choli* (a kind of bodice) ... is always cheerful, and though he sometimes talks at random, he never (in contradistinction to a *jamali mast*) speaks in riddles ... He loves *pan*, and is moderately fond of tea ... and he is fond of dancing."⁹⁴

Moti Baba, the Great *Mast* of Negapattam

The next day Baba visited Moti Baba, who was residing in the house of a leather merchant. It is interesting to note how Kaka Baria and Eruch first met the *mast* at Negapattam. In 1939 while Baba was staying in Bangalore, He wished to have a *mast ashram*, so He sent the two stalwarts, Kaka and Eruch, to find inmates for this particular *ashram*. It was the rainy season, and it rained particularly heavily in the south so that the roads were submerged. With great difficulty the two men reached Negapattam to see Moti Baba, who was a well-known figure there, and at sundown they joined a group of persons who were eagerly waiting for him at his place. As Moti Baba arrived, the gathering became silent. This great personality of the sixth plane glanced at the assembly with his sparkling eyes and then took off his outer clothes, for they were quite wet — seven coats and seven trousers. Then the people commenced paying homage to him. After some time, Kaka and Eruch offered due respects to the *mast* and put forth their request that Moti Baba accompany them for some days. They did not mention Meher Baba's name, but the *mast* spontaneously answered that since he had just returned from the Man who sent them, it would not be necessary for him to accompany them to Him.

When Kaka and Eruch returned to Bangalore, they

⁹⁴ William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*, pp. 29-30.

related to Baba the account of their tour, including the meeting with Moti Baba. Upon hearing about it Baba decided to visit him, and His first contact with Moti Baba was established in November 1939. Baba washed his feet, offered him food and sat alone with him for His spiritual work. In those days Moti Baba mostly wandered in the city in the daytime. Sometimes he would be seen enjoying a bundle of *beedies* (*bidis*, country cigarettes). By 1948 he preferred mainly to sit in a room and would be seen shuffling playing cards. When Baba visited him, Moti Baba agreed to Baba's contact without any hesitation, and it was to Baba's satisfaction.

While the Baba party were visiting a few more *masts* in different parts of Madras, one was spotted roaming about the city holding glowing joss sticks (*agarbattis*) in his hand. Another one named Ashaq Mian was quite old. Three years previously he had been seen with a number of dogs around him, but this time he was dogless. "Nevertheless," Baba remarked, "he is one of the good *masts*."

Chatti Baba, One of the "Five Favorites"

From Madras, Meher Baba moved on to the south and stopped at Trichinopoly. There He contacted an old Pathan who used to sleep near a graveyard by the side of the road. He was over eighty but had an exceptionally clear and melodious voice. In all seasons he liked *sharbat*, a sweet drink with flakes of ice. Baba contacted him at night. The place was quite out of the way and it was pitch dark. Vishnu, one of the *mandali* and a new addition to the usual *mast* party, stumbled over something and fell flat on the road, knocking out one of his teeth. It was a long-standing reminder for Vishnu of Baba's visit to that old Pathan! To be with Baba on the *mast* tours was an ordeal of one kind or another.

From Trichinopoly, Baba journeyed towards the end of the Indian Peninsula to visit Tiruvallur, near Negapattam. The visit had a special purpose — to bring about the final contact with Chatti Baba, a most delightful and remarkable *mast* of the sixth plane. He had stayed and traveled with Baba from November 1939 to September 1941.

Chatti means a small earthen pitcher. As this *mast* invariably kept a pitcher with him, he was known as Chatti Baba. He also carried a bundle of rags known as *mutha* in Tamil, so to some he was known as Mutha Baba. He was fondly remembered for his pleasing smile by those of Baba's people who knew him. He had a childlike disposition, and because of his innocence Baba's love flowed out to him freely. He was one of Baba's five favorites, so I will give a brief account of his life with Baba prior to this final contact in August 1948.

On the previously mentioned tour of Kaka and Eruch in 1939, they had also met Chatti Baba. He could then be seen lying happily by the side of a highway near Negapattam. People showed great reverence for him, and as they fell full length before him he would give each a pinch of dust which they applied either to their foreheads or to their hair. At that time the *mast* would smilingly say in a low voice, "*Po, Anna, po*" ("Go, Brother, go"). A *tonga* owner named Sardarsaheb who accompanied Kaka and Eruch on this tour requested in Tamil of Chatti Baba that he accompany them. But the *mast* gently replied, "I have work to do with my children here. I may go with them after a few days."

Chatti Baba's Bath, a Prodigious Performance

The foregoing hint of Chatti Baba was enough for Meher Baba to make the trip from Bangalore to that distant city. After much persuasion, the *mast* was finally won over and got a taxi bound for Baba's residence. From the very

beginning, Baba's relationship with Chatti Baba outwardly consisted of giving him profuse baths. Baba would lovingly soap and rinse the *mast's* body, and then bucket after bucket of water followed and was tossed over his head. Chatti Baba sat on a low wooden platform, chuckling merrily. The number of buckets of water would range from fifty to two hundred, thus each bath was a prodigious performance. Sometimes after the bath he would be found pouring handful after handful of dust over his head, and he wore his hair long! Noticing this strange fancy, Meher Baba instructed one of the *mandali* to put over a dozen buckets of dust from the road into Chatti Baba's room. In contrast to this *mast*, Ali Shah, who was also one of the five favorites, was rarely bathed by Baba. Various were the ways of the God-Man as He played tenderly with the love of these souls, madly in love with God.

It is worth noting that the baths did not affect Chatti Baba's health — he did not catch cold. Later, in Jaipur (Rajasthan) in the bitter cold of January when people preferred having two or three blankets at night in order to sleep well, this memorable *mast* would sit in the yard in open country under the starlit sky and happily murmur, "How cold! How nice!" The bodies of *masts* are strangely marvelous, perhaps governed by supervening laws. As for these baths, it is interesting to note that for a period of one week it was Meher Baba's turn to have baths at the hands of Chatti Baba. And Baba, although not used to having His head bathed every day, complied lovingly with Chatti Baba's wish as the *mast* tossed buckets of water over His body.

After Chatti Baba's initial stay at Bangalore (Mysore), which lasted for over five months (1939-1940), he moved with the Baba party to Ranchi (Bihar) and then to Ceylon for a stay at Kandy. From there he accompanied Meher Baba to Dehra Dun (Uttar Pradesh) and Ajmer (Rajasthan).

In September 1941 when Baba's headquarters was at Panchgani, Chatti Baba expressed an intense desire to return to Negapattam by sneaking away towards Wai, so Baba made the necessary arrangements to get the *mast* back safely and comfortably to the place of his choice.

During Baba's visit to Negapattam in August 1948, the *mandali* found Chatti Baba about twenty kilometers away from the city, nonchalantly lying in a field with his head resting on a bundle of rags. They were seeing the *mast* after six long years, and they noticed that he looked older and not really happy. Was he sorrowing for something? Did he know that it was his final physical contact with the God Man? Baba seemed quite pleased to meet this great soul of the sixth plane again, and He praised highly Chatti Baba's love for God. After this meeting, Chatti Baba dropped his body, to live eternally with Beloved God in perennial union. Meher Baba once stated that those on the sixth plane of consciousness usually realize God at the time they drop their gross bodies.

Two *Yogis* — Ilai Swami and Prasannanand

Meher Baba left Tiruvallur by train for Avanashi, where lived a great *yogi* known as Ilai Swami. Although he was past eighty, he looked quite healthy. He rarely had a bath, and it was said that he drank water very seldom. After having his food, he would wipe his hands along his body, particularly his hair. The nails of his fingers and toes were inches long. It was a surprise that at least he wore a loin cloth. His body was a challenge to the laws of hygiene. In appearance he looked filthy, but his innocent and carefree attitude toward uncleanliness created affection for him. His outer sheath belied his exalted inner state. Baba was so pleased to meet him that after the contact He gave a coconut to each of the *mandali* to celebrate the happy occasion.

Then the Baba group left for Tiruppur to meet Prasanand Swami Guru. He, too, was a *yogi*, but he was also a householder. While offering prayers he would nearly lose gross consciousness. As they asked the way to Swami's residence, the *mandali* met a half-crazy old Brahmin who told them that he knew the way well. Hearing this, Baba gestured that the old man should somehow be accommodated in the *tonga*. A madman leading the God-Man! After they reached the place, it was learned that the *yogi* had commenced a forty-day fast in seclusion. Eruch approached the young disciple of the Swami, explaining that they had come from a far-off place and that his "elder brother" should be allowed to meet Prasanand Swami. The talk at the outset did not seem to produce much hope.

Comic Incidents in Spiritual Work

While Baba and the *mandali* were standing outside Swami's house, they were surrounded by a group of inquisitors. The *mandali* did not know Tamil and most of the people did not know either English or Hindi. While they were somehow conversing, one of the *mandali* noticed that someone had placed a hand on his shoulder and was at the same time trying to take a ten-rupee note from his pocket. He was detected in time, and a few in the crowd suggested that the young man should be handed over to the police. Baba, however, called the youth to Him, gently twisted his ears, and conveyed through gestures that he should not steal. It was a lucky act of pilfering to end in a direct touch of the God-Man and divine exoneration. Baba then gave him the ten-rupee note and told him never to steal again.

While this was happening outside the house, the half-crazy Brahmin sneaked inside to the crypt where Prasanand was staying. The young disciple was with Baba's party. There was no one near the *yogi*, so the Brahmin

scribbled note after note in Tamil and passed them through the door-slit to him. Meher Baba's identity had not been disclosed to anyone, but the old man pleaded vehemently that the visitors might meet the *yogi*. By the time Baba had told the young thief to go away, the Brahmin appeared and announced that he had been successful in convincing Prasannanand to give *darshan* to the visitors. As Baba entered the inner courtyard, the *yogi* came out of his cell and they sat quietly and silently near each other. Thus Baba's object of contacting Prasannanand was fulfilled. The *mast* tours had hardships but their own comic incidents and uncommon events, too.

By the third week of August 1948, the proposed work of that tour came to a close. With the significant and memorable contacts of *masts* and *yogis* in the south fresh in their memories, Baba and the *mandali* returned to Madras to board a train for Ahmednagar. During a short stop in Madras, Baba took some time to meet one of His dear children, a God-intoxicated soul named Ramdas Swami. He had been continuously sitting in the open under a tree for over two decades. At last his penance and austerity were rewarded by the visit of the God-Man. In this way Baba's *mast* tour to the south of India ended, and He reached the headquarters at Ahmednagar by August 18.

Correspondence with Meher Baba, 1948

The Opening of Baba House

FOR about two months from the third week of August 1948 there was no plan to go on a mast tour, so Baba invited the two visitors from the West who were residing at Meherabad, Delia and Jean, for a stay with Him in a bungalow at Ahmednagar. Mehera, Mani, Norina, Elizabeth and a few others were already there. About this time Baba was informed that construction of the Baba House at Meherazad (Pimpalgaon-Malvi) was completed. Someone suggested having the housewarming function hosted by Baba Himself. He agreed, so on August 27, 1948, the women disciples and devotees from Meherabad and Ahmednagar, and a few from Bombay and Poona, were especially called for this occasion. It was a very happy get-together in Baba's love. By morning all had assembled at the Rest House at Meherazad — Baba House was built at its rear side.

The winter morning warmth was quite pleasing, and the wind wafted the fragrance of flowers in bloom from a little garden supervised by Kaka Baria. (Later the gardening work was directed by Mehera.) Baba used to call it "The Garden of Allah." Baba walked with ease and grace through the garden, and as He reached Baba House, a silver key was handed to Him. He looked pleased and unlocked and opened the door. Baba was led to a beautiful

couch inside the house where Gulmai, mother of Adi Sr., garlanded Him, and a chorus *arti* in Gujarati was sung. Coincidentally, according to the Hindu calendar it was Gokul Ashtami Day — the birthday of Lord Krishna. Was it symbolic, to indicate that Baba House was to be the Brindavan of this age?

As wished by Baba, Kaka Baria had prepared a short speech befitting the occasion, but none of the men *mandali* was allowed inside the houses or the garden. In those days the men disciples of Meher Baba were not allowed even to look at the women *mandali* who permanently resided with Him, particularly Mehera and Mani, so Kaka's speech was relayed from the men's quarters. Kaka wished that all should love and obey Baba wholeheartedly in all matters, big and small. At 11:00 A.M. the women who had assembled perched on the lawn for lunch, which was served on big banana leaves. The Westerners, also, ate in Indian fashion. It was a lovely sight. Baba's regal and upright figure, clad in a white *sadhra*, moved through the rows. He would ask one if she liked the lunch; to another He would gesture to do full justice to the special dish. It was a simple way of conveying His intimacy. By afternoon everyone returned to Ahmednagar. The day was indeed memorable for those who participated in this function.

In 1949, as wished by Baba, the entire property known as Meherazad was transferred to the name of Nariman Dadachanji, one of the intimate *mandali*. Baba presented to him and his dear wife Arnavaz the silver lock and key of Baba House. The blessed couple always regarded these things as a souvenir of love from this hallowed dwelling.

Nariman, the Owner of Meherazad

It was Nariman's wish from the beginning to maintain Meherazad as an ideal place for Meher Baba's quiet

spiritual work, and he did this to Baba's entire satisfaction. Baba often conveyed to the resident *mandali*, "The united love of Nariman and Arnavaz for me is matchless." In January 1969 Meher Baba dropped His physical body to live in the hearts of His lovers. This was a vital incentive for His devotees spread over the world to visit Meherazad, and this quiet residence began to buzz with Baba boys and girls from different nations in the East and West. In view of this changed situation, Nariman renovated the old building and erected a few new constructions. Nariman's love for beloved Baba helped him keep up the beautiful atmosphere of Baba's residence.

What made Nariman do all this so unselfishly? It was his acceptance of Baba as the God-Man in a simple and natural way, as the sunflower accepts the sun. He once remarked, "I met Him, fell in love with Him, and I followed Him." This happened when he was quite young, an incident as far back as 1928. After finishing his school's final examination at Karachi (Sind), Nariman visited Bombay to meet his family in Rustom Bagh at Byculla. Because of Nariman and Arnavaz's uncle, Chanji (Meher Baba's secretary, Framroze H. Dadachanji), all members of the family had been drawn into close contact with Baba. During Baba's visit to Bombay in 1928, Nariman had the blessed fortune to meet and stay with Him for about two weeks. From the beginning, Chanji showed great love for and interest in his nephew Nariman, who in return had great love and reverence for Uncle Chanji.

Nariman secured a First Class in the school examination, and he retained the honors until the end of his college career. In 1931, when beloved Meher Baba was at Karachi in the Clifton Beach area, Nariman had another opportunity for a fortnight's stay with Him. In a way this was a quiet, close *sahavas* — a silent participation in any work whenever possible. Nariman never had any questions to ask

Baba about spirituality. He was blessed with the gift of faith, and he only wished to serve Baba as much as he could. In college he was regarded as one of the brightest students. During his stay at Benares, he was once captain of the university cricket team. He played tennis well and was equally good at chess. These interests helped him to be good company for Meher Baba in many ways at different periods. He was the top First Class in B.Sc. and also M. Sc., so he was awarded two scholarships to continue his education abroad. He had to make a choice and decide whether to enter a university in the United States or the United Kingdom. Finally he selected Manchester and sailed for England in 1937.

In the same year, 1937, Meher Baba stayed at Cannes on the French Riviera for about five months. Baba cabled Nariman to come to Cannes for a stay of two weeks. Baba was slowly revealing to him the different aspects of His work. In due course Nariman finished his education in England and obtained a M. Sc. in Technology. He also earned a merit scholarship that entitled him to study in Germany for the next two years. He wrote to Arnavaz — his intended partner in life — about his plan to go to Germany. It was May 1939, and Baba's headquarters was at Jabalpur (Madhya Pradesh). When Arnavaz was reading Nariman's letter, Baba unexpectedly came in, looked over her shoulder and asked her the contents. Upon hearing it, He asked her to convey to Nariman the following instructions: "Don't proceed to Germany. Return to India immediately."

Nariman had in mind starting a good business in colors and chemicals in Bombay. He had been counting on gaining some practical experience and guidance in this matter during his stay in Germany. When he received the letter from Arnavaz, at the outset he felt a bit hesitant, for he would have to forego the scholarship if he canceled his

visit, but the next moment his love for Baba made him change his plans. He contacted a shipping company to book passage for India, but he was informed that he would have to wait about six months. It was difficult for him to while away such a long period, but he was helpless. Then suddenly World War II broke out, on September 3, 1939, and what a coincidence — within a fortnight he got a letter from the shipping company stating that a berth was available and would he like to sail for India? Nariman jumped at this Baba-sent opportunity and reached Bombay. Had he visited Germany as planned, it would have been impossible for him to leave until the end of the war in 1945.

After his return to India, Nariman did become a businessman. At the same time, his visits to Baba became frequent. By the time Chanji dropped the body, Nariman Dadachanji had become one of the active *mandali* members. In a sense, the nephew succeeded the uncle. Nariman and Arnavaz were married in Baba's presence in December 1944. Their flat "Ashiana" at Breach Candy, Bombay, became Baba's stopping place and resting place while passing through the great city either for *mast* work or His visits abroad. Sometimes He especially visited Nariman's home and stayed for some days. Ashiana was also a beacon for Westerners visiting India to meet Meher Baba. In later years Nariman retired from business but was all the more active with Baba work, staying for prolonged periods at Meherazad, the residence of Avatar Meher Baba.⁹⁵

Hafiz, Meher Baba's Favorite Poet

At the beginning of September 1948, Baba and a small group of *mandali* left Ahmednagar for a stay at Meherazad. Baba expressed His intention to make this place His permanent

⁹⁵ Nariman dropped the body on July 2, 1974.

residence for all the years to come. Formerly during His short stays at Meherazad, for a night's rest and work He either went to Ratan Gyara's house in a nearby field or occupied one of the rooms near the quarters of the men *mandali*. But now every night at Baba House He began going upstairs — there are two big rooms there and a spacious gallery facing north. Baba usually occupied the room at the west end, and in the adjacent room, as per Baba's instructions, one of the men *mandali* invariably kept awake and attended to Him whenever He clapped. Even after the second auto accident in December 1956, Baba preferred to be carried in a sedan chair to the second floor of Baba House. From then on, the night watch was allowed to be in His room. After a decade or so, Baba agreed to repeated requests made by His personal physicians, Dr. Donkin and Dr. Goher, and in 1959 He consented to stay in the room on the ground floor, now known as Baba's bedroom or resting room. It was in this room that He finally dropped the form He had donned for this Advent. The upper two rooms of Baba House have some memorable and interesting incidents connected with them which will be related in due course. In September, Mehera and Mani, Meheru and Goher resided in Baba House, while Norina, Elizabeth, Jean and Delia stayed in the Rest House, now known as the Cottage. In the evening Baba generally called them all into the sitting room. Sometimes He wished to hear humorous stories or jokes. Some selected books, generally not of a serious type, were read aloud to Him. Once, however, He asked Delia to read *The Hound of Heaven*. In a lighter vein, Baba remarked later, "If I can stand Delia's reading, I can stand anything!"

On some occasions, whether He was with the men or women *mandali*, Baba would ask someone to read the odes of Hafiz, translated into English. Sometimes Dr. Ghani read aloud to Him the original lines in Persian. Hafiz was Baba's

favorite poet. In His boyhood Baba had heard His father repeating in his melodious voice the couplets of Hafiz. He listened to the lines so attentively that He could repeat some of them word for word. From the very beginning Baba felt greatly drawn to Hafiz because of his skill in using choice words and the meaning conveyed through them. Hafiz (his first name was Shamsuddin) came from Shiraz in Iran, and as he had learned the Holy Koran by heart, he was known as Hafiz Shirazi. Baba told us that he was not only a perfect poet but also a Perfect Master. The book in which his couplets are compiled is known as the *Divan-i-Hafiz*. Some regard him as the greatest lyrical poet, but in his *ghazals* he has symbolically and allegorically described the experiences pertaining to the different planes of consciousness.

Hafiz (1320-1388) was the son of a coal merchant. During His stay in Guruprasad, Poona, in the summer of 1963, Baba conveyed the following information about Hafiz to His devotees. Hafiz's favorite occupation was to hear and read the life stories of the saints and Masters, but in his twenties he fell in love with a beautiful girl from a wealthy family. Hafiz had an ugly countenance and there was little possibility of winning her love, so he practiced a certain penance for forty days to evoke the blessings of God. At the end of the stipulated period, it is said that the Archangel Gabriel appeared before him. He told Hafiz to ask for any boon. Hafiz, overpowered with the beauty and elegance of the Archangel, forgot to ask for the hand of the girl in marriage. Instead he thought, "If Gabriel is so beautiful, how much more beautiful and gracious must God be!" So, unawares, he asked for the bestowal of God-realization. No angel can grant this favor, hence Gabriel directed Hafiz to Attar, a Perfect Master. Hafiz wholeheartedly served him for forty years, and at last by the grace of the Master he became God-realized.

Baba always rejoiced heartily while listening to the couplets of Hafiz; and occasionally He would explain a line or two to divulge the depth of meaning contained in the couplet. He loved Hafiz dearly. A day prior to the dropping of His body, Baba expressed His wish that the drawing paper on which three couplets of Hafiz were written in Persian, along with the English translation, be brought from the sitting room of the men *mandali* to His room in Baba House. Today we find this paper framed and displayed on one of the walls in Baba's bedroom at Meherazad. Baba often expressed through gestures, "Hafiz as a poet is unique, matchless." And with a slight change we might say, "Meher Baba's fondness for Hafiz was matchless! "

The Inception and the Termination of the Sufi Circle

In the latter part of 1948, the men *mandali* who resided mainly at Meherazad were Kaka Baria, Gustadji, Baidul, Dr. Nilu, Vishnu, Jal (Baba's brother) and Dr. Ghani. Those staying at Ahmednagar and Meherabad would visit Baba regarding work. At this time Baba had already commenced dictating *God Speaks* on the alphabet board to Dr. Ghani, who was one of His close disciples and well-versed in Sufi literature. During this period, one of the main events was the inception of the Sufi Circle in India. It was founded on September 8, 1948, under the patronage of Meher Baba. Adi K. Irani was nominated as the secretary-general. Dr. Ghani and a few Baba devotees from Poona were permitted to establish the head office of the Sufi Circle for India at Poona. A young postgraduate teacher was the vice-president. Within a short time, reports reached Baba that the members of the Sufi Circle at Poona were not zealous enough in propagating the Sufi work. Baba always expected wholehearted dedication in any work connected with Him

and not haphazard loyalty. The *mandali*, also, felt that work under Baba's patronage should not be carried out with half-hearted allegiance. Baba seemed displeased with this matter.

Of the God-Man it is said, "He is interested in everything but not concerned about anything. The slightest mishap may command his sympathy; the greatest tragedy will not upset him."⁹⁶ In the case of the Sufi Circle, a few ordinary incidents, if I may say so, apparently annoyed Baba, the God-Man. I will outline only one such event. Baba had instructed one of the office holders at Poona, a teacher, to dedicate all his spare time after school to the work of the Sufi Circle. The teacher was privately coaching some pupils at home in school subjects, and he had a good income. To obey Baba literally, he had to forego these extra earnings, so for some days he was a bit hesitant over this point. Generally Baba would not ask anyone to work for Him. But if someone expressed readiness and offered to serve in His cause, He would not tolerate fragmentary obedience. The person concerned failed to understand that following Baba, the Compassionate One, might entail a bit of daring but never any loss. Sometimes it had even proved profitable materially. In connection with this I wish to mention a contemporary incident.

Baba had entrusted some work of translation to one of my friends, who also was a teacher. He, too, was asked to discontinue private tutoring, which he did immediately. After some months, he was unexpectedly selected by the managing committee of the school as the Headmaster. It might be chance, but it is a fact, and thus the material loss was amply compensated. At any rate, the Poona Baba devotee's response to Baba's instruction was not total. Besides, it was brought to Baba's notice that there were some

⁹⁶ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 3:15.

"creaks and cracks" in the constitution of the Sufi Circle. Being engaged in some important work, Baba had no time to spare for these matters, so with Baba's permission the founding members of the Sufi Circle in India called a meeting on October 19, 1948. After free discussion, four resolutions were passed. The first was: "Resolved unanimously that the Sufi Circle be and is hereby dissolved." It functioned only about forty days.

It is really difficult to fathom the meaning of the activities of the Master. One sees so many stars in the sky, and unwittingly how easily one miscalculates the distance and the quality of the radiation of light. So in a sense, having seen the stars, one has not seen them. Is not the same folly committed while witnessing and judging the doings of the God-Man? To us He is infinitely close and also infinitely remote, hence sometimes we may be right and at times utterly wrong. Nonetheless, I have tried to present the outward aspects of an incident connected with the Sufi Circle. It may not necessarily have any cause-effect relationship. At the final meeting it was also made clear that anyone who felt deeply interested in Sufism would be permitted by Baba to work as a free-lance Sufi. Adi Sr. and Dr. Ghani wrote the necessary letters to persons concerned in the West.

Later during His visit to the United States in 1952, Meher Baba reoriented the Sufi Way in the West, and now Sufism Reoriented extends the hand of help to those who are interested in that Path. All Ways are His ways. *Sanskritic* inclinations and one's capabilities direct and determine the path one has to tread. The God-Man, whenever He comes amongst us, revitalizes all the Paths according to the needs of the time. He belongs to all and is also above all. He is not only with us, but *one* with each one of us. No Path is superior or inferior. If ever He likes any "Way," it is not a condemnation of another Way. In February 1964 Baba

sent the following short, meaningful message to Sufism Re-oriented:

All Paths are mine,
And all lead eventually to me.
But the shortest Way to me
Is the No-Path of self-annihilative Love.

Consider the World as a Toy

In the months of September and October Meher Baba did not go on any *mast* tours. Almost every day He took time to attend to correspondence. During this period, as was His method after hearing letters or the contents of letters, He generally conveyed a sentence or two on the alphabet board or through familiar gestures by way of directing the replies. One of the *mandali* — Vishnu, Ramjoo, Dr. Ghani or Adi Sr. — would then answer accordingly. Some important replies were read to Baba before they were posted. The few words from the Master conveyed through these letters have lighted lamps of understanding in the hearts of despairing souls. His short and simple messages poured in upon His followers a love that brought to them a new vision of life. Baba seemed to enjoy hearing the letters from His dear ones and liked replying to them, though occasionally He seemed to grow weary of it. Of this correspondence, particularly from India, Adi Sr. had the lion's share, hence I will present some replies sent through him. They represent different types of communication with Baba.

Some months earlier Baba had given His consent to a youth who wanted to visit Iran and settle into a business. He was the son of one of Baba's disciples. The climate of Iran, however, did not suit him. He fell sick and the rosy prospects of the business did not materialize. He informed Baba about this state of affairs and Baba replied, "Don't

lose heart; find good medical treatment. Get well and return to India." At the end of the letter Baba added the following lines of cheer:

Now listen my boy
It's good to be full of joy.
Consider the world as a toy
Stick to Baba as a gloy (glue).

Soon this young man returned to India from Iran, hale and hearty, and joined the Indian military service, from which he eventually retired as a commissioned officer.

Longing for Baba's Sahavas and Guidance

During Baba's earlier visits to Nagpur, a schoolboy who had been blessed by His glance developed a great love for Him. Often he would be seen thinking about Baba, whether at school or at home, with tears of love which seemed uncontrollable trickling down his cheeks. In the beginning the boy was permitted to stay near Baba for a few days, and he wished to live permanently with the *mandali*. Baba, however, asked him to complete his education. Later on he accepted employment in one of the government offices. The boy, now a grown man, was always longing to leave his job to be in the company of Baba, and the life of a householder held no charm for him. In August 1948 he wrote to Baba: "Will you kindly grant me the privilege of staying with you for a few days? ... If I fail to hear from you within a reasonable time, I shall be a victim of constant restlessness which may disturb the tranquil state of my mind."

After two days, he wrote again, "Unless and until I hear from you a definite time when I shall have your *sahavas*, it will be difficult for me to check myself and so the state of

restlessness which I experience may result in madness. I know not what I will do then. Perhaps I may leave my family and go wherever I like ... Adi K. Irani in that case will be nominated to claim the provident fund." After Baba's return from a *mast* tour He heard the contents of the above letters, or rather the notices served upon Him! Since He was very busy, Baba had no time to grant the request of this devotee, so Adi Sr. replied: "Baba appreciates your feelings and sends you His love and blessings." These few words of consolation pacified the tormented heart of the lover, and he continued to serve in his office with a more balanced mind. In his intense longing he had composed some songs on Baba's divinity in Hindi and Marathi. These are now sung in Baba meetings.

To another Baba lover whose family problems were critical, Adi Sr. wrote: "Baba says, 'However much the circumstances be oppressive or depressive, you should learn to take them easily. I am with you.'" Baba's remembrance and blessings offered him timely help, and after a successful career in the police department, he retired as a deputy superintendent. To one of the devotees who felt confused over a problem, Baba dictated just a sentence: "Act as you think best." And even before the letter reached that person, Baba's inner help was on the way to guide the conscience of His devotee.

Yearning for Real Darshan

A Baba devotee named Vaidyanath lived in Bombay. He used to read the Bhagavad Gita (The Lord's Song) daily. One day after the regular reading, he commenced his usual meditation. After some time, he saw amidst great splendor various grades of beings. They had on strange, shining ornaments and held queer weapons. The "long-armed, vast-bosomed and tremendous-toothed" figures frightened him, but some forms were very handsome and graceful.

In his letter to Baba the devotee likened this experience, though very remotely, to the visions of the Universal Body as explained in the eleventh chapter of the Gita. Vaidyanath had not personally seen Baba, but he felt that the above vision was vouchsafed to him through His grace. He wrote a letter of gratitude, also expressing his earnest desire to have Baba's *darshan*. Baba looked pleased as He heard the contents of the letter. The devotee, however, was asked to wait for an opportune moment to meet Baba in person. Some people met Baba and craved for visions, and here was one who had a profound Baba vision and was longing for His *darshan*!

Joseph, a Christian youth, also lived in Bombay. He was a regular reader of the Holy Bible. Over a year earlier when he met Baba, he was blessed by an interview with Him. Baba explained to him the way he should live and lead his life. It seems that from that very first meeting, Joseph accepted Baba as the Father. In one of his letters to Him in 1948 he wrote: "I am very happy because I look at the world in the way I have been taught by my Father. I read the Holy Bible every day. Now I am learning anew the meaning contained in it. I wish to have your *darshan*, but if you command that it won't be possible soon, I will have nothing to say about it." Baba appreciated Joseph's suppliant understanding and conveyed to him His fond love. Since Baba has dropped the body, the same kind of "Baba willing" understanding can be seen in some of the visitors from the West — young boys and girls who with great love visit India to pay their homage at Baba's tomb. And to me, Joseph seems to be the forerunner of this band.

A devotee named Chavan resided at Karad in the district of Satara. He was deeply impressed when he met Baba. At the time of *darshan*, Baba casually conveyed that seeing Baba in person was not His "real *darshan*" — it was something quite different. After returning to his hometown, Chavan thought seriously about Baba's statement. Feeling

very restless, he wrote to Baba that he wished to fast unto death for Baba's real *darshan*. Baba sent him a telegram: "I know your love and longing, but don't fast without my permission." Finding him very sensitive and earnest regarding the subject, Baba called him to Ahmednagar for an interview. He asked Chavan to follow certain instructions. He was also told to visit the important holy places in North India and also to pay homage to any saints and sages whom he might meet. The pilgrimage and contacts with holy persons helped Chavan to understand the profundity of Baba's real *darshan*. It was not a question of having a deep yearning or fasting unto death, he learned. Such an experience, as any other deep experience, is an act of grace of God or of the Perfect Master. Baba had such winsome ways of bringing home the lesson which He wanted one to learn.

The World, a Wondrous Prison

One day a letter was received from a prisoner who had been sentenced to a life term. As this young man was not permitted to leave the prison grounds even on parole, he begged Baba to visit the prison. He was feeling very nervous and very excited over trifling matters. To get over this mental weakness and agony, the only remedy, he thought, was to have Baba's *darshan*. To Baba, it made no difference whether He visited a prison or a palace. He once conveyed that the whole world is a wondrous prison and that all those who live in it are spell-bound prisoners. In this sense, are not all of us the captives of *Maya*? We free ourselves from certain environments which we call "bad" to get bound in fresh enclosures which we term "good." We do not know the art of total living. Meher Baba stated, "Instead of meeting life and all that it brings without expectation, entanglement and shirking, the mind creates a standard whereby

it divides life into opposites, one of which is regarded as acceptable and the other as not acceptable."⁹⁷ The breaking of life into compartments is an impediment to honest inquiry about Life, the one indivisible whole.

In those days (1948) Meher Baba was engaged in special spiritual work and was not in a mood to grant *darshan* or make visits for *darshan* programs, so He sent a short but suggestive message to this imprisoned sorrowing soul. He dictated the following lines on the alphabet board:

I love saints as much as I love sinners; I love you. It is never too late or too early to love God. Think as much as you can about me [Baba], And as little as possible about yourself.

The message provided great solace and help to the young man. After some years, Baba took time to visit that prison. The government authorities gave Baba a warm welcome. The main gate and the visiting room were decorated with bunting, and it seemed a festive occasion for the prisoners. Perhaps this visit was an excuse for Baba to contact "the despised ones." Thus the prisoners had a rare chance to be in the company of the real free man, who recurrently gets himself bound to free man from this incredible prison, the world. At present, the above-mentioned Baba lover is a free citizen and a changed man with one-pointed devotion for Baba, the Compassionate Father.

Responsibilities Must Be Adequately Shouldered

Baba lovers from different places in India used to write to Baba for His guidance and blessings. Time permitting, the

⁹⁷ Meher Baba, *Discourses*, 1: 92-93.

necessary replies were sent based on Baba's personal instruction. One of His devotees named Bhargav found it hard to conduct joint-family life. He had in mind leading a secluded life in some far-off place. He approached Baba through a letter to ask the way out. Adi Sr. wrote in reply: "Baba tells you that in the world of miseries and sorrows, whatever duties you may be doing you should stick to, and stand by those who are near and dear to you and depend on you. You should follow your avocations but should not worry over the results. You must perform the worldly duties but dedicate the results — good or bad — to the divine Will. You should not be swayed by happiness or sorrow in contemplating constantly on the transitoriness of things. In the continuous remembrance of God you should try to develop a detached outlook on life. Repeat throughout the waking state any one name of God that you love." Some were given the choice of repeating the name of God they loved, while Baba specifically asked some to repeat *His* name. To Him, however, this made no difference. Literally, advice from the Master may not differ much from that of a scholar, but the former, being alive with love and wisdom, carries a special power and perfume to the receiver, who feels strengthened and refreshed.

In another case, Baba had allowed one of His devotees from the south to stay for a short period in the *ashram* at Meherabad. After his return, he resumed his duties, but it was learned from a letter sent by his wife that he was not discharging his family duties very well. He had seen Baba's work with the poor, but he had caught the wrong notion. After receiving his pay, he began distributing it to the poor and neglecting his family. He forgot Baba's words: "Don't imitate me. Obey me." His wife complained to Baba about her husband's attitude. Adi Sr. wrote to him the following: "Your frequent roamings with beggars (and *sadhus*), disregarding

your duties to your wife and family, and spending money on them whom you call 'Baba,' thereby causing hardships at home, is the last thing I could expect of you who call yourself a Baba devotee. Do you mean to say that whomsoever you call 'Baba' you really have the experience of seeing as Baba? Or do you really mean that you intelligently try to look upon everyone as Baba and strive to have the experience of Baba living in every heart? If the latter is what you are attempting, you should know that Baba exists in the hearts of all and not particularly in a certain beggar to whom you choose to give at cost to your wife and children. Can you not see that Baba is also in the hearts of your family? Besides, you are bound to them by the ties of matrimony, the responsibilities of which you have to bear. With best wishes and Baba's blessings to you and yours."

In addition to these words of advice, Baba made arrangements to send him every month some monetary help as *prasad*, but in his wife's name. Being the Compassionate Father, Baba guides and helps, and waits until one behaves oneself.

The Three Types

In those days a few devotees printed pamphlets containing Meher Baba's words of wisdom and distributed them among the people. One such pamphlet contained Baba's laconic explanation about the three types of disciples, seekers, *yogis* and resigners:

- I. Three Types of Disciples:
 - 1) Those who give and never ask.
 - 2) Those who give and also ask.
 - 3) Those who do not give but ask.

II. Three Types of Seekers:

- 1) The inspired ones.
- 2) The inspired ones who are intellectual.
- 3) The intellectual ones.

III. Three Types of Yogis:

- 1) Those who long for the Goal and shun powers.
- 2) Those who long for the Goal and also for powers.
- 3) Those who do *yogic* exercises merely for powers.

IV. Three Types of Resigners:

- 1) Those who are so completely resigned to the Will of the Master that even the question of how, why, or when never enters their minds.
- 2) Those who do what the Master asks, sacrificing everything and not asking for reward, but doing it under the compulsion of surrender to the Master's will.
- 3) Those who do what the Master asks at all cost, but expect reward.⁹⁸

One of the Baba people named Babadas distributed copies of this pamphlet in Nagpur. All those who sincerely read it naturally tried to find out the category to which they belonged. One of the elite of the city, who had been fortunate enough to welcome Baba at his house in November 1944, incidentally received this pamphlet. The message set him to thinking rather seriously and he wrote to Baba, "May I know what category I belong to, and to improve myself, what steps should I take or adopt? I want your guidance in this matter." He also wanted to know if the pamphlet was given to him especially at Baba's instruction, which it was not. It was meant for general circulation. Baba did send him His love and blessings, and under Baba's

⁹⁸ Meher Baba made some alterations and additions to this informal discourse, and later it was included in *The Everything and the Nothing* (p. 16), first published in Australia.

general instructions, Adi Sr. wrote to him: "To be conscious of what we lack is good. To become conscious of what we can become is better. To dwell constantly upon the spiritual Goal is best. But to have wholehearted devotion for the Master is love *par excellence* ... [Then] all the knots of commission and omission are undone and the gush of His blessings at the appointed time floods the being with the never-lost love of God." This pamphlet thus helped some to have a new understanding and was instrumental in sending Baba's indelible blessings to one of His devotees in Nagpur.

"How Many Such Daughters Do You Want?"

Here is another incident connected with a Baba pamphlet, though the printed matter was not a message from Baba but was a poem on Baba by one of His lovers from Nagpur. The poet, Sulay, first had Baba's *darshan* in 1944 at the branch of the Theosophical Society in Nagpur. During Baba's visit, His special message "The Dynamics of Love" was read to the gathering. As he heard it, Sulay felt that in the form of Meher Baba he was beholding Love personified. He looked at Baba, and there stretched an eternity between them. At this meeting, everything he had planned to say to Baba vanished from his mind except one personal sorrow. Sulay had had a daughter about six years old who was extremely dear to him, but she had suddenly passed away. In his first interview he told Baba about the sad and untimely death of his daughter. Baba sympathized with him but casually put a question to him: "How many such daughters do you want?" Sulay felt confused over the question and kept quiet. Baba switched to another subject, and the interview was over.

Some months later Sulay took a position in a school for

small children (kindergarten) run by a foreign mission. His duty was to teach fundamental lessons in Hindi. The children were mostly from well-to-do families. In their company, he nearly forgot the sorrow caused by the demise of his little one. One day while he was teaching the lesson, he noticed that the faces of the girls in the class remarkably resembled the countenance of his darling daughter — only the dresses marked a difference. This experience continued for some days as he taught. Eventually he realized that this was in fulfillment of the question that Baba had put to him. This little incident sowed deep in him the seeds of conviction of Baba's divinity, and he wanted to lead a life dedicated to Baba and His cause.

Later on Sulay had an urge to visit Pandharpur, one of the famous places of pilgrimage in Maharashtra. He commenced this long journey of over a thousand kilometers in his bare feet. During the course of his walk, a certain dream was repeated several times — in it he saw a well by a road and one small hill on the other side. The route of his pilgrimage took him to Ahmednagar, and as he reached this city, he decided to visit Meherabad, for he had not seen it before. When he approached the *ashram*, he at once recognized that the well and the hill were identical with those he had seen in his dream. It was thus symbolically revealed to him that the real place of pilgrimage was none other than Meherabad. He was overjoyed to learn that Baba was there, but He was to go into seclusion the next day. Sulay was permitted to meet Him. In an informal audience, Baba conveyed to him: "As you have come to Meherabad there is no need for you to go to Pandharpur or any other place of pilgrimage." After Baba dropped the body, the tomb on Meherabad Hill has become a sanctuary for pilgrims from all over the world, for the form of the holiest of the holy of this age is laid to rest there.

Meher Baba, the Absolute God

Sulay very gladly accepted Baba's instruction and decided not to proceed to Pandharpur. Some experiences that he had during the journey, including the recurring dream, were instrumental in the flowering of the seed of conviction in his heart — that Meher Baba is the only one to worship and to whom to pray. On the way back to Nagpur, he stopped at Nasik for some days. During his stay he had occasion to meet Ramjoo, one of Baba's closest *mandali*. He heard from Ramjoo some Baba anecdotes — a few full of fun, a few fiery, a few very interesting, and a few incidents which had been quite trying. This contact helped him to love Baba more and more. He also developed high regard for Ramjoo and treated him as a close friend. Sulay composed some fine poems in Marathi on Meher Baba, the God-Man. In 1948 he tried to offer his prayers to Baba through the following stanzas in English:

Prayer to the Absolute God, Meher Baba
 Thou who art Absolute, supreme, sublime,
 Master of destiny beyond space and time.
 Light of the Universe, life's central Sun,
 Incomprehensible, all things in One.
 Light Thou my pathway and teach me to know,
 That Thou art the source from which all things flow.
 That whatever exists whether good or ill,
 Proceeds from the law of Thy infinite will.
 And sooner or later must return to Thee,
 Death-purged in the waves of Eternity's sea.
 Endow me with love, in faith make me strong,
 And instead of a dirge, let my life be a song.
 Till Thy Spirit divine in the innermost soul,
 Flames like the torch and illumines the whole.
 Thenceforth from earth-life to be free in its flight,
 To the effulgent radiance of supernal Light.

He sent a typed copy of these verses to Ramjoo, who suggested a slight change, not in the poem but in its title: "Prayer to the Absolute God *in* Meher Baba." Sulay thought that Baba, as the God-Man, is Absolute God Himself, so he did not feel like complying with the suggestion. He wrote to Ramjoo, "When I was at Nagpur, do you remember that I put a question to you, 'Where is Meher Baba?' You replied, '*Jahan ke wahan,*' meaning, 'He is where He ever was.' You also quoted a couplet which conveyed that He (Baba) was, is and will be the same One. Do not these references made by you then mean that Meher Baba is the Absolute God? . . . Will you please excuse me for my inability to change the title? Thanking you ..." I do not know much about poetry, but I was acquainted with Ramjoo and Sulay, both of whom were strong characters, very frank and loving, but they would rarely compromise on the views they held. I have used this example to show that in spite of differences of opinion in expressing feelings about Baba — who in fact is beyond any expression — cooperation and friendship in His cause should remain unaffected, as it was between Ramjoo and Sulay.

In September 1948 the above poem and its Marathi version were sent to Baba. Baba asked one of His educated, Marathi-speaking devotees to read both poems. After listening to them, Baba didn't say anything about the title, but He granted Sulay's request for permission to print the stanzas for general distribution to the public, including Baba people. Baba generally allowed His lovers to express their devotion to Him in their own ways, provided they were sincere and honest in what they said and did. Perhaps this is the best way to make one learn anew what he should. Is not honesty in expression the keynote in spiritual life? Honesty in its finer quality affirms without the intrusion of any sense of achievement and leads one to God, the Absolute.

To the Girnar Hills in Gujarat, 1948

God to Man and Man to God

THERE were no mast tours in October 1948, though by the beginning of November plans were being made to visit Gujarat. Delia and Jean were to leave for the West by the end of October. Delia writes in her notes, "When the . . . day of our departure arrived, Baba said we were not even to shed a tear, as we would be seeing Him again whatever happened. So Jean and I left after a three months' stay, happy with Baba's promise and ready to do the tasks allotted to us. Having gained an added insight into Baba's working and his technique of changing plans, building and destroying [the 'scaffolding'] when the work is finished, we returned to the West, strengthened and recharged with Baba's unfailing love."⁹⁹ Delia was asked by Baba to establish a Center in Great Britain with the help of the Baba group in England. "It was to be run in conjunction with the parent league in America."¹⁰⁰ On November 27 such an institution was established and the following persons were office holders: Purdom, Chairman; Delia DeLeon, ViceChairman; William Backett, Secretary and Treasurer.

This was the period when Baba kept the *mandali* at

⁹⁹ Kitty Davy, "Recollections," *The Awakener*, vol. 6, no. 2, Summer 1959, p. 32.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

Meherazad and Meherabad busy participating in His work of "activity" and "inactivity." The external life of intense activities and the quiet stays of immense inactivity are the two aspects of the indivisible, awake-life of the God-Man, ever at work — giving as God and living as man. Those who stayed near Him were trained to lead a life as wished by Him. We find a passing reference to this phase in one of Baba's messages, sent about this time to one of His dear ones in the United States. Baba stated, "God is very *natural*, I would say very *human*, and one who finds God as He really is, becomes as natural as God Himself. To achieve that: (1) Amongst the complete activity shall always be a period of complete inactivity. (2) One must reach a state beyond desire; when one does not want anything, he has everything."¹⁰¹

Meher Baba's *Discourses*, volumes 1 to 5, were already printed and published in India. On October 25 a meeting was held to discuss the subject of reprinting them in the West. Purdom was asked to edit the *Discourses*. He was allowed to make linguistic changes in order to make the original *Discourses* more readable to Westerners, without excluding the stories, similies and examples. He was to write an introduction to this edition. Norina, Elizabeth, Dr. Deshmukh, Dr. Ghani, Adi Sr. and Ramjoo freely discussed this matter in the presence of Baba. It was during this meeting that Meher Baba suggested a new title for all of the discourses, which were to be compiled in one book — *God to Man and Man to God*.

The book was published by Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, in 1955. Meher Baba's discourses will ever be of great help to sincere seekers of Truth. Purdom at the close of the introduction wrote, "These discourses cover a wide field, but they begin and end with the reader himself . . .

¹⁰¹ Kitty Davy, "Recollections," pp. 32-33.

This therefore is not a book for those who do not want to be disturbed and who propose to go on living as they have always done . . . Baba invites those who listen to him to do the impossible because only the impossible has divine meaning ... He invites us to be different, looking at each other with different eyes, taking up our work each day with a different impetus and vision from what we have hitherto known, so that we can say as once was said in the world, 'The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.' Baba's awakening power is to enable us to experience that our true human being is divine."¹⁰²

Baba's discourses provide an opportunity to readers to gain much through a clarity that is so essential in this enigmatic world. An understanding of Baba's articles develops the ability to take things as they are, in their natural course, with ease and a sense of humor, too. One thus begins to understand one's part in this grand Game of God.

Besides the content of the edited discourses, the very title of the book holds profound significance. Some years ago during a stay in Poona in the company of a friend, I happened to visit coincidentally a saintly person. I found him sitting calmly and devotedly before a life-size picture of his Master. I was introduced to him as one of the Baba people. He asked me incidentally to relate to him, in a nutshell, Baba's philosophy. I quoted Baba's words: "A simple thing made difficult is philosophy!" As he heard this, he laughed heartily. I added, "Sir, what you ask me to state is beyond me. I, however, feel that the title of one of His books represents the crux of philosophy, the way of Life." "What's that?" he inquired eagerly. I replied, "*God to Man and Man to God*." "Marvelous! How true!" he exclaimed. Baba, with simplicity, always maintained the profundity of spiritual Truth.

¹⁰² C.B. Purdom, *God to Man and Man to God*, p. 13.

Infants Are the Epitomes of Purity

In the last week of October 1948, Baba consented to bless a function connected with the opening of Babawadi. The word *Baba* in the vernacular means a father, as well as a baby. *Babawadi* means a school for "babes," or children. One of the founders of this institution was Goma Ganesh, a postgraduate and a Baba devotee. He had met Baba first in July 1925, a few days prior to the commencement of Baba's silence. He had not conversed with Baba but had heard Him speaking with Arjun, one of the intimate *mandali*. He was especially intent on listening because he knew that Baba was to begin observing silence soon. He recalls that Baba's voice was exceptionally mellow and deep-toned. This early period of contact with Baba inspired him to write in Marathi a small booklet named *Satsamagam*. It was a short biographical brochure on Baba and was published on Baba's birthday in 1926. Goma Ganesh served as a teacher for some months in the school at Meherabad. He composed some stanzas in Marathi in praise of Baba, and they were recited by the boys in Meher Ashram. Perhaps this love for teaching and coaching children continued and blossomed in him as he joined hands in starting Babawadi in Ahmednagar. Coincidentally, at that time Baba was not engaged in *mast* tours, so He accepted the cordial invitation extended by Goma Ganesh and agreed to be present at the inauguration of Babawadi on the morning of October 25. The following message of Baba's was read out at the function:

. . . Selfless work, as you all know, has many aspects in the social and political field. Each aspect thereof, though tinged by a particular cultural background, has its own merit and consequential reward.

But the work relating to the welfare of babies is in a class by itself. Babies and infants everywhere in the world

are the very epitomes of God's purity and innocence. They are guileless and helpless — and yet they desire and expect nothing. Why do men see and recognize the enemy and the criminal outside? Because the so-called enemy and the criminal are already within them. Babies have no criminal or enemy within and therefore see none outside.

I am also called "Baba," which endearingly means a baby, and, in fact, all God-realized souls are unsophisticated, like babies. I, therefore, see and enjoy my purity and colorlessness in the unselfconscious ones, the babies.

This is what is real selfless service, when you are serving the little selfless ones, and this is tantamount to rendering service directly unto God. The Biblical statement "and whosoever shall receive one such little child in my name, receiveth Me" bears out what I have said . . .

The above message brings to my mind one more incident of the same kind that took place some years earlier. Meher Baba's love for little ones was strikingly sublime. The work connected with the nursing and education of the children evoked a special response from Baba. One of His followers named Dixit was a pioneer in the educational field at Kolhapur. He was one of the founders of a reputable institution, the premises of which were known as Tapovan, the forest school where boys were expected to practice *tap* (the penance) of learning. As early as 1930, while visiting the southern part of India Baba stayed at Tapovan three times. The news of His second visit had been received in advance, so He was accorded a rousing welcome by pupils and teachers alike. Baba stayed there for two days with Chanji, Vishnu and a few others of the *mandali*. He mixed freely with the boys and played cricket and hockey with them. He spared time to give a talk to the boys, of course through the alphabet board, on the importance of daily meditation. To the teachers, He later discoursed on the subject of "I

and the Creation." In honor of this visit, the staff and the boys arranged to plant a mango sapling in front of the seat occupied by Baba.

Tapovan, later also known by the name of Vidyapeeth, had only primary and secondary classes. In 1942, Dixit and his other associates were successful in receiving a special grant, and in addition a gift in the form of a building from the city municipality, to start a Montessori school. He conveyed this happy news to Meher Baba and implored Him to be present at the opening ceremony. The mango tree planted in 1930 had borne good fruit. The work connected with the welfare of the children was dear to Baba's heart, but at this particular time He was engaged in work with babies of another type — the *masts*. Are not the *masts*, though man grown, quite childlike? On Baba's behalf, Adi Sr. was sent to Kolhapur with a special message, which was read out on September 18, 1942:

One can render unselfish service in the domain of culture. The form of service that a Montessori school takes has a practical value. It deals with infant nature in the prime of its development. Their carefree hearts reflect qualities that are divine by their restless pranks and blissful for their innocence. It is to see how far you can make use of this "divinity" in man, expressed through the child-God. A little patience, a little kindness, infinite [great] understanding and sweet love are the only things by which the teachers can repay for having received the usefulness [opportunity] of human service at its purest.

The God-Man Remains Wakeful in Sleep

At the beginning of November 1948 Baba set out on a *mast* tour in Saurashtra, a part of Gujarat. Baidul, Kaka, Gustadji and Eruch, the regular *mast* team, accompanied Baba. In addition to this group, for this visit Baba also asked Adi Sr.,

Nariman, Meherjee and Chhagan to go with Him. The night of November 2 the party reached Junagadha, one of the famous towns in Saurashtra. Behind this township stands the well-known Datar Hill. Baba's intention was to stay on this hill in seclusion for two days. The party decided to camp for the night in one of the shrines in Junagadha. It was dark, and the *mandali* cleaned a small room with the help of a tiny broom and a dim lamp. This was to be Baba's bedroom. Outside there was a bench of concrete — the *mandali* thought that it could be used by those on the night watch. As they had reached the shrine after hours of tiring train travel and felt fatigued, a good supper and rest were much needed. Baba assigned the timing for the disciples to attend Him in turns at night.

Gustadji, the silent disciple of the Silent Master, was to attend Baba from 3 A.M. on. When he commenced duty it was quite dark and cloudy, and he leisurely took his seat on the bench. After some time, he wished to urinate. He was entirely new to the place, so instead of groping here and there, and also to be close enough to hear Baba's call — a clap — he thought of moving a little away to the rear side of the bench. He got up, unbuttoned his long coat, untied the cord of his trousers and was about to step behind the bench, confident that he would not be needed since Baba was snoring. Just then he heard Baba's clap, His signal to call in the one on night watch. Hurriedly Gustadji rearranged his trousers, buttoned up his coat and went inside.

Baba inquired why he did not come at once. Gustadji had to explain through gestures the reason for his late arrival. Baba gestured back, "All right. For the present, I do not want anything. But be seated on the bench — I may call you any time." As the *mandali* were trained to a life of obedience to Baba, poor Gustadji had to curb the urge to empty his bladder and sit quietly on that cold concrete bench. After

an hour or so, Baba clapped and Gustadji instantly opened the door and stepped in. The Master looked pleased and gestured, "Happy with your promptness. You can now ease yourself if you want to." By this time the sky was clear and fair. Gustadji looked carefully behind the bench, and to his amazement he saw the reflection of the stars. "Is that water or land?" he wondered. There was, in fact, a lake by the side of the shrine. A few hours earlier Gustadji had not suspected its existence in the darkness of the night. Had not Baba clapped in the nick of time, Gustadji would have fallen into the water and been in great danger of drowning. Being silent, he would not have been able to call out for help. The God-Man's omnipresent attention saved him from this mishap.

In a few instances when the *mandali* had heard Baba snoring, they were surprised to find that in spite of this, He was aware of what was going on around Him. The sleep of the God-Man cannot overlap His real state of everlasting wakefulness. In His so-called sleep, He just rests His body. In the course of time He drops the body, but His ever-luminous wakefulness continues of itself to watch and guide those who love Him and are working in His cause.

The Greatness of the Girnar Hills

The next day, November 3, Baba contacted two *masts* in Junagadha. Jina Sain was in a *majzoob-like* state. It was reported that a few years before he would stand all night in water and meditate. Now he was found lying unconcernedly under a tree. The other *mast*, Munga Sain Mastan, was experiencing a deeper state of *majzoobiyat*. He rarely spoke and had to be fed by others. He just looked at Baba with all the tenderness of his heart, a unique communication

where words dared not disturb the dignity of silence. Baba liked Munga Sain and wished to keep him near during the period of seclusion on Datar Hill in the Girnar Ranges. On the top of this hill there is a *samadhi*, said to be that of a God-realized soul named Bapuzamil Shah Datar. It is also said, however, that he once entered one of the caves on this hill and disappeared. People believe that his spiritual presence is still felt and that he guides sincere aspirants in their internal journey to God.

Baba and the *mandali* trudged hundreds of steps up to reach this *samadhi* on the summit. Munga Sain, the *mast*, was carried in a sedan chair. During the two-day seclusion Baba sat alone with this mute *mast* in silent conferences. Baba was observing a fast, but he regularly fed Munga Sain with His own hands. At the close of the seclusion period, the poor living near and about this hill were called into the shrine and Baba offered some money to each as *prasad*. Perhaps it was a pretext under which Baba established with these forlorn souls a spiritual contact that would guide them on their way back to Him. On Datar Hill the Baba party also came across a band of sincere aspirants, and Baba praised their life of exemplary simplicity.

By November 6 Baba was back in Junagadha. The following day the party scaled another summit of the Girnar Hills. There Baba sat alone for hours in one of the caves named after the sage-king Bhartruhari. With reference to the spiritual atmosphere of the Girnar Hills, Baba stated that every *Avatar* born in India has visited this area. In favor of the surcharged atmosphere, a tale has been carried to this day that in olden times some aspirants would fling themselves from one of the high crags down into the deep dale below. This was not undertaken out of despair or depression. It was carried out as "the climax of a most solemn and splendid ceremony." And down the cliff, their bodies

would be devoured in no time by the lions for which these jungles are still famous.

A Silent Emanation of Spiritual Perfume

In addition to the Girnar area, Meher Baba has mentioned two more places in India that abound in spiritual atmosphere — Rishikesh and Benares. In the summer of 1941 Baba's significant statement about Rishikesh was: "Of all the places of pilgrimage in India I like Rishikesh ... It is one of the best places in the world for its spiritual atmosphere." Regarding Benares, the following is the gist of what Baba conveyed to the *mandali*. "Since times of old, there have been many saints and sages who lived here and practiced penance and meditation. Some *Sadgurus* (Perfect Masters) stayed here. It is due to these advanced souls and the Perfect Masters that this place is surcharged with spiritual vibrations. True sanctity does not lie in the dead walls of brick and stone or the waters, but it is due to the great spiritual personalities who stayed here and filled the environment with the fire of their love and in the great spiritual forces released by the Masters. The *Avatars* — Rama, Krishna, and even Jesus — had been at Benares during certain periods of their lives."

After recharging the spiritual atmosphere of all the important places in India, Avatar Meher Baba at present silently but powerfully emanates an all-inclusive spiritual perfume from the tomb on Meherabad Hill. Hundreds who visit the tomb bear testimony to this supernal occurrence.

"How Can I Let the God-Man Go?"

By November 11 Meher Baba was at Delhi and contacted two *masts* and two *mastanis*. One of the *masts*, who was quite old, always preferred to keep his whole body covered with

a blanket. The only bait that induced him to uncover his face was offering him *pan*. The old *mastani* lived in such a tiny hut that one wondered how she could manage to get in and out of it. The next day, Baba visited two centenarian *sadhus* who had undergone severe austerities.

November 12 was regarded as one of the more eventful days because of Baba's contact with a remarkable *mast* named Amanullah Kabuli. He was a type by himself, a mixture of *jalali* and *jamali* qualities. His responses and states alternately changed from *salik-like* to *majzoob-like*. Baba felt pleased to have a secluded contact with this rare type of God-intoxicated soul. At the close of the meeting, the *mast* inquired of the Baba party where it was proceeding. Baidul told him that they were bound for Ajmer, whereupon the *mast* expressed a desire to accompany them. It was one of Baba's ways that He expected a happy parting with the *masts*. Through Baidul He gave Amanullah a ten-rupee note and asked him to make his own arrangements and happily allow the party to take leave. When Baidul cordially pressed the *mast* for such oral permission, he gave Baba a pleading look and replied, "When the God-Man is standing in front of me how can I let Him go?" Baidul, however, tried again to seek his consent. The mellowed heart of the *mast* filled to the brim with love, and he spoke, "All right. He may go, but I will send Him (Baba) such love-cables that they will drag Him to me." Hearing this, Baba gestured. "In that case I am sure to come." With these words of assurance, the *mast* felt overjoyed and began to quote some lines from Urdu and Persian couplets, all in praise of Baba, the God Man. At the end, the *mast* held Baba's hand with great fervor and was almost in tears. Baba's divine glance had surely touched the tender chord of his consciousness. It was a touching farewell. Meher Baba's relationship with the *masts* and their love for Him is beyond description, in fact beyond words.

The Master Fed by the *Mast*

Baba was at Ajmer on November 14. The next day he paid a special visit to the illustrious shrine of Khwajasaheb to contact Chacha, who was resting majestically in his hovel. Chacha, as Baba had explained, was the real *Majzooob* who was conscious of nothing except himself as God. From Ajmer the party moved on to Baroda. The purpose of visiting this city was to renew the link with Chambu Shah, a typical *mast* of the fifth plane. His peculiarity was that at every contact he asked Baba for new clothes and gave Baba his torn, dirty clothes, with a request that He wear them. Baba invariably complied with this. Later all these clothes were carefully packed and preserved in metal cans at Meherazad. Baba made a special trip to Khambat from Baroda to visit two God-intoxicated persons. One had several cats and dogs as pets. The other *mast* was seen most of the time circumambulating the fortress wall, a strange restlessness that kept him roaming and roving, mumbling and singing, perhaps till his last breath. How could the fire of love allow a *mast* either work or rest? Viramgaon lay to the northwest of Khambat. A *mast* at this place, Haji Ahmed, regularly visited a pond at night and sported in the water. He remained naked, day and night — a grown man-child.

Baba, still in Saurashtra, moved on to Morvi, a beautiful town on the banks of the river Macchu. Here an eminent *mast* lived whose name was Majzooob Ali Shah. He should not be confused with Ali Shah, the loving and quiet *mast* of Ahmednagar. This *majzooob* of Morvi was short and fat. Immersed in *majzooobiyat*, he sat looking nowhere, yet waiting with some aloofness for God knows what. Perhaps it was for his meeting with the God-Man. He seldom spoke unless spoken to. At times, after warbling a word or two he would slip into a strange remoteness, off from the world

in a domain of delightful ecstasy. With a cluster of long hair and a beard, he seemed to have an aristocratic bearing. Sometimes he would open a tap which was by his seat and enjoy the flow of water ceaselessly rushing out. His face failed to hide his restlessness. While sitting or eating, the same temperament would manifest itself. At the time of lunch or supper he would mix all the dishes into one hash. He would eat a little and distribute the rest among those near him.

It was about midnight when Baba visited this stately spiritual personality. On seeing Him at a distance, the *mast* exclaimed in loud voice, "The real *Fakir*." *Fakir* generally means a poor mendicant, but in Sufi terminology the term "real *Fakir*" means a Perfect Master. At this time the *mast* had just finished his meal, and so whatever was left over he commenced giving to Baba and Baidul. At the end he even offered water to Baba. Chatti Baba was the only *mast* who bathed Baba, and Ali Shah of Morvi was the only *majzoob* who fed Baba. In spite of His compliance, Baba did not find the *mast* in a good mood for a quiet contact. All of a sudden Ali Shah started walking to and fro in the room. This ended by 1 A.M. and he then told the visitors, except the Baba party, to leave the room, and he asked Baba for a *pica*-worth of dates. Baba was exceptionally particular in catering to the wishes of *masts*, and prior to the contact He sent one of the *mandali* to fetch the dates. In the dead of night they were purchased and given to the *mast*. Majzoob Ali Shah felt satisfied, and Baba happily sat with him for a secluded contact. The nature of such work Baba alone knew, but it must have been an amiable affair because Baba, with His men, left Morvi in a merry mood.

At Rajkot on the way back, Baba asked the *mandali* to invite a hundred and fifty poor persons, and He very lovingly offered *prasad* to all. At Ahmedabad He contacted over a hundred *sadhus* in the ashram of Jagannath Maharaj.

In addition, a few masts and *yogis* were also blessed with Baba's physical touch. A mast named Majnun was grey-haired and had closeted himself in a shrine for about thirty years. A *yogi* named Harihar Maharaj had been standing for years on one leg. He generally kept his face covered to ward off inquisitors. It seemed that he had mastered the art of taking rest and sleep in the standing posture. From Ahmedabad the party left for Bombay. The mandali felt tired from lack of good food and rest. They had had no time to wash and put on clean clothes, but thoughts of such things would occur to them only when they commenced the return journey.

"Where Is That Dumb Fellow?"

An unusual gale of great velocity hit the land while they journeyed back to Bombay. Trees were uprooted and a few fell across roads and railway tracks. The heavy rain that followed dislocated railway traffic and created breaches in the tracks. The train that was carrying the Baba party towards Bombay had to stop close by a jungle near Nadiad, and its schedule was declared "indefinitely late." The mandali with Baba had accommodated themselves in a small third-class coupe, generally reserved for the servants of those traveling in the first-class compartment. This composite bogie was the first behind the engine. Baba wished to have tea. The engineer (engine driver) was a Parsi gentleman, so Eruch approached him and asked in Gujarati if he could spare some good water, to which he replied, "Very gladly." The Baba party had tea and the mandali commenced playing the card game of La Risque with Baba. The engineer heard this respectable group of Parsis speaking in Gujarati and felt drawn to them. He peeped in, and as a gesture of friendliness joined them in the game of cards. Baba had put on a coat and also a cap that covered

His long hair. He played the game with such ease and grace that the engineer had not the slightest hint or sign that Baba was observing silence. But he did detect the silence of Gustadji and would refer to him as a *muga* — a dumb fellow. After the game, Eruch prepared rice and *dal* for Baba on a mini stove that the party used to carry on such trips. The repairing of rails continued throughout the night.

Gustadji from an early age had been leading a simple life in the company of Perfect Masters like Sai Baba, Upasni Maharaj, and now Avatar Meher Baba. He was not used to the ways of the civilized world, which out of necessity demand considerable haste. By early morning the next day, as is the custom in Indian villages, Gustadji, with a tumbler filled with water, proceeded to the nearby jungle to move his bowels. About this time an "All Well" signal was received by the engineer and he whistled to warn the passengers to get into the compartments. He then learned that Gustadji had gone out, hence he whistled and whistled at intervals. But Gustadji had no idea of this. Again and again the engineer leaned out from his seat to inquire of Eruch, peeping from the next window, "Where is that *muga* — the dumb fellow? Has he come? Is he deaf too?" After some time Gustadji appeared on the scene, walking leisurely, but finding no passengers standing outside of any of the compartments, he somehow realized the situation. As he hurried, he lifted and waved his tin tumbler at the engineer as a signal to wait awhile. The engineer felt very amused at this gesture and particularly at the expression on Gustadji's face, which reminded him of an innocent child about to miss a bus. Eventually Gustadji got in, many eyes from the many windows focused on him, and the train moved on. It goes without saying that Baba enjoyed the fun immensely.

I have recorded this incident in detail to show that the

engineer, who mixed freely with the *mandali*, detected Gustadji's silence but he did not even guess that Baba, with whom he participated in the game of cards, was also observing silence. One could be with Baba for hours without any impression that He was observing silence.

This reminds me of another incident where Baba's silence was detected and evoked an unexpected response. This also took place on a railway journey. Baba was on one of His *mast* tours. The compartment in which the Baba party was traveling was not crowded. Two elderly ladies were sitting on the other side. During the journey they saw Baba using gestures to convey some instructions. The conversation was either in Gujarati or English. Baba's personality naturally arrested the attention of the two ladies and they closely, though not directly, watched Baba's gestures. One of the venerable old ladies conveyed with motherly affection to her companion, "How proud a mother would be to have such a robust and handsome son. But what bad luck that he is dumb!" Some of the *mandali* overheard this remark, spoken softly in Hindi. When they told this to Baba, He had a lively laugh.

Returning to the account of the tour in Gujarat, the train left Nadiad by sunrise, but as it neared Bombay, it was detained again at Bassien. A part of the railway track was submerged in water. Once more they had to wait a long time. Baba reached Nariman's flat — Ashiana in Bombay — twenty-four hours late. From Bombay the party proceeded straight to Meherazad by car. The *mandali* looked quite tired but Baba appeared fresh and cheerful, for any "expedition" to contact good *masts* was the work He loved most.

At the Close of the Year, 1948

Baba, the Spiritual Physician

IN November 1948 Meher Baba was away from Meherazad for over three weeks and there was a lot of mail awaiting His attention. After His return from the *mast* tour of Gujarat, there was no travel until the end of the year. Each day a few of the *mandali* would either read out or convey the gist of accumulated letters to Baba and receive His special instructions, if any. Adi Sr. often went to Meherazad from Ahmednagar to attend to correspondence. A few excerpts from letters received and the replies sent, mostly about this time, are given below.

A devotee expressed his feelings: "Baba, I am extremely steeped in domestic affairs. Bless me, that I not forget you. Neither should you forget me! Your obligations in times of distress are unfathomable and beyond human admiration." Baba assured him of His loving help. A letter portraying the agonies of a devotee was read out to Baba. To this person in great distress Baba conveyed, "Happiness and suffering in life do not last long. Remain calm and patient while experiencing these ups-and-downs in life. I am with you." During this year Baba remained mostly either in seclusion or busy contacting *masts*. A devotee from Calcutta inquired of Adi Sr. about the nature of Baba's work in seclusion and the subsequent result. Adi frankly replied, "The result to my knowledge is known only to

Baba. He will go on working spiritually towards the ending. He does not give out or predict future events . . . Strange are the ways of the Master!"

Aside from being the spiritual Guide for all times, Baba sometimes was a physician, too. I noticed Him recommending a certain patent mixture for varied stomach complaints, but His prescription, I think, was more for the soul than for the physical body. It was a personal help that brought about spiritual results. One of the old devotees of Baba once told me that during the Meher Ashram days at Meherabad, Baba allowed some of them to press His legs and feet at night. Once Baba noticed that Madhavrao, while attending to this service, often scratched his own waist. He wore his *dhoti* very tightly and so had a ringworm right around his waist. Baba asked him to apply a common ointment that was easily available in Ahmednagar. To the surprise of Madhavrao, it worked wonders and he was completely cured. Later he incidentally advised his friend to use the same ointment. The man, however, was astonished to find that it did not help him in the least though he had just a small patch of ringworm. Madhavrao did not then realize that Baba's external "treatment" for anyone was an excuse for Him to effect a spiritual corrective.

By the end of the year 1948, Baba sent the following "prescription" to one of the dear ones in Karachi: "Stop taking vitamin A. Don't take food that increases fat. Eat oranges and lettuce profusely. Report your condition after one month." It was observed that if Baba gave some such instructions to anyone, He was very particular about the "check-up." Even in the later years, Baba's practice of prescribing medicines to some of His dear ones continued. It was surely a pleasing way to pass on His spiritual aid. By the way, I may state that I was also one of His "patients."

Reply to a Spiritual Riddle

The mail often brought a variety of communications. Sometimes the contents would present a contrast. One wrote to Baba for His blessings on the occasion of the naming ceremony of his grandson. A letter from another devotee conveyed information about the passing away of a dear one in the family. Baba, to whom births and deaths were like the wakings and sleeps of the one indivisible Life, had a word of cheer or comfort for each. A letter here or there would appear rather amusing. A few months earlier, a devotee from north India, who perhaps regarded Baba as the divine employment officer, wrote: "I pray at your feet for a proper job in accordance with my qualifications." After some months, finding himself still unemployed, he sent a telegram: "Pray at your feet God-realization." Perhaps he thought that it would be easier for Baba to give him God-realization than a job! Baba generally smiled at such communications, but even then one would notice a flash of compassion in His eyes, a gesture to help such persons work out the inevitable *karma*. Baba really lives with those who, in whatever way, remember Him.

Amusing correspondence such as the above brings to my mind an incident that took place a decade later. Generally Baba did not expect the *mandali* to acknowledge such letters. Sometimes, however, He showed interest in replying to even a strange query. During my stay with Baba in Guruprasad, Poona, one of my duties was to read out to Him in the morning the correspondence written in Marathi. In a letter addressed to Baba, a devotee from Baramati quoted a few lines of poetry by one of the saints in Maharashtra. The rhyme contained some specific *yogic* terms. It was a sort of spiritual quiz and Baba was requested to clarify the meaning. Hearing the letter, instead of conveying anything

with reference to the knotty point quoted, Baba simply asked me to inform this devotee to ask a Baba lover at Sholapur for the necessary explanation.

The same day in the afternoon as Baba was having a stroll on the long veranda of Guruprasad, He casually asked me if I had finished replying to the letters. When I answered in the affirmative, Baba specifically asked me if I had answered the question about the spiritual riddle. I just smiled, but Baba looked rather displeased and repeated the same question. I answered, "Baba, the person at Sholapur whose address you have asked me to convey, Anna Jakkal, died long ago." At this Baba gestured, "What have you to do with that? Do I not know it? I know everything. Tell me why you did not send a reply." I felt guilty for not being literal in my obedience to Baba. I immediately brought a postcard and replied as instructed. Only when I read the card to Baba did He leave for His resting room in the western wing of Guruprasad.

I do not know whether the devotee wrote to the address given or not. After some days, however, I met this person from Baramati during the *darshan* hours at Guruprasad, but the topic mentioned in the correspondence was never referred to in our conversation. After that time, while attending to correspondence addressed to Baba, I learned that His instructions alone mattered most. Baba's ways of dealing with His lovers were surprisingly personal and direct.

Phase of Contacting the Teenagers

Youth is full of vigor and vagaries; it holds energy in abundance. Youngsters are eager to express themselves and in this process are not mindful of whether they are helping or harassing others. But they have an open mind, too, and are ready to invite a transformation in their lives, provided the appeal is humane and not condemnatory. Baba's relationship

with His young devotees was jovial and loving. One of the teenagers in a Baba family at Bombay wrote a letter to Baba expressing remorse about some mischief he had done and also asked Baba's advice on certain other points. The following reply was sent to him by one of the *mandali*: "If you were mischievous in a good way, Baba has nothing to say. But a display of ego, use of bad language and insults to elderly people are not desirable. Baba, however, wants you not to bother about what has happened but henceforth try as far as possible to behave yourself. He has His *nazar* on you, and in His remembrance you will gradually overcome your weaknesses . . . As for learning to ride a motorcycle, and going swimming, Baba has no objection provided you are careful and not so hasty as to lose presence of mind when confronted with unexpected situations. Be careful, be confident. Remember Him. Don't worry. . ."

Apart from such personal guidance to those in Baba families, Meher Baba maintained contact with teenagers in a special way, as a part of His internal work. (Little is recorded of this particular phase, which commenced with the opening of the Hazrat Babajan School at Meherabad in 1925.) Baba spent considerable time in silent conferences with the *masts*, and He similarly spared time, though much less, to be in the jovial company of different teenagers in different years. Like contacting the *masts*, the company of these boys served Him, in a way, as the "scaffolding" for His inner spiritual work. Baba seemed to have worked on certain spiritual forces through such contacts, though the process involved or the results thereof were not disclosed by Him. In spite of the great concern and affection that Baba showered on these youngsters, with a few exceptions they did not necessarily continue to come into Baba's recurrent contact by attending different programs held in later years. Perhaps through them something deep was

sown in the hearts of the young which needs time to germinate and blossom. As for this phase of work, I will narrate two incidents, one occurring in India and the other in France.

Ismail and Ibrahim were two brothers living in Poona. Sometimes Baba especially sent for them and they were asked to follow certain instructions. After the partition of India in August 1947, this family moved to Karachi in Pakistan. One of Baba's dear ones living in that city was asked to look after the needs of this family, especially the two teenagers. In the middle of 1948 Baba expressed a wish that these two boys should visit India and stay near Him or wherever He wished them to reside, provided they were ready to extend their stay in India to five years. If they were not in a position to fulfill this condition, they were not to come and not to worry. The boys wished very much to go to India, but because of visa difficulties they had to cancel the visit.

A few months later in the same year, Baba sent another message to His people in Karachi to try again and obtain visas for as many days as was permissible and send these boys to Ahmednagar as soon as possible. This time the matters moved speedily, and to save time in response to His message, Baba's men booked tickets for these two boys on the first available plane flying to India. The plane, however, did not land at Bombay on schedule. Baba felt very concerned, and a telegram was sent to Karachi with the necessary inquiries in this matter. By the time the message reached Pakistan the boys had arrived in India, so another telegram regarding their safe arrival was duly sent. Baba could seemingly be very ignorant, but this could never detract from His Knowledge, His All-knowingness. The two boys did get the privilege of being in Baba's company for some days, and then they were sent back to Pakistan.

Whenever such young visitors stayed near Baba, He paid greater attention to their needs than their parents did. He would see that their health, education and any future prospects were not ignored. At the time of parting, Baba generally very lovingly offered them something as *prasad*, either in cash or kind.

Search for the Ideal Boy

This phase of work was carried on even during Baba's visits to the West. For instance, during Baba's 1937 visit to Cannes in France, He expressed a wish to invite as a guest some vital, good-natured boy from Europe who would stay at Cannes. The problem, particularly of bringing him to stay with an Indian Master, was not an easy one. After due inquiry, Dr. William Donkin was deputed to visit the Spanish Refugee Association in Paris. Because of the political situation prevailing in Spain, the association was located in France. Dr. Donkin was successful in winning the authorities' permission to release a teenager to accompany him to Cannes. The boy did not know either English or French well. Owing to the new environment, he felt rather nervous. Baba wished that the boy should feel at home and remain cheerful, so Sam Cohen taught him the languages while Countess Nadine Tolstoy initiated him into music lessons. Baba instructed Dr. Nilu to look after the health of this young visitor, and He Himself took time to play games with him and "worked" in His own way. Baba expected the boy to be vital and jovial, but the young Spaniard was of a quiet temperament. The boy was taken back to Paris at the close of Baba's stay in Cannes. By this time the situation in Spain had considerably changed, and the boy soon returned to his homeland. Baba has not explained the significance and subtleties of His work in contacting teenagers, but as I do not wish to leave unrecorded this

typical phase in Baba's life, I have narrated just the visible portions of these incidents.

The introductory part of this phase consisted each time in a search for an "ideal boy." There are some interesting stories connected with this search, but to relate them here would be a digression. Nevertheless, I remember another incident which may be regarded as indicative of the closing of this particular phase. In April 1955 there was a meeting at Rosewood in Satara. At that time Baba's brother Beheram brought for the first time copies of a special Baba picture. It was developed from a group photo of His school friends, all teenagers. In this picture Baba was seen squatting on an old striped carpet, and on His chest a small medal was pinned to His long black coat. Holding the picture between His fingertips, Baba showed it to us and casually conveyed, "I was in search of a perfect boy like this. Good that I found him!" Then He switched to some other subject. Whether He was joking or was serious I cannot say, but it was noticed that after that, the phase of searching for the ideal boy gradually came to a close.

In Quest of Light and Love

By the time Meher Baba had concluded the search for the perfect boy, it was observed that coincidentally in some parts of the world the younger generation developed interest in spiritual life and commenced a search for a Perfect Master. Was it the result of Baba's work — the phase of contacting teenagers? Whatever it may be, I feel it fitting to quote here Meher Baba's words of wisdom released in His later years especially for groping youngsters in quest of Light and Love. The following message, under the caption "Meher Baba Has Said On Drugs," was edited and compiled from Meher Baba's statements by one of His close disciples, Francis Brabazon:

No mind-changing or consciousness-expanding drug can help [even] one step on the way to the inner Self because mind does not have to be changed nor does consciousness have to be expanded, for as soon as the soul emerged from the process of evolution as a human being it had full consciousness — full, fully evolved and complete in every respect — and it cannot be "changed" or "expanded," increased or decreased.

What has to happen now in each one is that mind has to be emptied of all the impressions which color consciousness and cause one to identify oneself with what one is not. You do not have to become better or bigger, you have to become that which in Truth you are. There is no short-cut to the Beloved — except that which is through the grace of the God-Man or one of the living Perfect Masters.

Drugs, any drugs, can be used beneficially for specific medical purposes, but for spiritual progress they are not only useless but are positively harmful. The experiences they give are but of the shadows of shining Truth; and although some of them are not habit-forming, one becomes *addicted to the experiences* of the false imagination they give.

To attempt to approach the Creator of universes and the Beloved of hearts through drugs is to mock the majesty of God and insult your own intelligence. The ancient, beautiful Self of each of us can only be realized by loving Him with all the love one has — pure, simple, unconditional love.

Pure love which gives without bargaining is the greatest of all forces for overcoming every difficulty on the way to Truth; it is unparalleled in power, untiring in persistence and matchless in patience and endurance, and so there is no darkness it cannot dispel.

Everything has its price. The price for entering the Way is that you will keep straight ahead and not go off on side excursions; the price for obtaining the Beloved's presence is that you cease being present to yourself; and

the price for actual sight of Him is that you see nothing else but Him.

The little God of dreams locked in a pill
is not the God of love and universal will.
The little God of dreams which dreams sustain
is not the God who lives in lover's lane.¹⁰³

"Will You Willingly Frequent Places of Prostitution?"

To resume the account of the year 1948, Baba continued to stay at Meherazad. Some of the men and women *mandali* resided at Meherabad (Arangaon), a distance of about fifteen miles, so Baba paid them regular visits. He wished to keep Meherazad as a secluded residence. Whenever He granted permission to devotees to see Him, the meeting place would be Meherabad and not Meherazad. In the month of December there were two small *darshan* gatherings at Meherabad, one on the seventh and the other on the twelfth. For the first program, a person came from Poona who had met Baba on past occasions. This time he came especially to have a short interview with Baba. He was a religious-minded man. Such types of people generally hold strongly conventional ideas about spirituality and attach very special importance to the outward forms of rituals and disciplines. When one has the rare opportunity of meeting the Master face to face, however, one should unburden oneself of all dogmas and be receptive to His guidance, whatever it may be. The Master knows the secret of wiping out vitiating complexes, but to be eligible for His help, one has to offer oneself diligently to His compassionate call for obedience.

This particular person pleaded that Baba help him lead a real spiritual life. Upon hearing his request, Baba

¹⁰³ "Meher Baba Has Said on Drugs" (Beacon Hill, N.S.W., Australia: *Meher House Publications*, 1973).

appeared very pleased. After some formal inquiries He solemnly asked this person an unusual question: "Will you willingly frequent places of prostitution in Poona, if ordered?" The man looked quite puzzled. He tried vainly to smile and inquired of Baba whether He was joking. He had read a good many books on religion, but nowhere had he come across such a strange spiritual discipline. He tried to tell Baba that he was really in earnest about his request and that he was not after material enjoyment but spiritual bliss. Baba, to whom the deepest layers of consciousness were an open book, assured him that nothing was conveyed in jest. This made the man all the more confused. He made a fresh attempt to argue with Baba, but in the end he nervously expressed his inability to carry out Baba's instruction. Poor soul — he failed to understand that what Baba really expected of him was not visits to the brothels but an intensity of surrender to Baba's will. Those who failed in total dedication to Baba, He generally asked to please themselves. In this case Baba asked the man to visit holy places in different parts of India. During these travels he was not to carry money with him, and he was to be careful not to touch any woman. He happily agreed to this. Baba then fixed the date of his departure and warned him to commence the pilgrimage on that particular date. Some days later, this man sent a telegram to Baba stating that owing to some personal difficulties, the date of leaving Poona had to be changed. To what extent the person faithfully and literally carried out the rest of Baba's order, I do not know. It is, however, clear that he did not comprehend the rarity and potency of the Master's orders.

The next year, 1949, Baba left Meherazad for the New Life and all correspondence with Him was completely stopped. No one was allowed to meet Him. He returned to Meherazad in December 1951. Some months later when one of Baba's *mandali* visited Poona, news reached his ears

that the above-mentioned person had commenced visiting brothels and had ruined his life by contacting the worst type of lustful impressions. Perhaps he had tried to play with fire. Had he agreed to carry out Baba's instruction, it would have been a different story. "Doing" anything under the express order of the Master is "non-doing." Under such conditions, the inexorable law of *karma* works but it does not create impressions that bind the soul. Baba's first question to him was incidental and strictly personal. I am sure it will not be misunderstood. Baba always held high the dignity of married life and warned all against a life of promiscuity. In later years, the two injunctions that Baba repeatedly stressed for those in quest of Truth were: "No drugs; and no sex outside of marriage."

The Devil of Doubt

The second *darshan* program was on December 12, 1948. From the beginning, Baba was benevolent in allowing me to be present at most of such gatherings. With His inner help I was able to attend — though sometimes unwarranted difficulties arose. Some memories connected with such short stays near Baba in those early days are vivid and lively. But to be frank, it is difficult for me to recollect the month and the year. At any rate, I am sure I was at Meherabad on December 12. I still remember what a happy time I spent with Dr. Ghani. Once he read to me some lines from his *ghazals*. As I did not understand Urdu, he used to explain the meaning in Hindi and English. These *ghazals* were compiled in a small booklet under the title *Hosh-mad-hosh*. I will give a free rendering of some lines from the *ghazal* entitled "*Saki*." The poet wrote: "O lover, as a rule no unwanted person can enter the lane of the Beloved. In case anyone sets his foot unawares in this lane, it is difficult for him to get away from it. This (*Saki's*) is the school the like

of which you will not find anywhere. The lesson you once learn here cannot be forgotten. It is rare fortune that you come across a tavern of the *Saki* — the Wine-seller. Drink to your heart's content. If the glass is broken, do not hesitate to drink by handfuls." What a marvelous lane, an incredible school and a wonderful tavern! I feel that these lines portray the atmosphere of those small Baba gatherings held at Meherabad.

On the morning of the twelfth, Baba and a few of the *mandali* arrived at Meherabad from Meherazad and the whole atmosphere seemed to radiate His divine presence. Once during the day I saw Baba sitting on a chair in the open courtyard near the *ashram* building. A well-dressed group of His devotees — men and women who had come from outstations — were standing in a queue to meet Him. Some of them held in their hands nicely wrapped packets to offer Baba. In spite of the unconditional love that Baba showered on me, it was my weakness, rather the result of my inferiority complex, that sometimes I had a thought, a doubt, that Baba was more in favor of the rich. Influenced by this misunderstanding, I picked a small cluster of tulusi — a wild but sacred shrub with small leaves — and joined the line.

With a look of unhurried awareness of the depth of everyone's devotion for Him, Baba was greeting each one in the queue. He patted some on the back, kissed a few children, and smiled at the rest as they moved closer to His chair. There was a quality of heavenliness in all His gestures. Yet how strange that in such a blissful atmosphere my mind was still possessed by the devil of doubt! As I approached Baba, I bowed down and offered Him that bare bunch of leaves. He accepted it gracefully, as if He had received something very valuable. I have noticed that sometimes a simple offering made Him beam with animated appreciation. He looked at me and then handed

these leaves to Kaka Baria, who was standing by His side, as though for safekeeping. He must have read my stupid thoughts, and yet He so lovingly accepted the leaves. I felt ashamed and pitied myself. Baba's response of love, however, warded off this constricting doubt and it did not return.

I was convinced that Baba is for everyone. He has His own ways of meeting His dear ones on their own levels. He is for the rich and for the poor. He is for the learned and for the ignorant. Once someone questioned Baba in the same vein of doubt that I had had, and He conveyed: "Don't see how I behave with the rich or the poor, the mad or the *masts*. Don't try to fathom the Unfathomable; do not judge me. Love me." Baba's words remind me of the lines of Hafiz. In one couplet Hafiz says: "When you are with the Beloved, beware. Every moment in His company is a crossroad that may lead you close to or away from Him."

A Humorous Coincidence

Prior to Baba's long stay at Meherazad, the men and women *mandali* who constantly moved with Him from place to place did not live together but in two different houses, and the two quarters would not be very close to each other. At Meherazad, however, Baba asked the men to occupy the small, improvised rooms adjacent to the compound wall.¹⁰⁴ In those days, as per Baba's instruction, the men disciples were not allowed to meet or even greet the women permanently residing near Baba. Dr. Goher, who joined the women *mandali* in 1947, was an exception. She was the link between these two groups. While sitting with the men *mandali*, if Baba wished to convey anything

¹⁰⁴ The rooms were unfurnished and had a low roof of old corrugated iron sheets. There was no lavatory, no kitchen, and not even a bathroom.

to the women inside, Kaka Baria would ring a bell and Goher would come to the gate to get the message. Even the gardening work inside the compound wall was done only by the maidservants. Though a doctor and Baba's untiring personal physician, in the beginning Dr. Goher was allotted many sundry duties except medical ones. Dr. Goher commented later, "Maybe it was to take away the pride of profession!" By the end of 1948, Baba's brother Adi Jr. brought some Manila ducks to Meherazad and Baba wished to keep them, so a small tank was built in the garden that suited them well. Dr. Goher was to look after the ducks. Besides, she had to take care of other small poultry. What a spiritual discipline to follow after meeting the Master! So instead of reading any books or journals on medical subjects, she had to study books on poultry farming.

Baba rarely granted any interviews at the Meherazad quarters. In December, however, He made an exception. One morning He was seen sitting in Kaka Baria's room with a learned person from North India. Baba was explaining to the visitor the planes of consciousness. After elucidating the main characteristics of the first six planes, He was about to comment upon the seventh plane. Just then, not knowing that Baba was giving an interview, Dr. Goher appeared at the door and broke in sharply: "Baba, the wheat husk for the chickens is out of stock. Can I ask the servant boy to get another bag?" Baba, whose sense of humor was as spontaneous as that of a genuine comedian, smiled at her and good-humoredly gestured: "We were about to 'step' onto the seventh plane and you brought us right down to the gross plane!" Goher felt a bit nervous, but in a way she was duty-bound, too. The person who attended daily to the marketing was about to leave for Ahmednagar, a distance of about ten miles, and it was time to give him the list of articles to be purchased for the day. To order any new or extra things, Baba had to be informed. It was His specific

instruction. Thus obedience to Baba's order incidentally brought about this humorous coincidence. How the scholar related Baba's explanation about the planes and Goher's inquiry about the wheat husk is a different matter, but I do remember that Baba enjoyed the fun of the situation and in later years sometimes referred to this incident and gestured: "To me husk or heaven makes no difference. What I liked most about Goher was her sense of duty in obedience to my order."

"Don't Worry — Be Happy"

During this month, similarity in names created some slight humor. Minoo (Kharas) from Pakistan requested that Baba grant *darshan* to a small group of Baba lovers from Karachi. Baba instructed Adi Sr. to send a telegram of approval. In the haste of attending to so many details, Adi Sr. unwittingly thought that he was to inform Minoo Pohawala — another Baba lover from Karachi — and acted accordingly. Naturally the telegram caused short but sweet confusion, but soon the mistake was rectified. Minoo Kharas and other Baba stalwarts from Pakistan duly arrived in India. They had Baba's enlivening *darshan* at Ahmednagar on the last day of the year in Khushru Quarters, now known as Meher Nazar. There was silence in the room, and all gazed at Baba's radiant face. Everyone paid homage to Baba and He accepted their love with a beaming smile. When this informal meeting was over, everyone was exceedingly happy. They had journeyed for hundreds of miles to see Baba just for a very short time, and they would have been only too happy to extend their stay, but Baba had asked them to leave Ahmednagar the next day, January 1, 1949. They were happy to obey Him.

At such small gatherings of Baba lovers, there would not be any discussions on metaphysical or spiritual subjects.

Baba's presence was enough for His lovers. Baba would generally make inquiries about the journey and their health. His robust sense of humor would keep the atmosphere light and lively. With an open mind the visitors would absorb His divine presence and accept lovingly His words of advice. The gist of what He generally conveyed to His dear ones can be summed up in the following simple, yet deep and potent, statements:

Do your best and leave to me the rest: Don't worry, be happy.
Go happily. Take me with you.
Be in the world but not of it.
Don't lose heart but keep me in your heart.
I am nearer to you than your own breath.
Remember me and I am there with you, and my love will guide you.
I am the divine Beloved who loves you more than you can ever love yourself.
I love all and all I want is love.
I am Love.

With such loving and encouraging words of advice conveyed by Avatar Meher Baba through His loving gestures to a small gathering at Khushru Quarters, the year 1948 came to a close. There was, however, no indication of His incredible New Life of "hopelessness and helplessness" that commenced ten months later.

Glory to the God-Man, the Ancient One, the eternal Beloved!

GLOSSARY

Abba: Father.

adept pilgrim: A person either on the fifth or the sixth plane of consciousness or in between them.

advanced pilgrim: A person either on the third or fourth plane of consciousness or in between them.

Ahuramazda: Almighty God.

Allah: The Muslim name for the One God.

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 did not necessarily follow this conventional ceremony when the *arti* (song or songs of dedication) was recited or sung.

ashram: A place of retreat.

avadhoot: A spiritually advanced person who generally wears no clothes.

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.

Bhagavad Gita: Lit., "Song of the Blessed One." A section of the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata, consisting of a colloquy between Krishna and Arjuna on the eve of battle.

- Bhagavan*: The Supreme Being. The God Vishnu (The Sustainer). A revered person.
- Bhagwan*: See: *Bhagavan*.
- bhajan*: A devotional song, or the singing of devotional songs.
- bbiksha*: Charity, alms. Anything received by one who goes out begging, especially for food.
- chapatti*: Flat wheat bread.
- chappals*: Sandals with straps passing over the instep but not around the ankle.
- dak bungalow*: A post (mail) station, or traveler's rest house, located originally on post roads
- dakshina*: Acting to the satisfaction of. Colloquially, a holy gift given or received in the form of money or kind.
- dal*: The pigeon pea. Also, any pulse or split grain.
- 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 shelter for travelers.
- dhoti*: A type of loincloth.
- dhuni*: A ceremonial fire fueled by faggots or sandalwood and *ghee*, known as a purifying fire when lit or used by a Master.
- darbar*: An audience hall graced by a king or a Perfect Master.
- fakir*: One who lives the life of poverty, in the spiritual sense. A mendicant.
- gadi*: A seat or throne. A mattress.
- ghazal*: A short love-poem. An ode. A special poetic composition in Urdu or Persian.
- gopi*: Lit., milkmaid. A woman companion of the Lord Krishna.

gram: The chick-pea. Also a type of bean.

guru: A spiritual preceptor or master.

Hari: Lord.

Hu: Lit., He. God.

ittefaqi: A *mast* who has become God-intoxicated accidentally.

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.

jap: Repetition of a name of God or other sacred word.

Jivanmukta: The Liberated Incarnate, i.e., God-realized and in
the body. A Perfect One.

jowar: A grain sorghum, also called guinea corn or Indian
millet.

kafni: A body-length lightweight cotton garment. A long robe.

Kamil: Perfect.

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 name of *the*
Avatar, or in remembrance of *the Avatar*, e.g., "*Jai Baba!*"
"*Jai Ram!*"

kirtan: The singing of devotional songs, accompanied by music,
interspersed with explanations on spiritual subjects.

Krishna: The *Avatar* whose history is told in the Hindu epic
poem, the *Mahabharata*.

- Lahar*: Lit., a ripple, wave, fancy, whim. The Whim of God which caused the Creation.
- Lila*: The "Divine Sport" of God. The "game" which God plays, which manifests the Universe.
- Lungi*: A loincloth.
- madar-zad*: Born a *mast*, q.v.
- mahabubi*: A *mast* who wears articles of feminine attire.
- mahatma*: Lit., a great soul.
- majzoob*: Lit., absorbed in. One who is absorbed in a plane of involving consciousness. Also, sometimes used to denote one who is God-merged (more correctly called Majzoob-e-Kamil).
- majzoobiyat*: The state attained upon God-realization.
- mandali*: The intimate disciples of a Sadguru (Perfect Master) or Avatar (God-Man).
- mantra*: A sacred name or phrase given by a master to his disciple to be repeated as a spiritual discipline.
- Manzil-e-Meem*: Lit., the House of "M." The residence which Meher Baba used for work with his mandali in Bombay in 1922-1923.
- mast*: (pronounced "must") A God-intoxicated man on the Path.
- mastani*: A God-intoxicated woman.
- masti*: Lit., intoxication.
- Maya*: Lit., illusion. False attachment. That which makes the Nothing appear as everything. The root of Ignorance. The Shadow of God.
- mayavic*: Arising from *Maya*; illusory.
- Mukti*: Liberation. Release from the cycle of births and deaths (i.e., reincarnation).
- 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 watch.

nimaz: Prayer.

nirvikalpa samadhi: The "I am God," state of the Perfect One.
Divinity in expression.

Om: God. Also, the first Word, the primal sound at the beginning of the Beginning of Creation.

pahad: A hill.

pan: Betel leaves.

pandal: A shelter erected on upright poles supporting a roof of bamboo matting or cotton cloth. A large, open-sided temporary pavilion used for meetings.

Parabrahma: The Supreme Spirit. God.

Paramhansa: A Perfect One, who is sometimes "drowned" in God and sometimes also conscious of Creation.

pranams: Salutations.

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; when swallowed it acts as a seed which will eventually grow into full-blown love. A gracious gift of the Master.

qavval: One who sings *qavvalis*.

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

Qutub: Lit., the hub or axis. A Perfect Master.

Rama: The *Avatar* whose life is the subject of the Hindu epic, the *Ramayana*.

rava: A sweet dish.

rishi: Lit., seer. An inspired sage or religious poet. One to whom the Vedas were revealed.

- Sadguru*: A Perfect Master. A Man-God.
- sadhak*: One who practices *sadhana*.
- sadhana*: Practice, striving, endeavor.
- sadhra*: A thin, ankle-length muslin shirt.
- sadhu*: A pilgrim. An advanced soul. A mendicant.
- sahaj samadhi*: The effortless divine state of God-consciousness with Creation-consciousness. Divinity in action.
- sahavas*: Lit., close companionship. A gathering held by the Master so that His devotees may enjoy His company, i.e., His physical presence.
- salik*: One who consciously has divine experience of any of the six planes.
- samadhi*: Trance, induced by spiritual meditation.
Contemplation, leading to rapture. The tomb of a saint or Master.
- sanskaras*: Impressions. Also impressions which are left on the soul as memories from former lives, and which determine one's desires and actions in the present lifetime.
- sanyasi*: One who has renounced the world.
- sardar*: A chieftain, leader or commander.
- seer*: (also, *ser*) A unit of weight of a little over two pounds.
- sharbat*: A sweet cold drink.
- shastri*: One who is well-versed in the Hindu scriptures or *shastras*.
- Shiva*: The Destroyer, in the Hindu trinity Creator-Preserver-Destroyer.
- siddhis*: Occult or psychic powers.
- Sufism*: The mystic discipline which has its roots in the Middle East. Its origins are lost in antiquity. It is known to have existed at the time of Zoroaster and was revitalized by Muhammad. It exists today in all parts of the world.
- tabla*: A drum.
- tap*: Purificatory action, penance.

tattya: A reed mat.

tonga: A horse-cab.

tribhuvan: The triple sphere. The created universe.

Urdu: The official language of Pakistan, written in Arabic script, and also spoken in the northern part of India.

Vishnu: The Preserver, in the Hindu trinity Creator-Preserver-Destroyer.

wali: Lit., friend. A friend of God; one who has wilayat. More specifically, a fifth plane saint. *walla* (or, *wala*): A suffix denoting an agent, doer, owner, possessor, keeper or inhabitant.

wilayat: Lit., friendship (with God). The state of a soul on the fifth or sixth planes.

Yezdan: Almighty God.

yoga: Lit., union. The method and practice leading to conscious union of the human being with the Divine Principle.

yogi: A soul who is traversing the spiritual Path. One who practices *yoga*.

yuga: A cycle of time, of about 700 to 1400 years' duration, which begins whenever the Avatar appears.

Zoroaster: (also, *Zarathustra*) The ancient *Avatar* who lived in Iran, one of the earliest of whom we have records.

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