

MEMORABLE STAY AT ELURU 1954 - PART VII

"Breaking" the Silence

A little after 11:00 on the night of February 22, Meher Baba reached Eluru. This time also, as in the previous year, He stayed in Katta Subba Rao's garden, in the two-room cottage known as the Kuti. The host had done all he could to make sure that Baba and His party would be comfortable. The Kuti was decorated and provided with furniture, while temporary electric lights had also been installed. The verandah had been extended by means of an awning, creating a covered area in front of the Kuti for Baba and others to sit under.

A temporary thatched pandal-type structure had been erected for Baba's *mandali* and the Andhra lovers traveling with them. It had folding cots for all, with a chair next to each cot. Latrines, bath rooms, a kitchen and dining hall had also been thoughtfully arranged. So loving and lavish was the host that when all reached Eluru, Baba jokingly warned us to be careful about our stomachs as Subba Rao would, in his hospitality, undoubtedly tempt us to overeat!

Although it was late, before Baba could retire to His room for rest, He was surrounded by some of the Baba families of Eluru. Ever compassionate and willing to sacrifice His own comforts to please His lovers, Baba greeted them and then permitted them to sing His *arti*.

When the *mandali* reached their quarters, they found that Subba Rao had prepared tea for all and it was certainly welcome and refreshing after the night journey. This sort of loving concern for the well-being and comfort of Baba's *mandali* was typical of all our hosts in Andhra Pradesh. But like different voices singing the same sweet song, no one expressed it in exactly the same way.

The next day, as was customary during tours with Baba, all woke up early in the morning, at around 5:00. By 7:00 we were

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all gathered under the nicely decorated awning which was facing Baba's Kutu. Carpets had been spread on the ground to sit on. There was also a special tent pitched nearby for Gabriel Pascal, who was expected to arrive to film Baba.

Pascal was a famous Hollywood movie producer whom George Bernard Shaw had called a "genius" for his brilliant adaptation of *Pygmalion* to the screen. Pascal had met Baba in Zurich in 1934²⁸ and had been enthusiastic about producing a film on Baba's life under the title, "The Slippers of the Perfect Master." He was also interested in making a movie on Gandhi. He was supposed to come to India to be with Baba, especially so he could film Baba on His birthday. Pascal had even bought his ticket to fly to India but his life was in turmoil and, at the last minute, he could not make it.

Soon a good number of people had arrived at Subba Rao's garden and were admitted through the gate. These were friends and relatives of the host. Even more people were left standing outside the garden, waiting to be allowed in. Baba came out of His hut and signaled that the gates should be flung open so all could enter.

Thus what had been planned as an informal and intimate gathering turned into a small *darshan* program. Families joyfully approached Baba, the women pushing their shy children in front of them, or carrying their babies to be laid at Baba's feet. It was a colorful sight to see, the women's *saris* flashing in the early morning sun. Most had brought garlands, some quite elaborate, with which to adorn Baba, but some simply folded their hands with great reverence when it was their turn to stand before Him.

A brass band arrived from somewhere and began playing the festive music usually associated with joyous celebrations. Meanwhile, two or three pandits chanted Sanskrit verses in praise of the Avatar. A Baba lover recited a very melodious prayer in Telugu. A disciple of Swami Shivananda, who was studying in Eluru, read a poem he had written on Baba's divinity. He was so overpowered by Baba's presence that as he read he trembled from head to foot with emotion. Baba patted the young man and His soothing touch helped the poet compose

²⁸ *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba*, Vol. III, p. 82.

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himself.

After all of this there was a music program which all enjoyed. Baba seemed to like it so much that He conveyed the following from His board:

Before the end of the year, God will make Me sing the first original song and those who love Me will be lost in that song to find Me in everyone and everything.

The atmosphere of love which prevailed in the garden on this occasion seemed to transport those present to the celestial regions. Many could be seen silently weeping, while others were enraptured, gazing at Beloved Baba's indescribable beauty.

One swami from the crowd got up and began to dance in ecstasy. Baba seemed delighted at this and picked up a *kansi* (a percussion instrument which consists of long metal tongs with a ring attached) and began keeping time Himself while the swami danced on.

The "three messages" were read out, along with their Telugu translations, as they were at almost every *darshan*. Afterward, Baba conveyed:

When I break My silence, the greatest divine miracle of all time will happen. To be worthy to receive My divine grace at that moment, prepare yourself from now on by loving Me. I really am, and always have been, the slave of My lovers.

This theme of Baba's intimating to His lovers that He was about to break His silence was repeated several times in His second Andhra visit. Two days earlier, at Guntur, on the 21st, Baba had declared at the end of a fairly long message, "Now, I am giving Myself some good news—that as I really am fed up with this silence, soon I will have to get rid of this [alphabet] board and break My silence."

Earlier, in Machilipatnam, Baba had added, "God will make me break My silence soon. . . and then the world will realize that God alone is real and that every one of us is eternally one with God."

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There has been much speculation as to what Baba meant by such cryptic references to His silence and the breaking of it. Only Baba knows the full significance of His statements, but the effect has been to intensify the love that His dear ones have for Him.

Some people have been drawn to Baba through His promises to break His silence because they felt that soon He would unmistakably reveal His divinity to the world and they would be benefited. When these promises did not seem to be fulfilled, those who came only because of Baba's promises drifted away, disappointed.

In a way, therefore, Baba's promises to break His silence are a challenge to His lovers. Those whose love for Baba enables them to concentrate on Baba and not His silence or its breaking, find that eventually in holding onto Baba they have every thing in His gentle, supportive Presence.

Even today, for some the prospect of Baba suddenly breaking His silence continues to loom on the horizon like a glorious sunrise heralding the dawn of the new humanity. Only time will reveal what Baba's breaking of His silence really means. However, blessed are they who are content in the act of loving Baba just for what He is—the Avatar, God in human form.

The program ended just before noon and Baba asked us all to have our lunch, rest and be back at His Kutu by 2:00 that afternoon.

"The Avatar's and Masters' Love and Grace"

The *mandali* were getting ready to be at Baba's Kutu by 2:00, but fifteen minutes before the hour, Baba on His own came to visit them. Baba usually would find time to visit His *mandali* and see where they were staying. Although we knew this trait of Baba's, we were not prepared for this visit and some could be observed quickly straightening up their beds and clothes so that everything looked neat and tidy.

It seems that Baba's decision to visit the *mandali* must have been rather sudden, in fact, for we noticed that Eruch hadn't

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even had time to put his sandals on but had accompanied Baba barefoot. Baba's visits to the hearts of His lovers are equally unforeseen and unpredictable!

After staying a few minutes at the *mandali's* quarters, Baba walked to a small platform built on the spot where Baba had sat for some time during His first visit, the previous year. The local lovers had decided to erect a small structure there to commemorate that event, but due to some difficulties the work had not proceeded. Now there was only the platform there, but upon this they had placed a large painting of Baba. Baba bowed down to the painting.

Then Baba started rapidly walking back and forth on the garden lawn, from one end to the other. He seemed to be in a pensive mood. After ten minutes or so, He returned to the verandah of His cottage and sat there, still absorbed in His inner work. The index finger of Baba's right hand was moving quickly in that characteristic way of His when working on the inner planes.

Baba got up and walked back and forth on the verandah barefoot, but still absorbed in His work. Then He sat down again. Adi approached Him with some telegrams in his hand, but Baba didn't pay any attention to him. Getting up from the chair, He paced back and forth on the verandah again and then entered the hut and went into His room. There He sat back on an easy chair, His hands clasped behind His head. Adi again read the telegrams to Baba and this time Baba gave Adi some instructions, although He still seemed withdrawn and in His working mood.

A little later, Baba came back outside and sat in the chair for a while and then again got up and began pacing on the verandah. At around ten minutes before three, Adi interrupted Baba's mood by drawing His attention to the messages which were to be given out at a later public program. Baba seemed amused at this juxtaposition of His deep inner working in the spiritual realms and these mundane details and His fingers flew across the board spelling out this brief but penetrating statement:

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Life is a mighty divine joke. That is the best way to describe it—a mighty divine joke. A zero. In fact, to even say it is zero is to grant it existence!

Baba's mood has been described here in such detail only to show that even during *darshan* tours, Baba's inner work (which always continued) occasionally expressed itself in His withdrawn and absorbed moods.

Soon after, Baba left for the *darshan* which was being held at Ramkuti. *Kirtan* was already underway when Baba arrived. Baba went to His chair on the dais and sat. A regal yet mysterious simplicity seemed to emanate from Him. After a few moments, Baba got up and came down and sat on the ground with the people for a while before resuming His seat. Baba then explained on His board:

I am one of you; that is why I sat on your level. It is not just for show, but My eternal experience of being one with everyone of you.

This was one of the largest gatherings of Baba's *darshan* tour and at the edge of the crowd, some of the older people with weak eyesight, were making telescopes of their fists and peering through them at Baba's marvelous form. The following message, "The Avatar's and Masters' Love and Grace" was read out over the address system:

It makes Me very happy to see you all here and I appreciate the feeling of love and devotion with which you have approached Me. I know and understand your difficulties, problems, sufferings and expectations; these you need not voice to Me either by word or action.

The world has been suffering from natural and unnatural calamities in various forms. The picture of the whole human race is indeed a sorry one, but suffering is the heritage of mankind. There is not only individual suffering, but the whole world is suffering in the grip of fear and anguish. It is the Divine Will that lies behind human suffering, for nothing happens without the Divine Will.

There are individual as well as national and universal

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problems, which need the spiritual guidance of the Avatar and the Perfect Masters, who guide humanity through their divine messages. . . .

The Avatar and the Perfect Masters give their divine guidance and protection to the human race and to the world in their own unique and imperceptible ways, which are beyond the grasp of human intellect. The Avatar and the Perfect Masters are the true Saviours of mankind and not just of the selected. Their love and Grace alone sustain the universe.

A disciple or devotee should never approach the Avatar or a Perfect Master with a mind clouded with doubts and queries of why, when and wherefore. This can be a hindrance to his receptivity of the Master's grace, which is beyond the probings of the intellect.

So I say with divine authority, approach Me with unfailing faith, love and devotion, and with the longing to receive My divine love and grace. My blessings.

Baba's words, given out in His divine presence, filled the hearts of the audience and lifted their spirits, filling their beings with a profound feeling. The president of the local reception committee sang Baba's *arti* and then the people started coming for Baba's *darshan* and He began distributing *prasad* to them. The arrangements had been so well planned that Baba was able to give *prasad* with both hands; one hand for the women and the other for the men.

In the midst of this distribution, a *mast* got into the queue. Pointing toward Baba, he kept shouting out, "Rama, Rama." We later learned that he was also pleading with Baba in Telugu to break His silence. Baba embraced him and fed him a banana with His own hands. Madan Arora captured this on film and something of the ecstasy in the *mast's* eyes can be seen even though the footage is rather brief. After the *darshan* program, Baba and His *mandali* returned to their residence in the garden. Interestingly enough, just like the "chargeman" at Orai, this *mast* was never seen again, even though later, the Baba lovers of Eluru tried to locate him.

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Baba's Orders Are Potential Opportunities

That evening, Baba was sitting under the awning in front of the Kuti. There was a small crowd gathered around Him. A Muslim gentleman came and conversed with Baba in Urdu. As he was leaving, Baba sent Ramjoo, one of His Muslim disciples, after him with the message that he should continue to think of Baba wholeheartedly until he loses himself in Baba.

After supper, again a crowd gathered and at about 8:00 that night a dance program was staged by some girls from a local musical institution. They performed a dance depicting the ten incarnations of Vishnu, according to Hindu mythology. The chief dancer was the daughter of a Baba lover. After each segment of the dance, Baba called her to Him and expressed His love and appreciation.

Baba liked music, dance and, in fact, any art form that uplifted the hearts of the audience or opened them to feel God's presence. He did not require that the art form be explicitly spiritual, as Baba's love for comedy attests. Perhaps guileless laughter, by itself, is instrumental in opening the heart to God's love. One time Baba said that it was a divine art just to look cheerful, as this helped others.

In the crowd was a *sadhu* named M. Swami. He had met Baba during His first visit to Andhra in 1953. On his own he had offered at that time to stay in Subba Rao's garden and act as a caretaker, looking after Baba's Kuti. Baba had agreed but added that if Swami wanted to stay in the garden, he should stay there permanently.

Someone brought it to Baba's attention, as He was sitting there in the garden that night, that M. Swami had not followed His instructions and, after staying a while in the garden, had left and gone elsewhere. Baba turned to him and asked why he had done this. Swami complained that he had not been treated properly, had not been shown enough respect! There was a look of displeasure on Baba's face as He replied:

Is that the reason? It would have been better if you had died rather than left [the garden] and disobeyed My

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orders. If you want God, all inconveniences are nothing. They cannot be used as an excuse for disobeying Me.

Swami looked upset at this stern rebuke and, realizing his error, tears began streaming from his eyes. Baba paused for a while and then took pity on him and, perhaps to nullify the impact created by his disobedience, Baba gave him new orders:

From the day I leave Andhra, I want you to stay at some place, any place, in a small room for forty days. Don't take any food. Don't sleep, even for a minute. One cup of milk and one cup of tea you can have, nothing else. You can drink as much water as you want, but don't leave the place you're staying at, except to go to the toilet or bathe. Don't go to the bazaar. Day and night repeat, "BABA, BABA."

Even if you go mad or die, don't break these orders. And don't make a show of what you are doing. Don't let anyone bow down to you or fold their hands to you. If you obey Me 100% you'll get a glimpse of Me.

About half an hour later, Baba turned to Swami again and reemphasized the importance of obeying His orders. Swami seemed apprehensive at the severity of the orders, but Baba reassured him: "Don't be nervous. Do it with love. If you do it wholeheartedly, I will help you."

Being the Compassionate Father in whatever He does or asks others to do, Baba's compassion is always present. But sometimes, if one's faith in Baba's All-knowingness and Love is weak, His orders seem frightening. It has been observed, however, that Baba's orders, even when they appear difficult or harsh, are always blessed opportunities for the ones to whom they are given to get rid of some impressions which have been obstructing the deeper awakening of the heart to the love and beauty of God within.

If one willingly accepted Baba's orders, even when they seemed impossible or outlandish, and wholeheartedly resolved to carry them out then one of two things happened. Baba either rescinded the orders on His own, or one found that the

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impossible turned out to be delightfully possible. It was as if Baba had already done the work and one merely had to go through the motions, enduring the suspense until the happy ending.

I have experienced this myself on several occasions. For example, in 1949, instead of allowing me to be with Him in the New Life, Baba sent me to contact a friend of mine who was staying somewhere in the Hardwar-Rishikesh area in the foothills of the Himalayas. I had never been there in my life and had no idea where my friend might be staying. The task seemed hopeless, especially as my health was very poor.

I discovered, however, that the long journey was surprisingly pleasant and I found my friend in the very first place I happened to look! Such is Baba's omnipotence. Baba's orders are opportunities for us to develop deeper faith in Him and thus to surrender more and more to Him.

Returning to that night in Katta Subba Rao's garden, just as we were about to disperse for bed, a singer from Amalapuram asked Baba to give him just five minutes so he could show Baba how he was able to make a sound like a flute using only his fingers. With the wonder of a child expressed on His face, Baba agreed to this unusual request and had the man come inside the main room of the Kutu.

The man laced his fingers together and blew into his hands and all heard such a nice tone that it was hard to believe he didn't have a flute. The man then played a melody and Baba liked the performance so much that He asked the man to do it again for Gustadji who had missed the first performance.

Before Baba sent the *mandali* away, He told them that on the next night, February 24, they would have to stay awake all night long. Baba then told all to be back there, at His Kutu, at 8:00 the next morning.

At 7:00 in the morning of February 24, Baba again surprised the *mandali* by visiting them before they could assemble at the Kutu. As usual, Baba asked various ones how they had slept, how they were feeling, etc. At that time Subba Rao appeared wearing a new coat which he proudly displayed. He then explained in his inimitable mixture of English, Hindi

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and Telugu, that last year he had presented a piece of cloth to Baba who had returned it to him as *prasad* and instructed him to have a coat made of it. Now Baba and Subba Rao both—giver and recipient—looked delighted with the end result.

Two Heart-Moving Visits

Baba returned to the Kuti and began discussing the day's program with the local organizers. He wanted to know when He was going to make house visits and KDRM explained that they hadn't scheduled any house visits because there were so many Baba lovers in Eluru and there was so little time in which to visit them.

Baba, however, expressed His wish to visit the homes of His lovers. KDRM replied that in that case they would need some time, not only to make up a list of whom Baba should visit, but also to notify those on the list so they could prepare to receive Baba. But Baba didn't want to wait for such arrangements to be made. Often it has been noticed that once Baba decided to do something, He wanted to do it immediately without any sort of delay.

KDRM were hesitating about this precipitous change in the program so Baba mollified them by saying, "Let the visits be surprise visits; everyone will get more pleasure from them that way." Baba added that KDRM should do their best to quickly notify as many people as possible of the impending visits in the short time available to them, but that they shouldn't worry about it if they couldn't contact everyone.

Hurriedly, KDRM sketched out a program for Baba. While they were doing this, a police department clerk named Veerachari, who was present, approached them and asked them to include his home in the list of those whom Baba would visit. Although his house was on the same street as several of the prominent Baba lovers in town, KDRM decided not to include it as it was very small and the roof was so low that Baba would have to bend down to enter.

It seemed to Veerachari, however, that the organizers were

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favoring the wealthy Baba lovers. On top of his disappointment that Baba would not be visiting his home, was the bitterness at the unfairness of life which had deprived him of the rare good fortune of having the Avatar bless his house.

KDRM sent out people to notify those whose homes had been selected for visits, but after only a few minutes, well before they could have informed very many people, Baba insisted on starting out. As His car pulled out of the garden, Veerachari watched it go with a mingled sadness and frustration. He was so upset that he didn't join the party following Baba's car, but stayed behind in the garden and wept.

As soon as Baba's car reached the main road, Dharma Rao began to turn left, as it had been decided that Baba would first visit the home of K.N. Chaudhary, the editor of "Avatar Meher," a Telugu periodical. Baba, however, reached over and put His hand on the steering wheel and indicated that he should turn right. With a puzzled look on his face, Dharma Rao said, "No, Baba, it's to the left." But again Baba gestured that he should turn right and one of the *mandali* explained, "Just go wherever Baba directs you." And, surprisingly, Baba directed Dharma Rao straight to Veerachari's small home.

Baba got out and, bending low, entered the room where Veerachari's mother, wife and little baby were living. One of the organizers quickly introduced the startled family to Baba. Baba sat down on a roughly woven *charpai* and told the family that He had come especially to bless them, and then added that they could perform His *arti* if they so wished. In Andhra, it is customary to burn camphor while performing *arti* but the family that day had none in the house so they simply folded their hands and, expressing their heartfelt praise of Baba, reverentially prostrated at His feet.

Baba gestured, "I have heard your prayers and I have come to bless you and the child." Baba picked up the baby and held it in His arms, blessing it with His caress. Baba then embraced the women and conveyed, "Tell Veerachari that I have come. Tell him not to worry, that I have blessed you all. I am for all."

At that very moment, Veerachari was sitting in Subba Rao's garden, weeping because Baba was not going to visit his home.

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Instantaneous is Baba's response to the deep inner yearning of His lovers! Rumi, the Persian poet and Perfect Master, once wrote:

Your cry of "Allah!" is in itself God's "Here am I."
Under your every "O Allah!" whispers many a "Here am I."

Baba then turned and, with the four or five people who had squeezed inside with Him, left the house and returned to the car.

Then they proceeded to Chaudhary's house as originally planned. In the hall there was a big picture of Sai Baba. Pointing to it, Baba remarked, "His eyes were matchless. No one had such eyes in the whole world." Baba also folded His hands to offer His respects to Sai Baba. Later that morning, Baba visited a Sai Baba temple at which time He remarked, "He is my Grandpa. He and the other four Perfect Masters of this Age made Me what I am—the Ancient One."

On leaving Chaudhary's house, once again Baba interrupted the scheduled program and directed Dharma Rao this time to a nearby school. Baba got down and, as if He knew the place well, entered the school and went straight to the fourth form classroom. The headmaster and the teachers were taken aback. They thought to themselves, "This is Meher Baba! But why has He come here and why don't those with Him stop to introduce Him to us?" But there was no time to ask these questions, much less to get them answered, for Baba had quickly disappeared inside the classroom, with His group rapidly following along behind.

As soon as Baba entered, one of the boys stood up and shouted, "Meher Baba" and tears started flowing from his eyes. Before the others could take in what was happening, Baba had embraced the boy and was telling him through gestures, "Tell your parents that I came and gave you *darshan*." And then, as unexpectedly as He had come, Baba turned and walked back to the car, leaving the entire school buzzing with His recent visit.

It was not until several hours later, when the boy appeared in Subba Rao's garden with his parents, that the *mandali*

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learned the full story. It seems this boy had happened to pick up one of the pamphlets announcing Avatar Meher Baba's arrival and *darshan* program at Eluru. For some reason he instantly felt drawn to Baba and asked his parents to take him for Baba's *darshan*. Being Brahmins, however, his parents saw no reason why they should go visit a Parsi for his blessings and so they refused. The boy was heartbroken but there was nothing he could do.

That night he slept with the pamphlet, which had Baba's picture on it, under his pillow. He spent a restless night, thinking of Baba, and the next morning, after refusing to eat breakfast, he went off to school. The parents had not discussed their son's odd wish to have Baba's *darshan* with anyone and neither had the boy. But Baba, the "In-dweller" of every heart, was fully aware of what the boy was going through and lovingly responded to his sincere yearning.

When the boy told his parents that Baba had come personally to see him at school, they relented in their opposition and agreed to accompany their son to Subba Rao's garden. There, Baba graciously allowed the whole family to see Him briefly and the parents repented to Baba for their previous views.

As far as I know, the family did not become "Baba lovers" as such; unless Baba wills it, no one can love Him as Meher Baba. But the Avatar, being the floodtide of love, does not flow only in one channel but swells the currents of every river running to the sea. Thus the family's path of rituals and orthodoxy must have been enlivened and quickened—redolent with the pervasive presence of God—owing to their contact with the Avatar. Baba has His own way of reaching the hearts of His dear ones, and is infinitely patient waiting for His lovers to come to Him.

A Printing Press and a Pan Shop

From 8:30 that morning to a little after 11:30, Baba visited the homes and business places of His lovers in Eluru. That afternoon, from around 3:30 to 6:00 P.M., Baba continued with

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His visits. Nowhere else did Baba make as many visits as He did in Eluru.

His pace was so fast that Kishan Singh, who kept a diary, could only obtain information on thirty-five of the sixty places Baba visited. Sometimes the *mandali's* bus, for example, would be unable to enter a narrow lane, and by the time they got down and caught up with Baba on foot, He would already be returning after having made one or two visits.

Wherever Baba went, He would be received with great reverence, garlanded, and *arti* would be performed. Baba would be introduced to all the members of the family and sometimes He would offer them *prasad* or agree to sit with them for a group photo. But although these outward formalities tended to be the same at each place, the inner give and take of love between the Beloved and His dear ones always varied. Baba would embrace some, pat another on the back, stroke one's cheek. In little ways, Baba made each feel that He was not only responding to them as individuals, but that His love was personally and intimately meant for them alone!

One of the businesses Baba visited was a printing press run by Venkata Rao. He, and a good many of his staff, were ardent Baba lovers. Baba was introduced to all the heads of the various departments of the press, as well as their employees and took a great interest in it all, inspecting each machine and listening as V. Rao explained what it was used for. Baba seemed particularly taken with a machine which took large pieces of paper and automatically folded them until they were book size.

Perhaps Baba took such an interest because of all the work this press had done in Baba's cause. When Eruch and Pendu had come to Andhra in 1952 (before the Fiery Free Life), each morning on waking, they were handed a copy of the talk they had given the night before. All of this was done by this press, with its staff working late at night to prepare the pamphlets. During Baba's 1953 and '54 visits also, the press had printed hundreds of thousands of leaflets: copies of Meher Baba's messages in Telugu and in English, for the benefit of the people.

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Before Baba left, the staff gathered and sang in chorus some verses glorifying Him. As Baba left, He noticed some of His *mandali* who had waited outside the press while He was being shown around as they had thought there wasn't enough room for them all. Some thought that the press was a little too noisy and stuffy for comfort! Baba casually turned to them and gestured that before they all left for Penugonda that night, they had to find time to visit the press on their own!

During Baba's journeys and *darshan* tours, He always wanted His *mandali* (His "spiritual baggage," as Chanji would refer to them) to share things with Him whether they liked them or not. If Baba ever noticed that some of His *mandali* refrained from participating in something because it was not to their taste then, with a mischievous twinkle in His eyes, He would gesture, "Don't miss that!"

Later, Baba also visited Venkata Rao's home, and gave *prasad* to his son. He gestured, "When I give anything unasked, it is really given." Because not everyone could be informed in advance of Baba's visit, at some homes some of the family members were not present. At other homes, there was surprised delight at Baba's unexpected appearance.

At one place, it appeared that no one there had any idea who Baba was, and the people were quite startled to find this "stranger" with so many others following Him, appear in their compound. However, Baba's presence was such that the family welcomed Him. Another family seemed surprised at Baba's visit, but it could not be ascertained whether they had known of Baba beforehand or not. At another home, the family knew Baba but hadn't been expecting Him and rushed to get a nice chair for Him to sit on. Before they could arrange this, however, Baba had already walked through the house and left by the other entrance!

Baba also paid a visit to the house of one who owned a small *pan* shop nearby. The organizers did not know him. Baba, however, entered and sat on a *charpai* and gestured, "Let me sit here for five minutes; it is so cool here!" What an excuse to bless these people. Did the family even realize what good fortune it was having? Probably not. But it was not necessary

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to know who Baba was for His love was self-communicative. Baba's house visits in Eluru had a certain Nauranga flavor to them; Baba seemed to be spontaneously going wherever His heart led Him, whether the residents had consciously invited Him or not. What an incredible living illustration of divine compassion!

"Myself Is for Those Who Love Me"

At the home of a lawyer, Baba asked how many children he had. The man replied, "Fifteen." Baba looked surprised and then asked him to introduce all the children to Him one by one. By the time the attorney got to his fourth child he had gotten the names mixed up and couldn't remember the child's right name. Baba and all the others had a good laugh over this.

The lawyer's wife corrected her husband and then stepped forward to garland Baba, but Baba, with a warm hearted glance, spelled out on His board, "No garland; no *arti*. Such things mean you are not relating to Me naturally. Let Baba feel at home here. Love is most natural and I feel so happy that, in My presence, your husband can't even remember the names of his children!"

At the home of M. Ramalingeshwar Sastri, who was usually referred to as "Baba Sastri," owing to his penchant for constantly talking about Baba and interspersing his talks with Sanskrit *slokas*, one of the family members asked Baba, "My Lord, Baba, what can I place at Your lotus feet, other than my own heart? What else can I give you?" This question seemed to kindle a divine light in Baba's eyes and with an aura of love illuminating His face, Baba conveyed, "Give Me what is not Mine! Everything is Mine, except Myself; Myself is for those who love Me."

What a profound statement describing Baba's status and work as the Avatar, yet clothed in such simple words. Here, Baba seems to imply that He is in us and suffers for us to reveal Himself within us. This is the Avatar's game of love and crucifixion. So what is there for us to offer Him?

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As Baba left the home, an old blind woman was found sitting on the verandah. She had some sweets in her hand which she offered to Baba who accepted them gracefully, as if they were most precious and that He was really happy to receive them. At Dr. K. Suryanarayana's house, all the members of the family stood in two rows so Baba could walk between them. Hanumantha Rao, a government official, was introduced to Baba and he in turn introduced his sister's daughter with the remark that she had secured first class in her last examination. Baba called her to Him and joked, "I like first class people, because I am the First of the first class, in everything!"

Baba also visited the home of Y. Ranga Rao, the "R" of KDRM. Ranga Rao was one of the pioneers of Baba work in Andhra. Owing to some of his profound experiences, he had a rock-like conviction in Baba's divinity. He was outspoken to the point of bluntness as far as Baba's Avatarhood was concerned.

Once it had been arranged for a high government official to meet Ranga Rao. Immediately Ranga Rao began declaring to him in no uncertain terms Baba's greatness. The official was not responsive; he didn't pay attention to Ranga Rao as he continued to work on various files before him. Ranga Rao stopped and said, "Excuse me, Sir, but it seems to me that it is stupid of you to behave like this!"

This got the man's attention for he had never been spoken to like that in his office before. Ranga Rao explained, "Here I am, telling you about Avatar Meher Baba, the most important thing you will ever hear in your entire life, and you aren't even listening. Tell me frankly, if you are not interested, I'll leave, for I have better things to do with my time than wasting such precious news on one who is acting so foolishly!"

The official was completely taken aback, but he did put aside his files and give Ranga Rao his undivided attention. What he made of Ranga Rao's discourse on Meher Baba cannot be said, for he never invited Ranga Rao back again. But the incident must have made a lasting impression upon him, for words spoken with love and conviction in Baba have a deep inner impact on people, regardless of whether they accept

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Baba or not.

Y. Ranga Rao was a lion in Baba's work and was responsible for the first Meher Baba Center in Andhra being established in Eluru. Around him gathered a small group of dedicated Baba workers who were, in turn, responsible for spreading Baba's message and establishing centers in other parts of Andhra. This early group of Baba lovers in Eluru consisted of two Sastris, Subramanyam and Ramalingeshwar; five Raos, Poornachandra, Dr. Kondala, Chelapathi, Jagannadha, and Ramamohan; T.V.S. Prasad, P. Balaramaiah, Dr. Suryanarayana and others.

They were all completely dedicated to Baba and, in fact, witnessing their fiery conviction in Baba, some will be reminded of the lines of a mystic who exhorted:

Thrive, thrive, O Love Divine, thy happy madness
Sole remedy for all life's ills and sadness!

Baba seemed very happy to be visiting Ranga Rao's house and blessed all the members of his dear family. To Dhannama, Ranga Rao's wife, Baba conveyed, "Don't worry about anything. Ranga Rao is very dear to Me." And with a delightful, radiant smile, Baba moved on to the next house.

Y. Ramamohan Rao Keeps Watch at the Gate

Baba visited the home of K. Subramanyam Sastri. The first Baba Center in Andhra had been opened in his house. There was a painted portrait of Baba there, done by Ranga Rao, which Baba reverently bowed to and touched its feet. Then Baba gestured for His *arti* to be performed, at the end of which, Baba threw a piece of *prasad* to Y. Ranga Rao who caught it. Perhaps this was in appreciation for all of his efforts in Baba's cause. Baba also threw a piece to Subba Rao who missed it the first time around, but was able to catch it the second time. Apart from the spiritual significance of giving *prasad*, Baba's making a game out of it in this way always kept the atmosphere light and lively.

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At K.L. Radha's house, Baba was offered some fruit juice. He sipped a little and then gave it to Mrs. Radha and told her to drink the rest, spelling on His board, "When God gives you a son, name him Meher Das." The *mandali* were offered soft drinks but when Dr. Deshmukh wanted a second bottle, Baba lovingly teased him and told him he had had enough.

Dr. K. Suryanarayana was also honored with a house visit. He was commonly known to the *mandali* as Dr. Kanakadandi and he looked after the *mandali's* health during the entire tour. From the way he would listen to our complaints and then dispense some homeopathic treatment, we suspected the cures were more due to his absolute conviction in Baba's divinity and to his taking Baba's name as he prescribed, than to the medicine itself.

In addition to his medical duties, Dr. Kanakadandi's great love for Baba inspired him to pitch in and help make the *mandali* comfortable in any way he could, doing little favors for them every chance he got.

During the house visits, whenever Baba was introduced to anyone who was ill, He would usually give them special *prasad* or give them certain instructions to follow. For example, at the home of Y. Ramamohan Rao, when Baba was told there was something wrong with Ramamohan Rao's wife's eyes, He instructed, "Take a glass of water and add a pinch of clean table salt. Wash your eyes several times a day and each time repeat My name seven times before washing." Repetition of Baba's name with love is, in fact, the cure for this disease called life.

Ramamohan Rao brought his fifteen-month-old baby to Baba. The child looked at Baba very intently the whole time he was with Him. When Baba got into the car to leave, the little one stared at Baba as if he knew Him.

Perhaps it is fitting here to say something about Y. Ramamohan Rao, one of the early staunch Baba workers. During Baba's 1953 visit to Eluru, Ramamohan Rao once asked Baba to grant him such a *darshan* that he would only be aware of Baba and nothing else. Baba told him that he should not ask for such a thing, but then, some time later, when they happened

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to be together, Baba placed His hand on Ramamohan Rao's chest. Instantly the world vanished and all Ramamohan Rao saw, wherever he looked, was Baba.

In this dazed state, Baba led him to the dais where a very brief program had been arranged, but Ramamohan Rao did not see any of the people there, he only saw Baba. A little later, Baba touched him on the shoulder and the experience ended—he again became aware of the people, the hustle and bustle around him.

In 1953, as in 1954, Baba was staying in Katta Subba Rao's garden. As they walked in the garden Baba casually asked Ramamohan Rao, "Well, have you had My *darshan*?" "Yes." "What do you think about it now?"

Ramamohan Rao folded his hands to Baba and replied, "Please Baba, I do not want that *darshan* hereafter. How can I be your worker if I am in that state? Bless me so that I may work for You, Baba. I wish to work for You, live for You and die for You. That is my only request." Baba looked immensely pleased.

So perhaps it is not surprising that when, one time in 1953 while Baba was staying in the Kuti, Ramamohan Rao was asked by Baba to stand watch at the gate to see that no one entered, he took this duty very seriously indeed.

He began his watch at the gate in the early afternoon and it was not too long before Subba Rao drove up in his car with sweets and snacks for Baba and His *mandali* for tea. But imagine his surprise when Ramamohan Rao stepped forward and announced, "You can't come in." It was Subba Rao's garden, Baba was his guest, he was bringing food for Baba and the *mandali* and yet, here he was being denied access to his own property.

"It is Baba's order," Ramamohan Rao explained and it is indicative of Subba Rao's great love for Baba, that he did not insist but accepted the order in a cheerful spirit, as Baba's will. Some time after this, seven Muslim fakirs came to the gate and said they wanted to see Baba. Ramamohan Rao told them they could not come in, that Baba was resting and was not to be disturbed by anyone. "Better to wait outside for ten or

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fifteen minutes," Ramamohan Rao advised, "until Baba calls for you."

"No, no, we must have Baba's *darshan* immediately," they insisted, but Ramamohan Rao was equally adamant and would not let them in and after a while they left.

Shortly after this, Baba called Ramamohan Rao to the Kuti and asked him if anything had transpired. Ramamohan Rao said that Subba Rao had come, but he had refused to let him in. Baba seemed pleased at this obedience, but when He was informed about the seven fakirs He looked concerned.

"Why did you do that?" Baba asked. "Quick, go find them and bring them here." So Ramamohan Rao left immediately and went into the city of Eluru itself, looking everywhere he could think of, but he couldn't find the fakirs. After several hours of fruitless searching he returned to the garden and Baba, on spotting him, immediately gestured, "Well? What happened?"

"I couldn't find them, Baba," Ramamohan Rao confessed, whereupon Baba surprised him by gesturing, "Don't worry. It doesn't matter." What the significance of this was Baba never explained. But Ramamohan Rao's wholehearted and literal obedience to Baba's orders needs no explanation.

A Loaf of Bread Brings the Wine of Love

Returning once more to the account of Baba's second visit to Andhra, on the afternoon of February 24, Baba visited the K. P. High School. On His own He gave a brief message to the students and staff who had assembled to welcome Him:

I will say what I want to say in a very few words. I love children and never feel more happy than to be among them. I would prefer to have time to play with them rather than have all this garlanding, *puja*, *arti*, etc., specially because I am ustad [expert] in playing marbles. Ages ago, when I woke up, I began to play marbles with the Universe.

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I would feel specially happy if you pupils one day become . . . torch-bearers of the Truth that is Baba.

After this message, sweets were brought to Baba to distribute, but as there was so little time Baba merely touched them so they could be given as His *prasad* after He left. Baba told the boys, "Baba would like to embrace each and every child here, but there isn't time. My love to you all."

It is hard to give an idea of what this whirlwind day of visits was like. So much love was given and received, and it all happened so quickly that it was like a two-day *darshan* program compressed into a few hours. The *mandali* found it physically exhausting, but exhilarating and heart-warming nonetheless. Nowhere else, to my knowledge, did Baba ever make house visits on such a scale; it was impossible for those of us following Baba to fully appreciate the love-drama being enacted that day, but there were numerous episodes which touched us.

As Baba was leaving the home of one of His lovers, about forty boys from a nearby school surrounded Him and lovingly pleaded with Him to visit their school. Moved by their love, Baba instantly agreed and all went to the school, where Baba gave His *darshan* to all the boys there.

That afternoon, as Baba was driving from place to place, He inexplicably ordered His car to stop at the gate of a house. The organizers were mystified since this house was not one scheduled to be visited. Naturally all the cars and buses following Baba's car also stopped and this caravan quickly attracted attention, especially once people saw that Meher Baba was in one of the cars.

The commotion eventually reached D. Sree Rama Murthy (now staying at Visakhapatnam) who was sleeping in his house after the midday meal. Somehow the shouts that Meher Baba had come penetrated his sleep and, although he was clad only in his *dhoti*, he rushed out of the house and pushed his way through the crowd to Baba's car. His wife, children and mother all followed. Baba smiled and called Murthy to Him and, in His unique style gestured, "What was the problem

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about bread?" Murthy was greatly astonished to hear the word 'bread' which dumbfounded him. Before he could say anything, Baba with His omniscient smile added, "And why did you give it?" Instead of replying to the questions, Murthy simply folded his hands with speechless wonder written on his face, and bowed down to Baba.

The organizers were much surprised at this unscheduled stop and Baba's unexpected questions, for they did not know the hidden story. Murthy had only heard of Meher Baba the day before and had, at that time, denounced Him and His followers! He was a staff nurse in charge of the kitchen of a government hospital. The previous day, a friend of his who was a Baba lover had approached him and asked for some bread from the hospital kitchen. I don't know exactly why, but something must have come up which necessitated the hospital's bread—perhaps, it was felt by one of the *mandali* that it would be more suitable for Gabriel Pascal who was expected to arrive shortly. At any rate, Murthy refused, saying that the entire quota of bread was for the patients and not for Baba or His people, who were, he added with some heat, "Thieves. They simply plunder the country in the name of 'Babas'."

In spite of this, the Baba lover continued to press him and eventually Murthy gave in, saying, "Because you are my friend, I am giving this bread to you and not to your Baba or His followers." But so marvelous are Baba's ways, that even this "gift," so grudgingly given, brought Baba to the gate outside Murthy's home the very next day. After seeing Baba and feeling the impact of His love during their brief conversation, all of Murthy's opposition melted away and he became devoted to Baba from that moment on.

Baba once conveyed that any time a person sincerely takes even one step toward Him, He takes a hundred steps toward that person. It seems that it doesn't even matter to the Avatar whether that first step is taken in anger or defiance. The Avatar's sense of humor is such that Murthy reluctantly gave Baba a loaf of bread, but received the wine of the God-Man's love in return.

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Midnight Visit to Penugonda

Meher Baba returned to Katta Subba Rao's garden around 6:00 in the evening of February 24. After a hurried, but delicious supper, we all left in cars and buses for Tadepalligudem. Earlier, Baba had instructed us to stay awake that entire night. Some of the Baba lovers traveling with Baba began repeating in their conversation the catch phrase, "Stay awake for the Awakener" and there was a contagious feeling of enthusiasm and excitement in the air.

As we had to stay awake all night long, it did not particularly matter to us when we reached Tadepalligudem or Penugonda. There was no question of early or late for us; there was just the joy of time spent traveling with our Beloved Lord, Avatar Meher Baba. And, as it turned out, most of that night was spent in the bus, following Baba's car. The road was dark and the journey was long. Perhaps this night journey was a symbol of Baba's eternal presence with us, quietly keeping us company during the dark hours of our lives!

A little after 9:00 that evening we reached the village of Bhimadole. About five hundred people were waiting there to see the Avatar of the Age and a small *darshan* program had been arranged. Baba's regal figure, in His pink coat with a garland around His neck, was the focus of all eyes as He stepped up to the dais. Baba stood up and folded His hands to the masses who saluted Him and shouted out, "Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai."

With an air of indescribable compassion and tenderness about Him, Baba stood for a minute or two, allowing the crowd to get a good view of Him. Then He extended His hands, gesturing His blessings to all. Due to the shortage of time, Baba did not personally give *prasad* to all but He touched the baskets of sweets and bananas to be distributed later.

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From Bhimadole, Baba and His caravan set off once again for Tadepalligudem, arriving there about 10:30 that night. Arrangements for Baba's stay had been made at the Travelers' Bungalow where He had stayed during His 1953 visit. The *mandali* were accommodated in a nearby school building. We quickly unpacked our few belongings and then got ready for the onward journey to Penugonda—the subject of so much heated debate from the first day Baba arrived in Andhra.

Baba had promised He would give *darshan* there and so we continued, arriving there some time after midnight, although Penugonda was only around thirty miles from Tadepalligudem. People were waiting for Baba and when word spread that He had arrived, many more could be seen quickly hurrying toward the *darshan* site.

Baba was led to the dais. As He sat in the chair, His eyes, full of kindness, swept the crowd, seeming to note each and every individual there. The people appeared aware of the fact that Baba's visit was a special favor they were receiving and their joy in His presence was full and intense.

One member of KDRM got up and, in no uncertain terms, reprimanded the crowd for inconveniencing Baba by making Him come there. He pointed out that Francis Brabazon had come all the way from Australia and the least they, the villagers, could have done was to travel to Tadepalligudem to have Baba's *darshan* there. But instead of being willing to go such a short distance, they had made Baba miss His night's sleep to come to them. This sharp speech was not only impromptu, but also in Telugu, so it wasn't until later that we learned what had transpired.

One of the local landlords then got up and read out a welcome address to which Baba replied:

Let my coming here, at this late hour, even for a short period, be worthwhile by your being inspired to try to love Me and find Me within yourselves. My blessings to you all.

Baba had originally agreed to visit Penugonda for only five minutes, but He spent nearly an hour there. So, when the organizers requested Him to have tea and snacks, He gestured

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that He and His party had to return to Tadepalligudem immediately.

And once again we got back into the bus and drove through the night. It was around 4:00 A.M. and still dark when we returned to Tadepalligudem, but Bapi Raju and his wife had hot water waiting for Baba who had a quick bath and then drove straight to Dr. Dhanapathi Rao's home. It was now nearing 5:00 in the morning, the time of the Avatar's birth.

Washing the Avatar's Feet

There were many people waiting for Baba outside Dr. Dhanapathi Rao's and, in their enthusiasm to receive Baba, they swept forward to garland Him before He entered the house. Although Baba had not slept at all the previous night and had spent most of it driving back and forth, He lovingly allowed Himself to be garlanded and even permitted those who so wished not only to bow down to Him but also to touch His feet as well. This unexpected permission was indeed Baba's birthday gift to those who were fortunate enough to be there.

Baba then quickly walked into Dhanapathi's house with the *mandali*, KDRM and a few of the local Baba lovers. As the house was not big enough to accommodate everyone assembled there, Baba instructed that the doors be closed after His party entered.

Even so, the room where Baba took His seat was packed to capacity, while those outside clustered around the open windows so they too could have a glimpse of Baba, the most beautiful One. The auspicious moment of Baba's birth drew near and Baba stood up and asked Eruch to read the Prayer of Repentance which He had dictated in November 1952:

Om Parabrahma Paramatma! Ya Yazdan!

La ilaha illallah! O God, Father in Heaven!

We repent, O God Most Merciful, for all our sins; for every thought that was false or unjust or unclean; for every word spoken that ought not to have been spoken; for

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every deed done that ought not to have been done.

We repent for every deed and word and thought inspired by selfishness, and for every deed and word and thought inspired by hatred.

We repent most specially for every lustful thought and every lustful action; for every lie; for all hypocrisy; for every promise given but not fulfilled; and for all slander and backbiting.

Most specially also, we repent for every action that has brought ruin to others; for every word and deed that has given others pain; and for every wish that pain should befall others.

In Your Unbounded Mercy, we ask You to forgive us, O God! for all these sins committed by us, and to forgive us for our constant failures to think and speak and act according to Your Will.

Amen!

Ramjoo and Dhake then read the Urdu and Marathi translations. Even those outside the house stood in rapt silence as the prayers were read out. When that was over, Baba sat down and, with a look expressing both majesty and divine authority, conveyed:

I have asked God, whoever He may be, to forgive you for all your weaknesses. From today, try to be honest in your thoughts, words and deeds. Henceforth, you are responsible for your own actions.

This birthday gift of forgiveness which Baba bestowed on all the participants was an act of His grace and, at the same time, it extended an invitation to His lovers to begin to please God, from that moment on, through their every thought, word and deed.

It also serves as a call to His lovers today. For every day in our life with Meher Baba, we can partake of this birthday gift by offering the same prayer. As we do so, it is helpful to have a picture of Meher Baba, the Avatar, before us. Any of His pictures acts as a gateway to the Infinitude of His Being. And

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when we pray with all sincerity, our prayer becomes a love-line through which flows the Avatar's unconditional love and compassion.

Meher Baba as the Avatar is infinitely more eager to help, guide and forgive us, than we are to confess our weaknesses to Him and to ask for His help. So, as we repeat the prayer after glorifying His divine names, His clemency and companionship descend upon us. And this simple act of self offering becomes a praise-filled way of rededicating our lives anew to Him. A life lived just for Him is a joyous celebration which culminates, eventually, in dying in Him—the One beyond births and deaths.

Now, Dr. Dhanapathi and members of his family came forward and were granted the unique privilege of washing Baba's feet with *panchamruta* (literally: five nectars; in this case represented by honey, *ghee*, milk, curds and coconut water). When this was complete, Baba remarked that it was the first time since February 1937 that He had allowed His feet to be so washed. Then, with His characteristic humor, Baba added that His feet should now be washed clean with plain water lest ants be attracted to the sweetness of the *panchamruta* and bite Him. Eruch and Gustadji washed Baba's feet again, with water this time.

Veena and Meera

Standing in the room near Baba were the Pillay sisters. Meera was disabled and the other, Veena, seemed mentally unbalanced and she stared at Baba with an unblinking look of amazement on her face. Baba allowed them both to garland Him and remarked that Veena was not mad, but that her mind had been overpowered by her love for Him. Baba called her close, pressed her eyes and gestured, "Don't worry." In spite of her dazed look, Baba's love must have been felt by her for she suddenly started smiling.

In a letter to Bili Eaton, Mani writes about the effect Veena's first meeting with Baba in 1953 had on her:

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Veena is the daughter of a retired Civil Engineer. She and her sister. . . both love Baba, as does the father. . . . She met Baba in Andhra during His mass darshan tour. Soon after, when we were in Dehra Dun, we heard that one of the sisters (i.e. Veena) was behaving strangely and had changed completely from her normal active social self. She scarcely spoke or ate, kept to herself and would sit for hours with a rapt expression on her face. The only time she "came to life" was when they recited the arti before Baba's picture. Then she would participate and stand before Baba's picture with joined hands.

Some days after we heard this, Baba had the father bring her to Dehra Dun. She has a dark complexion, is petite, gentle and graceful, has a sweet, piquant face. She would look at Baba with such a happy lighted smile, speak little and only when pressed for an answer, and would be reluctant to eat anything until Baba fed her a little and then told her to eat some more. At times, her face would suddenly light up; sometimes she would point vaguely at "nothing" or make a gesture before her face as if she were removing a cobweb.

Next day, Baba sent her home with the father with special instructions about her. We heard nothing further until about a month ago. Now she has changed still more. She goes from house to house—anybody's house she feels like, making no distinction whatever about whose house it is. Some understand, others don't. Friends fearing someone may take advantage of the girl's state, tell the father to have her put away in a mental home. He wrote to Eruch that he just could not do that, for he knew Veena's state of mind was not from material causes and had been convinced beyond doubt since his experience one night.

He sleeps in the same room as his daughter. . . . He once woke from deep sleep to find the room unnaturally bright. Looking toward Veena's bed, he found it empty. Then he saw, in a corner of the room, Baba standing before the kneeling figure of Veena. When he recovered from his dazed stupor, the father, too, went forward to have Baba's

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darshan and stood waiting his turn. Veena must have felt someone was behind her, for she raised her head from His feet and turned to look around. At that the vision disappeared.

Returning to our narrative of Baba's birthday, a little after 5:30 that morning, after His feet had been washed with the *panchamruta* and the plain water, Baba went outside and took His seat on the raised platform under an awning. There were around five hundred people gathered there. Some of them had been allowed to touch Baba's feet when He first returned from Penugonda, and many of the others had just watched Baba's feet being washed by Dhanapathi's family. Even though the usual instruction forbidding anyone to touch Baba's feet was given, the people assumed the order was no longer in force and they surged forward so they too could have the blessed fortune of touching the Avatar's feet. It took the *mandali* a little time to straighten out the confusion and to restore order. Baba addressed the crowd:

If you love Me, why can't you listen to Me? When I say "Do not touch My feet," why don't you obey? You do not understand the importance of this moment for which even great sages long for ages. Take advantage of this occasion by observing what I say, "Don't touch My feet."

After listening to Baba, all present returned to their seats under the *pandal*. Then prayers from different religions and in different languages were offered and Baba *artis* were sung. Following this, Baba allowed all to come forward to have His *darshan*. As this was now according to Baba's wish, He seemed to pour His radiance on all who filed past Him. The morning was breaking, but the rising sun was only a pale reflection of the Sun of Love, the Avatar, warming the hearts of His lovers and filling them with His light.

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"I Am Never Born. . . ."

Baba returned to the Travelers' Bungalow and the *mandali* to the school building. After our previous night's vigil, most of us decided that first we wanted to bathe. There was no question of having any rest, for at 7:30 there was to be a procession through the streets of the town, escorting Baba to the *darshan pandal*. And sure enough, soon we saw a crowd arriving, some singing, some dancing.

Baba was requested to sit in a decorated car and the rest of us walked behind. Some Baba lovers continued to dance, some sang Telugu songs in praise of Baba, while a group of devotees cried out heartily, and often, "Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai!" Women carrying their children in their arms struggled through the crowd to get close to Baba so He would bless their children with His touch.

It took approximately an hour to return to Dhanapathi's house. The *darshan* program began with Ramjoo reading out an editorial Filis Frederick had written for "The Awakener," a part of which is given below:

This February, on the twenty-fifth, according to the Western calendar, Meher Baba will be sixty years old.

But the real BABA can never grow old; the real BABA is eternal. Who is this "real BABA," whom he says we have never seen?

This "real BABA" is our Real Self. . . .

"There have been Buddhas before me and there will be Buddhas after," said the Gautama, predicting the greatest one would bear a name meaning Mercy. Meher Baba means Father of Mercy. "Whenever there is a decline of virtue and a resurgence of evil and injustice in the world, I, the Avatar, take human form," said Krishna.

Our *namaskar* to Him Who Has Come Again. . . The Awakener Divine!²⁹

In response to the various recitations, Baba conveyed:

The more you try to understand God, the less you understand

²⁹ *The Awakener*, Vol. I, No. 3, p. 3.

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Him. How can He, who is beyond all explanation, be explained? His being infinitely simple had rendered Him infinitely difficult. The secret is that you have to become what you already are.

You can know Me as the One in you only when the veil of separateness is lifted. This can be done only if you love Me honestly and wholeheartedly. . . .

There can be no compromise in love. It has either to be full or not at all. I say with divine authority today that I am the Ancient One and the slave of those who really love Me. Lose yourself in Baba and you will find that you eternally are Baba.

Baba then had His special birthday message, which He had dictated before leaving Mahabaleshwar, read out and it was later translated into Telugu for the two thousand people assembled there. The message is:

I am never born, I never die. Yet every moment I take birth and undergo death. The countless illusory births and deaths are necessary landmarks in the progression of man's consciousness to Truth—a prelude to the Real Death and the Real Birth. The Real Death is when one dies to self; and the Real Birth is when, dying to self, one is born in God to live forever His eternal Life consciously.

Although I am present everywhere eternally in my formless Infinite State, from time to time I take Form. This taking of Form and the leaving of it is termed My physical birth and death. In this sense, I was born sixty years ago and will die when My Universal Work is finished.

Your celebrating My *shastipurti* birthday today with all your love, enthusiasm and zeal has deeply touched Me and makes Me give you My blessings for the ultimate understanding that we are all One; that God alone is Real and that all else is false.

As the Telugu translation of this message was being read out, for a while Baba sat on the ground. When He returned to

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the dais, He conveyed that He had sat on the ground to make all feel that He, honestly, was one of them. These words thrilled the hearts of the spellbound audience. But even more than His words, Baba's presence, a subtle sense of bliss and love, seemed to sweep over the crowd. What a supreme birthday present—for each it was different yet the same, a portion of His pure love.

Still, some may wonder how the Birthless One can take birth and how the Deathless One can drop His body. How can Infinity descend into a finite human form and yet simultaneously experience the Infinity of God? Jean Adriel, in her book on Meher Baba's life, *Avatar*, writes:

Perhaps it is because our own human nature is still so unredeemed that some of us deny a God who dares to be human. Yet, logically, a Perfect One, whose work is the redemption of mankind, must be perfect in his humanity. He should function with all the powers of the human being raised to the nth degree.

Whatever the human mind may conceive as comprising the fulfilled personality, he should have: that inner beauty which expresses itself as grace, charm and compassion; that inner poise which gives detachment and a sense of humor; that inner joy which expresses itself in work and in play. He should be human as well as God-like; and he should at all times express the ecstasy and peace of God. Otherwise the "Word made flesh" is a contradiction in terms. God, to be God, the incarnate Avatar, should be Master of all masters and masteries.

Such a Master, Baba is.³⁰

At about 10:30, all stood up and one of the *mandali* began to recite Baba's *arti*. To the amazement of all, Baba straightaway took the *arti* tray with the burning camphor on it and waved the tray Himself to the assembled masses while *arti* continued, as if Baba were performing *arti* to His own Self in all.

At Meherastana, on February 10, which happened to be Baba's sixtieth birthday according to the Zoroastrian calendar,

³⁰ *Avatar*, pp. 94-95.

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Baba declared His Avatarhood. In Andhra, on February 25, Baba's birthday according to the Western calendar, Baba authoritatively declared that He is the Ancient One. And more than that, that He is the slave of His lovers. On His sixtieth birthday, Baba brought God to the world and declared, "I have come."

The Avatar's love is always present on earth and He eternally exists in His formless state. But His physical incarnation, as the Avatar, has a special role to play in awakening humanity. The significance, for humanity, of Baba's sixtieth birthday was His open revelation that the Avatar once more was on earth and waiting to receive all who come to Him. No one else in the world is able to give such a gift of pure love which, once received, can never be taken away.

Some of this is expressed in a poem written by one of my dear friends and co-worker:

M arvelous is the mystery of the Avatar's incarnation.
E verywhere on earth, in everything, in all creation
H e is born. And at every moment we have the chance to
E xperience consciously His eternal life simply through
R enouncing ourselves—this "death" is His birth
celebration!
B ecause God exists, we exist. He is our only True life
A nd yet, enslaved to form we "live," knowing only strife,
B ondage and despair, until His love illuminates our morn
A nd our heart's radiance proclaims once more — "He is
born!"

"For Me or for Food ?"

It was after 11:00 when Baba left the *pandal* from the morning's program, but by 12:30 He was on the move again; this time visiting a rice mill in town where arrangements had been made for Baba to serve food to poor families.

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The plans had been worked out in advance and the poor had already assembled by the time Baba arrived. Huge pots of cooked food were ready for Baba who began the distribution by personally serving some of the men, women and children who had gathered. Then others continued serving the large crowd which had come.

Meanwhile, Chhagan, who used to cook for Baba and also helped Eruch in attending to Baba's personal needs, noticed a small group of people standing under a tree outside the Travelers' Bungalow. On inquiring, he discovered that they were Baba lovers from Andhra who had been traveling with Baba. One of them, Manik, explained that Baba had asked them to join His group and to tour Andhra with Him.

However, due to the pressure of attending to so many details, the organizers had somehow not been informed that these five people were part of Baba's party. So they had been told to find their own accommodations and see to their own food. They had not been permitted to have their breakfast with Baba's *mandali*, nor were they allowed to stay in the school building. Manik, who had a bit of a temper in those days, was eager to see Baba to complain to Him about this treatment.

It should be added here that such confusion or misunderstandings were not uncommon during Baba's tours, but these incidents brought to the surface negative feelings which had to be faced (in this case Manik's resentment of KDRM's way of handling things). And the final result was always that those involved came closer to Baba in their love for Him. Baba plays His game not only through clarity and understanding, but also through confusion and misunderstandings.

Chhagan was sympathetic and, on his own, went inside and brought out sweets and fruit that had been offered to Baba. The group was happy to receive such bounty from Baba's residence and their spirits were quickly restored.

A little after this, Baba returned and was informed by Chhagan of what had transpired. Baba came outside and called the group to Him. He asked them why they were there even though they knew it was time for Baba to rest and that He didn't want to be disturbed. They were all contrite, but Manik,

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who had not gotten over his irritation at KDRM, began to complain about how they had been treated. Baba did not look pleased. His annoyance was not directed at KDRM, however, but at Manik. In a fiery mood He demanded, "What did you come here for? Did you come for Me, or for food?"

As soon as Baba asked this, Manik realized his folly in disturbing Baba over such a trivial matter and repented his petty-mindedness. But Baba continued, "Do you remember when I was at Vijayawada? To attend the *darshan* program you had forgotten to inform Me about, I went without food for you, and now you cannot go without food for Me. And on My birthday!"

By this time, Manik and the others were in tears and they begged Baba's forgiveness. They apologized for displeasing Baba and in their hearts they were indeed sorry that they had allowed any consideration of their own comfort to inconvenience Him. This sincere repentance on their part changed Baba's mood and, suddenly concerned and compassionate, He assured them, "I will see that from now on you get food wherever you go with Me. Today too." Baba then called for food to be brought from inside.

This loving kindness made them all feel their unworthiness even more. They said, "Baba, Chhagan already gave us some food. We don't need anything more." But Baba insisted and had a big basket of sweetmeats brought out which He then began to personally distribute to all of them.

Baba did this by tossing the sweets, throwing them in one direction while looking in another. The heavy atmosphere lifted and light-hearted merriment prevailed. Baba's ways are such that His rebukes make one want to love Him more, while his love makes one realize how unworthy of it one is. And yet, after letting His lovers experience this, Baba's compassion wipes away any lingering feelings of bitterness or self-recriminations. He makes one feel new and refreshed in His ever redeeming love.

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"Share My Love Freely"

After a brief rest following lunch, the mandali and the main Andhra Baba workers gathered in the Travelers' Bungalow. In spite of the night journey and the non-stop morning programs, Baba came out to sit with them. He looked radiant and charming, but He also seemed to be in a serious mood.

Baba instructed Y. Ranga Rao to include K. Subba Rao in the list of those called for the important workers' meeting to be held on the second of March. Referring to all of the *darshan* programs that had been held so far in Andhra, Baba conveyed, "I am fed up with all this bowing down; the gods bow down to Me so what need is there for humans to do so!" Baba explained that He wanted workers who did not just make a show of worship, but were willing to live and die for Him.

The conversation then became more general and slowly Baba's serious mood changed and He kindled a light-hearted yet profound feeling in the assembly by reminiscing about His teenage days.

The informal conversation continued and someone said, "Baba, when we tell people about You, they ask us what has happened to us, in our lives, since coming into the orbit of Your love. Some of us feel hesitant to relate our personal experiences of Your love, compassion and divinity, for fear that others will think we are trying to show off. But if we don't mention our personal experiences, then we are not doing full justice to Your unconditional love. So what should we do in such situations?"

Baba seemed pleased at this question and assured them all that when it came to sharing His love, through relating personal experiences, one need not worry about being egotistical. Of course, Baba cautioned, one should not exaggerate one's experiences for effect; one had to be honest in one's recounting and careful that the emphasis always was on Baba and not on the experience itself. Baba concluded, as long as one is sincere and earnest, He, the Avatar, would see to it that His lovers' egos do not become inflated. Hence they should not worry, but should freely share His love.

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Baba then went on to explain the ego's tricks in some detail, observing:

There is a world of difference between modesty and humility. Modesty is weakness, but humility is strength. The moment you say, "It is not my ego," or "in all humility I say," that very expression is egotistical. No sooner is humility given expression in words, than it is no longer humility. The life of humility is to be lived spontaneously and it should not give rise to any thoughts either about humility or modesty. . . .

To try to be humble is humbug. You must be so natural that your life becomes humility personified, which is then all strength and free from any weaknesses. . . .

Be natural. Whatever you are, express it unmindful of the reactions of others. If you are dishonest, don't try to hide yourself behind the curtain of honesty. That, however, does not mean that you should be dishonest. What I want to say is that you should be most natural rather than be the least bit hypocritical.

The previous year, while staying at the Travelers' Bungalow, Baba had given a discourse which was later included in *God Speaks*. Baba's comments on modesty and humility given at this time later formed the theme for Baba's message, "Meher Baba's Call," which was given out seven months later during the mass *darshan* program at Ahmednagar. What there was about the Travelers' Bungalow I don't know, but it seemed to prompt Baba to give vital discourses.

"Help Us Enthroned You in Our Hearts"

After the explanation of modesty, it was time for the afternoon *darshan* program. Baba arrived at the *pandal* about 3:30. Embracing one of His lovers who wasn't feeling well, Baba had the man sit on the dais, near Him. Baba took His seat and looked over the crowd with His indescribable look of compassion. A soft radiance seemed to emanate from Baba which

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glued every eye to Him, and made all else fade into the background.

A special intimacy was created by the fact that for those gazing at Baba, nothing else had any importance, while Baba's glance seemed to rest on each individual in the crowd, emphasizing this intimate relationship. On such occasions, Baba seemed to dole out His love in an even greater degree than usual.

In this intense atmosphere of divine love made manifest, a welcome address on behalf of the Tadepalligudem Center was read out glorifying Baba. Excerpts of it are given below:

Lord of the Universe!

We beg to pay our most humble homage on the occasion of Your Sixtieth Birthday Anniversary which You have graciously allowed us to celebrate at this place.

Though Unborn and Imperishable, You are pleased to assume a human form when the evolutionary [and involutory] process requires periodic quickening of consciousness through the Physical Presence on earth of the Avatar.

As Pure Love, which is the keynote and the very heart of Your teaching, now finds no place in the heart of humanity, You, as "Avatara-Purusha," are experiencing spiritual agony for the world's travail in its separation from Divine Love. Blessed will be humanity if it can facilitate rapid results by practicing complete surrender to Your Divine Will and unflinching readiness to carry out Your orders. . . .

We have now enthroned You in this temporarily improvised pavilion of ours; but we ever crave for Your Love and Blessings to enthrone You eternally in our hearts, to be in the world, yet not of it and to enable us to see You everywhere as the Immanent Lord of the Universe.

After this, a few other addresses were also read out. This afternoon program was considerably longer than the morning one. Out of the many things that were happening on the stage, the songs, messages, *darshan*, I wish to include one little incident

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that highlights Baba's instantaneous response to the silent cry of a yearning heart.

There was a good musician in the crowd, a singer who had met Baba at Machilipatnam and been fortunate enough to sing for Him there. He had wanted to sing for Baba on His birthday too, but the program had already been chalked out and as it was a full one, no time could be made for him. Naturally, he was very disappointed. He walked a bit away from the crowd and as he was standing there, thinking about Baba, his love for Baba welled up in his heart and without even being aware of it, he started weeping.

Perhaps in answer to this silent upsurge of love, under some pretext, Baba got up from the platform and walked to where the musician was standing. The man looked up and was startled to see Baba so close to him. Baba gestured that he could bow down to Him if he so wished.

The singer did so and then Baba conveyed, "Now, go back to your home and attend to your family duties. Do not worry. Come to see me when I come near your village." Completely satisfied, the person went back to his home and when Baba visited a nearby town, not only did he get the chance to again have Baba's *darshan*, but he was also allowed to sing to Him as well. In later years, he would offer his services many times at public events, glorifying Baba as the Avatar of the Age through his songs and music.

"Behold Him Come, the Son of God!"

Just as Baba's birthday was being celebrated at Tadepalligudem, halfway around the world, in New York City, Baba's birthday was being celebrated in the editorial offices of the *Awakener* magazine. Baba's message on Real Death and Real Birth was read out, as was Darwin Shaw's article, "A Birthday Remembrance," excerpts of which are quoted below:

Although Baba is just completing his 60th year, there is so much about him that is timeless, that it is difficult for us

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to think of him in terms of age. The Great Being behind that face and form we know and love so dearly is, as we are sure, not measurable by the passage of time, but is as immortal as the Divine Love with which we identify him.

In celebrating Baba's Birthday, therefore, we are really celebrating the return to earth of Love Divine in the form of a man we can see, love and with whom we can communicate. A Being who has, ages since, completed the long evolutionary [and involutionary] process of the Soul through numerous cycles of lives, from the original state of unconscious Divinity, to the final state of fully-realized God-hood. This is Baba, our Spiritual Master, Eternal Friend and Divine Beloved.

We have found in him the living Beauty of all our highest hopes, and we have experienced, through His Grace, a precious taste of the Divine Nectar which is, indeed, the true panacea for all the suffering, disillusionment and *mayavic* ignorance which, in one way or another, besets all humanity. And this Divine Nectar is the touch of the Master's boundless Compassion which has, somehow, in mysterious ways known only to him, found us in our far corners of the earth and awakened some measure of our slumbering consciousness from the darkened dreams of life, as seen through the distorted vision of our own selfhood.

Through Baba we have been touched by a Love too great for us to comprehend, much less ever to have deserved. We have come to him in various ways; sometimes groping, often wondering, but always with faith and longing; and he has taken us into his Infinite Heart where we have found the secret Highway to God.

We have discovered that Baba works through the very fabric of our prosaic, everyday lives to reveal an ever greater measure of the Spiritual Splendour of his True Being, and, through inwardly drawing closer to the Unveiled Reality we discern in him, we find that the Way has become clearer, easier and more sure.

As the Messianic Avatar of the Ages, Baba again comes

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forth to succor the great need of the immortal spirit of man. As such, he leads the way out of the labyrinthine maze of selfhood's false impressions, and declares with Divine authority the true nature of man and the Real Goal of Life.

Strange as it may seem to those who do not know, we have found that through loving Baba we are actually loving God; and that his Love leads us into the inner mystery of the Ocean of Divine Love that God really is. This is the Key to one of the most beautiful and overwhelming of all mystical experiences; for when we love, and inwardly keep company with the God-realized Master, we in turn become the recipients of his immeasurably greater Love; and this outpouring is more than the hard-shelled ego can bear, so it begins to die. But that dying is actually the beginning of Life, for it is the beginning of the annihilation of the false by being in the conscious Presence of the Real. . . .

The following lines [of Kabir] have been quoted by Baba . . . : "Constantly repeating Thy Name, I became one with Thee, nothing was left of me (self). How can I sing Thy praise, O Guru Mine? Wherever I cast my eyes, I perceive Thee and nothing else."

With this as the pattern of our devotion, may our "Birthday Remembrance" to Baba be a greater effort to understand and more deeply appreciate the incomparable importance of his life as it touches ours; and let us, in all sincerity, have the courage, the humility and the faith to let go of every shade of self-centered ignorance, and truly, wholeheartedly set forth on the glorious Path of Love and Truth to the Highest of the High.

Returning to the narration of events at Tadepalligudem, on the evening of the 25th, there was yet another program, this time mostly of dance. At 7:30 Baba came to the *pandal* and, shortly after, a dance was performed for Him by Dharma Rao's two daughters. One enacted the role of Krishna, the other of Radha.

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Baba enjoyed seeing His past *lila* enacted and He called the girls to Him and expressed His loving appreciation of their dance. Then, looking at those around Him, He added, "On the second of March, remind Me to explain about My Dance. I have not yet explained My first original Dance." However, as it turned out, during the momentous meeting, no one remembered to ask Baba about His first original Dance and so it still has not been explained.

After the last dance performance there was a fireworks display, the highlight of which was when the fiery explosions spelled out in bright colors, "Avatar Meher Baba." This was a glorious termination to the birthday celebration of the One who is birthless and deathless.

Josephine Ross met Meher Baba during His first visit to the States in 1931, at Harmon-on-Hudson. She was captivated by His divine love. In the subsequent years, her love for Baba inspired her to write many beautiful poems, some of which were published in "Meher Baba Journal" and I remember reading them and being touched. In her poem, "To Baba . . . The Awakener," she writes:

He Who glows within the rose,
He Who every mystery knows,
He Who comes like gentle rain
Soothing all our earthly pain;

The true Awakener of the heart
Who sees the Whole within the part;
Who raises man above the earth,
Renewing him in mystic Birth.

A flame, a fire, a perfect flower,
A penetrating Cosmic Power;
A cleaving sword to strike away
The crudities of mortal clay.

He Who glows within the rose,
He Who every mystery knows,
On the path where Saints have trod,
Behold Him come, the Son of God!³¹

³¹ "Meher Baba Journal", Vol. III, No. 9, p. 519.

**SHAMA-PARWANA AND SOME
MEMORABLE INCIDENTS
1954 - PART IX**

Divine Shama: The Illusion-Consuming Flame

On the morning of February 26, the day after Meher Baba's birthday, the *mandali* gathered in His presence. Baba told Ramjoo that He wished to say something on *naaz* and *niyaz*. He asked whether Kishan Singh, who had been given the duty of keeping an account of Baba's second Andhra visit, was there. As it turned out, Kishan was still in the school building where the *mandali* were lodged. Hearing this, Baba looked a little annoyed and gestured, "During this tour, whenever I have the urge to say something, something goes wrong: there is some sort of disturbance; the microphone malfunctions or the ones whom I expect to be present are not there."

One of the *mandali* quietly slipped out and hurried over to the school building to tell Kishan that Baba wanted him and very soon Kishan arrived. Before beginning the discourse Baba glanced around the room. The look in Baba's eyes made all fall silent in anticipation of what He was about to say. The next moment Baba's graceful fingers sped over His board and the message on *naaz* and *niyaz* began.

My hand automatically reached for my pen to take notes. I have taken the liberty of editing my notes taken at that time in the light of explanations Baba gave us later, such as His illuminating statement that "The Avatar *becomes* and the *Sadguru acts*." So the following is not a verbatim rendering, but is the edited version of the notes I took at the time. Baba conveyed:

Today, I want to tell you something about the two Urdu words, *naaz* and *niyaz*. In the past, enlightened Sufi poets used these terms as well as *shama* and *parwana*. These terms have now become quite common in poetry, but the real esoteric meaning behind them has been lost.

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Naaz, (also known as *nakhara*) refers, on the human level, to the caprices or whims of the beloved expressed in the relationship with the lover. In this game of love, the whims of the beloved often change before the lover can fulfill them. Thus the beloved ever remains unsatisfied, and his or her *naaz* continually displays its various facets.

Sufis regard a Qutub (*Sadguru* or Perfect Master) as the perfect personification of *naaz*—as one filled with divine *naaz*. This is because the Perfect Master is infinitely indifferent. One may wonder how God, Who is the source of everything, and a Perfect Master, who is God-personified, can be indifferent, cold and uncaring; His infinite independence makes this impossibility possible.

Even on the ordinary human level, the beloved can be indifferent to the lover. The divine Beloved, Perfect Master, who is the very Ocean of Love, also can appear indifferent and callous toward His lovers. Yet the life of each lover is totally dependent upon the Master's every *naaz* (whim). But there is a difference between the *naaz* of the divine Beloved and the *naaz* of an ordinary beloved. The whims of the latter gratify the beloved's ego. They are used to demonstrate the control the beloved has over the lover. The *naaz* of the divine Beloved, however, is the medium through which the lover is helped to become free of the limitations of the ego.

This point was explained more fully when Baba began to discourse on *shama* and *parwana*, but before continuing with this, I would like to interject here a brief profound exposition Baba dictated later that year: "God is absolutely independent, and the universe is entirely dependent upon Him. . . . Between God and the universe, infinite mercy and unbounded love act as a prominent link which is eternally made use of by men who become God or by God who becomes Man."

God's indifference, therefore, is only apparent. And God's independence is such that He is able to even use that indifference as a medium for the infinite mercy and unbounded love which is the link between His independent state and the universe.

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But this is perhaps made even more explicit in the remainder of Baba's discourse which is given below.

Baba continued:

Now what is *niyaz*? *Niyaz* literally means supplication or prayer, but in its true sense, it refers to the lover's dancing to every tune of the Perfect Master's (divine Beloved's) *naaz*. This requires great preparedness on the part of the lover—to live wholly and solely for the Beloved and not for one's self. It is not easy to respond cheerfully to the Beloved's *naaz*. Those lovers who are able to lead such a life are rare.

Now, there is another aspect to this game of love which is even more profound. *Shama* literally means the flame of a candle. It is used to symbolize the All-consuming life of God as lived by the Avatar. The Avatar's lover is likened to a moth, *parwana*.

As the Avatar, God, the Infinite Reality, assumes a human body—puts on the cloak of illusion. As soon as the Avatar dons this cloak, the sufferings of the world devolve upon Him. So the Avatar, who is infinite bliss, infinitely suffers.

Why does the Avatar suffer in and through the cloak of illusion? Or why does the divine *Shama* keep burning? It is in order that others, who are trapped in their cloaks of illusion, might become as free as God, the Infinite.

In fact, the Avatar, as the Eternal Divine Beloved, experiences the sufferings of the world as His own.

People suffer for innumerable reasons—physical and mental. But this suffering, as it revolves around desires rooted in illusion, binds those who suffer even more tightly to illusion. Therefore, this kind of suffering is termed "illusory suffering" because such suffering is grounded in illusion.

The Avatar, however, wants to free people from their suffering, so He wants to make them suffer for God. This suffering is known as "real suffering" because it loosens the bindings of people's *sanskaras* (mental impressions)

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and leads them to Reality.

How does the Avatar bring this about? He burns His own cloak of illusion (which is His constant crucifixion) so that others' illusory cloaks will also be burned. And the brilliance of the Avatar's *Shama* attracts the moths (*parwanas*). The Avatar burns His cloak of illusion to attract His lovers to Him. He suffers infinitely and this suffering draws His lovers to Him. Once His lovers are drawn to Him, His *naaz* may make them suffer, but this suffering is "real suffering" as it frees them from all suffering and eventually unites them with God.

The life of the Avatar is an Illusion-consuming Flame. The Avatar's lovers, like moths, gather, hovering about Him, the Flame. A few are even so possessed by love that they fly into the Flame and burn themselves, their false selves, and so experience the "I am God" state. To be so consumed by love, however, depends upon the grace of the Avatar.

As Baba finished, He put the alphabet board on His lap, holding it gracefully between His fingers while a profound silence settled over the room. Baba, the Divine *Shama*, the illusion-consuming Flame, looked so resplendent that all eyes were centered on the radiance of His face, and all hearts were moved by His compassion and His sacrifice in suffering for the whole world.

Barbadi and Abadi: Ruin and Prosperity

The hushed atmosphere in the room, after Baba concluded the absorbing discourse on *shama* and *parwana*, did not last long. One of the local organizers approached Baba and started discussing the morning program of house visits with Him. D. Satyanarayana was scheduled to have Baba come to his home first. But, as in Eluru, Baba on His own changed the schedule and went to visit someone who was not on the list at all—B. Bhaskara Raju.

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The previous day K. Sastri had asked Bhaskara, "Is Baba going to visit your home tomorrow?"

"I don't know," he replied.

"Don't you know the program of house visits?" Sastri asked incredulously and then added, "Tomorrow Baba will visit your house."

A little later, when Bhaskara saw Dhanapathi, he mentioned this and Dhanapathi told him that his name was not on the list of those to be visited by Baba. "Come to my house," Dhanapathi said, as he thought that in this way, Bhaskara would be able to have at least some time with Baba in the morning since Baba was definitely going to visit his house.

Bhaskara didn't know what to do. One member of KDRM assured him that Baba wasn't going to visit his house while another had told him just the opposite. Deciding finally to follow Dhanapathi's suggestion, he and his wife left their home on the morning of the 26th and went to Dhanapathi's house.

In the meantime, Baba had left the Travelers' Bungalow and had gone straight to their house. No one was there, of course, and Baba sat on a chair on the verandah for a few moments and then left, expressing His displeasure that Bhaskara was not there to greet Him! Hearing this, Dhanapathi suddenly recalled the conversation he had had the previous day and, realizing that Bhaskara must have gone to his house, rushed home in a car to bring him to Baba.

Bhaskara and his wife got into Dhanapathi's car, but by the time they returned to their home, Baba had left. In fact, He had already visited D. Satyanarayana as well and by the time they caught up with Baba, His car was stopped near the home of B. Bapi Raju. Baba gave Bhaskara a piercing look as he approached the car, and that one glance was enough to plunge him into a vortex of emotions.

Baba gestured, "Where were you when the God-Man Himself came to visit your house?" "Baba," he replied with down-cast eyes, "I was misled. I was waiting at doctor's house for Your *darshan*." He was obviously upset as he uttered these words. Bhaskara is a thin, even frail, person and, although he

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tried to keep his emotions hidden inside, his face was flushed with feeling and a moment later he wept openly like a child.

Seeing his state, Baba asked him about his health, and then affectionately, and without warning, reached out and tickled him. In spite of himself, Bhaskara began to laugh and Baba added, "Now, go home quickly and wait for Me. I will visit your house again after visiting all the other homes."

He and his wife went home immediately while Baba proceeded to Bapi Raju's house. Baba had visited here during His first Andhra tour, the previous year. At that time Bapi was working in a firm called M. B. and Sons. But the day Baba left Andhra, coincidentally Bapi was discharged from his job. He took this as Baba's blessing and was delighted that now he could work full time, not for M. B. and Sons but only for M. B.: Meher Baba.

Baba had instructed that a small sum of money be given to Bapi to be used in the work of spreading Baba's message of love and truth. Bapi had used this amount for train and bus fares to enable him to go from town to town, but he hadn't spent even a *pie* (penny) of it for food or personal comforts. He still had five rupees left from the small sum given to him.

The sincerity with which Bapi was doing the work pleased Baba and He remarked that although in the eyes of the world Bapi was a poor man, he and his family members were fortunate to be rich in Baba's love. Baba remarked that such love was rare and then added, "Even if such lovers were to forget Me, I would not forget them!"

Baba continued:

I am the Avatar, I am the Perfect Master; I am whatever you take Me to be. I am what I am, and, in fact, I am beyond that too! Those who love Baba may have to pass through a phase of suffering. But out of this *barbadi* [ruin] emerges the real *abadi* [prosperity].

Gesturing at Bapi, Baba commented cryptically, "He is now sinking in sand, next he will be floating in air and finally he will find himself established on a firm foundation."

His fingers gesturing with grace yet rapidity, Baba

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expanded on this comment. The following is the gist of what I gathered from Baba's impromptu comments:

The average man of the world feels as if he has a stable position, but remains ignorant of the fact that his very "security" is like a pool of quicksand which will drag him down. Those who are comfortable in the world seek even more comfort and there is no end to this seeking to further solidify one's position.

But the only way to achieve permanent stability is to not depend on worldly security. Invariably lovers of God do not seek a worldly refuge. In their overwhelming love for their Beloved, these lovers are unmindful of all calamities or suffering; the only thing they can cling to is their love. Hence, they are like particles of dust floating in the air.

But as soon as this type of love for the Beloved blossoms in their hearts, the love itself becomes their refuge. So they find themselves, before long, established on a rock-like foundation of unshakable faith, a profound conviction in the Beloved as Love Itself.

As for Bapi Raju, he had to pass through some really difficult times. There was even a day when his wife told him that there was no food in the house. (Just then help came, but that's a different story.) However, now, after a period of thirty-two years, he is well off financially and his conviction in Beloved Baba as the Highest of the High continues to deepen and mature.

To quote a Sufi mystic:

On some occasions, He gives by depriving you,
Sometimes He deprives you in giving.

To accept cheerfully the refusals and favors of the Divine Beloved, in a spirit of total surrender to His will, is to invite His grace.

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Flavors of Intimacy

Baba continued with His house visits at Tadepalligudem. At each home, there was a different expression of Baba's intimacy with His lovers. Baba's physical presence made a deep inroad into the consciousness of His dear ones, creating a path as it were along which their love could flow to Him more easily and more directly. These house visits helped them learn to house Him in their hearts.

At one place, the daughter of a Baba lover whom Baba called "a fine man" could not contain herself and wept uncontrollably at seeing Baba. With great tenderness, Baba consoled her with His divine touch. At another place, Baba was asked to give a name to the family's twelve-day-old son. The twelfth day happens to be the day on which Hindus name their new-born sons. Baba looked amused at this request and spelled out "Meher Kumar" on His board.

While visiting the home of a Baba lover who was in charge of the transportation arrangements, Baba casually inquired, "How many children have you?" "Seven," was the reply and Baba looked delighted. Whether Baba was pleased with the fact that he had so many children or particularly with the number seven was impossible to say. Perhaps He would have seemed as delighted had the man said, "One."

At one home, pandits chanted Sanskrit verses to honor Baba and Baba gave handfuls of sweets to the son of the host, instructing him that he should have one each day while remembering Baba. Wherever Baba found people ailing in the homes He visited, He prescribed special medication for them to take, usually along with His name.

Baba went to visit the Ganesh Rice mill where, the previous day, the poor-feeding program had been held. Baba remarked, "I am the 'poorest of the poor' so whosoever serves the poor, serves Me." During this visit it was brought to Baba's attention that Dhanapathi had forgotten to introduce some of his close family to Him. Baba teased Dhanapathi by remarking, "No one in the whole world is forgotten by Me and you forgot a few of your very close ones! What sort of a memory have you?"

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And He smiled a Baba smile.

At one point, as they were traveling, Baba's car had to wait at a railway crossing. Baba got down from the car and then, to everyone's surprise, walked into a nearby shop, ostensibly to get out of the sun. The *mandali*, meanwhile, were told to stay outside in the sun which was quite intense. But almost immediately some clouds came and gave them relief. Baba also visited the hut of a poor family and sat on the ground with them for a while. This visit had not been scheduled.

At the Divine Life Society, Baba was received with great respect and the following excerpts from their welcoming address give some idea of their reverence for Baba:

It is a great pleasure for us to present this address to You on the occasion of Your second visit to this branch. . . .

We closely followed Your latest message, "The Highest of the High." It recalls the words of Lord Sri Krishna to Arjuna demanding complete surrender to Him with body, mind and all. . . . Your words, "Make Me your constant companion" are ever roaring in our ears. . . .

Please permit us to declare to the public that You do not belong to any limited circle, but belong to one and all, the entire world.

It is neither possible nor practical to detail all the homes Baba visited, or narrate all of the special incidents of love which transpired during those visits. But perhaps something of the flavor of the intimacy of these love encounters between the Beloved and His lovers can be found in the above.

Tears Bring You Closer to Him

After completing all the other home visits, as He had promised earlier, Baba returned to Bhaskara Raju's house where he and his wife were waiting for their beloved God-Man. They paid their respects to Baba who sat down on a folding cot. Bhaskara's eyes feasted on Baba's beautiful and radiant face. Baba gestured, "Sing a nice song for Me. But be quick, I have to go

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to Gopalapuram." Bhaskara sang a song which he had composed in Hindi. Later it was recomposed in Telugu and has become a popular song among Baba lovers in Andhra. Baba looked pleased with the song.

Originally, Bhaskara and his wife had not expected Baba to visit their home. And later, when Baba assured them that He would, He also instructed them to go straight there and wait for Him, so they had not been able to get any fruits or sweets to offer to Him. This meant that Baba could not bless what was offered to Him and then have it distributed as His *prasad* to those in the house.

Although Bhaskara and his wife hadn't mentioned this, Baba suddenly asked Bhaskara's wife to get Him a glass of water. She did so, thinking Baba must be thirsty, but instead of drinking it, Baba merely dipped His fingers into the water and then gave the glass back, commenting, "Distribute the water. . . as My *prasad*."

Before He left, Baba again called Bhaskara's wife to Him and, pointing at Bhaskara, remarked, "He is my man; I hand him over to you. Look after him carefully." Bhaskara has been blessed by Baba with a strong conviction in His divinity and he continues to travel throughout Andhra to spread His message of love and truth.

A footnote to Baba's visit to Bhaskara's house can be added now as well. While there, Baba asked for the children to be called to Him. Bharati, who was three or four at the time, was eating or drinking something in the kitchen. When she was called to see Baba, she replied, "I'll come when I finish." But by the time she came out, Baba had left.

Over the subsequent three decades, although Bhaskara had many opportunities to be in Baba's company, or to attend gatherings of His lovers, it always seemed that something came up which prevented Bharati from joining the family on such occasions. In January 1985, just before Amartithi, she visited Meherazad for the first time along with her family. In our conversation, Baba's visit to her family in 1954 was mentioned and she then haltingly told me of how she had missed her chance to see Baba.

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"Why didn't I go at once when I was called?" she wondered aloud in obvious regret and repentance. "Why didn't He prompt me to go to Him? Why did He allow me to miss my chance?" she exclaimed in distress, and began to weep.

I replied, "Because He is compassionate." "Compassionate! How?" she asked, hiding her head in her sari so I would not see her crying.

"Perhaps so that you should weep in His remembrance and love Him more someday," I suggested.

"But why did it have to take thirty years before I could come here to have His *darshan*?"

"Baba knows the opportune moment when your shedding tears in love for Him will bring you closer to Him. And thirty years of waiting to receive such a great blessing is nothing!" By this time, not only were tears rolling down her cheeks, but mine as well. However, I managed to conclude, "Each drop of your tears will cleanse your heart. This will bring you closer to Him and you will find Him walking toward you."

The next day I met Bharati at Meherabad and casually remarked, "So, at last you have come to Meherabad!" This once again brought the tears to the surface and I continued, "Now you must be feeling Baba getting closer to you. Mind you, He may walk so fast that soon the span of thirty years will, by His grace, be quickly crossed!" At this we both laughed freely.

Baba Sits Majestically Atop His Car

After the house visits at Tadepalligudem, Baba left for Gopalapuram. On the way, He stopped at a small village, Ramchandrapuram. Here, everyone seemed to know of Baba and had great reverence for Him. After a small *darshan* program, Baba's *arti* was sung in chorus and then all proceeded to Gopalapuram. They arrived there around 3:00 in the afternoon.

Arrangements for Baba's brief stay had been made in the house of M. N. Swami who had vacated it for Baba's use. On

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arriving they found that tea was already ready and the *mandali* were requested to have it immediately. The tea was to be served in a nearby place and Baba permitted the *mandali*, even including Eruch, to leave Him and have tea. Only Bhaskara Raju was left waiting with Baba.

Baba seemed restless and walked from room to room in the house—a characteristic of His when engaged in inner working. In the meantime, some of the people who had gathered around the house waiting for the *darshan* program, began climbing over the compound walls so they could approach the house and see Baba.

Bhaskara saw this and was upset at this breach of discipline. His inner desire was to go out and reprimand those who were threatening to disturb Baba's privacy. Although thin and not particularly strong, he was full of fervor where Baba was concerned. Knowing what was in his mind, Baba turned to him and gestured that he shouldn't worry. But Bhaskara was still boiling within. Baba walked over to him and lovingly put His hands on his shoulders and gently pushed him until he was seated on the windowsill. Now there was no question of disobeying and leaving Baba's presence to scold the interlopers.

A little later, Baba gave Bhaskara some tea and biscuits which had been kept in the house for Him. Baba looked at him with love and tears gathered in Bhaskara's eyes. Such intimate moments with Baba which bring tears coursing down one's cheeks, whether they occur in dreams or during one's silent inner communion with Him, link a person to His Presence and softly push the individual closer to the Indivisible One—Baba!

Baba continued to seem restless, however. He was displeased that people were forced to wait outside in the hot sun for Him, while His *mandali* were leisurely having their tea. When Dhanapathi returned, Baba asked him whether he had called Baba there for the sake of the villagers or so that he could entertain the *mandali*!

Baba continued, "I will wait here for only five more minutes. Remember, I have come for these people and not for a picnic or

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tea party for the *mandali*! I don't like the idea of sitting here when people are waiting for Me there [at the *pandal*]. Once I lose my mood, I might beat you! Don't act like a fool."

Shortly thereafter, Baba left for the *pandal*, arriving there by around 3:30. The hot sun did not seem to deter the crowds, for even as Baba arrived, more people could be seen flocking to the area. From nowhere, clouds suddenly appeared and it began to drizzle. As soon as *arti* was started, it began raining more steadily and the heat was immediately dissipated and a nice cool atmosphere prevailed. The villagers considered this sudden, brief, and unexpected shower most auspicious and, who knows, perhaps indeed the rain was a tangible result of Baba's compassion for those who had stood in the hot sun waiting for Him!

People in the *pandal* started to stand up so they could have a better view of Baba. As people stood, those sitting behind them had to stand as well so they could see. Soon there was a good deal of confusion and unrest in the gathering as all started trying to get a better glimpse of Baba. Baba stood up so all could see Him and then walked to each side of the dais and folded His hands to the crowds, asking them to please remain seated.

Copies of one of the prepared messages, "Relief from Suffering," in Telugu and English, were distributed to the people. The message, though brief, has the profound simplicity of the Buddha's "four noble truths." It reads:

Man or woman, whether rich or poor, great or small, each is under the spell of some sort of suffering. The relief from every kind of suffering is within yourself, if you try, under all circumstances and in every walk of life, to think honestly, act honestly, and live honestly. When you put your wholehearted faith in God, the relief is found.

You are already in possession of Infinite power and happiness, but it is your way of life which prevents you from enjoying these eternal treasures of God.

As the leaflets were being passed out, the crowd again began to get restless. Baba once more stood and asked all to sit

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down. Then Baba Himself sat up on the top of the backrest of His chair so that everyone could have a better view of Him.

The crowd was too large, perhaps more than 13,000, for Baba to give *prasad* to each in the limited time He had available, so Baba touched the sweets to be distributed later and then left the platform and went to His car. This precipitated a headlong rush toward Baba's car. Many had brought sweets and garlands to offer Baba and, seeing that they would have no opportunity to do so, they now began throwing their garlands before Baba's car. A veritable rain of flowers poured down. Baba's car was like an island in the middle of a river of humanity that swirled about, flooding its banks, because the Ocean of Love was now in its midst.

After the car had gone only a short distance, Baba had it stopped and then got down and sat underneath a tree so His lovers would have another opportunity to see Him. But the multitude was so vast that those at the back still could not get a glimpse of Baba. Therefore, Baba climbed up to the roof of the car and stood there for a few moments, and then sat for a while so all could see Him.

Meanwhile, poor Kumar had to scramble as best he could up the back of the car so that he could hold an umbrella over Baba's head. But Baba Himself seemed unmindful of the sun as He sat there looking out over the large assemblage. Seeing Baba sitting so majestically atop the car, the people spontaneously started singing *bhajans* glorifying Him. Truly it was a spectacle that would have melted the hardest heart. Luckily there is some brief footage in the Andhra film capturing this heart-stirring event.

The crowd was so unexpectedly large because villagers had come, not just from Gopalapuram, but from many of the surrounding villages as well—traveling by bullock carts so as not to miss this rare opportunity of seeing the Avatar, God in human form, in their midst.

Baba was here for only three quarters of an hour and yet the crowd seemed to enjoy every moment spent in His company. Only a brief message had been delivered; there had been no time for singing *bhajans* during the program and Baba had

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not distributed *prasad* personally. Yet, He filled the *darshan* grounds with the music of His silence, and the sweetness of His presence radiated from the top of the car.

Simultaneous Rest and Restlessness

Baba left Gopalapuram for Nidadavolu at around 4:15 P.M. The road in places was just a country unpaved road and Baba's lovers had put flags along it as it wound through the fields so that Baba's caravan would know which way to go. Some of the *mandali* were reminded of Baba's Hamirpur tour, especially when Baba stopped the car and gave *darshan* to groups of His lovers waiting on the road for Him.

After traveling for two hours, Baba and His party reached Nidadavolu. Within ten minutes of Baba's arrival, a large *darshan* program was held. During this program, Baba spontaneously decided to convey "something special" to the gathering but as there was no microphone, Baba wasn't able to do this which displeased Him.

Although the original schedule called for Baba to spend only an hour at Nidadavolu, in addition to giving *darshan* to about 5,000 people, He decided to visit a few of His lovers' houses as well. He went to the Andhra Meher Center which was in the house of I. C. Mallikarjuna Rao. Baba bowed down to His picture there which was used for worship. He also visited the head office of KDRM.

Then Baba went to T. S. Kutumba Sastri's house where a woman who had been mistreated and finally kicked out of her home by her husband was introduced to Baba as a "very unfortunate person." There was a serious look on Baba's face and He gestured, "Why do you call her unfortunate when this has ultimately led her to be in the presence of God in human form? You should regard her as most fortunate; more fortunate than the *rishis* and *munis* who have longed for ages for My *darshan*."

Baba then lovingly turned His attention to the woman and gestured, "Don't worry, don't fear; I will help you. Remember

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Me and be happy." Baba's responses to those in need always seem so simple, and yet the God-Man's assurance, "Don't worry, I will help you," carries with it a deep internal assistance and is more effective than the most elaborate sermon from others.

Incidentally, it may be added here that although sometimes it does seem that some people yearn for the Avatar's contact for years, while others are granted this rare privilege without seemingly desiring it, the Avatar, however, in His infinite Compassion, always chooses the right moment for such contact; it is never an instant too soon or a moment too late.

A little after sunset, Baba left for Kovvur which He reached at 8:00 that night. He was led directly to P. Ramalingeshwara (Ramling) Rao's house. When the *mandali* got down from their buses, they saw a large gathering of Ramling's friends and relatives waiting to have Baba's *darshan*.

What they did not know was that Ramling's daughter was getting married and thus the ranks of those waiting to greet Baba were swelled by the guests of the wedding party. In that crowd were many of the important people from the town and women dressed in elegant and beautifully colored saris. Liveliness and joy filled the air. A nice *pandal* had been erected and a comfortable chair, covered with a lion skin, had been placed there for Baba. All of this care reflected the host's great love for Baba.

In mid-January when Ramling first heard of Baba's intended visit to Andhra, he had written Him offering his services. He wrote that from the moment Baba entered Andhra to the instant He left, he would stay with Him and assist Him in any way he could. In response to this letter, a reply was sent to Ramling in which Baba nicknamed him "Baba's P.A." meaning personal assistant.

Now, when Baba saw the large crowd waiting for Him, He turned to Ramling and remarked, "You are My P.A. You wish to see to My comfort. And yet, after the very tiring program at Gopalapuram where I had to give *darshan* from the top of the car, I find that instead of being allowed to rest here, you expect Me now to give *darshan* and meet all these people."

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Ramling was tongue-tied and immediately felt that Baba was right and that he had been inconsiderate of Baba's health in expecting Him to meet so many of his relatives and wedding guests. K. Sastri then began reprimanding him, telling him that introductions to those gathered should be postponed till the next day and Baba should be allowed to rest. This often happened around Baba, concern for His well being would prompt others to speak out in situations where normally they would remain silent.

Baba immediately intervened before any argument could ensue between Sastri and Ramling and, in His inimitable way, indirectly rebuked both of them while simultaneously reassuring them of His love: "For eternity, I have been simultaneously experiencing continual rest and continual restlessness. Don't worry about my rest, but try to anticipate my needs and listen attentively to what I say."

A Night Stay in the Launches

Changing the subject slightly, Baba went on, "At Nidadavolu, I wanted to dictate something, but they did not have a mike. Printed messages which had been dictated earlier were distributed; they have their significance, but messages dictated spontaneously are different. When I dictate on the board, on the spot, then those messages have a special significance. Last night a dance was arranged at Tadepalligudem. I had the urge to convey a message but the mike that was there was out of order."

Completely out of context, Dhanapathi suddenly interjected, "Baba, there is a good *mast* in Kovvur!" Baba smiled and commented, "Now it seems that Dhanapathi's mind, because of his love for Me, has also gone out of order! If he were to see Me as I really am, even just a glimpse, then he wouldn't interrupt Me and say, 'Baba, take rest, take food or here is a *mast*!' He will then become a *mast* himself." All present had a good laugh and this served as a signal for an informal *darshan* to begin.

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Ramling had printed copies of the welcome address which were distributed. The opening lines give an idea of his faith in Baba, for the address began, "Blessed Baba! Welcome Lord of Love, Lord Siva Himself." Then those present were introduced to Baba. As one person introduced all of his family members to Baba—from grandparents to grandchildren—Baba smiled and gestured, "I am My own wife, My own husband, My own child. This is not just idle talk, but I am that."

Despite His earlier remarks about wishing to rest, Baba not only met all those gathered, but also permitted them to perform His *arti* and then to come forward to garland Him. There were flower garlands, lace garlands, camphor garlands, elaborate garlands of all sorts and sizes were lovingly placed around Baba's neck with such rapidity that Eruch quickly had to remove some before Baba's face was completely immersed in flowers.

Baba, looking radiant and beaming His inimitable smile, in receiving the garlands mirrored the love of those offering them to Him. And, accompanying Baba's smile was His blessing for each. After greeting all, Baba was led inside where He was served supper. By the time we finished our meals, it was past 9:00 and most of us were exhausted from the long day and wondering when we would be able to sleep.

When we asked Pendu what the arrangements were, he informed us that we would be spending the night on launches on the Godavari river. This struck almost all of us as an excellent arrangement, for the thought of sleeping under the stars while the Godavari gently lapped against the sides of the launch seemed most appealing.

But as time passed with no move being made to leave Ramling's house, some again approached Pendu to find out what was happening and he said, "Forget about sleeping for a while; we still have to attend a program first!"

This program was news to us. Baba had been scheduled to give *darshan* the next morning, but apparently when He heard that hundreds of people, town folks and villagers, had already gathered in the *pandal* on the banks of the river, He agreed to stop there before retiring for the night. Baba often

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stated that He was the slave of the love of His lovers, and we saw proof of it again this night, for Baba really did look tired. But He did not want to disappoint the hearts of those who had gathered in His love and devotion. It seems that Baba's "rest" was in answering the restless calls of His lovers.

By the time Baba reached the *pandal*, there were nearly five thousand people there who hailed Him as He arrived. The *pandal* had been nicely decorated and was illuminated well so that all could clearly see Baba. It has been noticed many times that when Baba appeared before the public, His face seemed to shine with a special radiance which enhanced His physical beauty.

All were spellbound seeing Baba's luminous countenance. Many in the crowd spontaneously remarked, "What a divine expression!" "How divinely pure!" So intent were the people in gazing at Baba's charming radiant face that even when the sound of fireworks, which had been arranged in Baba's honor, could be heard exploding outside, none left to look at them. Baba sat there for around half an hour and the feast of His silent presence and vibrant love ended by around 10:00 that night. We then traveled only a short distance down the banks of the Godavari to where our launches were waiting.

Baba's launch was quite well equipped. It had a separate bedroom, living room, dining room and even electricity. Baba and four of the *mandali* were to stay here. There were two other launches for the rest of those traveling with Baba. These were moored next to each other and the quickest way to get from one to the other was simply to jump from deck to deck.

While we were scurrying about in the dark (there were only a few lanterns on each launch) looking for places to sleep and stow our bags, Helen of Dehra Dun misjudged the distance between the launches and fell into the river. Although he landed in waist deep water, he had the presence of mind to hold his bag over his head so it wouldn't get soaked. In good-natured camaraderie, this feat was cheered by the rest of us.

It was after 11:00 when we finally got our luggage stowed away. As there were so many of us, we slept wherever we could, some on the roofs of the launches, some on the little deck

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space that was available, some inside. Once we were all settled, we cast off and set out for the opposite shore. As we approached, the engines were cut and anchors were dropped. Baba's launch continued until it was practically on the Rajahmundry bank itself. This was done so that Baba would not be disturbed by any noise from the Kovvur side, or by His people either.

Baba's Order to Drown Savak in the Godavari

The next morning a small boat brought large containers full of tea and South-Indian delicacies, such as *uppama*, for breakfast. It was delightful on the river in the early morning, seeing the sun shining on the sparkling waters and Kovvur nestled along the bank on the far side.

Savak Kotwal was in charge of catering and so he accepted the food and then distributed it to all on the two launches where we were staying. There was plenty and we enjoyed ourselves.

After breakfast, our launches were taken all the way to the Rajahmundry side where Baba's launch was already anchored. Baba was strolling on the beach with a few of His *mandali*. He could see a crowd forming on the Kovvur banks and turned to Eruch and inquired, "What time is it? It's getting late, already people are waiting for Me and we haven't even had our breakfast yet!"

Just then Koduri Krishna Rao, who had sent us our morning refreshments, had himself taken across the river to Baba to make sure He had everything He needed. Baba greeted him in a solemn mood and gestured, "Why didn't you send breakfast for Me?" "But I did, Baba," Krishna Rao replied.

In His All-knowing ignorance, Baba totally overlooked this and continued, "You have forgotten the Avatar and remembered only His *mandali*." Krishna Rao looked puzzled but did not say anything; it was not his way to argue or offer excuses on his behalf. To his immense surprise, Baba unexpectedly turned to one of His *mandali* and gestured, "Throw him in the

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river!"

Koduri Krishna Rao was startled by the authoritative tone with which Eruch spoke this out, and by the fact that instantly one of the *mandali* stepped forward to grab him. Instinctively, without thinking, Krishna Rao retreated. This "chase" continued for a minute or two until Baba called both to Him.

Krishna Rao's mind was too shaken by the incident to appreciate the fact that Baba's very order that he be thrown into the Godavari indicated the special intimacy that Baba felt for him. Baba would never have given such an order to someone who was not one of His close ones. Krishna Rao was not aware of this at the time, however, and his mind was in a state of turmoil as he approached. Baba gestured, "Forget about it. Don't worry, I forgive you," and He smiled.

While Krishna Rao was still reeling under the shock of what had just transpired the *mandali's* launches pulled up on shore, some distance from where Baba was standing. Baba called for Savak Kotwal.

"Did you have a good breakfast?" Baba asked. "Yes, Baba," Savak answered. "It was very nice and we had more than enough." Baba's eyebrows rose, as though in surprise and, instead of looking pleased, Baba seemed upset, and then informed Savak, "While you were seeing that everyone on the two launches had enough to eat, Baba's launch was not provided with anything! Do you know that?"

This came as a shock to Savak who was responsible for seeing that all received their meals. Savak apologized and asked Baba's pardon for the mistake that had occurred.

Apparently what had happened was that Krishna Rao had sent the food in a launch and had either forgotten to inform the boatman that some of the refreshments were to be taken to Baba's launch, or the boatman had not properly understood his instructions. When Savak received the tea and delicacies, he assumed that a similar arrangement must have been made for Baba's breakfast and that it had been sent directly to His launch. As Baba's launch was moored at a distance, it wasn't possible to simply call out and make sure. It was no one's fault really; just a case of lack of communication.

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To some it may appear that Baba's displeasure was completely out of proportion to the "cause." But Baba's actions cannot be compared to those of an ordinary man. He expressed certain emotions only because through them He was able to reach deep into the hearts of His dear ones to awaken love. To say that Baba got angry is, in a way, not right. Even to say Baba was annoyed, or upset, irritated or displeased does not capture what it was like when Baba was "out of mood."

Baba's moods were such that if He was happy, others felt happy just being in His presence. When Baba became serious or solemn, whether He said anything or not, all felt the solemnity about Him. When Baba "lost His mood," it was like dark rain clouds suddenly covering the sun. What hurt the *mandali* most was to find Baba in an unhappy mood owing to some negligence on their part. And the reaction Baba's "anger" caused in those who experienced it was very different from what might be expected from a worldly standpoint. It was like a delicate surgery which created, through temporary agony, lasting love.

Baba called Krishna Rao to Him. Krishna Rao was a tall man with strong broad shoulders. When he hurried over, Baba turned to Him and conveyed, "Savak is the one entrusted with the duty of catering. Yet he only thought about those on the other launches and he did not think of Me! Will you now obey Me if I ask you to do something for Me?"

Krishna Rao was still shaken from his experience of Baba's displeasure and humbly replied, "Yes, Baba."

Baba then gestured, "Get a strong rope and a big stone; tie it around Savak's neck and throw him in the middle of the Godavari!" Baba then turned and casually walked away. Once more Krishna Rao's mind was plunged in confusion while his heart was thrown into turmoil. Seeing him hesitate, Savak urged him, "Hurry up, carry out Baba's orders."

Krishna Rao was astonished. How could this be? He knew from his own experience how difficult it was to obey such an order and here one of Baba's *mandali* was blaming him for not seeing to his execution promptly enough. He marveled at Savak's faith and love, for his eagerness to literally follow

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Baba's order indicated a devotion to Baba whose depth he could not begin to fathom. But despite Savak's promptings, he could not bring himself to throw Savak into the river.

Further complicating the situation was the fact that there were no large stones (or even small ones) to be seen on the shore so literal obedience to the order did not seem possible. Krishna Rao hesitantly approached Baba and confessed his inability to carry out the order.

Baba did not reply at once, but that silence churned up many an emotion in Krishna Rao's heart. Finally, and suddenly, to Krishna Rao's delight, the expression of displeasure on Baba's face disappeared and He told him not to worry about it. Then he called Savak over and also pardoned him for his negligence. After doing that, Baba changed the subject completely and seemed to forget about the whole affair.

This too was typical of Baba's way of working with His lovers; He might seem to take one to task for some trifling affair, blowing it up completely out of proportion, but when He forgave, it was done so wholeheartedly that it was as if the matter had never happened.

Yet it was not so easy for Krishna Rao to forget it all. After a while all were instructed to get into the launches to head back to Kovvur. Krishna Rao had tremendous respect for Baba, which was why he had come forward to act as Baba's host, but his heart had not completely accepted Baba as the Avatar. This incident, however, far from convincing Krishna Rao that Baba was a hardhearted and capricious taskmaster, was instrumental in helping him love Baba as the God-Man. Krishna Rao's subsequent faith and conviction in Baba were marvelous to behold. In later years they prompted him, at considerable expense, to erect on his own property, a beautiful monument of stone and bronze to commemorate the Avatar's visit and to inspire others to love Him as He should be loved. We cannot truly understand the way in which the Avatar "tunes" the hearts of His lovers, we can only marvel at the beauty of the music they ultimately produce.

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Savak's Desperate Yearning to Be with Baba

Here it seems reasonable, and appropriate as well, to digress a little and briefly recount Savak's coming to Baba. This will give something of the flavor of the lives of those who surrendered totally to Meher Baba, the God-Man, and sincerely tried to follow His every wish. They only wanted to please Him whose slightest act, they believed, was a selfless dispensation of divine love, not only to them, but for all humanity. The least negligence on their part in following Baba's instructions was torture to them. This was the life of the *mandali*; a life of complete surrender in obedience to the eternal Master, the Avatar.

Savak came from a middle class family and had a job in Bombay in the Bank of India. At the age of twenty-three he fell in love with Nargiz who was then nineteen. She was from a very wealthy family but she and Savak loved each other despite the difference in their social status. Nargiz's parents, however, were opposed to the marriage. They were concerned that their daughter would not be able to lead a comfortable life if married to Savak. But Nargiz insisted and she and Savak married in spite of her parents' reservations. In those days of arranged marriages, this caused quite a commotion in the Parsi community.

Although Savak and Nargiz were happy together, a great spiritual longing developed in Savak. After office hours, instead of going home, he took to visiting *sadhus* and saints in Bombay, and he would spend a good deal of money in serving them. Luckily, in the course of his spiritual search, Savak had the rare good fortune of meeting Upasni Maharaj, Hazrat Babajan and Narayan Maharaj—three of the Perfect Masters of the time. While reading *Sakori na Sadguru*, a biography in Gujarati of Upasni Maharaj, Savak for the first time came across Meher Baba's name.

Later, while visiting Hazrat Babajan, he overheard someone commenting that Babajan was Meher Baba's Sadguru. The same person also happened to mention that Meher Baba was staying at Meherabad, near Ahmednagar. Hearing this,

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Savak spontaneously had the urge to visit Meher Baba. The moment he saw Baba, he knew he had found the One for whom he had been searching.

After that first meeting, even though it entailed a twelve-hour train ride each way, Savak would go to Ahmednagar almost every weekend to be with Baba. During the week, as soon as his work was over, he would go to Chowpaty, a beach, where he would feed any *sadhus* that were there, regardless of whether they were genuine or not. A considerable part of his income was spent in this way.

Savak also continued to visit Upasni Maharaj, Hazrat Babajan and Narayan Maharaj, but now, each time he met them, he would simply pray to them, "May Meher Baba's grace descend upon me. Please grant me this."

On weekdays, after feeding the *sadhus*, Savak would return home and spend the rest of his time, well into the night, reading spiritual books. The *Kabirvani* (the couplets of Kabir, the Perfect Master) was one of his favorites. Nargiz, out of love for Savak, did her best to try and stay awake as he read although she had no real interest in spiritual subjects.

Nargiz found it difficult to understand Savak's preoccupation as she had no leaning toward spirituality. Savak, on the other hand, seemed quite content in spending almost all of his time and money either visiting Baba or serving *sadhus* in Bombay, while virtually ignoring his wife and newly born daughter.

Nargiz's parents, especially her father, were quite distressed at this and, feeling that she was being neglected, suggested she divorce Savak and come and stay with them. Nargiz told her father that whatever was happening to her was her destiny and she must face it. However, as time passed, she became interested in meeting this Meher Baba who seemed to be stealing her husband's heart and making him forget all about his family and worldly responsibilities.

One time, on hearing that Baba had come to Bombay, Nargiz in desperation went to Dina Talati's to meet Him. Baba walked in and walked past her without her noticing Him. Then Vishnu, one of Baba's *mandali*, entered the room and

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asked her to come in and see Baba. She entered and sat before Baba, exclaiming, "So you are Meher Baba!" Baba nodded that He was and then, with obvious concern, asked her what she wanted.

The look of loving compassion which Nargiz saw in Baba's face unleashed all of her pent-up emotions and she burst into tears and complained that Savak was neglecting her and their new born child, Najoo. Baba nodded tenderly and said, "I have come not to separate, but to unite." These words pierced her heart. Baba added, "Don't worry. Everything will be all right." Nargiz felt reassured and inwardly she was filled with joy.

Baba also moderated Savak's enthusiasm for visiting *sadhus* by remarking once, "Those who have come in contact with the Emperor do not need to seek favor of the guards to gain admittance to His palace." After this, Savak stopped visiting them unless on Baba's orders.

Over the next twelve years, although Nargiz was still primarily interested in raising a family and leading an ordinary worldly life, she helped Savak do whatever they could for Baba. She used to stitch clothes for the *masts* and the mad in Baba's ashrams. Savak, who was still working at the bank, longed to be with Baba permanently, however. In 1939 he wrote Baba a letter in which he poured out his heart, explaining how his only desire was to leave everything and come stay with Baba. Baba replied, "Dear Savak, I know how you long. . . . I know how you feel. I know what you think. Don't worry and leave everything to Me. . . ."

This letter, signed by Baba, only fueled the fire of Savak's longing and, on the day he was promoted from the post of a cashier to that of an agent of the bank at a branch in Bombay (a prestigious post both socially and financially), he resigned from his job. Nargiz was appalled when she heard of Savak's rash decision, but he explained that he couldn't concentrate any more on his job because his longing to join Baba had become overpowering.

Nargiz wrote to Baba about Savak's reckless move and Baba immediately called Savak to Bangalore to see Him.

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Savak explained to Baba that he could no longer bear to stay in the world and, since Baba wouldn't allow him to come live with Him, he was going to go to the Himalayas. Baba looked serious at this and conveyed, "If you can find any guru who is greater than I, then you may go to the Himalayas, otherwise you should come to stay with Me." This was the most unexpected yet most welcome invitation and Savak immediately renounced his idea of going to the Himalayas and declared without hesitation that he intended to come and stay with Baba.

"To You I Shall Give the Ocean"

Baba, however, told Savak that first he should go back to Bombay and return with Nargiz so that He could discuss the matter with her. Baba wanted to know what she thought of Savak's intention of coming to stay permanently with Him. Accordingly, a few days later, the couple arrived and Baba immediately broached the subject with Nargiz.

"Savak is coming to stay with Me," He informed her, with a look of great solemnity. "What," He asked with great tenderness, "is your wish?" Nargiz replied that she would follow Savak wherever he went, and then added simply, "Whatever belongs to me is also yours."

Baba looked very pleased at this response and began giving them instructions for winding up their affairs in Bombay and joining Him. When they returned to Bombay, they therefore began selling everything they owned, except for a sewing machine which Nargiz had Baba's permission to keep. She had used it to stitch the masts' clothes and she thought it would be useful, so she asked Baba if they could keep it and He said, "Yes."

So it was that on March 15, 1940, the Kotwal family—Savak, Nargiz and their three children, Najoo, Hilla and Adi—came to Bangalore with their worldly possessions reduced to a sewing machine, a very small box which contained all of Nargiz's jewelry, and a large amount of cash which was stuffed in an

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envelope.

Soon after they arrived, the enormity of what they had done—committing themselves to a penniless life in the Master's ashram—hit Nargiz with a shock. She had never protested about joining Baba, but now that it was happening, and so precipitously, it seemed too much for her and she fell sick.

Savak, holding the envelope that contained the proceeds from everything they had sold, wanted to offer it to Baba. But Baba, who touched money only when giving it to the poor or the lepers or the *masts*, gestured that Savak should put it in a pocket of His coat. Then Savak handed over Nargiz's jewelry box as well. Baba accepted it with love, but got up from His seat and went to Nargiz who was resting in a room and gestured, "Savak has given Me this box. Does it belong to you?"

"Yes, Baba," Nargiz replied. "It contains all my jewelry. It is all Yours. You may do whatever You want with it." Instead of appearing pleased at this touching evidence of surrender by one who was not that drawn to spirituality and, except for her husband, would have preferred to lead an ordinary worldly life, Baba asked, "Is there anything more?"

Nargiz was about to say no, but the seriousness with which Baba asked the question made her pause and then she suddenly remembered that Najoo and Hilla, her small daughters, were wearing pretty little earrings of gold studded with tiny rubies. She told her daughters to take off these earrings and give them to Baba.

Now, a radiant smile played upon Baba's beaming face as He held the jewelry box and the earrings in His hands. Baba looked at Nargiz with great love and, as if in answer to her unvoiced worries about the future, He assured her, "I am pleased with you. From today, till the very end, I will see to your children's littlest needs." Then, turning to Savak, with a proud look, Baba announced, "And to you, I shall give the Ocean."

Savak's life with Baba reminds me of something Baba once told us in the mid-'50s. Beloved Baba was sitting with some of His close ones in the hall at Meherabad. His shining eyes seemed to miss nothing and no one. During the informal

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conversation, amidst the laughter and jokes and special intimacy which Baba always created about Him, He suddenly began to convey great spiritual truths to all of us there. With Baba there was never any distinction between the "spiritual" and the "worldly" as there is with ordinary men. On this particular occasion Baba conveyed:

Love is a gift from God to man.

Obedience is a gift from Master to man.

Surrender is a gift from man to Master.

Savak's great yearning as a young man for the spiritual life, which eventually became transformed into an insatiable restlessness to be with Baba, was God's gift to Savak. When he came to live with Baba and faithfully followed Baba's orders, that obedience—that opportunity to obey—was the Master's gift to Savak.

Now, in his old age, Savak stays in Bombay with his family, and his acceptance of this metropolitan life, with its day to day delights and discomforts, is his attempt to offer his gift of surrender to the Beloved Master. So, although Krishna Rao could not bring himself to drown Savak in the Godavari, Savak's merging in the Ocean that Meher Baba is, is certain.

KOVVUR TO KOTTAPETA 1954 - PART X

Baba's Darshan Is Ever New

On the morning of February 27, as Meher Baba's launch approached the Kovvur bank of the Godavari, the *mandali* noticed a large crowd eagerly waiting to greet Baba. Another day of *darshan* had begun; another day of *artis* and addresses, crowded programs and whirlwind house visits. And yet, every day of Baba's *darshan* tour was different.

Just as each sunrise has a unique and charming design, unfurled through the combination of colors at the horizon, inspiring birds to chirp, filling the air with song, so too the radiating presence of Baba's love at each program was reflected differently, and could be seen in the devotion-filled eyes of the crowds and their enthusiasm in welcoming the Avatar in their midst.

The *pandal* was not far from the river, in fact it was right on the river bank itself, and it was about a quarter of nine when Baba took His seat on the dais where He had sat the night before. His presence pervaded the assembly like soft luminous clouds and all seemed to be overwhelmed with a profound feeling of adoration.

The program was inaugurated by offering *arti* to Baba. This was followed by the reading of Baba's three messages in Telugu; the English translations were also distributed to the public. Then a welcome address on behalf of the Kovvur Meher Center was read out.

After this, Baba, as He did at most *darshan* programs, left the dais and sat on the ground to express His Oneness with the masses. Perhaps this was also one of His ways of giving a spiritual push to those assembled, to help them feel His loving companionship with them.

Before the *darshan* began, Baba had it announced that everyone should simply come with love to receive His *prasad*

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of love and then quickly move on so that all could avail themselves of this opportunity; none should take the time to garland Him, or bow down to Him or even stop in front of Him. All were asked to keep moving.

As the people filed by and received their share of *prasad*, they would quickly look up to gaze at Baba's luminous face and then reverently revert their gaze to His feet. Even those who had come purely out of curiosity, found it hard not to feel their hearts moved, at least for those moments in His presence. After two hours of this rapid yet heart-stirring dispensation of divine love, Baba left the *pandal*.

It was now a little before 11:00 and Baba was taken back to Ramalingeshwara Rao's house where all had a delicious meal which he lovingly had arranged. Baba then began making house visits. First, Baba visited Krishna Rao's home. In honor of this visit, Krishna Rao started a free kitchen at his house for the local people, especially the poor, which he continued for a week. During these communal meals, Krishna Rao also arranged for passages from holy books to be read out so it could be a feast for the heart as well as the stomach. (Later, on March 4, Krishna Rao informed Baba that about 15,000 people had availed themselves of this kitchen service.)

On February 27, after leaving Krishna Rao's house, Baba paid a surprise visit to a poor man's home. He also visited the home of Bogi Raju, the driver of one of the buses which carried the *mandali* during the tour. Baba also graced the house of Mrs. Tayaramma, who had introduced special meetings exclusively for the women of the town as a part of the Kovvur Meher Center.

It was nearly 1:30 by the time the house visits were completed and Baba, with His *mandali*, left for Rajahmundry.

Heart: The House of Beloved God

Rajahmundry was on the opposite bank of the Godavari but it took over an hour to drive there because it was necessary first to drive some distance along the canal road, parallel to the

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river, to reach the *anicut* (causeway) which crossed the Godavari and then they had to drive back up the river to Rajahmundry. They drove through the city itself and went straight to the Nava Bharat Gurukul where Baba had presided over the opening of a hall the previous year. This year, Baba was being accommodated in one of the buildings while the *mandali* were to stay nearby, in another.

Here, after refreshing ourselves by a short rest and washing our faces and hands, we all accompanied Baba to the M.H. School where the public *darshan* program had been arranged. Outside the grounds were a number of cars, testifying to the attendance of the town's elite as well as quite a few high government officials. In all, there were about five thousand people present, waiting for Baba's *darshan*.

The program followed the usual course, beginning with prayers in Telugu, followed by an *arti* sung to Baba. Then there were two addresses read out welcoming Baba. The headmaster of the Municipal High School concluded his address with the following words, "O *Prabhu!* Awaken in us true knowledge and cure us of our ignorance." Later, Baba made a point of sitting on the ground with the audience and having His reason for doing so explained over the public address system.

This all took half an hour or so. It was now nearing 4:30 in the afternoon and, addressing the people, Baba conveyed:

In the Spiritual Path, messages and addresses mean nothing. Without actual experience, all philosophical statements are idle talk and all this ceremonial phenomenon is a further addition to illusion.

If instead of erecting churches, *mandirs* (temples), fire-temples and mosques, people were to establish a house for Beloved God in their hearts, My work will have been done. If, instead of performing ceremonies and rituals mechanically, as age-old customs, people were to serve their fellow beings with love and selflessness—taking God to be equally residing in all and understanding that by serving others they are serving God—My work will have been

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fulfilled.

I give you all My blessings so that, if not all, at least some of you, or one of you, can love God honestly and find Me in everyone and everything.

Now, I will give My *prasad* of love which you should accept with love. No one should bow down to Me or offer fruit or anything to Me. Only take with love what I give with love.

Baba then proceeded to distribute *prasad* for a little over two hours. The speed with which Baba handed out the *prasad* was amazing, and yet there was a graceful elegance to Baba's movements. His attention seemed so totally concentrated on each person filing by that it was as if Baba was experiencing Himself in all. As such, those who received the *prasad* felt His love and appreciation of them, irrespective of their individual weaknesses or failings.

Most of those present received *prasad*, and it was Baba's intention to stay until He had given it to all. When, however, people persisted in touching His feet, despite repeated requests on His behalf not to do so, Baba finally stopped the distribution and returned to the Gurukul Ashram.

Baba's Message to the Children

While sitting with His lovers at the Gurukul, an informal discussion took place during which Baba stated:

As I said previously, each time I want to explain "something special" the mike fails. Today too, I had it in mind to explain. . . about the religions and. . . the priests. . .

I began with *mandirs*, mosques and churches, etc. but I wanted to say something about the priests as I was in a good mood but circumstances did not permit it. This also has a purpose behind it! Whether I explain now or not, that which is to happen must happen and will happen.

The next morning, February 28, before 7:00, Baba was on

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the grounds of the Gurukul with some of the boys who stayed there. Baba always loved children and soon He could be seen playing with the boys. He looked so natural in their midst that He seemed like a young boy Himself, albeit one with exceptional grace.

All the boys gathered about Baba and He started asking them questions about their lives in an informal way. Baba inquired whether any of them could sing and then asked someone in the group to sing a song. Baba listened appreciatively to the song, the animated expression on His face rapidly reflecting encouragement, enjoyment and praise.

With His soft, gentle eyes scanning the group, Baba gave an impromptu message:

Be honest. Never tell lies; whatever happens, never tell lies. I too was once like you, a young boy; now I am God. If you love Me, you will advance spiritually in your journey to God.

Respect your teachers; respect your principal; do your studies. Attend to your studies, but every day, at least once, remember Me. Then my *nazar* will be on you and I will help you, but you must be honest.

Then Baba asked who would follow this exhortation and most of the boys raised their hands. Baba looked pleased. Depending on the circumstances, Baba could be disarmingly simple or puzzlingly enigmatic, but in no case could He hide His unconditional love. Baba now began throwing apples to the boys, making a game out of it by looking one way and tossing the apple in another.

Once a boy caught an apple, he was to step back and let others have a chance. In this natural way, Baba focused the boys' attention on Himself and enabled them to receive His *prasad*, a taste of His presence, without any intellectual thoughts about its significance.

Deshmukh, Gadekar and Madan Arora were called by Baba a little before 7:30 for His farewell embrace since they all had to return to their homes to resume their work. As always, such occasions were bittersweet, but the sorrow of leaving was

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leavened with the happy memories of Baba's companionship which each had just enjoyed. When one departed from Baba's incomparable presence, the welling of tears and their gradual disappearance as well, fueled one's longing to see Him and be with Him again, at the first opportunity.

Gadekar, who was very sensitive, was smiling grimly in an effort to hold back his tears. Each time Baba turned His attention to him, Gadekar's smile widened while his unshed tears mounted higher. Baba's delicate long hands were, at last, held out to each to embrace them and with His touch, each burst into tears.

Sad, yet happy, Gadekar, Deshmukh and Madan prepared to leave for the railway station, already looking forward to their next chance to be with their Beloved Baba. Incidentally, with Madan's departure for Delhi, the filming of Baba's Andhra visit concluded.

A little while later, Baba's local host, T. Bullaiah came to inform Baba that the wife of the President of the Gurukul earnestly wished to see Baba but, being ill, could not come; she asked for Baba's blessings. Baba replied:

Unless one loses one's self in the Beloved, one cannot be said to be a true devotee. In loving God there can be no compromise. One of God's aspects is infinite honesty and unless we love God honestly from the core of our heart, we cannot find Him. Reading, theorizing, reasoning, thinking leads us nowhere. Love. In love one loses everything and finds oneself in God.

Turning to the others around Him, Baba concluded:

We have to "die" to "live" eternally. Anyway, I bless her.

Then a swami of the local Radha Krishna Ashram came to see Baba. After the usual greetings, Baba shot a twinkling look in the direction of the swami and, with a complete naturalness, casually commented, "I am both Radha and Krishna," as if He were saying no more than, "I am M. S. Irani." Yet the implications of such a statement are quite profound. Was Baba indirectly hinting that He is the Perfect Lover and the

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Perfect Beloved in One? The gravity and charm of Baba's informal and simple statements are unfathomable.

A Timeless Love and a Limitless Mystery!

Before leaving for the railway station, Madan showed a film of Meher Baba's public *darshan* given at Dehra Dun on November 1, 1953. This short, lively film was a sort of miniature version of what was transpiring in Andhra: there were shots of Baba enjoying the music His lovers provided; dictating messages on His board; gracing the crowds with His smiles; graceful gestures, charming facial expressions and meaningful glances from His transcendental eyes; and above all one could get a glimpse of Baba's sweet dispensation of His redeeming love.

As the Avatar's work is beyond the limitations of time, even films taken of Him thirty years ago have a freshness and immediacy to them. It appears from the films that Baba's main concern for those who came for His *darshan* was the quickening of their spirit, leading them onward through the "high roads" in their journey to God. Those who watch the films can also avail themselves of Baba's *darshan* even today.

After this enjoyable interlude, a little before 9:00, Baba's car sped for Amalapuram. On the way, Baba stopped at Dowleshwaram, at the house of N. Pillay, the superintendent canal engineer. Pillay introduced a number of people to Baba, including those working in his office. Baba then suggested that Pillay should introduce his family members to Him. On learning from Pillay that all his family was away and that he was alone, Baba quipped, "I am eternally alone and remain alone eternally; you are staying alone only temporarily!"

Near Baba's chair, Pillay had kept a slate and a slate pen (a pencil made especially for writing on slate) so Baba could write a message if He so wished; it seems he wasn't aware that Baba had stopped writing since January 1, 1927. Baba, however, was in a playful mood and, to the surprise of those watching, He picked up the slate and pen and began playing

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cross and circle (tic-tac-toe) with one of His *mandali*. Before leaving the house, Baba touched some fruit and gave instructions to Pillay that it was to be distributed to the visitors as His *prasad*.

Shortly after leaving the outskirts of the town, Baba gestured that He was feeling hungry and so Dharma Rao stopped at a small village. Meherjee Karkaria told Baba that they had some cheese and biscuits with them, but Baba wanted rice and *dal*. While this discussion was going on, the *mandali's* bus arrived and Meherjee went and told Chhagan of Baba's wish. Chhagan immediately got the kerosene stove out of the bus and began warming up some *dal* which he had with him, but he had no cooked rice. Baba repeated His wish for rice so the *mandali* began asking for it at some places in the village but they could not get it anywhere. Finally, Baba instructed Dharma Rao to proceed to the next village, Bobbarlanka.

Chhagan hurriedly had to pack all his cooking equipment back into the bus and once again they were off. At Bobbarlanka the *mandali* tried again to get some cooked rice, but as it was much before the usual lunch hour, no one had any ready. Some of the local Andhra organizers sent a jeep ahead to the next town, Kottapeta, with instructions to a Baba lover that food should be prepared for Baba, but that people in general should not be informed of Baba's brief halt there.

Meanwhile, K. Sastri happened to spot a woman, some distance away, outside a small thatched hut. She was pouring out the extra water from the rice she had just cooked in a small earthen pot for her son who was working in a field. Sastri went to her and noticed that she was wearing a crucifix around her neck. So he said to her, "Sister, Christ has come again!" The woman looked startled and Sastri continued, "He is sitting in a car on the road and He wants some rice. It is your great good fortune to be able to offer your rice to the Son of God Himself!"

The woman was unconvinced and replied skeptically, "When Jesus comes again, it will mean the Day of Judgment; He won't want to have anything to do with my cooked rice!" An intelligent woman indeed! But Sastri persisted that Baba was the Christ come again, and that He did, in fact, want her rice.

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Finally, although still dubious about the whole thing, the woman allowed herself to be led to Baba's car. Perhaps part of her reluctance was her shyness to offer such a simple rustic meal to One who might be the Christ!

Baba was sitting in the front seat of the car with a serious look on His face. He had one foot propped up against the dashboard. The door of the car was open and some people approached for Baba's *darshan*, but Baba seemed withdrawn, in a pensive mood and it was obvious that He did not want to meet others just then. Perhaps He was absorbed in some special spiritual work. So people stood around the car, watching Baba with reverence and awe.

When Sastri came with the old woman, Baba snapped out of His "working" mood and was His usual lively self. The *mandali* took the pot of rice and mixed some of the *dal* with it and gave it to Baba to eat. Baba only took a morsel or two and then gave the rest to the woman as His love-gift. Baba also embraced the old woman with love and gestured (touching the tip of His middle finger to His forehead) that she was very fortunate to have been able to offer Him food and that she had been really blessed.

Baba's touch affected the woman and she wept with overwhelming joy. Perhaps she had earnestly been longing to meet her beloved Jesus for lifetimes and so the Ancient One, hearing the cry of her heart, had purposefully come that way and, under the pretext of being hungry, fulfilled her wish.

In recent years, quite a few in the West who love Jesus have marvelously recognized in Baba the "second coming of Christ." Meher Baba, as the God-Man, the Avatar, lives a life of timeless love—a life of limitless mystery.

"Drink Coconut Water to Your Hearts' Content!"

The Avatar has numerous moods depending on His inner spiritual work. He is not just peaceful, for He has in Him restlessness, fun and fire too. At times He is like a soft cooling breeze, but on rare occasions He can be a mighty hurricane.

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During Baba's journey from Dowleshwaram to Amalapuram, His lovers in Andhra had a glimpse of some of these changing moods.

While leaving Bobbarlanka, Baba instructed Dharma Rao, who was driving the car, to go straight to Amalapuram so He could have lunch there, despite His previous agreement that the Andhra lovers could organize a quiet peaceful meal for Him at Kottapeta.

When the car reached Kottapeta, there was a crowd on the road which forced the car to stop. They clustered around the car, pleading with Baba to stop so they could serve the *mandali* with refreshing coconut water.

Baba seemed annoyed at this request and did not respond. Eruch intervened and reminded Baba that He had, in fact, agreed to this proposal while at Rajahmundry. Thereupon Baba gestured that the Kottapeta lovers could serve the *mandali* coconut water and instructed Dharma Rao to drive to Amalapuram as He was feeling very hungry.

Baba's car started again, but almost immediately, two people carrying trays of food appeared and started running after Baba's car. One of the local hosts, at K. Sastri's beckoning, tried to get into the car and Baba ordered it stopped.

This food had been prepared with Baba's tacit consent but as He had expressed the desire to have His meals in a quiet place, without any crowds or fuss, He was not pleased at the way things had been handled.

At around this same time, the bus carrying the *mandali* arrived in town and was stopped by the crowd of enthusiastic Baba lovers. They informed those on the bus that Baba had given His permission for them to serve the *mandali* with coconut water. This put Pendu, the controller of movements, in a bit of a dilemma. Baba had previously told him to have the bus follow His car and not to stop for anything, anywhere. Now Pendu was being told that Baba had given His permission for the bus to stop, but he hadn't had this instruction directly from Baba. Luckily, Pendu spotted Baba's car stopped at a distance further down the road, so he ran up to it to ask Baba what he should do.

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There were many people surrounding the car and much confusion. On top of this, Baba seemed to be in a distant and uncommunicative mood and Pendu could not get any answer to his questions. In Gujarati, Eruch informed Pendu that Baba had not been in a mood to reply readily to anything since that morning.

Hearing this, Baba, to Eruch's surprise, got down from the car and walked over to a nearby house and sat on the verandah remarking, "I am feeling hungry and you *mandali* are after coconut water! I gave orders that we should go straight to Amalapuram but no one obeys. Now you can all drink coconut water to your hearts' content." Looking at Pendu, Baba added, "In fact, I order every one of you to drink the water from four coconuts!"

Pendu knew that Baba was displeased at his question so he stood there silently but Baba repeated, "Go on, hurry. Ask the hosts to give four coconuts to every member of the *mandali* so that the hosts will feel satisfied and everyone from the *mandali* will also be satisfied!"

Pendu had no choice but to return and inform all of Baba's order. Meanwhile, Baba turned to Eruch and took him to task for his part in allowing Baba's journey to Amalapuram to be interrupted. "Why was it necessary for you to remind Me that I had agreed to let the people here serve the *mandali* coconuts when you knew that My most recent order was that we should go straight to Amalapuram?" Eruch kept quiet.

Most of the Andhra lovers had never seen Baba in such a mood before and didn't know what to make of it. The *mandali*, who had been with Baba for years, had the conviction that there was some deep meaning in Baba's every action or order. So they accepted all He "said or did" in a spirit of surrender to His will. But those who were new or had preconceived notions about what or how the Avatar should behave, found it hard to understand Baba's giving conflicting orders, or reprimanding the *mandali* for no fault of their own. They were stunned and stood by silently.

Soon Pendu returned and informed Baba that it would take a very long time for everyone to drink the water of four coconuts,

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at which point, Baba simply ordered everyone to get back in the vehicles and leave for Amalapuram. Baba then turned to Dharma Rao and ordered him to drive as fast as possible. Yet, before reaching there, Baba had Dharma Rao stop and called the *mandali* and the others to Him. Perhaps, knowing the confusion His behavior had caused in the minds of some of His Andhra lovers, Baba explained:

Today Baba got up and left His room very early in the morning. After a long time, He felt hungry, but He couldn't get anything to eat. A jeep was sent ahead to arrange for My meal at Kottapeta and to see that there was no crowd. But what happened at Kottapeta was just the opposite of what I expected and I could not take My meal there as planned. Now, let us go to Amalapuram.

But only five or ten minutes later, a little before noon, Baba again had Dharma Rao stop and the others gathered around. Baba gestured to Dharma Rao that he should tell everyone what had happened during that brief stretch. Dharma Rao explained that while driving faster than usual (because Baba was in such a hurry) he had somehow dozed off. The car began to swerve off the road and would have plunged into the canal which ran parallel to it, except for Baba's quickly grabbing his hand and pulling the steering wheel in the opposite direction.

Some in the car seemed shaken by their narrow escape. Baba, on the other hand, seemed exhilarated by it. His earlier mood of displeasure was gone and with His usual good humor, Baba joked that the narrowly averted accident had served the purpose of ensuring that Dharma Rao became wide awake. Baba continued that now all the occupants of the car were also wide awake and His appetite, which had been spoiled by the episode at Kottapeta had also now returned. Baba concluded that now they should proceed to Amalapuram and, turning to Sastri, ordered him to be sure that a good meal was served as soon as they got there.

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"Religion" of the Ancient One: Love God

Before Baba could reach Amalapuram, there was one more brief stop, this time at the village of Pulletikur where people had gathered for Baba's *darshan* on the road, blocking Baba's car. After pacifying the yearning in their hearts for His sight, Baba and all proceeded and we finally arrived at Amalapuram at around 12:30 P.M. Baba was escorted to the Sri Konaseema Cooperative Bank building where His host, Kala Venkatarao, had arranged for Him to stay on the first floor.

The *mandali* were temporarily put up in a big hall on the ground floor of the building, but that evening they moved to a nearby *choultry*. At last, Baba got His meal, lovingly served by K. Venkatarao who then sat at the bottom of the stairs leading up to Baba's door so that none could disturb Him and Baba could have His lunch without interruption.

Baba came downstairs to join the *mandali* that afternoon and then walked across the garden attached to the bank building to the house of the bank's night watchman. He sat there on the verandah for a few minutes and then returned to the main hall where the *mandali* were.

K. Sastri mentioned the work done by K. Venkatarao in aiding the victims of the floods in Andhra the previous year. Baba looked at Venkatarao with His glowing eyes and conveyed the following for the benefit of all:

Love for God can be expressed in so many ways because God has infinite aspects. The three aspects of power, knowledge and bliss are well known, but infinite honesty and infinite goodness are also His aspects, and goodness means there is no thought of self.

When you serve your fellow beings with selflessness, you serve God, but this word "selflessness" is used so loosely that it has lost its meaning. Selfless service has to be so natural that even the thought that you have served should be absent. . . .

Honesty demands that no show and no fuss be made of your service and that you treat others as you treat your

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own dear ones.

As Baba concluded this message, He caught Dharma Rao taking a nap and, with His eyes twinkling in merriment, He remarked, "This morning he dozed while driving and almost put us in the canal. And now he's dozing off again!" Poor Dharma Rao had been driving Baba ever since His arrival in Andhra. This meant not only staying awake for hours at a stretch, but also being alert as well while driving on country roads, late at night without proper lighting. It was a demanding task. No wonder Dharma Rao found it difficult to stay awake.

Baba continued, "The only thing I did not lose when I found myself one with God was My sense of humor. So, though only a few can fathom My Divinity, at least everyone can easily understand My being human." This divine quality of perfect humanity enabled all sorts of people with varied interests, temperaments and idiosyncrasies to feel perfectly at ease in Baba's company, and His sense of humor enabled Him to enjoy the quirks of those about Him.

A number of people were introduced to Baba while He sat there and even more crowded outside the bank and peeped in through the windows and doors. One of the *mandali* asked Baba about the message to be read out at the *darshan* program which was scheduled to be held shortly and Baba replied, "More important than My receiving addresses and giving messages is My contact with the people through My *prasad*." On another occasion Baba stated that His act of offering *prasad* to someone established a direct link with that person. He once referred to *prasad* as His "life-line" to the individual receiving it.

Soon after this, all left for the Board High School where the public program had been arranged. V.V. Narayana Rao received Baba on the dais. Baba spelled out on His board: "First, as is my custom during this tour, I will sit on the ground on your level to help you feel that I am one of you." After sitting on the ground briefly, with hands folded to the crowd, Baba returned to His seat on the dais and His *arti* was

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performed.

Baba looked out at the crowd sitting before Him and stretching out even beyond the limits of the *pandal*. His eyes seemed to radiate pure love. Although some could not see Baba properly, their hearts could feel His love. Periodically the Avatar descends and, as the God-Man, mingles with the multitudes. When He is physically present, few understand Him. It is through His acts of matchless humility and His words of divine authority that He proclaims Himself as the Avatar. At Amalapuram, Baba gave one of His most sublime and salient messages:

I belong to no religion. Every religion belongs to Me. My personal religion is My being the Ancient Infinite One, and the religion I impart to all is Love for God, which is the Truth of all religions.

This Love can belong to all, high and low, rich and poor. Every one of every caste and creed can love God. The one and only God who resides equally in us all is approachable by each one of us through love.

Then the three special messages were read out in Telugu. After this, Baba conveyed:

. . . For the common man the most practical way of loving God is to help others lovingly. God is in every one, so if you try to love others, help others, make others happy, you are loving God. Even attending to your everyday duties, you can still love God. If at least some of you try to love God, then My coming here will have served its purpose.

For the next hour and a half, Baba distributed *prasad* to the thousands who had gathered. The crowd was estimated to be at least 7,000 and Baba was not able to give *prasad* to everyone in person.

Baba Remembers Gandhi's Meeting with Him

On arriving back at the bank building, Baba commented that

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even though He was very quick and was energy personified, it just hadn't been possible for Him to give *prasad* to all who had come. Turning to K. Sastri, Baba added, "This is my last visit to Andhra in this life. No more programs except for the one at Ahmednagar on the 21st of March. Then My real program begins, not what you see now; it will be different when I break My silence."

Somehow this remark reminded Baba of His conversation with Mahatma Gandhi aboard the Rajputana when they both sailed for England in 1931. Baba recalled:

Gandhiji used to come to see Me at night and I would explain spiritual themes to him from the board for two or three hours each night. On his third and last visit to Me, Gandhiji said in Gujarati, "Baba, *have zulm thaeo, have tame jaldi bolo, ane dunia ne tamaro sundesh apo.*" [This means, "Baba, now enough of this tyranny! Please break your silence quickly and let the world have your message!] I answered him, "I will break my silence soon." Twenty-three years have passed since that soon was spelled on the board. But now when I say, soon, it really means soon. And really means really!

Baba smiled. Referring to Gandhi again, Baba gestured, "Gandhiji was a jewel of a soul."

In the general conversation that followed, Baba hinted that it would be good if all His *mandali*, lovers, devotees and workers in Andhra stayed awake the next night, the night of March 1. He also added that the workers' meeting, to be held on the 2nd, could then be taken up that night instead. Baba continued that He wouldn't mind in the least keeping awake Himself if it were possible to arrange a *qawwal's* program. If not, Baba commented, He would hear His own *qawwali* in His room.

At one point Baba turned to His host and conveyed, "I sometimes humor people for My work, but I am not humoring you when I say that I really like you! I am happy."

At 6:00 that evening, Baba told the *mandali* to retire early and be present at His residence in the bank the next morning

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at 7:00 sharp. Baba was sending all to bed early because the next night, March 1, He had asked them all to stay awake the whole night. But the *mandali*, for the most part, were only too happy to retire early that evening. The long journeys, the frantic pace, the nights without sleep had taken their toll. Baba's presence was a force which sustained us, but now that we were back in the *choultry*, exhaustion seemed to overcome us. Francis Brabazon, in a way which was typical of him in the early days, announced, "Immediate food, and then immediate rest is my immediate requirement."

She Internally Challenged Baba

Across from the bank was K. Venkatarao's house. He was an old freedom fighter and the ex-general secretary of the all-India Congress Committee, also the ex-minister of Madras (Tamilnadu) State. His career as a minister was very brilliant and he was honored by the people and the press alike. His love for Baba was touching to behold. Although a man of some prominence in his own right, he was completely unaffected and simple in his love for Baba. Wherever Baba went, he could be seen humbly walking behind Him.

He considered himself blessed indeed to be able to play the host to Baba at Amalapuram, but his wife felt differently. She was a devout follower of Krishna as the only Avatar. When her husband tried to encourage her to take some interest in Baba's visit, she humbly said, "You follow whom you want and please allow me to go my own way."

That afternoon she had not attended the *darshan* program and generally took no part in the Baba activities. She was content in her devotion to Krishna. Each day, early in the morning, she would get up, have her bath, say her prayers and read the *Bhagavad Gita*. Although she expressed no interest in Baba, inwardly she could not completely ignore Baba's claim to be the Avatar which her husband had accepted. So she internally challenged Baba: "If you are really God, visit my house and give me *darshan*."

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Knowing his wife's views (but not her inner challenge) Venkatarao had not brought Baba to their house on February 28. That evening, at 6:00, Baba sent all back to their residences and Venkatarao and his wife both went to bed early. The next morning, as usual, the wife arose well before dawn and after her customary ablutions and prayers, began reading the *Bhagavad Gita* in her *puja* room. She was reading for a while when she suddenly felt someone standing behind her. She turned and beheld Meher Baba, who was silently watching her, with a gentle smile on His face.

Inwardly she heard Baba's voice proclaim, "The One you have been reading about all along is Me. I am Krishna." And there was such unarguable divinity about Baba's silent presence that she fell at His feet in a confused tangle of emotions—ashamed of her former denial, wanting Baba's forgiveness, and overwhelmed at her great good fortune to have God in human form before her.

With a mischievous sparkle in His eye, Baba comforted her, patted her and intuitively conveyed, "Don't tell anyone of my visit here. Don't even tell your husband!" And then Baba went away or disappeared as quietly as He had come. Indeed, a marvelous encounter!

Some hours later, at 7:00, as Baba had instructed, all assembled at the bank building. Baba again raised the possibility of having the workers' meeting take place that night, March 1, instead of during the next day on the 2nd. Baba asked K. Sastri whether this change could be made and then, emphasizing the importance of the meeting, added:

I want work. And work must be done with 100% honesty or stopped. I can do My work by Myself. But if possible all workers, small and big, should attend the meeting. I will thrash out every point on how to work for Me because I don't want just these mass *darshans* and other programs. If workers love Me but do not work with 100% honesty, then they are not wanted.

If it is possible, then arrange the meeting for tonight. If not, then for tomorrow morning. If all cannot come

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tonight, then tomorrow they must come. I say all this because I won't come here [Andhra] again in this body.

At Hamirpur I had a discussion with My workers, and here too I want you to know about My work because I love Andhra. Why I love Andhra you will not understand! Work done honestly is the real work. I have been doing My work by Myself eternally, since eternity.

KDRM assured Baba that they would make the arrangements so that the meeting could be held that night. They then left to send telegrams to all the workers informing them of this change in the time of the workers' meeting.

Baba turned to S. Pamulu, a government official, and told him, "Work for Me wholeheartedly. Tell people about Baba's love. If you work for the people wholeheartedly, you work for Me." After this, Baba began a series of house visits, first going to Pamulu's house.

Next Baba went to Venkatarao's house. There his wife came forward with some sweets for Baba. As if totally unaware of what had transpired a few hours earlier, Baba looked surprised and, addressing Venkatarao, gestured, "What is this? Yesterday your wife didn't even attend the programs and today she's bringing Me sweets! Has something happened?" Venkatarao was at a loss to explain this sudden change in his wife's behavior and didn't know what to say.

Venkatarao's wife, meanwhile, reverently presented the sweets to Baba. The warmth of Baba's presence filled her heart with love and tears began rolling down her cheeks—the tears of love and remorse that cleanse the soul of all doubts. "Baba," she sweetly said, "You are Krishna; forgive my ignorance."

Still expressing surprise, Baba asked, "How do you know that? What has happened?"

"Baba, you have asked me not to tell anyone," she replied, "but now that You are asking me, I feel I can say." And then she proceeded to recount her experience that morning. Her obvious sincerity and devotion to Baba touched all who heard her heart-aching, heart-waking, love-making account. Baba

looked delighted as if this was all news to Him.

After this, Baba visited several other homes, including once again the home of a very poor man. Baba's visits for the most part were very quick and within a half hour they were over and we all got on the buses and into the jeeps and followed Baba's car to Razole.

The Smiling Beloved and the Weeping Dagger

After journeying for about an hour or so, but before reaching Razole, Baba had His car stop by the roadside. Soon the bus carrying the *mandali* pulled up behind. Baba's car would always be in the lead, but often while traveling with a large group on tour, Baba would have His car stopped and would wait for His dear ones. When they arrived, Baba would chat with them informally for a while before getting back in His car and resuming the journey.

On this occasion, the sunny and breezy morning of March 1, as the *mandali* gathered around Him, Baba had an intriguingly humorous expression on His face and all became eager to know what was up. Baba pulled out His board and with accompanying gestures related:

Last night was a funny night for Me. It was quiet all around but a mad person had the whim to howl, practically without a break, throughout the night. You know well that tonight I have to remain awake for the whole time during the workers' meeting. So, yesterday I especially wanted to go to bed early but I could not sleep, even for a short while. I wondered what sort of madness possessed that lunatic which did not allow Me even a moment's respite or rest.

Baba was standing under a tree while Kumar, alert to his duty, stood nearby with an umbrella in his hand. Baba asked him, "Why should such a thing happen?"

Kumar promptly replied, "Because you wanted it that way." This was another way of saying that nothing happens unless

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Baba wills it.

Baba appeared pleased with Kumar's ready reply and, with a serious air about Him, gestured, "It must be so!"

Then, turning to others and pointing at Kumar, Baba added, "This man does not want to understand who is God or what is a Perfect Master, but he loves Me, knows how to obey Me well, and also to say the right thing at the right time." Kumar shyly looked at Baba, a little embarrassed at the fulsomeness of Baba's praise; the rest of the *mandali* smiled in appreciation of Kumar's qualities, as well as his being put on the spot!

Baba then turned His gaze on Pukar and gestured, "Why are you looking like a dry fish [depressed]? You have a good loving wife. Soon you will have a child and become a father! Look cheerful." In fact, Baba was teasing Pukar who had never wanted to marry. It had been his wish to dedicate his life entirely to Baba.

Pukar's mother, however, had entreated Baba to order her son to get married. Baba, for reasons known only to Him, complied with her request and Pukar obediently submitted to Baba's wish. As Pukar was one of my closest friends, I knew that he was the last person in the world who looked forward to raising children and living the life of a householder.

During Baba's visit to Hamirpur District two weeks earlier, Baba had inaugurated Pukar's flour mill to help him earn his livelihood. Actually, it was Pukar's mother who mainly conducted the business. With reference to Pukar's mill, Baba looked at him pointedly and remarked, "Now, I intend to grind you in My mill and you should be happy about that." Pukar stood there with his hands folded across his chest and looked solemn, saying nothing.

Baba then referred to an Urdu couplet which, when freely translated, means, "When a lover offers himself as a sacrifice to the Divine Beloved, the Beloved laughs but the dagger that He holds in His hands begins to weep!" Baba added, "That is why the Beloved is also known as *Katil*, the Executioner."

It is not easy to express the depth of the relationship symbolically expressed in this cryptic couplet, with its enigmatic

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image of the smiling Beloved and the weeping dagger. For a while all those standing around Baba fell silent. Then Baba quickly walked to His car. This was the signal for the rest of us to snap out of the serious mood Baba's words had produced and to hurry toward our bus so we could keep up with Baba's car.

In a Coconut Grove

Part of the drive that morning was on a canal road and the green fields shimmering in the sun with swaying palms scattered here and there presented us with quite a pleasant view. A little before 9:00 Baba reached Razole and was led straight to the place where the *darshan* program was to be held. This was in a small grove surrounded by coconut trees. A small *pandal* had been erected in the grove with two huge banana trees, their long leaves sparkling, on either side of the dais.

Once again, Baba first sat on the ground with the people before taking His seat on the dais. Perhaps this oft repeated gesture was symbolic of the Avatar's divine dispensation of Grace on the human level.

After garlanding Baba, His messages were read out in Telugu and then *arti* was performed. Due to a lack of time, Baba could not distribute *prasad*, but He touched the sweets and fruits that were there and instructed them to be passed out later to all who had gathered. The program had been well organized and went smoothly. Within an hour Baba was on His way again.

Now we were heading for Kottapeta, but on the way Baba asked Dharma Rao to stop. Baba got down from the car and walked into a nearby coconut grove. All of us on the bus followed Him. Baba then called each of us to Him, patting us on the back and asking after our health. Those who were not feeling well were asked to stand apart. Then Baba called the doctors, Nilu and Kanakadandi, and pointing at all the "patients," Baba specifically asked the latter to administer medicine to all of them so they would be fit for the workers' meeting. Kanakadandi put his medical chest on the ground

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and bowed very reverentially to Baba, saying, "Baba, only with Your grace will that be possible. Please help me."

Leaving the doctor to his ministrations, Baba walked off alone into the interior of the grove, signaling that the rest of us should not follow Him. Baba sat for a while and then we heard three claps. One of the *mandali*, I don't recall which one, came and told us that Baba now wanted all to come. When we had gathered around, Baba conveyed, "This place is connected with My earlier advent as Rama. The owner of this grove is very fortunate."

During Baba's tour of the Hamirpur District, He had made a similar comment about one of the villages visited. Perhaps this age-old connection with the Avatar, as Rama, and Baba's subsequent visits, explains why there are so many Baba lovers in Hamirpur and Andhra.

It is hard to capture in words the feeling that was evoked whenever Baba, in passing, referred to His previous incarnations. Somehow such casual references seemed to make His timeless divinity more palpable. Hearing Baba's comment about that particular coconut grove, some of the Andhra lovers went out to find the owner of the grove to share with him the exciting news. Soon this man appeared on the scene, shedding tears of joy over his good fortune to have Rama come again in the form of Meher Baba sitting in his grove.

With folded hands and with obvious emotion he said to Baba, "I have nothing to offer you except some coconuts, but I would feel myself blessed if you and your people accept them." Baba smiled and instructed those present that they should all have one coconut each. The owner was delighted with this and immediately set to providing us with the coconuts and we all enjoyed the treat. The fresh tender coconuts were made even more enjoyable by the fact that we consumed them in Baba's presence.

During Baba's Andhra tour, various people, like the man with the bananas who met Baba at the crossroad, or the Christian woman who gave Baba rice, or the owner of this coconut grove, seemed to have the good fortune of having the Avatar's *darshan* entirely by coincidence. And, as far as others could

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ascertain, these "chance" encounters did not make these people Baba lovers. But perhaps these people are like asteroids whose paths have temporarily, and quite unexpectedly, brought them into proximity to the sun. Even though they soon go off in another direction, that brief encounter is enough to permanently change their orbits and eventually they will begin to revolve around the Sun, the Avatar, seeking only His pleasure. Or to put it a totally different way:

Not only the thirsty seek Water (the God-Man)
But the Water Itself seeks the thirsty!

Four Journeys of a Perfect Master

While standing in the grove, Baba signaled that we should resume the journey, so we all headed back to our bus. As Baba got into His car, He ordered Dharma Rao to drive quickly. It was a little after 11:00 that morning when we reached Kottapeta. There was a large crowd waiting for Baba and His car slowly passed between those clustered on each side of the road to greet the Avatar. Eventually the car made it to the grounds of the Board High School where Baba was to be accommodated. A group of Boy Scouts had lined up outside the building to salute Baba. Then the headmaster and the staff of the school were introduced to Baba, as well as the local Baba lovers.

When informed that a hot meal was ready for all, Baba instructed the *mandali* that they should go quickly, eat their lunch leisurely but then return immediately, without taking any rest. Although Baba had refused to eat at Kottapeta the day before, this time He blessed His host by happily accepting the food offered.

By 1:00, after having our meal, we had all reassembled in a big hall in the main school building. Baba was already there when we arrived, conversing with some of His Andhra workers. When we all had taken our seats, Baba turned to Pukar and gestured, "Sing a song that will either keep everyone wide awake, in spite of the heavy meal, or which will help

all to fall sound asleep!"

Pukar, who had not completely recovered from Baba's remark about grinding him in His mill of love, poured out his heart in a Hindi song. Although Pukar's voice was hoarse and he was not known for his singing, his obedience seemed to please Baba. Others were also touched by Pukar's love for the Beloved . . . the Executioner!

Baba then asked some others who were not particularly good singers to sing some songs. At the end of this non-singer's singing session, Baba unexpectedly brought up the previous night's incident at Amalapuram. He added that the madman's howling reminded Him of His earlier promise to the *mandali* to clarify some points concerning the different states of *fana* and *baqa*. What connection the former had with the latter was beyond our ability to guess, but obviously Baba knew and, at any rate, it prompted Baba to give the following discourse:

In Sufi parlance, the term *fana* means "passing-away-in," and *baqa* means "abiding-in." *Fana-fillah* is the Goal where the "I am God" state is experienced. *Baqa-billah* is abiding in God as God.

The final or real *fana* has two stages in one, like the two sides of a coin. The first stage of the final *fana* is the absolute vacuum state where mind, energy, body, universes and "I" [individuality] completely vanish; only consciousness remains experiencing absolute vacuum—the "limited I" is annihilated totally.

The first stage of the final *fana*, however, is immediately followed by the second stage where the "limited I" is replaced by the "unlimited divine I" and the "I am God" state is experienced. This is the Goal, but not "Perfection."

A very few souls, however, come down to ordinary human consciousness retaining the "I am God" state. This is *baqa-billah*. These souls not only experience God's knowledge, God's power and God's bliss, but are also aware of the three worlds—gross, subtle and mental. As for the two stages of the final *fana*, the second immediately follows the first. For example, in the sound sleep of an

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ordinary individual, consciousness of mind, energy, and body is not there. But as soon as one wakes up, one becomes conscious of one's body, energy, and mind and asserts one's limited individuality ["I"] which is *baqa* of the gross world.

Nirvana is where apparently "God-is-not." This is the first stage of the real *fana*, which Buddha emphasized. And this was later misconstrued as Buddha having declared "There is no God." The fact is that even in *nirvana* "God is" but in that state, consciousness only experiences the absolute vacuum of God. [Nirvana is the total drowning of limited individuality, for all times, in the Ocean of Infinite Consciousness.]

To sum up, Baba concluded:

There are four journeys. The first journey ends in *fana-fillah*. The second journey ends in *baqa-billah*. The third journey ends in *Qutubiat*. This is a state where the *Qutub* leads the life of God. He not only abides in God, but lives the life of man and God simultaneously. He is known as the Perfect Master [Man-God]. The fourth journey ends with the dropping of the gross body by the Perfect Master—the passing away [of the Man-God] as God in God.

At the end of the fourth journey, the second stage of the final *fana* is continuously and everlastingly experienced by each Perfect Master and the infinite Individuality is retained eternally.

In fact this discourse explained the states of the God-realized ones. Therefore, the entire discourse didn't have much to do with those present. But for us, just watching Baba's fingers moving on the board, or His radiant face or captivating expressions was most delightfully absorbing.

As Beloved Baba put His board on His lap, He pointed at Meherjee who was not feeling well and hence was looking a bit drowsy. With a knowing and jovial smile, Baba joked, "Among all in the hall, Meherjee is the only one who is trying to appreciate the vacuum state of *nirvana* by dozing off."

As usual, Baba's good-natured teasing of one of His close

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ones lightened the atmosphere after the serious discussion. Meherjee looked a little sheepish but then Baba smiled at him with the sparkle of a mountain stream and any lingering feeling of embarrassment was washed away.

Baba's discourse on *fana* and *baqa* was, in later years revised and, along with a special chart which was prepared under Baba's direction, given out again during the East-West Gathering in November 1962 in Poona. The chart was labeled "The Four Journeys." At that time, Baba added:

In Avataric periods, one does not have to necessarily make these inward journeys by stages. If you have the grace of the Avatar, He just takes you from where you are to where you should be, where God wants you to be. There's no need for trains or planes when He is here.³²

As Baba had not given this information in the *Discourses*, published earlier, a brief article was authored by Him and was later published in one of His books, *The Everything and The Nothing*. Therein, after explaining the seven planes of consciousness and the three worlds, the article ended up with the following lines:

In reality, these Four Journeys are never journeyed, for God has nowhere to journey. He is without beginning and without end. And everything which has the appearance of being, appeared from That which has no beginning and passes back in [to] That which has no ending.³³

Accident to the Jeep

As Baba finished His discourse on the "Four Journeys," someone brought the news that KDRM had had an accident. The four had stayed behind at Amalapuram to send telegrams to all Baba workers in Andhra, informing them of the change in the date of the workers' meeting, from the 2nd to the night of March 1.

After sending the telegrams, Dhanapathi, K. Sastri and

³² *The Awakener*, Vol. IX, Nos. 1-2, p. 27.

³³ *The Everything and The Nothing*, p. 26.

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Ranga Rao got into a jeep and began the drive to rejoin Baba at Kottapeta. On the way their vehicle had gone off the road. Not long after someone brought this news, the three members of KDRM appeared in the hall. Dr. Dhanapathi's hand was bandaged but subsequent inquiries revealed that none was seriously injured.

Apparently they had been in the jeep when a cyclist approached them, riding on the wrong side of the road. The jeep swerved to avoid the cyclist and the driver lost control of the vehicle and they went off the road and into a ditch where the jeep turned over on its side. Fortunately, it was stopped by the wall of an unoccupied house or it would have completely turned over. As it was, all the occupants were thrown out of the car but luckily none was badly hurt.

With the kindly help of some villagers the jeep was pushed upright and back onto the road. Surprisingly, it started right up and the only damage sustained was a broken windshield and dented fenders. By chance, this accident occurred not far from where the previous day Baba's car had almost gone off the road when Dharma Rao had dozed off for a few seconds.

Dhanapathi approached Baba. He seemed on the verge of tears as he declared with deep adoration, "Oh Lord! You have saved us from being killed. Your grace has protected us since otherwise death was inevitable. This is Your miracle!"

Baba appeared surprised at this remark and responded, "I have not yet performed a single miracle. What you say is news to me!" Baba advised the three to calm down and be brave in their love for Him. Then He told them to have a good lunch and be ready to visit the National Club Building where the local *darshan* program was to be held.

At 2:00 that afternoon, Baba and the *mandali* reached the club building. As at other places, there was the reading of welcoming addresses, Baba's messages in Telugu and His *arti*. Then Baba had it announced that if everyone wanted *prasad* from His hand, they should file by quickly and none should bow down to Him. Baba emphasized that how many people received *prasad* depended on how cooperative they were in complying with these instructions.

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Although there were over four thousand people present, the crowd lovingly complied with Baba's instructions and Baba, looking majestically beautiful, began distributing the *prasad* with incredible rapidity yet gracefulness. During each *darshan* program, Baba seemed to effortlessly radiate an atmosphere of love which is impossible to describe adequately.

It was the warmth of this divine unconditional love which captivated people in His presence. All eyes were glued to Baba who, in turn, gazed out over the masses, occasionally seeming to single out particular individuals for a glance of intimate love. While giving out *prasad*, He patted the children who clung to their mothers as they came forward in the *darshan* queue.

At 4:00, Baba raised His hands to bless the crowd and signal that the distribution of *prasad* was now over. Baba walked to a nearby compound and sat for a few minutes under a mango tree. He did not return to the high school from there but, after a while, got in His car and sped to Rajahmundry where the momentous workers' meeting was to take place—one of the unique gatherings in Meher Baba's life.

**MEHER BABA EXPLAINS "REAL WORK"
AT RAJAHMUNDRY
1954 - PART XI**

Baba and His Workers Reach the Gurukul

Meher Baba had informed His Andhra workers to assemble at Rajahmundry for the meeting to be held on the night of March 1. They started arriving as early as noon that day from different parts of Andhra. Baba was not expected until 6:00, so they spent the time happily sharing *Meher-kathas* (stories) of their lives with Baba, the Divine Father. Some of the incidents related were humorous, some profound, some trivial, some serious, but all were equally appreciated because Baba's touch was in all and it was that which made them significant.

Among the early arrivals was V. Rama Rao from Bilaspur. He was standing on the playground of the Gurukul watching the pupils engrossed in a game of *kabaddi*. It was late in the afternoon but the sun was still bright and the boys were glistening with sweat. As Rama Rao watched the boys, he thought how wonderful it would be if Baba could see them for he thought Baba would enjoy their vibrant high spirits and the enthusiasm with which they played.

To Rama Rao's astonishment, just then Baba's car pulled into the grounds and stopped. Baba got out and came over to where the boys were. He sat on the ground with His back leaning against the trunk of a tree close to the playing field. There were shouts of "Avatar Meher Baba Ki Jai" from the Baba lovers and the boys joined in, but when they showed signs of flocking toward Him, with a gesture Baba indicated that they should go on with their game which they did with renewed zest.

In 1922, when Baba was staying in the *jhopri* at Poona, He used to play a game called *hu-tu-tu*, which is similar to *kabaddi*, with His first group of disciples. Perhaps it was nostalgic memories of those early days which prompted Baba

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to come watch the boys. But throughout His life, Baba enjoyed all sorts of sports, both as a participant and as a spectator. He is the real sportsman.

Some of the *mandali* were reminded of an incident which occurred the previous year when, in March 1953, Baba was traveling from Rishikesh to Hardwar. I was fortunate to be with Baba and, as we were passing through a densely populated area of a large village, Baba spotted a small group of children playing marbles on the dirt road. Baba had the car stopped and got out to watch. One of the *mandali* was able to get a chair for Baba from a nearby house and Baba sat at the edge of the road, absorbed in watching the contest.

Baba's appearance, at first, caused a bit of a stir, but as people saw that He was only interested in watching the game, they went about their business with just an occasional inquisitive glance. The womenfolk peeked out through the windows but then continued with their household chores. The children, meanwhile, were so engrossed in their game that they paid practically no attention to Baba. I had not seen Baba so absorbed in watching a game before and all of the *mandali* stood by silently so as not to disturb Him.

Baba's chair had been placed just in front of a two-story house. The drainage pipe from the house was broken and, as Baba was sitting there, dirty water splashed on the ground near Him, but He didn't seem to be bothered by it. After a while, Baba got up and walked quickly back to the car, and we resumed our journey without a word being said about the interruption.

Actually a fascinating account could be written just about Baba's participation in various games during different phases of His spiritual work, as well as the numerous cricket matches that Baba attended while remaining incognito, but that is outside the scope of this book.

At the *kabaddi* match, Baba sat and watched with great interest while the handful of Baba lovers who were there took delight in watching Baba. For them it was a divine privilege to look at Baba, but they were careful not to disturb His enjoyment of the game.

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When it was over, Baba called the boys to Him and expressed His appreciation of the skill and enthusiasm with which they had played. Baba gave the boys His blessings and conveyed to the few Baba lovers standing nearby, "Children are the epitome of God; they are sweet, simple and playful. Child-like trust is what any lover of God should aspire for." Baba seemed to enjoy this brief unscheduled interlude. Perhaps it was a bit of recreation for Him before the work of the workers' meeting to be held later that same night.

The *mandali's* bus arrived at the Gurukul a little after 6:00 that evening. The entire premises were buzzing by then as many groups from different places throughout Andhra had arrived to attend the meeting. Many of the faces looked familiar as we had seen them enthusiastically working during the various *darshan* programs we had attended. They were walking about, animatedly talking among themselves, their faces glowing in excitement. Not knowing Telugu, I did not understand a word of what they were saying, but I could see and feel the love for Baba which sparkled in their eyes. If love has a language, it is surely spoken, at least to some extent, through the eyes.

It was announced that Baba wanted all—*mandali* and workers—in the meeting hall by 9:00 that night. Everyone was expected to be there without fail. The aroma of the South Indian food being prepared was in the air and it was not long before we were called for supper. The food was delicious, as it had been throughout the tour, but knowing that we had to keep awake that entire night, we overcame the temptation to eat a full meal.

Introduction to "Real Work"

A little before 9:00, we started entering the big hall of the Gurukul to take our seats. Some wanted to sit as close as possible to Baba's chair, while some of the older people preferred the seats near the walls where they could rest their backs. Some sat with their groups and some went to join

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particular friends.

Although the meeting was being held a day earlier than originally scheduled, and people had only been informed of this change at the last minute, still most of the workers in Andhra had come. There were a few who received the cables late and didn't manage to get there until midnight, but they had certainly done their best to get there as fast as they possibly could. All were taking this meeting very seriously. Most in the hall wore typical Andhra dress—spotless white or yellow *dhoti* and shirt, and a long scarf with many folds resting over their left shoulder.

Baba sat in the hall in a white muslin *sadra*, with a cream colored silken coat and with His hair combed back, looking magnificent and regal. He held His alphabet board on His lap and occasionally tapped it with His long fingers. His eyes seemed to radiate love and joy. Eruch and Adi sat close to His chair while the rest of the *mandali* sat behind Baba's chair, but ready in case He should need them for anything.

E. Bullaiah had kept hot coffee ready for the participants of the meeting. At the beginning, Baba handed everyone present a cup of coffee to help them keep awake and stay alert. Then, before the meeting began in earnest, Baba glanced around the room. The God-light in His eyes made all feel the warmth of His presence. When everyone was seated, Baba's fingers moved gracefully over the board and Eruch read out, "Tonight is a very important night."

With this sentence a deep silence fell over the hall; all became very attentive, concentrating completely on Baba. His gestures and the words on the board were read out by Eruch. Although the flow of Baba's "words" was interrupted often so that they could be translated into Telugu, there was no break in the intensity of the concentration of those listening.

What follows is my attempt to portray the general proceedings of this momentous ineffable meeting. I have tried, with the help of Kishan's diary, notes I compiled, and my personal memory as well as ability to understand, to share Baba's message given that night. Beloved Baba's words, with their charm, profundity and humor reveal His mastery in

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conducting this gathering, the first and last of its kind. Baba continued:

Tonight is no political or social meeting. This meeting for which I have asked you all to assemble here is for the Divine Cause, and it reminds Me of My former meetings during My previous incarnations. During those periods, the circumstances were different, but since eternity the same God-incarnate has been presiding over these meetings for the same cause—the Divine Cause. It has never been truer than in the spiritual cause that history repeats itself.

Even if this meeting takes all night to complete the work at hand, I would not feel unhappy because this one night would be worth thousands of nights if you all honestly act up to what I want to emphasize tonight. The Apostles and the Asahaabs [the close ones of the Prophet] who worked for My cause did the work at the cost of everything, even at the cost of life itself. So, listen very carefully and be very attentive.

This is My last visit to Andhra in this incarnation for mass *darshan* programs. The mass *darshan* programs in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and in Andhra have been enough, and I tell you all with divine authority that the welcome addresses you all have been presenting Me with, and the messages that I have been giving you all, mean nothing on the actual spiritual path. Just to chant My *arti*, to perform My *puja*, to garland Me, to offer Me fruits and sweets, and to bow down to Me—these acts in themselves mean nothing.

It is a waste of money to buy garlands, fruits and sweets as offerings to Me for the conventional *puja*, and a sheer waste of breath and energy to merely chant My *arti*. What I want from all My lovers is real, unadulterated love, and from My genuine workers I expect real work done.

I also want to draw your attention to the fact that many miracles experienced by My devotees and admirers, both in the West and East, have been attributed to Me. But with

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divine honesty, I tell you that in this incarnation, until now, I have not consciously performed even a single miracle. Whenever a miracle is attributed to Me, it is always news to Me. What I want to emphasize is that by attributing such miracles to Me, people cheapen and lower My status as the Highest of the High.

But today, I do say this, that the moment I break My silence and utter the original Word, the first and last miracle of BABA will be performed. . . . When I perform that miracle, I won't raise the dead, but I will make those who live for the world dead to the world and live for God. I won't give sight to the blind, but will make people blind to illusion and help [make] them see God—the Reality.

Specific Conditions for "Working" in Baba's Cause

During the interval when Baba's words in English were being translated into Telugu, He would sit quietly at ease in His chair. Sometimes, He would raise His hands and, with His palms, run His hands over His head, brushing His hair back. For a few seconds this gesture would eclipse His beautiful face, but when it reappeared, its expression would have changed marvelously.

The time taken for translation was a good opportunity to focus one's attention on Baba's divine figure. I suspect that there were some in the room who did not care very much what Baba dictated on the board; they were happy just for this rare chance to be in the immediate presence of the Avatar. But whether the concentration was on Baba's words or His form, it was one-pointedly on Him.

After the opening remarks were translated, Baba continued:

Now, without further introduction, let us switch to the main points on My work and Baba's workers. Each and all should listen very carefully. Those who have assembled here have been called "workers" of Baba; therefore you must first understand what My work is.

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You Andhra workers, from all walks of life, have done your best to make these mass *darshan* programs successful. I know that you have tried to express your love for Me by spreading My message. I am happy about that. I feel, however, that something deep down is wrong. There are bound to be differences of opinion among workers of any cause, political, social or spiritual; that is natural. But these very differences of opinion and feelings of competition and jealousy lead to the breakdown of the very foundation of work.

You have been called "Baba's workers." But is it necessary for you all to work for Baba? If I am the Highest of the High and God-incarnate, then where is the necessity for Me to have workers, organizations and centers? If I am not the Infinite One, but just one like you, then thousands of centers and such programs would be of no avail. If I am Baba, which definitely I am, can I not in My own silent way do the Universal Work? Even if the whole world goes against Me or worships Me, it is all the same to Me.

The reason why I call upon every individual to work for Me is to make each one share the Divine Cause, and the programs, such as mass *darshans*, are created just to give an opportunity for the expression of individual and collective love [which is for the good of those expressing it]. Therefore, if you are prepared to share My Universal Work [which is to spread My message of Love] then it must be done with 100% honesty.

First of all, bear in mind that you should not at all seek appreciation from Me or from others. Though this sounds easy, it is so difficult to put into practice. Remember this much, that work in itself is its own appreciation. The moment you seek appreciation, the work is undone. Therefore, seek no appreciation for the work you do for Me.

Secondly, do not depend upon anyone or any outside help in your work for Me. It is true that you are ready to work for Me and for My cause 100%, but because some are poor and have large families, they cannot devote any of their time and means for My work. But then why work beyond

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your means? The moment the worker depends upon anyone or anything, the "real work" [which is total reliance on Baba] is undone. Therefore, do as much as you can, but do it honestly.

Thirdly, if money is collected for the work and spent without being accounted for, then all work in the name of the Divine Cause, must be stopped immediately by the so-called workers. One *pie* [penny] raised in My name, without true necessity, is dishonesty and will be the cause of millions of re-births. So today, I want everyone of you to pour out your hearts and decide once and for all either to work or to stop the work for Me.

My dear friends! If you want to make people love Me, show them that you really love Me. Don't merely make them read My books and messages, but live such a life of sacrifice that others may naturally begin to love Me.

Baba Confesses on Behalf of All

Baba briefly explained the formation of KDRM as He spelled out, "Last time I visited Andhra, I appointed KDRM as the four pillars of My work in Andhra." Looking at them Baba continued, "I know each of you four loves Me with all your heart and works for Me wholeheartedly. There is no doubt about that. But if you each go your own way, how can you work together? So first let us find out if these four can work together as I want. So now, you four, pour out your hearts to Me honestly, without any curtain over your feelings. This will make Me say something really good for all. Don't look at each other or fear each other."

Baba then turned to K. Sastri and asked him what he had to say. Sastri replied that he had never complained about the other three members of KDRM. Baba spelled out, "So, you are absolutely satisfied with the arrangement of work between the four of you?"

Sastri said that it was not a question of what he thought, but of simply obeying Baba's orders. Although Baba had emphasized

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that they should work in unison, in practice this was found difficult due to the fact that they lived at different places, and had different temperaments and styles of working, making communication difficult among them. He also admitted that he had reservations about the way that the others worked for Baba, especially when it came to keeping proper accounts of all financial transactions.

Baba then asked the other three members of KDRM what they had to say. During the discussion that followed it became clear that although each member was honestly trying his best to further Baba's cause in Andhra, there was nonetheless a seemingly unbridgeable gulf of opinion among them on how this should be done. And, in their enthusiasm to work for Baba, each resented any of the others trying to modify his own way of working.

In addition to this, some of the other workers in Andhra complained that important letters received from Baba by KDRM and the replies sent by them to Him were not generally shared. They protested that cooperation was not extended to the different Baba centers and requests for help in spreading Baba's message were ignored.

On top of this, the members of KDRM themselves expressed their dissatisfaction at not being able to meet frequently to plan their work. Baba, with a serious look, interjected:

I have not understood Myself what work you are doing! If you are doing only propaganda for Me, it is absurd. I don't want propaganda or any kind of false publicity. Never. I want love and honesty. If you cannot do that, then stop what you call work. I am quite capable of doing My Universal Work. So, today I think we must try to stop the so-called work.

At this point, Baba approached the subject from a different angle, by bringing up the subject of His *mandali*:

I have often mentioned that I have not yet found one who can love Me as I should be loved. Yet there are those who have surrendered to Me in such a way that they will do

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anything I say. It is a fact. . . . Each of the *mandali* would give their lives at My bidding.

What I am trying to explain is that to surrender to Me is higher than to love Me. And, paradoxical as it may seem, to love Me as I should be loved is impossible, but to obey Me, though very difficult, is possible. So, to call yourselves My workers and yet not obey Me is hypocritical.

It was now nearing midnight, but the discussion showed no signs of lagging. In fact, Manik (Y. Manikyala Rao) became so heated in his criticism of KDRM that even when Baba told him to be quiet, he continued to express his grievances. Finally Baba ordered Manik to leave the hall. Manik did so and stood outside for a while.

Not long after this, Baba temporarily put a stop to the discussion by announcing that He wished to ask God's forgiveness for the weaknesses and failings of all. Baba instructed the assembly to quickly wash their hands and faces and then come back into the hall. Manik, whose hot temper had cooled now, was also allowed to rejoin the group.

With great solemnity and earnestness, all the workers, *mandali*, and Baba stood quietly as the *Prayer of Repentance* was recited. Afterward, Baba had coffee served to all for the second time. When all were seated, Baba turned to Manik and remarked:

Your enthusiasm led you astray. I understand you want to spread My name and you did it with the best of motives, but not gracefully. You were not humble. Did you see how my confessing tonight for the weaknesses of all was done? How I became the confessor on behalf of you all?

Although I only may appear to do something, I not only do it, but I become it. I confessed wholeheartedly; I did it for the whole universe and I actually became the one who confesses. My own principle of humility I do not break; I am free but this principle must be maintained.

Baba's loving words helped not only Manik but even others to learn to control their temper and to cooperate with each

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other in doing Baba's work by humbly sharing His words of love and truth with the people of Andhra.

KDRM Dissolved; Every Baba Lover a Baba Center

A free discussion in Baba's presence continued. One of the workers said, "Baba, how is propaganda possible without raising money?" With a meaningful look Baba's immediate response was, "It is only without money that Baba's real work can be done. What do you mean by propaganda? The very word makes Me look down [belittles Me]. Since ages My work has been done without money."

After a variety of subjects were discussed during the intimate conversation that ensued, Baba eventually announced His decision:

I have heard what you have said. Now I will make some points clear. I know KDRM are not dishonest. K is very particular about money; D has some money with him; R has no money; M, the same. It is natural for them to think that for spreading Baba's message far and wide they need money. But to depend on money to do Baba's work and to extract money by hook or crook is absolutely dishonest.

From the day I kept silence, I stopped touching money. But from that day till today, you have no idea how much money has "flowed" through My hands. Yet I have not a *pie* with me. I am the Fakir. But money comes and money goes. If you depend upon money for My work, then do not work for Me, because how will you get money? Let us be very practical.

K. Sastri said, "I feel it is the life we lead which is important." Baba continued:

Very good. Live such a life that you show others that you love Me. To ask people to give money and then in return to propagate Baba's "message of love," how does it sound? Absurd! So, unless you four have something else to suggest

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other than raising funds to disseminate My message, it would be better if you stop what you call work and begin to live the life of love. Let there be no compromise in this, otherwise the whole thing will merely be a show, a mixture of honesty and dishonesty.

Katta Subba Rao might say, "I am not a fool; I can do Baba's work independently [of KDRM]." Kovvur people will say, "We are capable of spreading Baba's love, why must we be directed and controlled by KDRM?" And likewise from others.

Remember, in these sixty years of My life this is the first time I have attended such a meeting. . . . Not even in Hamirpur was a workers' meeting like this called. But because I felt that something is seriously wrong here, I called this meeting. Absolute honesty must be there, or there is no Baba-work. I am Baba and I know everything. KDRM must stop functioning as a committee from now on. Have you anything to suggest? Am I unjust in dissolving KDRM?

Each of the four members of KDRM were then asked in turn whether they thought Baba was being unjust in dissolving KDRM. Each said, "No". Baba then declared:

KDRM is dissolved. Andhra Meher Center and all other Meher Centers in Andhra should be discontinued as they are presently functioning. Neither KDRM nor any center nor Meher Publications nor any literature on Baba will have anything to do with Me directly as I shall have no concern either with KDRM as a whole or with any of the centers in Andhra.

Let each Baba lover be a Baba center radiating My message of love through living the life of sacrifice, love and honesty for the divine cause. Let every lover, whoever and wherever he may be, be Baba's center in telling people Baba's message that God alone is real and everything else is unreal and that therefore all should love Baba.

So, from today, KDRM, Andhra Meher Center, and Meher Publications are dissolved. Let true workers

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become Baba's centers. And, for God's sake, for Baba's sake, beware of money. One *pie* taken from others with false pretensions makes one die a million deaths! Let principle in work and honesty in life prevail.

I know definitely I love Andhra, and the Andhra people have expressed their love in a way to touch My heart. I know also that every one of you here tonight loves Me. So, I feel very happy. The unique love expressed in Andhra during all the programs, big and small, has really touched Me very deeply.

Now, once again, I will confess before God, whoever He be, on behalf of all, because the Eluru people were not here when I confessed the first time. After the confession, if you really love Me, even a little, I want your hearts toward each other to be clean. Forget your past differences, clean your hearts and live for Baba if you love Baba.

At this point, before the prayers began, one of the workers asked Baba, "How, if all centers are abolished will Your messages reach us and the people?"

Baba replied:

All those who love Me and want to work can share My message with others. Those who have money and can afford to go from place to place should spread My message of love in distant nooks and crannies. Those who have little money can easily go around their own towns and, by living the life of love, inspire others to love God. Those who have no money, large families and no spare time, should share their love with their own family members and friends. Let Baba's love be the center, the office, and the work. Is that not right?

The light of God sparkled like a flame in Baba's eyes as He announced these drastic decisions. None had expected such a turn of events and many looked anxious as Eruch was reading out Baba's board, wondering what else Baba was going to declare.

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"Love Me; Love Me; Love Me."

K. Subba Rao asked Baba whether, after the abolition of the centers, His lovers, as individuals, would be allowed to correspond directly with Him. Baba replied, "Henceforth I want to stop all correspondence. I intend to no longer send messages to you all. Now, I wish to work out My personal program to break My silence."

This proved too much for Subba Rao who could not refrain from saying, "For others' faults, we have to suffer?" Baba threw him a disapproving glance and replied, "It is no one's fault. Perhaps it may be your fault, who knows? Is there anyone without weaknesses, without defects?"

Someone in the hall said, "Baba, You are the only one without fault." Baba was still in a serious mood and He continued:

You take Baba as God. God means All-knowing, All-pervading. So, I am in everyone and know everything—is it not so? Hence it is My fault. Who else could be at fault? I am in everything; I am everything, and I do everything. If you say I am God, then it is no one else's fault. If I am not God, then there is no one in the world except Myself who is more at fault!

Looking at Subba Rao, but addressing the rest of the people as well, Baba continued:

I am fed up with this board and My silence, and I must break My silence. When I break My silence, all of you who have come into My contact will have some glimpse of Me. Some will have a little, some more, and some still more. When the powerhouse is switched on, wherever there are electric bulbs which have a connection with the powerhouse, there will be light.

If some of the bulbs are of small candlepower, the light will be dim, and if some of the bulbs are of high candlepower, the light will be bright. If a bulb is fused, there will be no light at all. That is why I have told you that I have performed no miracles, but when I break My silence, the

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first, last and greatest of all miracles will happen.

These statements contain an implicit call to Baba lovers to love Him for love's sake, through a silent inner communion with Him, irrespective of what happens externally in their lives.

During this meeting, while explaining various points from the board, Baba's hand gestures were very suggestive, and His facial expressions indicated a depth that one could feel but which shall ever remain beyond words to describe. As a simple yet profound conclusion to this long conversation, Baba with a divine glow about Him, added:

Love Me wholeheartedly; that is the real thing. Love Me; love Me; love Me; and you will find Me.

When Baba's workers and lovers in Andhra heard His candid declaration of being God in human form and His loving counsel—Love Me—some of them gazed at Him with wonderment, and some in intense silence. For some the subliminal reaction was, "Yes, we wish to love Baba, but how?" Baba Himself had answered this question once by smilingly gesturing, "That is the lover's look out. I tell you all: I am the Eternal Beloved; love Me."

Perhaps a part of an answer to this question lies in the words of an enlightened mystic who wrote, "The 'fools of God' do not think, they act." Baba does not want to impose a particular method on anyone. It's a sort of a challenge and an open invitation to live with Him, experimenting with His presence. In a way, it is like trying to find a track in uncharted space, it can be anywhere or nowhere.

A line of a *ghazal* that Baba liked, when freely translated, means, "Love is not a game for the feeble-hearted." But Baba's compassionate appeal, "Love Me", also implies that if one honestly wishes to love Him, He will definitely help. So those who dare to love Him, will be taken care of by Him. When the pain of longing for Beloved God builds within the heart, one's path to Him begins to gracefully unfold. One then marvels at how, with Baba's grace, any way can become the way to Him.

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Existence is Substance; Life is Shadow

While all were wondering what was going to be the next item of the meeting, Baba asked everyone, through Eruch, to get ready for the second recitation of the *Prayer of Repentance*. In His compassion, Baba did not want His lovers from Eluru, who had arrived late, to be deprived of their participation with Him in confessing their weaknesses. The hall soon resounded with the solemn words of the prayer.

Baba then conveyed that a special message, "Existence Is Substance and Life Is Shadow," would be read out, followed by its Telugu translation. Before Eruch began reading the message, however, Baba pointed His middle finger toward His ear and gestured, "Listen carefully; it will help you to understand what work and action mean."

As the message was read aloud, Baba, in splendor and dignity, remained seated in His chair. His eyes flashed in different directions and His glances carried tides of His divinity to His dear ones who were attentively listening. This was one of the important messages given during Baba's second visit to Andhra, so the entire text is given below:

Existence is eternal, whereas life is perishable.

Comparatively, Existence is what one's body is to a person, and life is as the cloth that covers the body. The same body changes clothes according to the seasons, time and circumstances, just as the one and eternal Existence is always there throughout the countless and varied aspects of life.

Shrouded beyond recognition by the cloak of life with its multifarious folds and colors, is Existence unchangeable. It is the garb of life with its veils of mind, energy and gross forms that "shadows" and superimposes on Existence, presenting the eternal, indivisible and unchangeable Existence as transient, varied and ever-changing.

Existence is all-pervading, and is the underlying essence of all things, whether animate or inanimate, real or unreal, varied in species or uniform in forms, collective or

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individual, abstract or substantial.

In the eternity of Existence there is no time. There is no past and no future; only the everlasting Present. In Eternity nothing has ever happened and nothing will ever happen. Everything is happening in the unending NOW.

Existence is God; whereas life is illusion.
Existence is Reality; whereas life is imagination.
Existence is everlasting; whereas life is ephemeral.
Existence is unchangeable; whereas life is ever-changing.
Existence is freedom; whereas life is binding.
Existence is indivisible; whereas life is multiple.
Existence is imperceptible; whereas life is deceptive.
Existence is independent; whereas life is dependent upon mind, energy and gross forms.
Existence IS; whereas life appears to be.
Existence, therefore, is not life.

Birth and death do not mark the beginning or end of life. Whereas the numerous stages and states of life governed by the laws of evolution and reincarnation, life comes into being *only once*, with the advent of the first dim rays of limited consciousness, and succumbs to death *only once* on attaining the unlimited consciousness of infinite Existence.

Existence, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present God, is beyond cause and effect, beyond time and space, beyond all actions.

Existence touches all, all things and all shadows. Nothing can ever touch Existence. Even the very fact of its being does not touch Existence.

To realize Existence, life must be shed. It is life that endows limitations to the unlimited Self. Life of the limited self is sustained by the mind creating impressions; by energy supplying the impetus to accumulate and dissipate these impressions through expressions; and by gross forms and bodies functioning as the instruments through which these impressions are spent, reinforced and eventually exhausted, through *actions*.

Life is thickly linked with actions. Life is lived through actions. Life is valued through actions. Life's survival

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depends on actions. Life cognizant is actions—actions opposite in nature, actions affirmative and negative, actions constructive and destructive.

Therefore, to let life succumb to its ultimate death is to let all actions end. When actions end completely, life of the limited self spontaneously experiences itself as Existence of the unlimited Self. Existence being realized, evolution and involution of consciousness is complete, illusion vanishes, and the law of reincarnation no longer binds.

Simply to desist from committing actions will never put an end to actions. It would merely mean putting into action yet another action—that of inactivity.

To escape from actions is not the remedy for the uprooting of actions. Rather, this would give scope to the limited self to get more involved in the very act of escaping, thus creating more actions. Actions, both good and bad, are like knots in the tangled thread of life. The more persistent the efforts to undo the knots of actions, the firmer become the knots and the greater the entanglement.

Only actions can nullify actions, in the same way that poison can counteract the effects of poison. A deeply embedded thorn may be extricated by the use of another thorn or any sharp object resembling it, such as a needle, used with skill and precaution. Similarly, actions are totally uprooted by other actions when they are committed by some activating agent other than the "self".

Karma-yoga, dnyan-yoga, raj-yoga, and bhakti-yoga serve the purpose of being prominent signposts on the path of Truth, directing the seeker toward the goal of eternal Existence. But the hold of life, fed by actions, is so tight on the aspirant that even with the help of these inspiring signposts, he fails to be guided in the right direction. As long as the "self" is bound by actions, the aspirant, or even the pilgrim on the path toward Truth, is sure to go astray through self-deception.

Throughout all ages, *sadhus* and seekers, sages and saints, *munis* and monks, *tapasavis* and *sanyasis*, yogis, Sufis and *talibs*, have struggled during their lifetimes,

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undergoing untold hardships in their efforts to extricate themselves from the maze of actions and to realize the eternal Existence by overcoming life.

They fail in their attempts because the more they struggle with their "selves," the firmer the "selves" become gripped by life, through actions intensified by austerities and penances, by seclusions and pilgrimages, by meditation and concentration, by assertive utterances and silent contemplation, by intense activity and inactivity, by silence and verbosity, by *japas* and *tapas*, and by all types of yogas and *chillas*.

Emancipation from the grip of life and freedom from the labyrinths of actions are made possible for all and attained by a few, when a Perfect Master, *Sadguru* or *Qutub* is approached and his grace and guidance are invoked. The Perfect Master's invariable counsel is complete surrender to him. Those few who do surrender their all—mind, body, possessions—so that with their complete surrender they also surrender consciously their own "selves" to the Perfect Master, still have their very being left conscious to commit actions which are now activated only by the dictates of the Master.

Such actions, after the surrender of one's "self," are no longer one's own actions. Therefore, these actions are capable of uprooting all other actions which feed and sustain life. Life then becomes gradually lifeless and eventually succumbs, by the grace of the Perfect Master, to its final death. Life, which once debarred the persevering aspirant from realizing perpetual Existence, can now no longer work its own deception.

I have emphasized in the past, I tell you now, and I shall age after age forevermore repeat that you shed your cloak of life and realize Existence which is eternally yours.

To realize this truth of unchangeable, indivisible, all-pervading Existence, the simplest way is to surrender to Me completely; so completely that you are not even conscious of your surrender, conscious only to obey Me and to act as and when I order you.

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If you seek to live perpetually, then crave for the death of your deceptive self at the hands of complete surrender to Me. This yoga is the essence of all yogas in one.

As this message was being read out in Telugu, Baba called Mouna Swami and asked him to sit before Him. Baba repeated His previous order to the swami: "For forty days, take one cup of tea and one cup of milk only. For forty days and nights, no sleep, even if you go mad or die. If you say, 'Baba, Baba' constantly, everything will be all right."

The swami asked Baba where he should stay for those forty days, and Baba replied, "Kovvur. At the place where the mass *darshan* was held. Don't let anyone bow down to you. Obey My orders wholeheartedly and honestly, and Baba will help you." Baba then told Koduri Krishna Rao to provide the swami with a cup of milk and a cup of tea daily during the forty-day period.

When the Telugu translation of the message was finished, Baba remarked, "From you Andhrites, Baba's dear ones in Andhra, I want nothing but love."

It was now a little after 2:30 in the morning. The meeting had been in session since 9:00 the previous night. But these six hours had not just been a thrilling or memorable period, they had constituted one of the most moving events in my life. Baba declared that the meeting was now over and that all the workers and *mandali* should go to bed. All hurried to retire so they could rest for a few hours and be fresh for the programs of the next day.

"No One of My Mandali Is Baba"

After leaving the hall, I hardly slept, as the vibrant memories of what had just transpired kept me awake. And yet, Baba's presence was so enlivening that I felt quite refreshed the following morning March 2. After an early bath, I did not feel at all tired as I approached the hall at 8:00 for the session

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Baba had scheduled.

Beloved Baba was already there as most of the *mandali* and Baba workers of Andhra assembled. Baba looked fresh and resplendent, as if he had just been on a holiday tour and had had plenty of rest! Yet, for all this, He was in a serious mood. He did not ask after our health or whether we had slept well, as He usually did, but began getting down to His business immediately.

After looking about the hall, Baba bent His handsome head a little, and His delicate long fingers began to move over His board:

Summing up last night's proceedings, I want to make some points very clear. I have dissolved KDRM, and officially I am not connected with any of the Andhra Meher Centers. For books and all other literature on Baba, you [Baba lovers in Andhra] are responsible, not I. What I really want is that those who love Me and want to work for Me should each become a Baba center.

Last night I explained how those who can afford, and those who cannot afford, can work for Me. Now, if you, on your own, open centers in cities, in towns, in villages, and in your own homes, that is your concern, not Mine.

As I told you earlier, I will now have to work out alone My own program to break My silence, so I don't want to be bothered with correspondence.

It may be mentioned here that ever since Pendu and Eruch had first visited Andhra in November 1952, many centers had been opened by Baba lovers to spread His name and message to the general public. But in the enthusiasm to share the tidings of joy about the Avatar's advent, disagreements arose as to the best way of doing this. As a result, several devotees wrote letters to Baba explaining the situation and asking for guidance.

Baba was busy with His inner work and did not wish to be disturbed. He had little time to spare for correspondence, including that pertaining to Baba work in Andhra.

During the meeting Baba had made it clear that He should

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be completely relieved of the outward details connected with His work in Andhra. Baba's skill in "building" and "dismantling" was unique, and He was able to use both methods as a means of awakening the hearts of His lovers.

Baba continued:

Now this dissolution of KDRM and Andhra Meher Centers may create complications for those directly concerned regarding office, publications, etc. Therefore, I have ordered Adi to help you clear up any difficulties.

You can all, if you like, correspond with Adi, Eruch, Pendu, and with any one of the *mandali*. But I order them, the *mandali*, now, that not one word of the letters you write to them should be brought to My ears. So, if any of the *mandali* advises you, when asked by you, don't take the advice as from Me. You can trust them not to mislead you purposely, but after asking them for advice and help, you should also think about it yourself, for after all, the *mandali* are not Baba.

I will have no concern whatsoever with your offices or publications—whether it all goes on or is stopped. Even if KDRM, of their own, want to continue, I have nothing to do with it. You can add, subtract, or be zero [there may be one, many or none involved in this work]. I will have no concern with it. Let me now see how you love Baba and how you work for Baba. I am everywhere, and I am in you also to watch you. Now, ask Me something, if you like.

Venkateswara Rao asked, "What about our failings on the spiritual path in following You?" While saying this, he was on the verge of tears, which seemed to touch Baba, and He replied:

I tell you that no one has failed Me; you love Me wholeheartedly. When love is not at its height it always creates a mess; there is no question of anyone's failing. I am very happy with you all.

As I mentioned last night, this is the first time I have held such a meeting for the divine cause. If only you had a

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little glimpse of My Divinity, all doubts would have vanished, and love—real love—been established. But illusion has such a tight grip that you miss Reality.

In a hundred years, none of you will have the same body, and yet today you don't "feel" this truth. If yesterday's accident to KDRM had taken them away from this world, the present muddle which is in their minds would not be there.

Looking at KDRM, Baba added, "So, KDRM, think that you are dead and from now on try to live only for Me." V. Rao continued, "Baba, we are prodigal children and not up to the mark. Give us help through Adi." Baba answered:

Let us be honest. Adi has been with Me like the few tested *mandali* for a long period, and he has been conducting office work for twenty years with 100% dedication. Even so, remember, no one of My *mandali* is Baba. Everyone has got weaknesses and defects. Advice you can have from Adi, but not as from Baba through Adi.

For many, at that moment, the compassion behind Baba's severing external connections with His work in Andhra was not apparent. But eventually, some began to see that Baba's real emphasis at the workers' meeting was not on the severing of external connections, but on the assurance of His internal help, with the hint to establish an "inner link" with Him.

By dissolving Baba centers and prohibiting correspondence, Baba was helping His lovers create and nurture a genuine center in their hearts, and become ever more responsive to the flow of His inner guidance. Was not Baba's suggestion that His workers write the *mandali* for advice also a subtle clue that they eventually turn to Him residing in their hearts for the real help? Marvelous are His ways indeed!

Baba's Breaking of His Silence

Annapurnaiah, the editor of "Velugu," a Telugu weekly, on

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the spur of the moment asked, "Baba, will the Andhra lovers be informed of the time and place of the breaking of Your silence?"

Baba looked amused. With His characteristic smile and twinkle, He answered, "My dear 'Velugu!' If this is what is meant by the breaking of My silence, it would be better if I don't break it!"

After a slight pause, Baba continued:

Just as I told you all last night, the "powerhouse" is to be switched on and all the bulbs connected with it will be lit up. So this will not be just here, but throughout the world. All will know. But bulbs [hearts] that are fused will not give any light. That is why I have been telling you all to love Me more and more. The time for the powerhouse to be switched on is so near that the only thing that will count now is love.

Annapurnaiah's question about the exact time of Baba's breaking His silence reminds me of an incident which happened twenty-two years earlier in 1932. It is narrated by Jean Adriel in her book, *Avatar*, published in Santa Barbara, California, U.S.A. in 1947.

She writes:

Before going to California, Baba had told us he would break his silence there in July, and that this event would be the signal for the spiritual quickening which he had been predicting for so many years. We were naturally anticipating this moment keenly, because we—as among those close to him—would share in this quickening in a very profound way. This, Baba had told us at the time of his first visit [1931]. . . .

We gladly believed him—perhaps because we wanted to be relieved of the necessity of further conscious growth—but we were not greatly surprised when he told us there would be a slight postponement. He must first make a hurried trip to China, he told us, and would then return to break his silence in Hollywood Bowl, with Mary Pickford

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to introduce him!

How any of us could have given credence to this fantastic story I cannot now imagine! Certainly it revealed what babes in consciousness we then were. Only too willing were we to be lifted up to Heaven by the boot-straps without further delay! One day, in India, years later, Baba laughed as he recalled the picture to us: "Fancy your believing that story—that I would break my silence over the radio in Hollywood Bowl!"

But believe it then we did, and ardently anticipated his return from China. Before leaving with his party Baba had instructed Malcolm and me to go to San Francisco and prepare the ground for his return. Through contacts which we had from our bookshop days we got in touch with various 'key' people, who arranged for us to speak about Baba and tell of his imminent return and the breaking of his silence.

On precisely the evening when we were to attend the largest of these gatherings in Piedmont word arrived from Baba that he was not returning to America, but was proceeding to India and Europe; nor would he break his silence at that time. This, frankly, was a very dark moment for us.

Within a few hours we were expected to tell these new friends of Baba's expected return to America; to describe the quickening effects upon consciousness which his speaking would initiate for mankind; to proclaim him as a supreme example of God-hood, worthy of the deepest trust and faith. But in our hearts dark doubts were refusing to be silenced.... We felt like trustful children who had been cruelly deceived. Either he did not have the God-knowledge with which we had credited him, or he was another of the imposters who pose as advanced spiritual teachers. Either he was deluded or deluding, the rational mind argued and for a few hours held sway.

Now, in retrospect, it is difficult to recapture the agony of soul I went through. But, at that time, being a neophyte among Baba's followers, I had not become accustomed to

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his sudden changes of plan when his inner work demanded it. Even today, after fifteen years of close association, I would not attempt to explain why he does and says certain things.

Once, in Cannes, in discussing a letter which he had recently received, and in which the writer was bewailing the fact that Baba's promises were not materializing according to schedule, he indicated to me that everything he had promised would come true, "but in my own time and in my own way."

I accept that, though it explains nothing to the rational mind. However, the demands of the reasoning mind matter less and less as the years pass, whereas the intuitions of the heart matter more and more. But during those dark hours in San Francisco the claims of reason were very strong. I felt myself insecure in a world where one's given word was so lightly regarded. Surely the word of a God-man must be sacred. So I reasoned.

But as the hours passed I gained better perspective. I realized that though I could not understand his motive, I knew in my heart that nothing he did was ever prompted by the slightest shadow of self-interest; and that his consciousness so far transcended man-made ethics or conduct that his words or actions could not be judged by our conventional concepts of right or wrong. . . .

Out of deference to our hostess and the plans she had made, we went to the party that night, but only the following day did we send out word of Baba's change of plans. Overnight, practically all of the newly-made friends became ardent enemies! The next day another cable arrived showing the inner contact which Baba had been maintaining with us: "I knew you two would not fail me. Love, Baba."³⁴

On this enigmatic subject, Baba's secretary, Adi, shared his views in a letter as follows: ". . . Baba may be putting off the breaking of His Silence in order to put off those people who might believe in Him for merely being true to words rather

³⁴ *Avatar*, pp. 144-146.

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than for being the One who will give the WORD. The skeptics would believe in Baba because of it, while we believe in Baba in spite of it."

Whenever God visits earth in human form as the Avatar, He uses human language as well as His own language. And it is impossible for the intellect to differentiate between the two. However, if His lovers let His statements simmer in their hearts, then the Avatar's grace helps them to understand what He wishes them to know. Love accommodates contradictions, reconciles paradoxes, and shines forth with a purity which cannot be gainsaid. Once one is blessed with the insight love provides, one's faith in the God-Man's divine status is not affected by the intellectual conundrums of others.

The entire subject of Meher Baba's silence and His promises to break it is far, far beyond my comprehension. For me, it is one of the most sublime and subtle aspects of His spiritual work, and that's all I can say.

Once, while sitting with a group of His lovers in Guruprasad, Poona, one of His dear ones said, "Baba, some of my friends who are scholars and are really good people with many more spiritual qualities than I have, often remark that things do not happen as you say they will." Perhaps this was obliquely referring to Baba's oft repeated promises to break His silence on such and such a date.

Baba's eyes sparkled, and with a chuckle He gestured, "You know, when I was in school, I was good at all subjects, except arithmetic. That must be why I have trouble with dates and years!" What a reply! A magnificent Avataric joke!

"I Am the Ancient One"

Returning to the morning's program of March 2, Baba, after clearing up Annapurnaiah's misconception about His silence and its breaking, continued His conversation with His lovers:

Again I tell you, if you want to make Andhra love Me and make them feel My love for them, it is in the hands of

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each of you to do so. This does not mean that you must necessarily work individually; I never meant that. I want each one of you to be a Baba center. This does not imply that you should only work individually when you can work collectively through Baba centers or as a group.

But all the same, remember well that I will have no outer concern with any centers. I have shown you how to work. Now, it is all your own responsibility. You may open a hundred centers for Baba—it will be your concern, not mine. Know well this much, that each one who really wants to work for Me should lead the life of "Baba's lover" and this will very naturally bring others to Me.

I want "moneyless" love—love which does not depend on money for its expression, nor expects it as a reward. Remember that although I do not perform miracles, I will give anything to anyone who asks for it from the bottom of one's heart. If I am Baba, I can do anything; ask wholeheartedly and you will get it from Me. But this I also tell you, that the one who asks for My love will be the chosen one. The time is very near when I will break My silence. . . . So, from this moment, love Me more and more.

Don't go in for false propaganda. Pour out without hesitation what your heart feels and your conscience accepts about Me. While freely sharing your love for Me with others, be unmindful of whether you are ridiculed or honored.

Do not overrule your conscience and do not exaggerate merely for the sake of propaganda. If your conscience says, "Baba is the Avatar," say it, even if you are killed for it. But if you feel I am not that, then say honestly, "Baba is not the Avatar." Do not fear, but be prepared to honestly say out what you feel. From My own experience, I tell you again and again: I am the Ancient One—the Highest of the High.

When Baba reaffirmed His status as the Ancient One, He gracefully spelled out these words on His board with a casual matter-of-factness. For most in the hall, this statement seemed

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most natural. Baba's presence was so majestic, so overwhelming, that His declaration, "I am the Highest of the High," only reconfirmed what the hearts of His dear ones had already felt. It was truly an indescribable moment in the hall. And with this divine reassurance the meeting came to an end.

This second meeting of Baba with His workers had lasted for approximately an hour. At its conclusion, Baba returned to His room and sat outside in a chair. Soon the boys from the Gurukul spotted Baba and started gathering around Him. Baba got up and started throwing apples to them and soon there was much merriment as the boys tried to catch the apples which unexpectedly came winging to them—Baba was superb at looking one way and then throwing the apple in another. Baba then had a photograph taken of Himself with the boys and teachers of the Gurukul.

An interesting coincidence is that before the serious workers' meeting, Baba, on His own, went and watched the boys play *kabaddi* on the playground. After the meetings were concluded, the boys on their own came and watched Baba's "game" with the apples. Was there some significance to this, or was it merely one of the little games within the Great Game He eternally plays with His dear ones?

He Needs None; We Need None But Him!

Meher Baba spent the night of March 1 and the early morning hours of the 2nd in the company of His lovers and workers from Andhra, intimately and very frankly explaining to them what He meant by working for Him—the "real work." Those who were present, as well as those who later read the account of this meeting, tried to gauge the significance of Baba's statements.

Each one's understanding depends mainly upon the nature of the person's relationship with, and their degree of acceptance of, Meher Baba. There is no need to argue about anyone's perspective, for everyone's journey to Baba, the Ocean of Love, is a personal concern between the individual and the Eternal

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Beloved, the Avatar.

In Baba's All-forgiving love, however, I dare to share some of my thoughts on "work," to prompt others to have their own. As I look back and recall the proceedings of that unique meeting, sometimes the memories of Baba's flashing eyes and the graceful smile that often swept over His face reduce my careful calculations, logic and interpretations to naught. Eventually, though, the mind begins to function and ventures to fathom the meaning of Baba's words.

To me, working for Baba means to avail oneself of the compassionate chance that He has offered us to set ourselves free from the bindings of our emotions, thoughts, and actions. To do anything with love, with the warmth of sharing His message of Truth, links one with Baba's divine presence. Gradually this link begins to operate through all the events of every-day life, both big and small. As one's heart opens up more and more to Baba, instead of feeling proud about one's deeds, even when others regard them as great, one feels indebted to Baba for the opportunities given by Him to participate in His cause.

Baba's perennial work is to release each of us from the limitations of the finite self; our "work" for Baba is to bind ourselves more and more to Him, the eternal, infinite Self. Thus our occupation should be to make room for Baba within ourselves, letting Him flood our beings with His sanctifying presence. This is a quiet act of sacrificing our selfishness at the altar of the infinitely selfless One, Meher Baba. Hence our "work" or rather our part within His work, is a private affair of pleasing Baba, of surrendering to Baba, with no expectation of appreciation from others.

In the mid-1930s, Beloved Baba once conveyed to His early group of Western disciples one simple sentence which explains both the divine and human sides of His work. He stated, "My work is the realization of my Self in all creation." So our "work," with Baba's grace, will eventually end with the annihilation of the worker, the finite self, in the ever active Infinite Consciousness, the Avatar.

This does not mean, however, that there is no scope for individuality in our work. I am reminded here of an incident

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which I had heard from Pandoba, one of the *mandali* who stayed with Baba in the mid-1920s. He recalled that once during a general discourse, Baba remarked, "If anyone were to please Me with a sweet, melodious *bhajan*, I would bless the person in a special way and he will reap immense spiritual benefit."

One of Pandoba's friends gathered from this casual comment of Baba's that the easiest way for him to win Baba's grace would be through singing. Although nature had not gifted him with a sweet voice, he wanted to take advantage of this "hint" from Baba, as it seemed to promise a short-cut to spiritual progress.

So, each night, when the other *mandali* had gone to sleep, he would steal away from the sleeping quarters to practice his singing. One night, on some pretext, Baba was walking around Lower Meherabad and was surprised to hear some discordant notes emanating from a field in the distance. Baba quickly walked over and found this dear one singing for all he was worth.

The man was surprised to see Baba at that unexpected hour and bowed down to Him. Baba gestured, "What are you doing here?" The man shyly replied that he was trying to learn how to sing well. "Why?" asked Baba, and the man related the whole story.

Baba smiled in appreciation of the intent, but went on to explain that whatever one does from the bottom of one's heart in the service of the Master is nothing less than a song. He asked the man to discontinue his singing venture and simply be more diligent in the duties already given him by Baba.

Our work then is to discover our own way of singing to Baba. Paradoxically, part of this work involves giving up our earnest efforts, and learning to rely completely on Baba to find one's way to Him. This subtle process of self-effacement and surrender molds one's relationship with Baba in the way which is most in tune with one's innate nature. One begins to feel not only more at ease with one's self, but also closer to His presence.

This awakens in one a secret and poignant longing to be even

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RAJAHMUNDRY

more aware of Him. One develops the voice to sing His praise, and the eyes to witness His glory. In this spirit of love, offering flowers is not a ritual, arti is not a dry discipline, and prayers can become a genuine means of establishing His presence in our day-to-day life. When life is lived in this manner, one becomes a Baba center, completely centered in Him.

On some occasions I had the privilege to be present when Beloved Baba conversed with groups of His lovers from different parts of India. The gist of what He conveyed from time to time, as I recall it today is, "Whether one knows it or not, Baba, as the Avatar, is in everyone, around everyone, and beyond everyone. And, whether one accepts it or not, it is the Avatar who, in His timeless love and compassion for all, responds to even the faintest longing for God or call for help."

In my own life, I have seen many times how my efforts to get closer to Baba are the excuses He uses to come closer to me. To be aware of this is to surrender more completely to His will, to depend more wholly on Him, and to become a more pliable vehicle for the Avatar's work in us, and through us. How wonderful it would be to play our parts without self-resistance, as small passive nothings in the ever active Everything—the Avatar. For His work, He needs none, and for our work, we need none. . . but Him! He Alone Exists.

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TOUR ENDS
1954 -PART XII

"So Many Seek, So Few Find"

On the morning of March 2, after an extemporaneous and lively game of catch with the boys at the Gurukul, Meher Baba was ready for house visits. The impact of the previous night on me was so great that I could hardly recollect the details of what had transpired at the meeting. I was simply gratefully aware that Meher Baba had spent the night with us and we with Him. To be in the Avatar's presence for such a long time at one stretch was a rare privilege.

It was only later that I began reflecting on Baba's message and its meaning. On the morning of the second, however, only His words, "Love Me; I am the Ancient One," kept beating in my heart. To me these words were not just abstract philosophy, or coldly intellectual; they had a warm appeal, even as they challenged my love. What else was there to remember?

Ever since Baba had entered Andhra, He had been hinting at the importance of the workers' meeting that He wanted to hold at the end of His tour. Perhaps this was one of the main reasons for His visit. Be that as it may, at the end of these meetings, Baba seemed relaxed and in a happy mood. Around 10:00 that morning He visited the home of N. Dharma Rao, an executive engineer, who had been tirelessly driving Baba throughout His Andhra tour.

Baba then visited the homes of Jyothi Prakash and the Pillay family. At each place, Baba was garlanded and *arti* performed. At Pillay's house, his two daughters, Meera and Veena were also there. Meera was weeping bitterly, but that seemed to ease the pain of her aching heart and perhaps made the impending parting from Baba more tolerable. Baba compassionately embraced her, consoling her with His touch. Veena, on the other hand, seemed to be in high spirits, her face

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beaming with joy, because her Beloved Baba was in her home in person.

After these three visits, Baba returned to the Gurukul where Bullaiah approached Him with the visitors' book for Him to sign. Bullaiah told Baba that last year's flood had washed away the previous book and so Baba's would be the first entry in the new book. Baba smiled and gestured a few words which Eruch wrote down. Baba then took the pen and made just a little mark on the page as a token of His signature.

Baba then sat outside His room and all gathered around Him. People began singing "Nemo Meher Baba, Avatar Namō." (Our loving salutations to Avatar Meher Baba.) This evoked a mood of deep reverence and love for Baba, but this enchanted time of sitting in Baba's divine presence passed all too soon. At 1:00, Baba left Rajahmundry for Kakinada.

Baba made several stops en route. The first was at Tapeswaram where Baba gave *darshan* at the Theosophical Lodge. Here, He gave a special message from His board which Eruch read out in his loud clear flowing voice:

I am the One so many seek and so few find. No amount of intellect can fathom Me. No amount of austerity can attain Me. Only when one loves Me and loses one's self in Me, am I found. This love must be so honest that not only should others not know about it, but you yourself should not be aware of it.

One of the divine aspects [of God] is infinite goodness, and so, do good but without expecting any appreciation for the same from any quarter.

Baba gives His blessings to all.

These few words seem simple, yet have great meaning to them, for they amount to a declaration of Baba's being the Ancient One—eternally available to all. Regardless of one's worldly position, any attempt to love God is answered directly by the Ancient One.

When someone asked Baba for His blessings, He gestured, "My blessing is in the *prasad*. If people take it with love, it will go deep down into their hearts. Without love, all messages are

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empty talks."

The next stop was at the village of Alamuru where the host wanted to serve Baba and party with tea and coconut water. Baba, who was a quick wit, looked at the *mandali* with a smile and gestured that they could have one or the other, but not both!

After half an hour's program, Baba's car was speeding once again toward Kakinada, but there were two more stops before He reached there. First, at Mandapeta, which was about a half hour's drive from Alamuru. Baba glanced lovingly at those assembled with His luminous eyes and dictated a short message on His board:

Whether rich or poor, big or small, high or low, literate or illiterate, all of you can have Me. If you love Me as I ought to be loved, you will find Me as your own Self.

Baba's visit to Mandapeta was very brief and within ten or fifteen minutes He drove off to Ramachandrapuram. There was a short *darshan* program here at which K. Sastri gave a talk in Telugu on Beloved Baba and His message of love. At its conclusion, Baba added:

God is not to be preached, but to be loved, and only those who live a life of love can know Me as the Ancient One.

These last three stops were unscheduled originally, but Baba spared a few moments to answer the call of His lovers at each place. Baba left Ramachandrapuram around 5:00 in the afternoon and arrived at Kakinada at about 7:00 that evening.

An Offering That Begets Pride Defiles Love

During this *darshan* tour, Baba lovers tried to reserve for Baba a house in a semi-secluded location at each place He stayed. They knew this was Baba's wish and so, at Kakinada, they had arranged for Baba to stay at Y. V. Narasimha Rao's bungalow on the outskirts of town. Baba's car drove straight through the city until it reached the bungalow which the

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family had vacated for Baba's stay, but Baba did not go inside. He sat on the ground in front of the house and waited for the *mandali*.

Our bus had broken down a little before the end and all had to walk the last furlong or so. Traveling with the Avatar was simultaneously difficult and easy, exasperating and delightful, but it ever remained a cherished longing of His lovers—to have the opportunity to journey with Baba.

After being greeted by Narasimha Rao's family, Baba told us all to leave and to be at His place the next morning by 7:00 sharp. We retired to our quarters which were in a building not far from Baba's.

Accordingly, the next morning, March 3, all assembled and Baba, as was His habit, asked various ones how they had slept the previous night. All seemed to have slept well, which was not too surprising considering how little sleep any had had the previous night. Some of the local people came that morning for Baba's *darshan* and were introduced to Him. Baba then gestured that He wanted to visit the homes of His lovers and workers.

The first home visited was that of E. Sathi Raju, and there is an interesting story connected with Sathi Raju's acceptance of Baba as the Avatar. Some fifteen years earlier, in 1938, S. Raju had met a saintly person named R. Ganga Raju. This pious, God-loving person initiated S. Raju in a special path known as "*Surya-Upasana*"—worship of the sun. He taught him to meditate on Lord Vishnu, visualizing Him centered in the sun.

After some days, S. Raju could hear celestial music during his meditation and, sometimes, he could feel his *kundalini*, coiled at the base of his spine, slowly rise toward the center situated between his eyebrows. With this experience, a deep peace would envelop him. He was, therefore, content with his spiritual practices and even after hearing of Meher Baba from some people was not particularly interested in Him.

Two events, however, in January 1952 made him change his mind. On January 2, R. Ganga Raju, whom he considered his guru, passed away. And then, ten days later, while traveling

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by train to Madras, a curious yet significant coincidence occurred. He was talking to a friend who happened to be a follower of Sai Baba. This friend mentioned that he had recently heard of a man named Dr. Dhanapathy Rao who was telling people that Meher Baba was the Avatar of the Age.

When the train pulled into the station at Tadepalligudem, two men approached the compartment where S. Raju was sitting. One got in and sat down next to him. This was Y. Ranga Rao while the man who had come to see him off was none other than Dr. Dhanapathy Rao himself!

Ranga Rao gave S. Raju a booklet on Avatar Meher Baba which he happened to have with him and told him, without mincing any words, that Meher Baba was the Avatar. S. Raju heard all this with interest but was not drawn to Baba. Later that year, however, he happened to meet Dhanapathy again and was given a copy of *The Perfect Master: the Life of Shri Meher Baba* by C. B. Purdom to read. This book greatly impressed him and he began to show a genuine interest in Baba and so he was invited to attend a three-day *sahavas* program at Meherabad in November 1952.

During this meeting, he felt the loving warmth of Baba's presence and all the bits and pieces of his life seemed to fall together to make a perfect Baba design. His eyes shone with ecstasy and as he looked at Baba a few tears coursed down his cheeks. Later, he wrote: "At the first sight of Baba, I forgot myself completely and my joy knew no bounds."

He and Dhanapathy garlanded Baba with two beautiful *chemki* (tinsel) garlands. To his surprise, although many garlands were offered to Baba, He seemed to prefer wearing only the garlands that he and Dhanapathy had offered him. On the last day of the *sahavas*, S. Raju whispered to Dhanapathy that they were most fortunate as Baba had used only their garlands during the three days.

Perhaps there was not just gratitude, but a little pride as well in this observation. For, as Baba left the hall on the last day, He went straight to where Mohammed the *mast* was waiting for Him. Baba handed him the two garlands, caressed his face and then went away. As soon as Baba left, Mohammed

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took the garlands and crushed them into pieces between two stones. S. Raju felt that Baba was teaching him a direct lesson: the love with which the garlands had been presented was pleasing to Him, but the pride generated in their hearts by His acceptance of that love offering was not.

Baba's guidance through such personal experiences is heart-penetrating and lasting too. In one of S. Raju's later visits to Baba, in a very off-hand manner, looking at him, Baba gestured, "I am the spiritual Sun." As Baba made this comment, the veil over His face seemed to thin for an instant, revealing a little more of His luminous effulgence. Perhaps for many there, this statement was significant in itself, but for S. Raju it had a special meaning.

It confirmed to him that Baba knew all about his old spiritual practice of meditating on the Lord centered in the sun. Baba's casual comment strengthened S. Raju's conviction in Baba's omniscience and reassured him that Baba had been guiding his life, even before he had heard of Him. Even today, Baba continues to give such reassurances to His lovers who, like sunflowers, continue to turn to Him, the spiritual Sun.

During Baba's short visit to S. Raju's house on March 2, 1954, He touched a pair of silver sandals with His feet, at S. Raju's request. Similarly, at the home of V. V. Narayan Rao, Baba touched a pair of silver sandals as a gesture of His love for Narayan Rao. These sandals were then kept by the two men as sacred mementos of Baba's visit, to be treasured forever.

Baba visited seventeen homes in all, including the homes of M. Annapurnaiah, the editor of the *Velugu* paper and M. Thirumal Rao, who later translated *God Speaks* into Telugu. In each house Baba visited, He created a special atmosphere of intimacy. Each home has a heart-stirring story to be told of Baba's love, but it seems practical to relate only what transpired at a few of these visits.

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Baba Asks Questions; Baba Answers Them

When Baba visited the home of L. Subba Rao, his wife, seeing Baba enter the house, came running toward Him and fell at His feet, weeping. Overpowered with love, she became unconscious. Baba's love seemed to fill the house. There was also a poet there who, on feeling this incredible atmosphere of love, began spontaneously composing and reciting poems in praise of Baba, hailing Him as the Avatar. It was a touching sight to witness.

Seemingly immune to this intense atmosphere, one Baba lover continued to be absorbed in taking photographs of Meher Baba. He had been conspicuous throughout Baba's tour in this pursuit and Baba now turned to him and teased him, "Out of hundreds of pictures, has even one come out all right?"

When visiting K. Kesavarao's home, it was apparent that the host was not well. He was standing with outstretched hands for Baba's embrace. Pointing at him, Baba instructed K. Sastri, "Tell his family members that he is very fortunate!" Baba then gave his wife a slab of candy and added, "Break off a piece every day for the next 101 days; take Baba's name and then give the piece to your husband. Don't worry."

It was at the house of Hanumantha Rao that Bonala Venkateswarulu and his family first met Baba. Venkateswarulu was profoundly affected by this meeting and thereafter took a very active part in working for Baba in Andhra.

As Baba was being driven to His lovers' homes, He saw a man standing at the gate of a house. He was holding a plate with fruit to offer Baba, as well as camphor with which to perform Baba's *arti*. This man, G. Venkata Subba Rao, was very devoted to Lord Siva and was in the habit of repeating His name aloud, so much so that he was nicknamed "Mahadev Sambho" (a name of Siva) by the townsfolk.

But as he was devoted to Siva and not to Baba, no visit to his home had been scheduled. Seeing him at the gate, however, Baba asked the car to be stopped and blessed the offering by touching the plate with His hand. Baba asked one of His Andhra lovers to convey to "Mahadev Sambho" that Baba was

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Lord Siva Himself. Later, G. V. Subba Rao related to Sathi Raju that while looking at Baba, he saw Him as Lord Siva.

Baba also visited the home of Y. V. Narasimha Rao, His host, where He expressed His appreciation for all the care they had taken of Him. Lastly, Baba went to the home of H. Sambamurthy, the District Collector. Many of the socially prominent people of the town had come to see Baba, and were introduced to Him, one by one.

During this informal gathering, the collector's small boy suddenly appeared with a book to collect Baba's autograph. With a smile, Baba explained that as He had stopped speaking, so also He had stopped writing, but He drew a quick doodle (perhaps a mischievous chicken) in the child's book.

After *arti*, the collector's wife asked if Baba would give a message. Perhaps because most there had come more out of curiosity rather than love for Meher Baba, or had come simply because it was the collector who had invited them, in a most natural manner, yet with great authority, Baba dictated the following message:

It has been possible through Love, for man to become God; and when God becomes Man, it is due to His love for His beings.

If people were to ask Me, "Have you seen God?" I would reply, "What else is there to see?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you God?" I would reply, "Who else could I be?" If they were to ask Me, "Are you the Avatar?" I would reply, "Why else have I taken this human form?"

So the only message I could give, and have ever been giving is, "Love God;" and you will find that your own Self is nothing but God.

Sometimes Baba's messages were cryptic, but this particular message seems strikingly forthright. While its metaphysical implications might be so profound as to be unfathomable, its most immediate meaning is sufficient to direct one to the heights—love God and become God!

During these house visits, Baba was very quick; there was never a wasted moment, and yet Baba never seemed hurried.

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There was always a regal presence about Him; one had the sense not that Baba was rushing, but that in His divine atmosphere the pace of everything around Him was accelerated.

Baba was the divinely calm and tranquil eye of the hurricane. And when Baba left a house after only a few minutes, something remained behind—in the rooms and in the hearts of His dear ones for a long time—His presence and the warmth of His love.

"All Worship. . . Eventually Comes to Me"

Baba finished the house visits early and by 11:15 He had returned to Narasimha Rao's bungalow. As He was informally conversing with His close ones, someone requested Him to visit the Cosmopolitan Club. Baba graciously agreed to do so but gestured "only five minutes" and added that only if it could be arranged for Him to stop on His way to the M. S. N. C. High School where the public *darshan* was to be held.

These conditions were met and so, at around 3:00 that afternoon, Baba was received with honor by the members of the Cosmopolitan Club. Baba conveyed to those who were there, "Today is the last day of My *darshan* tour in Andhra. So, if people keep silent and order is maintained, I intend to give a special message. In addition to it, I will give fresh dictation on the spot. Those who want to hear it may come there."

After this loving personal invitation, Baba gave His blessings to those who were there and then proceeded to the high school where over four thousand people had already gathered. Baba was led to His seat on the dais. Before sitting, Baba folded His hands to the crowd (His own selves). There was a loud round of warm applause which rang out spontaneously as Baba was garlanded.

After the welcome address, the three short messages from Baba were read out in Telugu by Jagannadham Pantulu who usually performed this task during the Andhra tour. Then Baba asked Ramjoo to read out the special message, "The Word of Words" which He had dictated earlier. The last

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paragraph of this is given below:

The Word that I will speak will go the world as from God, not as from a philosopher; it will go straight to its heart. With the dawn of the realization of the unity of all life, hatred and dissension will come to an end. There will be unfaltering love and unfailing understanding and men shall be united in an inviolable brotherhood, based on the realized Oneness of God.

After Ramjoo read the message in English, it was read out in Telugu as well. As this was being done, Baba sat in His chair, His hands resting lightly on the arms, gently raising His palms and letting them fall while His eyes flashed in different directions. There was a graceful dignity to Baba which made even His small gestures, like His tapping the arms of His chair, very appealing. I would often find myself gazing in wonder at Baba's forehead which seemed especially resplendent, but others were equally captivated by Baba's eyes, or His smile. Truly Baba was divinely beautiful and many in the crowd were deeply moved by His beautiful divinity.

As He had indicated at the Cosmopolitan Club, after the translation was complete, Baba began dictating an additional message on His board:

In the Beyond State of God, sex does not exist; there, only one indivisible Existence prevails. It is in the realm of illusionary phenomena, called the universe, that sex asserts itself.

Babajan, the Perfect Master who, in less than an instant, made Me experience My Ancient Infinite State, had the form of a woman. Upasni Maharaj, the Perfect Master who brought Me down to normal consciousness, had a male form.

Babajan came from a high noble and rich family. She was beautiful when she was young. But just before she was going to be married, owing to her intense longing to be one with God, she renounced the world. In Poona, with one kiss

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on My forehead, she made Me realize that I am the Ancient One. She was about 100 years old at the time, yet, like a true fakir, she would sit under a tree day and night, in rain or sun.

Everyone of you, man or woman, of any caste or creed has an equal right to attain Divinity. I tell you with divine authority that I experience eternally, consciously and continually being one with you all and the One in you all. So, any worship or obeisance done to any deity, animate or inanimate, to any saint, yogi, advanced soul, or Master, eventually comes to Me.

Being rich or poor, literate or illiterate, of high caste or of low caste, need not interfere with your loving God—the supreme Beloved. By offering pure unadulterated love to anyone and anything, you will be loving Me. And let Me assure you on divine authority that we are all one. I give you all My blessings for the understanding that loving God in any form, in any way, will make you eternally free.

Following this discourse, Baba distributed *prasad* for about two hours. Whenever Baba distributed *prasad*, there seemed to be an extra kindness in His eyes. Although busily engaged in distributing the bananas or sweets, Baba would find time to smile at an infant in its mother's arms, sometimes reaching up and lovingly squeezing its cheeks or patting it gently. It often seemed as if Baba were the channel through which love flowed in boundless measure from some invisible source, within Him. At 6:00, Baba left the *pandal* and returned to His residence. Before supper, Baba instructed the *mandali* to be at His place at 8:00 the next morning.

Yoga Samadhi and Nirvikalpa Samadhi

On the morning of March 4, however, Baba surprised the *mandali* by appearing at their quarters a little before 7:00. Baba embraced all who were traveling with Him from outside of Andhra, who were leaving that day for their various homes.

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After this unexpected but heartwarming visit, we all proceeded to Baba's residence where He informed us of a telegram He had received from the secretary of the Balyogi Ashram, Mummidivaram. Baba then had the reply read out: "My love and blessings to all real Balyogis in the world who are God's beloved children."

Baba seemed in a very communicative mood. Perhaps He was relaxed now that the tour was practically over, but at any rate He began to refer to a variety of profound spiritual subjects with more than a little wit and humor. Some excerpts from Baba's talk are given below:

Listen, never has the proverb "all that glitters is not gold," been more appropriate than in the spiritual field. Tantric and other types of yoga, when developed and practiced diligently, result in the practitioner going into a trance or developing powers. But *yoga-samadhi* is absolutely different from *nirvikalpa samadhi*.

Yoga-samadhi is called *haal* by the Sufis. Those in *yoga-samadhi* need not eat food, drink water, sleep, etc. They are in a state of trance, but when they come down from their *samadhi*, they are like ordinary people.

Nirvikalpa samadhi is quite different from *yoga-samadhi*. It is deification—becoming God and experiencing the "I am God" State of the Perfect One, living the "life of God."

Baba continued:

There are three yogis who have been in *yoga-samadhi* for hundreds of years; their eyelashes and eyebrows have grown very long, they have become very lean, but they do not know Me.

Baba's description and gestures were so graphic that it was easy to picture those yogis sitting in a trance. The expression on Baba's face made us feel how lucky we were to be there in His presence. With a mischievous twinkle in His eye Baba continued:

Now let me give you an example of "all that glitters is

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not gold." [In the late '30s] at Meherabad I had a Mad Ashram, not a Mast Ashram, but a Mad Ashram and the maddest of all was one called Faqir Bua.

When I closed that ashram, all the mad were sent to their respective places. Faqir Bua was sent to Poona. One who was working at Meherabad spread the rumor that I gave My spiritual charge to Faqir Bua. The result was that this madman was taken as a *Sadguru*.

He was made to sit on a big *gadi* (fancy cushioned seat/throne). People visited him for his *darshan*. His every gesture was taken to be divine. People spent money on him, took him around the city in a car but Faqir Bua was absolutely mad.

Baba had those assembled laughing at this ludicrous situation. Baba's sense of humor was really great and the facial expressions and gestures He used to express Faqir Bua's insane behavior were a delight to see.

Baba concluded:

Don't be led astray. Remember, "All that glitters is not gold." So, be honest. I am the slave of the love of my lovers.

With a smile, Baba added, "There are even some so-called yogis and gurus who, in their letters, send even Me their blessings!" Baba's astonishment expressed at this turn of events again prompted His dear ones to laugh heartily.

Baba then became more serious and began discoursing on the "four journeys" which He had explained earlier at Kottapeta. Addressing the difference between a Perfect Master and the Avatar, Baba conveyed:

In living the life of God, both the Perfect Master and the Avatar are equal, the same. Both are leading God's life and also are on every level of life in Illusion. Simultaneously they are on the level of the lowest to the highest. The most important difference, however, is that the Perfect Master *acts* on that level and the Avatar *becomes* that. . . .

On every plane the Perfect Master *acts* as a man of that plane. The Avatar *becomes* the man on that plane and that

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is why the Avatar can give a universal [spiritual] push.

God is [in] everything and in everyone. The Avatar is not only in everything and [in] everyone, but becomes everything and everyone. Therefore the fundamental difference is that the Perfect Master *acts* whereas the Avatar *becomes*.

Later, Baba expanded on this theme and it was included in *God Speaks* (second edition, revised and enlarged) as part of the Supplement.

Ten Minutes and Four Seconds

Baba's discourses, of which I have given only excerpts, went on for nearly an hour. And they were given with Baba's casual yet authoritative divinity so that by the end, the hall was surcharged with His presence. All in the hall were looking at Baba. Some who had recently come into Baba's contact wondered what would have happened to them had they not the good fortune to be accepted by Meher Baba, the Avatar. Their feeling of gratefulness for Baba's grace was overflowing through their eyes.

Those from Andhra, in general, were overjoyed at the opportunity they had been given to spend time in Baba's company. This had inspired them to want to love Baba more and more. But now, despite the fullness they felt in Baba's presence, they could not entirely erase from their minds the thought that soon Baba would be leaving Andhra for Mahabaleshwar.

One of His dear ones, V. V. N. Rao, with all respect and humility spoke out, "Baba, how to retain our contact with You, the Avatar, constantly?"

His large eyes beaming with light, Baba looked around the hall and through His board and gestures replied:

Narayan Rao means now that Baba is physically among you, you feel the contact, but when I leave you, gradually this cools down. How to retain it constantly?

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Well, do you feel constantly hungry? When you work hard, you get hungry. When you feel hungry, you take food, and then you forget about the food. So work for Me in such a way that you feel hungry for Me. Sometimes think of Me, sometimes work for Me, sometimes talk about Me, but not all the time. If you go on eating continually you will get indigestion!

Before you go to bed, say, "Baba, I entrust all that I did, thought or spoke, good and bad, to You." When you get up, say, "Baba, I now begin entrusting all—thoughts, words and deeds—to You." Say this just twice each day for five minutes, but with all your heart in it. Do that and make Me responsible for all you do or think. Then you are free; . . . but you must do it *honestly*. This much will be more than sufficient to maintain the contact with Me.

I am the Ocean; I can accept both flowers, coconuts and also filth. So throw everything in the Ocean with all your heart. This is a great thing if done wholeheartedly, otherwise it goes in your own pool of water which gets filthy because of your dirt.

Here I would like to share a similar instruction Baba gave around seven months later. Baba had called some of His men disciples and devotees from the West to stay with Him for three weeks at Meherabad. On September 21, during one of His sittings with the Westerners, He dictated:

The question is how to remember Me. The easiest and surest way is to do as I tell you. . . . The first thing in the morning when you get up, before doing anything, think for one second of Baba. Baba is then worn by your soul: early in the morning dress your soul with Baba. At twelve noon, for one second do the same; do it again about 5:00; when you retire do it also. . . . If you do it I will be always with you, and you will feel My company. . . . Do it for four seconds every day, then you will be in the world, yet Baba will be with you all the time."³⁵

Amazing! Can it really be that simple? It seems too fantastic

³⁵ *The Awakener*, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 54-55.

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to be true, and yet the God-Man in His *hukki* (whim) has disclosed this to us. He has made it so simple that many will doubt it. Or they will try to turn this simplest game of daily remembrance into some difficult and rigorous chore. We all have our own way of relating to Baba and I do not mean to impose my views on any, but I would like to share some of my thoughts on putting Baba's ten minutes or four seconds into our lives.

I feel the most important thing is to remember the spirit of Baba's words. At the times Baba has suggested, we should lovingly remember Him, not the act of remembering. Therefore it should not become a ritual or a discipline in our lives. It is a light-hearted game of remembrance which He has graciously offered to play with us. We can make it a song, sung for our delight and His pleasure.

Baba is not interested in teaching us some technique as a shortcut to Him. He is reminding us, rather, of the eternal Truth of the God-Man's reassurance that if we trust and follow Him, He will be with us in our daily lives. Try, and see the wonder of it; experiment, and feel the delight of it.

When Baba finished answering Narayan Rao's question, the impact of His compassion was so great that one of His lovers there began to weep and weep from the emotion he was experiencing. His body was shaking with excitement and he could not speak. In between his heart and his vocal chords, his words had gotten stuck. Baba called the person near and patted him and lovingly soothed the turmoil in his heart.

Then Baba started embracing, one by one, all of His Andhra lovers and workers who were there, explaining that He would not be able to see each of them off individually later on. Not long after these tearful yet cheerful-with-His-presence farewells, Baba left Kakinada by car and headed for the train station at Samalkot.

Who Made the Sick Bogie Fit?

When we arrived at the railway station and went to the

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booking office, Manik (Manikyala Rao) greeted us. This surprised us for Manik had left on March 2, and Baba had subsequently asked many of His workers residing in different places in Andhra Pradesh to return to their homes and not wait to see Him off at Samalkot. It wasn't until much later that we learned the full story behind Manik's presence in the booking office that morning.

On March 2, after the workers' meeting, many were getting ready to return to their homes; among those who stood up as if to leave was Manik.

Baba looked at him in surprise and asked, "Why are you standing?"

"I have to go to Vijayawada, Baba," Manik replied.

"Why?"

"I have to make some train reservations for You."

"Who asked you to do that?" Baba wanted to know.

Manik replied humbly, "No one, Baba, but I overheard the arrangements Pendu wants to make on the 4th and I'm going to talk to my officer at Vijayawada about it."

It had been decided that on March 4, when Baba and party left Andhra, one entire third class compartment should be reserved exclusively for the *mandali*. Also one second class, four-berth compartment, with an attached coupe for Baba and a few of the *mandali* should be obtained. But Manik, who worked for the railways, knew that it would not be possible to make such arrangements at Samalkot. Although no one had asked him to handle this, he took it upon himself to make the necessary arrangements.

Accordingly, Manik went to Vijayawada and managed to reserve one third class compartment for the *mandali*, and a separate bogie (car) which would be attached at Waltair and which contained a second class coupe and a four-berth sleeper. Once these arrangements were made, Manik told his officer he was going to Samalkot to make sure that all went smoothly on March 4 when Baba and His party left.

But early on the morning of the 4th, Manik received a call from his officer in Vijayawada with the news that the movement officer at Waltair had just phoned to inform him that the

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reserved second class bogie had been declared "sick." (In railway parlance, "sick" means the car has been deemed unfit to travel.) Therefore the bogie could not be attached to the train and, as there was no stand-by bogie at Waltair, the train would not have a second class coupe and four-berth compartment on it.

Manik was greatly alarmed to hear this. He requested his officer, Mr. Amritraj, "to do something, for God's sake" and to prevail upon the officer at Waltair to get the bogie fit enough at least to travel as far as Vijayawada where it could be replaced with another bogie. Mr. Amritraj promised to do his best. So it was that Manik was still anxiously awaiting word on the bogie situation when Pankhraj and I arrived.

As it turned out, it was fortunate for us that Manik was there, for ordinarily it would have been impossible for us to purchase the return tickets for all those traveling with Baba. This was because tickets were only sold to nearby stations or junctions along the route, while some of those with Baba wanted to get down at small distant stations and even more wanted to change trains en route.

Manik, anticipating our difficulties, entreated the clerk in a friendly way to make out tickets for the final destination of each one in our party. To facilitate matters Manik began calculating the distances involved, how many miles to Nagpur, to Kanpur, etc., so he could advise the clerk on how much he should charge (tickets were sold on a per mile basis). "Don't worry," Manik assured him, "if it turns out that any ticket has been underpriced, I will pay the difference." Thus, because of Manik's help, the *mandali* and others were spared much bother and were able to get direct tickets at Samalkot for the entire journey home.

This whole procedure took quite some time and it was not long after this that Baba arrived at the station. Manik went over to see Baba, perhaps to mention the problem that had arisen with the reserved bogie, but just then a phone call came for him. Baba gestured, "First, go see what it's all about." Manik went and discovered that it was his officer in Vijayawada who had called to inform him that the bogie had been

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repaired well enough at Waltair to travel at least as far as Vijayawada.

Relieved to hear this good news, Manik returned to Baba who immediately asked what the phone call had been about. Manik explained the entire matter to Baba who looked pleased when the end result was announced. After hearing Manik's whole story, Baba inquired solicitously, "Now, what about your food?" "I will take something, Baba," Manik replied but this answer did not satisfy Baba who called Pendu over and gestured, "You people are having sumptuous food and you have ignored this man who is working for you! Now take him to the refreshment room and see that he has everything you enjoyed!"

This was Baba's way of expressing to Manik His concern and affection. In fact, Baba had not asked Manik to help make the travel arrangements, but now it was clear that He appreciated Manik's consideration in doing this work on his own.

Baba has His own ways of getting His work done through His lovers and those connected with Him. He works behind the "seven curtains" quietly to accomplish what He wants, but He arranges things so that His lovers may feel that they are the ones who have accomplished something in His cause. This is one of the personal aspects of Baba's impersonal working, a part of His Lila and an expression of His unconditional love.

Baba Helps Those Who Long to Obey

Our train arrived at Samalkot a little after noon. It was a passenger train originating in Puri and going all the way to Poona. We had traveled from Poona to Vijayawada on it on February 19 and now we were returning by the same train approximately two weeks later. The second class bogie which had been made fit at Waltair, and the third class compartment reserved for the *mandali* were both locked so that no one else could use them. When they were opened we piled in with all of our luggage.

As the train pulled out of the station we saw a big crowd had

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congregated. They folded their hands and lowered their heads as a parting salutation to Beloved Baba. We could see tears trickling down some cheeks. Baba's visit had provided a blessed relief to the eyes and hearts of His dear ones.

Standing at the door of His compartment, Baba silently raised His hand to convey His love and blessings to all; in return the crowd responded by shouting out joyously, "Avatar Meher Baba, Ki Jai." As the train pulled away, we could see white handkerchiefs waving in the distance.

Around 2:00 we reached Rajahmundry. There too many had gathered to get their last glimpse of Baba—the awakener of their hearts. After this brief but touching reunion where Baba's lovers took the opportunity to garland Him one more time and to offer Him their loving *namaskars*, Baba called for Manik who was traveling with us as far as Vijayawada.

"If I give you a special assignment, will you carry it out?" Baba asked Manik. "Most happily," Manik replied. Baba explained that Janaky, the daughter of Sampath Aiyangar, was waiting at Vijayawada with her family. They had traveled from Madras when Baba had given them permission to come see Him at the train station. But knowing that there was bound to be a large group of Andhra lovers as well, Baba was worried that this dear family would not get a chance to take full advantage of their limited time. Baba wanted Manik to go to Vijayawada, contact Janaky, and explain to all there that Janaky's family should come see Him first. Only after Baba gave them *darshan* were the others to approach Him.

Manik replied that he would do his best to comply with Baba's wish. "But how will you do it?" Baba gestured, expressing surprise. "Baba, this is a passenger train. The Howrah-Madras Mail will overtake this train and reach Vijayawada first. I will simply get down and get into the mail and that way I will be there in time to deliver your message." Baba looked pleased, even a little impressed at this clever solution to what had seemed to be a problem.

Manik got down from the train and went to the station master's office to find out when the Howrah-Madras Mail would be arriving. He was informed that the train was

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running almost two hours behind schedule. Doing a little quick calculating, Manik realized that there was more than enough time for him to travel to Nidadavolu, the next junction where he could catch the mail train, as it would only take forty minutes to get there. So, instead of getting down at Rajahmundry, Manik couldn't resist the temptation of spending forty more minutes with Baba's *mandali*.

At Nidadavolu, Manik again got down and inquired when the mail would arrive. He was told that it was still running an hour late. As it would take only another forty minutes or so to reach Tadepalligudem Manik again figured that he could stay on the train until reaching there and then get down.

However, eleven kilometers from Nidadavolu, as the train pulled into Navabpalem, with Tadepalligudem still two stops away, it was shunted onto a side track. Manik felt a cold chill running down his spine because he knew what this meant; he had been misinformed about how late the mail was running and it was now about to overtake them any minute! Sure enough, soon the mail roared past them without stopping, speeding on to Tadepalligudem. But it would be gone long before Manik got there.

When the train did pull into Tadepalligudem, Baba called Manik. "What's this?" Baba asked. "You said you were going to catch the mail but it has already passed us!" Manik did not know what to say. He felt very much ashamed. Nervously he explained what had happened and then concluded with a rush, "But Baba, even at Vijayawada I will find a way to see that your message gets delivered." Despite these brave words, however, Manik had no idea how he could do this and left Baba's compartment in quite a state.

Once again, there were many Baba lovers at the station to greet Baba. Dr. Dhanapathy approached Baba and asked His permission to offer tea and snacks to Baba and His party. Baba graciously consented and so Dhanapathy and Bhaskara Raju lovingly provided refreshments for all. But I doubt that Manik relished anything he ate or drank.

About two hours later, near 5:30 that afternoon, we arrived at Eluru. Here an amusing incident took place. After pulling

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into the station some people wheeling long hand carts piled high with baskets approached the *mandali's* compartment and began unloading everything into the already overcrowded space. Some of the *mandali* went to the door and began protesting and started to push everything out when Katta Subba Rao appeared and explained that this mountain of baskets contained provisions for Baba's party! There were fruit, sweets, bread, packages of butter, containers of yogurt and crates of orange juice. The orange juice we gratefully drank then and there and the rest of the refreshments were stored for Baba to distribute later on.

It was after 7:00 that night when the train began to pull into the Vijayawada railway yard, one of the largest in India. Manik was still very worried about how he could possibly carry out Baba's order, when the train stopped at an outer signal, still quite a distance from the actual station and platforms. This meant that another train was at the platform where the passenger train was supposed to arrive. Therefore our train had to wait until the platform was free. Manik, for the first time since Tadepalligudem, felt a ray of hope, and jumped down from the train. He began running along the railway track to the station itself which was around a mile away.

By the time he reached platform seven, where the train was supposed to arrive, he was so exhausted that he collapsed. Although he was tormented by the thought that after running all that way he might not be able to deliver the message after all, he could not get up. Finally, after a minute or two, he regained his strength and got to his feet. Once more he set off, but now he had only enough energy to walk slowly. But he soon saw the crowd of Baba lovers who had gathered and approached them to inform the prominent workers about Baba's wish that none approach Him for *darshan* until after a family from Madras saw Baba.

Having done this, he began looking for Janaky's family to tell them the good news. Someone had told him that they might be in the waiting room and he started for there when he saw a family which he did not recognize standing on the

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platform itself. He approached and asked, "Do you belong to Sampath Aiyangar's family from Madras?" "Yes." Manik felt immensely relieved and in a very happy mood conveyed Baba's instructions to them.

It is indeed amazing how Baba helped Manik to be able to obey His instructions. Perhaps he would have saved himself many anxious hours if he had simply gotten down at Rajahmundry to begin with, but the opportunity to spend a few extra minutes in the company of Baba's *mandali* proved irresistible. Even so, his wholehearted desire to atone for his lapse was such that Baba gave Manik a second chance. In fact, Baba continues to help, in His silent loving way, anyone who really longs to obey Him. Just as Manik finished delivering his message to Janaky's family, Baba's train pulled into the station. Perfect timing!

Darshan Treat for Janaky's Family

C. V. Sampath Aiyangar was one of Meher Baba's early disciples from Madras. In the late '20s, with the help of K. S. Srinivasam and M. Vadivelu, he formed a small dedicated group of Baba lovers in that city. Being in the judiciary of the Madras residency, he was often out of the city on duty, but he still found time to conduct many Baba programs at his house which he renamed Meher Bhavan.

Sampath Aiyangar was a very sincere and earnest person; a man not only of great scholarship, but of spiritual vision as well. Even before meeting Baba, in his daily life, he was engaged in an attempt to put his spiritual ideals into practice. It seems from the first he was drawn to Baba, wholeheartedly accepting his Babaji, as he used to call Meher Baba, as the living Christ. His love for Baba was profound and he possessed a remarkable understanding of Baba's teachings.

In March 1930, during Baba's visit to Meher Bhavan, He approved the formation of "Meher League," a group devoted to spreading Baba's teachings. Also, Baba inaugurated Meher Asramam, in the premises of Meher Bhavan, by planting a

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tree in the courtyard. This was to be the site for Baba gatherings in the future. During Baba's stay with Sampath Aiyangar's family, it was decided that a quarterly, "Meher Gazette" should be published with V. T. Laxmi, Sampath's talented daughter, as the editor.

Despite these many activities, Baba found the time, at Sampath's request, to help his grandson, Kasthuri, write his first letter on a slate. It's a Hindu custom that a family have their children initiated into the process of education by having the family's guru, or some spiritual figure they look up to, hold the child's hand and write "Om" or some other sacred word or symbol on a slate. Out of His love for Sampath Aiyangar, Baba graciously consented to do this for Kasthuri.

Baba's relationship with the whole Aiyangar family was indeed a very intimate one. Baba would invariably find some time to "sneak" away from the adults and play games with Janaky's (Sampath's other daughter) children. He would play hide and seek and other games to their great delight and amusement.

Baba's last visit to Meher Bhavan was in April 1947, a few years after Sampath Aiyangar passed away. At the end of this visit, Baba allowed the family members to wash His feet with milk and honey in the early hours of the morning; a rare privilege given by Baba to this dear family.

Given such intimacy, over so many years, with the Aiyangar family, it is not surprising that Baba allowed Janaky to come for His *darshan* at Vijayawada or that He took pains to ensure that they would have some private moments with Him.

Janaky had last seen Baba the year before, in January 1953 while Baba was at Eluru. At that time she had come with her son Kasthuri and his wife, Leela, who was expecting a baby. Baba blessed the couple and casually mentioned that if Leela had a girl she should be named Meherkanti. This time, Janaky was accompanied not only by her two daughters, her son Kasthuri, and his wife, Leela, but also by her ten-month-old granddaughter, Meherkanti.

The family arrived at the station on the morning of March 4 and put up at the Retiring Room. They had to wait for the

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whole day, however, as Baba's train was not expected until early that night. Meherkanti had a fever and was very restless and the hours seemed to drag by, although Janaky's excitement at the prospect of seeing Beloved Baba soon could not be diminished.

Finally, they assembled on the platform, well before Baba's train was due, carrying with them a vessel full of *halwa* prepared with love by Janaky's dear mother. As none in the family knew when they would next see Baba, they had decided to avail themselves of this opportunity to request Baba to initiate Meherkanti as He had her father, Kasthuri. In the hopes that Baba would consent, they had brought with them a slate and a slate pen.

As they were standing on the platform, Manik, whom they had not met before, approached them and informed them that Meher Baba wished to see them first when He arrived. They were overjoyed to hear this and, when Baba's train pulled in, they rushed to His second class carriage. The other Baba lovers obediently waited their turn and allowed Janaky's family to be ushered first into Baba's presence.

They entered Baba's compartment with their eyes riveted on Baba's winsome, smiling face and their hearts were filled with joy. For Janaky, once again time stood still in the overwhelming immediacy of Baba's presence. His divine embrace thrilled them all.

Janaky humbly offered the *halwa* to Baba as a gift from Meher Bhavan and Baba accepted it with great delight. Perhaps He was remembering His dear Sampath and his wife. Then Janaky asked Baba if He would be willing to initiate Meherkanti. Baba looked surprised for a second, perhaps because of the child's tender age, but He lovingly agreed. Janaky handed Baba the slate and the slate pen she had brought. Meherkanti, on the other hand, because of her fever and the noise and confusion of the railway station, appeared less enthusiastic about the whole procedure.

She was crying most of the time and refused to be taken out of her mother's arms. Even so, with the loving patience so characteristic of Baba, He blessed her and held her tiny hand

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in His as He guided it while He drew on the slate a picture of a "mischievous chicken!"

In all, the family had nearly fifteen precious minutes with Baba and then, taking His permission, with gratitude written on their faces, they got down from Baba's compartment. Adi and Jal, Baba's brother, then spent time with the family while the other Andhra Baba lovers got their opportunity to have Baba's *darshan*. Jal was an old familiar of the family, having visited them since the '20s at Baba's request.

As the train prepared to pull out, Baba came to the door of His bogie so that everyone could see Him one last time. The hearts of His lovers were enveloped with the joy of seeing Baba, yet tinged with the poignancy of parting. Kasthuri took some pictures of Baba inside His compartment as well as a few of Baba standing at the door as the train pulled out. These are probably the last photos taken of Beloved Baba during His second Andhra visit. He looks tired but, nonetheless, full of compassionate love.

All stood on the platform and waved and followed Baba's bogie with their eyes until it was out of sight, but they surely tried to follow Him with their hearts as far as their love could take them. When Janaky's family returned to their room at the station, they noticed that Meherkanti was now fast asleep and her fever was completely gone. A blessed great-grandchild of Sampath Aiyangar!

Don't Bend Baba's "Guidelines" to Suit Your Ends

As it turned out, Baba did not have to change bogies after all. At Vijayawada, His bogie was thoroughly checked and repaired so He could travel all the way to Poona in it. Not long after leaving Vijaywada, we began unrolling our bedding. Around fifteen people had gotten down at Vijayawada to catch trains for Hamirpur and Nagpur so we were not as tightly crowded as we had been. Still, every bit of space, including the aisles, was needed to accommodate us. Most were exhausted from the long *darshan* trip and went to sleep without difficulty.

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A few, however, remained awake in turns to see that others didn't squeeze into our reserved compartment when the train stopped at each station along the way.

To backtrack a little, there was a personal incident which occurred that day which I would like to recount. Between Samalkot and Vijayawada, Baba periodically visited the *mandali's* compartment, spending some time with His close ones. When Baba visited us after Eluru, He saw the pile of baskets which had been given by K. Subba Rao. Baba appreciated his hospitality and then began distributing the contents to those returning to Hamirpur and Nagpur Districts, gesturing that they should share this with their families and friends.

After personally handing out various items to a few, Baba told Sadashiv Patel and Savak to divide the rest among those in the compartment. I received some fruit, delicacies and a packet of sweets, wrapped in a shiny plastic bag. Some time later, Baba asked us if we had enough for our supper. All said it was ample.

Then, with a twinkle in His eye, Baba continued, "You were extremely well fed in Andhra. Some of you must have even put on weight! But starting tomorrow, none of you should eat anything that's leftover from Andhra." At the next station, Baba got down and returned to His coupe.

I don't know what effect this seemingly simple instruction had on the others, but for me, after my supper, it precipitated a bit of a problem, a little conflict. For years my body had been frail and my digestion delicate. It gets upset even if I overeat just a little. Hence I am careful never to have too much. I had eaten what I could for supper and put the sweets on the overhead rack to enjoy with my breakfast or lunch the following day. But now Baba's instruction made that impossible. I have a sweet tooth and I did not want to forego the pleasure of the sweets, but I knew if I ate them I would not be able to digest them. So what to do?

As with most temptations, it sounds trivial, and yet I could not simply put the matter out of my mind. I found my attention wandering to the thought of the sweets and my eye kept periodically glancing up at the shiny packet above my head. No

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one knew what was happening within me; I looked calm but I wasn't. See how even such a simple straightforward instruction of Baba's can bring to the surface deep rooted, yet often unsuspected, attachments.

I was jolted out of my preoccupation by the dramatic change in the sound the train made as it rattled over the tracks. Suddenly there was an extra loud clattering as we passed over a long bridge with iron fretwork on both sides. This not only distracted me from my temptation, but inspired me to discover a solution to my problem.

Without hesitation, I reached up and took the packet of sweets down from the rack and then happily dropped them out the window to disappear in the current of the river we were crossing. The conflict was resolved! I felt so relieved that I was left with a sweet taste in my mouth even though I hadn't eaten a single sweet. And it seemed that with the packet, I also managed to throw away a temptation that might eventually have prompted me to disobey Baba.

This little incident may appear quite innocuous but it taught me an important lesson: if we resolve to obey Baba, the problems created by our temptations resolve themselves in a natural way. To some it may not seem very critical whether I kept a few sweets to enjoy the next day or not, but initial disobedience always seems insignificant and justifiable. Sometimes the temptation to disobey appears alluringly "sweet," but within it lies the long snares of bitterness. Simply trying honestly to follow Baba, without attempting to bend His guidelines to suit our own convenience is the safest and sweetest path.

The next morning, March 5, the sun with its lovely hues and golden rays appeared on the Eastern horizon—an everyday ever-renewing miracle which is ignored by most people. For me, it was a great delight to watch that resplendent ball, looking so small although thousands of times bigger than the earth, quietly keeping company with each one in the moving train. Does not the spiritual Sun, the Avatar, in spite of being the Infinite One, offer to become a companion to each? The problem is that although we need Him, we do not always want

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Him.

Unlike the previous day, Baba did not visit the *mandali's* compartment and the day passed without any special incident, except for one small personal detail that I recall. Near midday the train reached Raichur where lunch had been ordered in advance for us all. We quickly rushed to the refreshment room to eat the simple South Indian meal of rice, *sambhar* and *papadam* before the train left. As I was eating I happened to bite into a small white pebble which had been carelessly left in the rice. It was crushed into pieces and I had to spit out the whole mouthful and it spoiled my lunch.

This vividly reminded me, by comparison, of the clean, rich food which had been carefully and lovingly prepared for Baba and His people during the entire Andhra tour. In living with Baba, one has to be ready for comforts as well as discomforts. You have to take life as it comes and accept tasty meals and bland inedible dishes as His wish.

One other thought came to me with great certainty—that if I had saved some of the sweets and substituted them for the ill cooked station food, those sweets would have proved most bitter spiritually. If I had disobeyed, I would have displeased Baba and the incredible richness of the Andhra *darshan* tour would have been ruined and lost for me. In following Baba, one should never treat His wish lightly. There can be no compromise with the Avatar's instructions because they come from the very Source of wisdom, love and compassion.

All Glory to Meher Baba, the Avatar!

It was past midnight when the train pulled into Kurduwadi. Most of the *mandali* were asleep and I did not wish to disturb them; to the few who were awake I said in a hushed voice, "Good-bye folks. See you in Baba's time."

I got down holding in my hand the small tin suitcase which I still use during my travels. The place where I stepped down onto the platform was close to the spot where, two weeks earlier, I had boarded the train to accompany Beloved Baba to

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Andhra. But now what a difference! I was parting from Him and I felt that the whole glorious experience had ended too soon.

As I started to walk away, my steps inadvertently led me toward Baba's second class coupe. Foolishly, I hoped I might get a last glimpse of Him, but the doors and windows were closed. I waited there silently, however, on the off chance that His window might be opened. What madness! The closed doors, however, could not obstruct the flow of Baba's presence and I stood happily glued to the spot until the engine whistled and the train pulled out of the station.

For a while my mind and heart raced along with the wheels of Baba's compartment but eventually, coming back to myself, I lifted the little suitcase and with a heart both heavy and joyous I walked to my home.

Next morning, March 6, Adi drove Baba from the Poona station to Bindra House where Baba had His bath and breakfast. Then Adi drove Baba to Mahabaleshwar and thus ended the glorious Andhra *darshan* tour.

And yet, the "*darshan* experience" of those who met Baba continues. Outwardly, some were merely charmed by His personality, but remained unconvinced of His divinity. Some felt the impact of His love and came away feeling that He was an exceptional individual, but not necessarily the God-Man. Yet even these will find their unconscious journey to God quickened because of His enlivening contact.

For a few, however, Baba's "call" resounded in the deepest recesses of their beings and their hearts responded by accepting Him as God-become-Man, the Avatar. For those who were meeting Baba for the first time, it changed the direction of their lives, reorienting them to Him. For those who had previously accepted Baba, this *darshan* tour deepened their conviction in Him and gave them a greater awareness of His presence as "awakened love."

Baba's *darshan* had as many facets as there were people who received it, and it continues to this day. For Baba's *darshan* is a dispensation in silence of His compassion; His giving of Himself as selfless divine love, to the measure one is ready to

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receive it. This *darshan* was made manifest in Hamirpur District and Andhra but is available today to any who approach Him with love. The story of Baba's Hamirpur and Andhra *darshan* tour is also the story of our own hearts once they are awakened by His love.

So it is that I often revisit those exciting exhilarating days. As the many lively incidents file past in my thoughts, the tides of wonder and delight envelop me. When I fly back to those years I can still visualize the events, and a heartwarming Hamirpur-Andhra nostalgia steals over me. The incidents appear before me like a flock of cranes, with wings spread wide, gracefully flying high up in the sky; they seem to suddenly appear for a while out of nowhere, just to disappear beyond the horizon. The spiritual splendor of those simple, humorous and profound Baba days often casts a tender spell over me. Like deep, passionate musical notes they bring me the joys and agonies of many yearning hearts.

Francis Brabazon accompanied Beloved Baba during the entire Andhra tour and on his return to Australia he wrote a thrilling and graphic poetic account of his journey with the God-Man. The following excerpt from that book, which also represents the feelings of many a heart, expresses how deeply he was touched by Meher Baba's love during this Andhra *darshan*:

Whether Meher Baba is the totality of Godhood or not, I have personally no way of knowing—I can only measure to my own degree. But to that degree, he is the embodiment of that ideal which I call God. Since Beauty and knowledge has been the only God I have ever worshipped or pursued, and since this man appeals to my eyes as the very embodiment and manifestation of Beauty and knowledge, I call him God. Not only the all-forgiveness and humour in his eyes, but the very movements of his hands and body, have unlocked regions within me which were unknown to me before.

No man or woman, no flight of thought, no aesthetic experience, no sublimity of nature, has touched the depths

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of me as this man has. I have met no one, or experienced no experience, which has melted my heart or sharpened my intellect as he has.

So it was that when the people of Andhra in their thousands, folded their hands before him in devotion, I, in each one of them, folded my hands and bowed in my heart before the purity and completeness of his beauty. My own goal is that in that purity I become annihilate.

That man is the God-man who makes the path easy—
Nay, who wipes out the path altogether,
Goes straight to the heart of the matter
And gives one realization of the one Self.³⁶

Many seasons have passed by, but the spring of Baba's *darshan* continues to remain fresh in my memory, with its glowing blossoms. Finding oneself in the love-orbit of the God-Man is a wonderful and exciting experience; the gift of His love opens the hearts of His dear ones to His eternal Beauty, His Glory, His existence as Love.

At the close of this volume, Meher Baba's messages given during the "*darshan* days" flash through my mind and stir my heart. Each of them has the superb depth of the Avatar's wisdom and the warmth of His magnetic love. But how can my words, which are poor props, ever reach the profound sanctity of Baba's presence felt in one's heart? To choose some concluding statements of Beloved Baba from those days to share with those who now seek Him and His *darshan* with open hearts, has become for me a delightfully confusing task.

At this juncture, out of the many matchless messages given by Meher Baba, I recall His following words of penetrating beauty and divinity—the words that let His unconditional compassion, love and divine assurance trickle through:

Everything is Mine except Myself;
Myself is for those who love Me.
I am the Ancient One,
the Highest of the High.

³⁶ *Journey With God*, p. 17.

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Love Me; Love Me; Love Me;
and you will find Me.

Let the bells ring!
All glory to Meher Baba, to Him, the Avatar!!!

GLOSSARY

arti: A cry of the yearning heart; an ancient Hindu method of concluding worship. Traditionally, at the time of *arti*, small lighted lamps or joss sticks are slowly waved in a circle before the person, idol or picture of the deity, saint, Man-God or God-Man being worshipped, while a special song with a theme or refrain of offering oneself to the One worshipped is sung. Meher Baba's lovers do not necessarily do this when His *arti* is sung.

avatar, an: An incarnation manifesting a specific divine quality.
Avatar, the: "God-become-man." The incarnation of God, the infinite, in a finite human form. The God-Man, Messiah, Christ, *Rasool, Saheb-e-Zaman*.

Bhagavad Gita, the: Lit., "Song of the Lord." A section of the Hindu epic, the *Mahabharata*, consisting of a colloquy between Krishna and Arjuna on the eve of battle. It was in the *Bhagavad Gita* that the *Avatar*, as Krishna, revealed the *Avatar's* status as being everyone and everything, and also beyond everyone and everything.

bhakti: Wholehearted devotion.

bhakti-yoga: A path of devotion.

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

baqa: Abiding.

baqa-billah: Abiding in God; the state of consciousness experienced by the Perfect Ones.

chappals: Sandals.

chilla: Engaging for forty days in worship, austerities.

choultry: A resting place for visitors where rooms and food are provided by a charitable institution for nominal rates.

dal (also **dhal**): A common preparation made from any of several types of lentils grown in India.

darshan: Formal or informal audience given by the Master who bestows his blessings on his devotees or visitors and

GLOSSARY

receives their homage. Sometimes the Master uses the occasion to distribute *prasad* as well; also the act of bowing in reverence.

dharamshala: A free rest house for travelers.

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

dnyan: Gnosis, Real Knowledge, discrimination.

dnyan-yoga: A path of discrimination.

fana: Annihilation.

fana-fillah: The "I am God" state of the realized Ones.

gadi: Lit., mattress. A seat or throne.

ghazal: A short love poem. An ode. A special poetic composition in Persian, Urdu or Hindi.

halwa: A sweet preparation, made from farina.

hu-tu-tu: An outdoor Indian game played by two teams consisting of nine to eleven players each on a rectangular area of 40' x 25'. The goal is to cross mid-field into the opponents' side and touch a player and then return safely to your group while repeating "hu-tu-tu" continuously in one breath. If the other team can hold you and prevent you from returning in time you are out.

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

jhopri: (Sometimes spelled zopdi), a hut.

kabaddi: An outdoor Indian game, similar to hu-tu-tu.

karma: The working of the law of action and reaction in relation to oneself and others. Fate. The happenings in one's lifetime preconditioned by one's past lives.

karma-yoga: A path of selfless action.

kirtan: A performance glorifying God or the God-Man through songs and stories.

Koran, the: The holy book of the Moslems.

kundalini: The vital force residing at the base of the spine, symbolically represented as a coiled serpent.

GLOSSARY

kuti: A hut.

Lila: God's "Divine Sport." In a general sense, playful activities.

mandali: The intimate disciples of a Perfect Master or the Avatar; a group associated with a common activity.

mantra: A sacred name or phrase repeated to invoke God.

mast: (Pronounced "must"), a God-intoxicated person on the spiritual path.

Maya: Lit., illusion—that which does not exist. The principle of Ignorance which makes the Nothing appear as everything. In a general sense, false attachment.

mayavic: Pertaining to *Maya*.

muni: A great sage.

naaz: A caprice, whim of a beloved or of the Divine Beloved.

namaskar: The placing of one's palms together as a sign of respect or greeting.

nirvana: The first stage of the final *fana*; the absolute vacuum state.

nirvikalpa-samadhi: The "I am God" state of the Perfect Ones; divinity in expression.

niyaz: Lit., prayer, supplication. In a general sense, the response to the beloved's *naaz*.

nullah: A gully.

pachadi: A South Indian dish, chutney.

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

pandal: An awning.

papadam: A crispy snack.

parwana: A moth.

payasam: Sweetened milk with cooked rice, raisins, almonds, etc.

perngu: Yogurt, curds.

prasad: Lit., a gracious gift. Anything, usually edible, given by a saint, Perfect Master or the Avatar to their followers.

GLOSSARY

Anything, usually edible, that is first offered to a deity, saint, Perfect Master or the Avatar and then distributed in His name.

puja: A worship.

pulihara: Special spiced rice dish, "yellow" rice.

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

qawwali: A characteristic type of singing, usually in Urdu, accompanied by musical instruments. Often these songs are addressed to the Beloved in a very intimate way.

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

qutubiat: The state of a *Qutub*.

raj-yoga: A path of meditation.

Ramayana, the: The ancient Indian epic recounting the life of Rama, the Avatar.

rishi: A seer. A hermit with spiritual wisdom.

sadra (also **sadhra**): A thin, ankle length muslin shirt.

Sadguru: A Perfect Master, Man-God.

sadhu: A pilgrim, an advanced soul.

sahas: Lit., close companionship. An opportunity given by the Avatar to spend time with Him and to intimately feel His presence. A gathering held in His honor where His lovers and followers meet to remember Him.

samadhi: In a general sense, a trance induced by spiritual meditation. Also a place where the body or the last remains of a saint, a Perfect Master or the Avatar are interred.

sambhar: A spicy liquid dish served with rice.

sanaui: An Indian reed instrument somewhat similar to a clarinet.

sanyasi: One who has renounced the world and its ways.

shama: A flame.

shastipurti: The celebration of the 60th birthday.

shastri: One who is well versed in the Hindu scriptures or *shastras*.

talib: An aspirant.

GLOSSARY

tapas: Penance.

tapasvi: One who practices penance.

uppama: A spicy South Indian breakfast dish.

yoga: Lit., union. A method and practice leading to conscious union with God.

yoga-samadhi: A trance induced by yogic practices.

zikr: The repetition of God's name.

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