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you to whiteness... And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast."

Doubtless there were also other implications in this upheaval than the purely personal ones. Once, in the early days, one of his Eastern men, puzzled at Baba's methods, asked why he sometimes subjected them to ordeals for which they could find no reason. Baba then told him that occasionally for his universal work he needs the energy resident in the emotions, and to avail himself of it he would stir up the emotional nature of one or more of his disciples. "Whom else should I use for my work, if not my own?"

I have related this personal experience to illustrate how a Master of Life works when he knows a soul to be ready for an important step in unfoldment. All of Baba's disciples in some measure pass through a similar ordeal, and all are agreed that the beneficial results are profound and far-reaching. Like the modern psychotherapist, but in his unique and superior way, Baba uncovers whatever lies hidden in the recesses of the Unconscious; both the demons and the angels are released to be utilized in more creative living; and when the moment is ripe, the deep transference, which in the beginning he fosters, he finally resolves.

The wider ramifications of this particular crisis are only now becoming apparent. Another of Baba's inimitable techniques is to work out a small-scale model of events, swiftly, in dramatic and realistic form. It is as if by this means he registers such events with the Cosmic Timekeeper, who, over a later and longer period of time and through the medium of daily circumstances, slowly unfurls the dramatic sequences—previewed earlier—giving more time for each phase of the drama to be thoroughly assimilated. Certainly this was so in my own case, as the later life pattern proved.

BIRTHDAY FEAST

One of the most memorable experiences of our stay in India was Baba's birthday celebration, the preparations for which began shortly after our arrival in December. Forty

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days before the birthday a fast began in which we all shared. The fifteen of us in turn joined Baba in a one-day fast of two cups of tea and two cups of milk. Again, we all participated as he fasted without even water for twenty hours of the day.

Some weeks before his birthday, Baba assigned specific duties to each of his Indian disciples, but like the Generalissimo that he is, kept himself in touch with the overall plans by calling his men to him from time to time to give account of their particular duties. All of his devotees, embracing Brahmin, Mahratta, Harijan, Christian, Parsi and Mohammedan, were notified and their help solicited in distributing the handbills in different languages among the slum districts in the Bombay Presidency, the Gugurat and the Deccan, inviting the poor to the birthday feast. Accommodations were engaged in the neighborhood of the Nasik Ashram for the devotees who would be staying a night or two. Busses were chartered to convey them from the railway station to their cottages and to the Ashram grounds. An enormous tent, two hundred and fifty feet long by one hundred and fifty feet wide, was erected to protect the visitors from the heat and glare of the sun. A smaller one was erected for kitchen use. Brahmin cooks and helpers were engaged; ditches were dug in the ground and covered with brick and stone to form the stoves and ovens. All the paraphernalia to cook and serve food to fifteen hundred people was imported from Bombay and with Baba supervising every detail, a commissary was set up that would well have rivalled for efficiency New York's finest caterers.

Thousands of yards of cloth had been purchased, together with tons of rice and lentils to be made into birthday packages for the poor. The Westerners worked at all spare moments tying up these bundles of food, until finally a pyramid of packages, twelve feet high, arose in the midst of the garden. The Ashram hummed with activity and by the fifteenth of February the preparations were completed. With Baba's arrival from Meherabad our fatigue vanished like mist before the sun. Knowing that all action initiated or supervised by Baba is symbolic, one may see in this con-

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centrated effort of the Westerners to prepare the gifts of food and clothing for the poor, a token gesture of the role America particularly was to play in rehabilitating the poor of the world, made destitute by man's greed and lust for power.

On the day of Baba's arrival came the Brahmin cooks and the following morning the kitchen was completely installed. Huge brass and copper cauldrons steamed with rice, vegetables, laddoo (an Indian sweet) and tea. The cooks were naked to the waist, with the sacred thread of the Brahmin caste dangling from their necks. They were magnificent looking men, of fine carriage and dignity. They might readily have been mistaken for great teachers or holy men. Being cooks apparently in no way impaired their sense of being the ruling caste of India.

In an attempt to see what was being cooked two of us approached one of the steaming copper cauldrons. Quickly, one of the cooks asked us to move away. A strict Brahmin would not eat food which had been polluted by a non-Brahmin's shadow cast upon it. In view of this it was a heart-warming sight to see later in the day Baba's Brahmin devotees eating their meal in close proximity to devotees of other castes, many of whom were 'untouchables'.

One elderly Hindu, himself a Brahmin, approached Malcolm who was watching the devotees at lunch. "Is this universal brotherhood, I see?" he asked, smiling. "I hope it is a step in that direction," was Malcolm's reply. "It is indeed," the devotee rejoined, "and one which only a Perfect Master like Shri Meher Baba, through the influence of his divine love, could inspire."

It was an impressive sight to see these some seven hundred devotees of Baba's sitting together on the ground, in long rows, as they ate their noon-day meal. The Brahmins prayed for two minutes before the food was served. The Mohammedan commenced their meal with the customary "*Bismillah*"—"Begin in the name of the Lord!" The Mahratta men stripped to the waist, as their ritual before

eating. Before *any* of the guests touched their food, and after they had performed their traditional devotions, the tents resounded with choruses of “*Shri Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj ki jai!*” – “Hail Shri Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, the Great King!” Nor would any of the arriving guests take even a cup of tea until they had paid their respects to Baba.

After luncheon Baba called the Western group to his little straw hut in the garden which had been built as a special resting place for him. There, on his knees beside the Master, was the figure of an elderly Hindu. His eyes were closed in ecstasy; his hands lovingly caressed Baba’s feet. This man – a saint – had seen Baba’s photograph the year before in the home of one of Baba’s devotees, and immediately recognized him as a God-realized Master; and though he himself was worshipped as a saint by his own devotees, some of whom he had brought with him to the birthday feast, he offered Baba the full homage of his awakened heart, as he buried his head in Baba’s breast, overcome by spiritual emotion. A few moments later Baba left the tent, with the group following. One of the saint’s disciples plucked a rose and handed it to him. Still deeply stirred by his meeting with the Master, the saint inhaled the fragrance of the flower, touched it to his forehead, his eyes, the top and back of his head and finally to his heart, then, partially dazed, stumbled off to the large tent supported by two of his men.

Later in the day, when one of the Western disciples who had not met the elderly saint in the hut, was introduced to him, he looked at her for several minutes and smiled. “Always be happy as you are now,” one of his devotees translated for her. Then he embraced her. Taking a scarf from the neck of one of his followers, he gave it to her; then, linking her arm in his, he led her through the tent toward the kitchen where he found Baba. Taking her hand he placed it in Baba’s and then prostrated himself at the Master’s feet. By this gesture, she felt he was making it clear that only one like Baba could give her the supreme realization which, apparently, the saint knew she sought.

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It was on this same day that Baba, hearing of some vainglorious remarks of one of his disciples, took time out to drive home a needed lesson. This man had boasted how hard he had been working, how long he had been fasting, how much he had been suffering, how little he had complained. Baba's eyebrows arched. Any form of pride is anathema to him. "Every second the little 'I' predominates! 'I work ... I fast ... I suffer ...'!"

Then he pointed across the garden to another of his men who was repairing a fence which the crowd had broken. He had been one of the boys in Baba's school in the early days at Ahmednagar, and ever since had lived and worked at Baba's Ashram. In January he had come to Nasik where he had been working day and night, setting up fences, unloading bolts of cloth and sacks of grain, helping to erect the tent and lay the special piping. He was thoroughly exhausted, as his posture and movements indicated; but no word of complaint passed from his lips; nor did he boast. "There is the man," Baba indicated, "who works and never says he works. That is *real* selfless service."

The next morning—the day when the cloth and grain would be distributed to the poor – we were asked to be in the tent by six o'clock. The men of our group helped the Eastern men to give out the bundles, while the Western women sat with the Eastern devotees as they watched the ceremony. When we awakened at daybreak and looked toward the tents, we saw milling mobs of poor people being held within bounds by some of the devotees and stalwart Indian police who had been called out from Nasik to help preserve order. Punctually at six o'clock the procession started and, until seven o'clock that night, ten thousand beggars filed past Baba, receiving the bundles of grain and cloth from the disciples and from Baba's hand sweet-meats and blessing. "This is India," whispered one of the Eastern men. "Not the Viceroy's new palace at Delhi, nor the monuments of the historic past, but *this*. Over eighty percent of India's population is like this!"

I had done social work in the slums of America's greatest cities, and thought I had seen most abject poverty. But

the people in those slums dressed like princes in comparison to these poor creatures. Shreds of dirty cloth—which must have been rags when their grandfathers wore them—inadequately covered bits of their bodies. No wonder many of them had travelled hundreds of miles for a piece of cloth and a few handfuls of grain! One tottering old couple – of whom the man was stone blind – had walked for days for the birthday gift and blessing. Another, a boy whose torn shirt – his only garment – failed to hide his bleeding syphilitic sores, was taken aside by Baba’s men for medical care. A group of about forty men and women lepers with an attendant were segregated from the others and given their bundles and blessings separately. Undoubtedly there were many other lepers, unattended, who mingled unnoticed with the crowd.

Hour after hour, these ten thousand men, women and children in all stages of poverty and physical need filed past the platform, holding out emaciated hands for food and bundle. Here and there one could see indications in their eyes of a hunger which transcended the physical, as they would come before Baba, bowing their heads to his feet, then looking up into his eyes for a brief moment. As Baba would touch their feet with his sensitive hand, one wondered what measure of his divine love they were able to receive. Certainly the majority looked as though they would be completely insulated by their dire poverty. But Baba, who sees deeper into men’s hearts, no doubt found many who were conscious recipients of his spiritual gifts. One woman – as tattered as the worst – was so lost in ecstasy at Baba’s feet that she had to be helped to get up and move along, and induced to receive her bundle. Her supernal joy so filled her eyes with light, that even her rags were glorified. “I gave, and I received,” said Baba, later. “As Baba I gave; as those wrecks, I received.”

In the middle of the afternoon someone asked him if his back hurt. Leaning over and touching with one hand the feet of ten thousand people, and with the other handing out ten thousand balls of *ladoo* sweet-meat, with only brief intervals of rest, was a strenuous ordeal even for a Master’s

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body. “My back aches so much it doesn’t ache at all!” he admitted, smiling a little wearily. “The whole evolutionary scheme passed through my spine today. This is the first time, you know, that I have touched the feet of those who came to pay me reverence.” We had wondered about this deviation from precedent, but when asked for a further explanation, Baba only smiled and said: “I saluted the divinity in them, as they saluted the divinity in me.”

That evening, after the ceremony with the beggars was over, we relaxed with Baba to the strains of native devotional music provided by musicians from Bombay. As we sat there our attention was attracted by the figure of a young man clad in a rough robe patched with burlap. We had noticed him earlier in the day as Baba singled him out from the many thousands who had passed before him. In response to Baba’s questions it developed that he had been silent for two years; that he had no home, but wandered about from place to place, sleeping wherever he could find shelter and eating whatever was given to him. Baba said he was a spiritually advanced soul but one who needed the expert help which Baba could render him, so he invited him to stay at our Ashram until he was ready to leave for Rahuri. A few days later he accompanied Baba to the jungle Retreat.

Now, as we watched his lovely spontaneous rhythm, it was easy to discern his spiritual ecstasy from the freedom of his movements. Unconscious of any watching audience, he moved his hands and arms as though he were conducting an invisible orchestra of celestial beings.

We had noted others during the day who were much more spectacular – who might have deceived those who would be impressed by the trappings of holiness. One such was a tall Hindu clad in a long green robe who stood in the midst of the crowd, holding aloft a picturesque prayer wheel and chanting, “Om! Om!” When we asked Baba about him, he said that he was a professional beggar and a rogue!

There were two others of these colorful mendicants who make a business of wandering about India, and eating

at the expense of those who are impressed by their outer regalia. Their long hair was matted, their foreheads painted with weird-looking symbols, their bodies covered with ashes. Their possessions they carried in packs on their backs. One shaded himself from the sun with a fantastic straw parasol. While hundreds of Baba's devotees were patiently waiting to be served their luncheon, these three insolently demanded that they be served at *once*. The result was they were ordered to *leave* at once!

By the morning of the next day – the twenty-fifth of February – the number of Baba's visiting devotees had grown to over a thousand. This day was in sharp contrast to the preceding one, when we had witnessed the continual outpouring of Baba's benediction upon those human derelicts. Simply to sit in the audience as a spectator of the bountiful love and mercy which one could see and feel emanating from Baba was a soul-stirring experience which moved some of us to tears. Light and darkness, pain and joy mingled in a symphony of human heart-beats, as the compassionate hands of the Master reached down to the level of humanity's affliction.

How superbly Baba transcended the pain involved in this drama, some of us knew later that night, after the distribution of gifts was over, and the beggars had departed. About mid-night – the hour when Baba would break his forty-day fast – he called us to the main house. We seated ourselves around the couch where Baba lay prostrated. Never before had we Westerners seen him like this. We yearned to do something for him, as we watched him in breathless silence; but what could we do that Baba himself could not, except to pour out upon him our love? We knew now what a tremendous oblation he had made of himself that day for suffering mankind. Then he stirred slightly. With great effort he pulled himself up into a semi-sitting position, then fell back again to rest a few more moments with his eyes closed. Again he pulled himself up, this time fully erect. Wearily, he passed his hand over his eyes, inhaled deeply a few times, then looked upon us with

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a wan smile. “I want to talk to you about this day’s activity and what it signifies for my Universal work.”

We begged him to defer it until the next day when he would be more rested. But no, that was the psychological moment, apparently. He must impose upon his fatigued and underfed body the task of ministering soul-food to his Western neophytes. Only after half an hour of pouring upon us his melting love and tenderness did he break his fast with tea and toast, prefaced with a bath and a clean robe. Toward one o’clock in the morning he bade us goodnight. The next morning at five, he was fully refreshed and busy with the hundred and one details of the celebration, all of which he personally directed. Smilingly, he spelled out for us: “I have that bad Avataric habit of supervising every detail myself!”

The second day of the celebration was one of great rejoicing. On this day the thousand or more devotees who had traveled from all parts of India brought their adoration to Baba – whom they worshipped as an incarnation of God. Through symbolic rituals they found appropriate outlet for their devotion. These ceremonies began with the washing of the Master’s feet. Baba’s Mother led the procession of women who were the first to offer their homage.

Baba was seated in a chair on the edge of the platform, with his feet resting in a silver basin. To one side stood a silver pitcher containing a mixture of milk and honey; another pitcher contained water. A little of the milk and honey was poured by the devotees over Baba’s feet, then a little of the water. Some of the worshippers scooped up a handful of the mixture in the bowl and drank it. Others touched their moistened fingers to their hearts or foreheads. It reminded us of the use of Holy Water in Catholic Churches and of the sacrament of baptism, with its symbolic washing away of sins.

Later, Baba explained this symbolism to us: “The feet, which are physically the lowest part of the body, are spiritually the highest. Physically, the feet go through everything, the good and bad, the beautiful and ugly, the clean and dirty, yet they are above everything. So, spiritually,

the feet of a Perfect Master are above everything in the universe, which is like dust to him. When people come to a Perfect Master and touch his feet with their heads, they lay upon him the burden of their *samskaras* – those subtle impressions of thought, emotion and action, which bind the individual soul to recurrent earthly lives. This is the burden to which Jesus referred when he said, ‘Come unto me all ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’.

“A Perfect Master collects these *samskaras* from all over the universe, just as an ordinary person, in walking, collects dust on his feet. Those who love him deeply and wish to share his burden as much as possible, wash his feet with honey, milk and water, which represent different types of *samskaras*, and place at his feet a coconut which symbolizes the complete surrender of their wills to him.”

The washing of the Master’s feet was followed by the ceremony of garlanding him with flowers and *darshana* – (taking the dust of his feet). Again the women led the procession, each one placing for a moment a wreath of jasmine and roses around his neck, then touching their foreheads to his feet.

Another picturesque ritual was performed by Baba’s Mohammedan devotees who enveloped him in a mantle of flowers. In a similar manner are Mohammedan brides and grooms shrouded at their wedding. In this instance it typified Baba’s union with God.

In all of these acts of devotion Baba played his role of the loving Father who knows the need of his children’s hearts for visible and sacramental expression of their love. In the ceremony of washing the feet the Western group asked permission to participate. As I approached Baba he gave me an amused smile and when I looked up into his face after finishing the ablutions I was greeted with a solemn wink of one eye, showing with what detachment he plays this game with *maya*, according to the individual need.

Later, birthday messages and addresses in Baba’s honor were read by devotees in Gujarati, Marathi, and English;

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Malcolm and Will Backett representing our Western group. The afternoon was given to spiritual songs and dances. One of India's most celebrated singers – Master Krishna, as he is called – sang for two hours, and groups of devotional singers from Bombay, Poona and Dhulia chanted Baba's favorites.

One unforgettable feature of the celebration was the performance by the whole male population of Arangaon, of traditional spiritual dances, to the accompaniment of elephant horns, drums, cymbals and clanking chains. These were the villagers with whom Baba had worked so patiently many years before, to raise their consciousness and standard of living. Today they are wholly devoted to him. Occupying the place of honor in their homes is the photograph of the Master who labored so consistently for their betterment. In the presence of this symbol they prostrate themselves before starting out upon their daily chores of cultivating the fields, repairing roads or driving to the bazaar with produce; and whenever they pass the Ashram at Meherabad, which is a few miles from their village, they salute it reverently. Now they were here at the birthday feast – every man, woman and child of them – to pay their respects to their beloved Master and Friend.

On this day one felt the overflowing joy of the devotees in seeing Baba again, and the Master's happiness in receiving their love. Yet, to me, the previous day was the more significant one. Perhaps my recent 'crisis' had conditioned me to sense greater joy where pain also abides, than in the happiness which lacks the overtone of suffering.

Concerning devotees in general, Baba pointed out to us: "There are always many who are devoted, but will not obey; a few who will obey after hesitation; and almost none whose love is so strong and pure that they obey without hesitation and without question."

Throughout the birthday feast Baba's closest disciples were busy serving, as usual, in the background. These were the truly selfless ones, constant under all trials, unquestioning in their obedience, whom Baba had been train-

-ing for many years, and through whom, he tells us, he will one day change the world, as Jesus changed the world of his day through his disciples.

CHANGE OF RHYTHM

Just as the birthday celebration marked the end of our confinement to the twenty-four acre estate, so it marked for some of us a complete change of inner and outer rhythm. Baba assigned to us new duties, new routines. My assignment – to meditate, write and think continually of him – was a most welcome and joyous one. Having for many years been of a deeply introverted temperament, I had found the discipline of having to be with people almost constantly a trying one. Now that was over! I was free to introvert and write to my heart's content.

The weeks passed much too quickly. Baba visited us twice weekly, and once every two weeks the group journeyed to Meherabad for the day. Only one night did we spend on that sanctified Hill, where the vibrations were so spiritually stimulating that I, for one, could not waste a moment of that Holy Night in sleep.

The days when Baba was with us at Nasik were always charged with greater activity and heightened consciousness, because Baba is a divine catalyst who quickens into swifter rhythm the lives of those whom he contacts. We never knew precisely when he would be coming; sometimes it was in the very early morning before we were awake. On these occasions we would hear a firm rat-a-tat at the door of one of the rooms and the call would reverberate throughout the length of the long porch: "Baba! Baba is here!" We would scramble into our clothes in order to be ready to greet him when he knocked at our door. Then would come the awaited knock and a quick tender embrace. With loving eyes and questioning gestures, he would inquire about our state of mind and body. If nothing needed his attention, he would pass on to the next room. Later we would all gather in the dining-room for breakfast. In the midst of our meal Baba would appear, gay, teasing sometimes, slipping quietly behind one's chair and gently

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tweaking an ear, then darting away before one could catch him at it. At other times he would serve us the food himself, with such grace and deeply focussed concentration that one knew that something more than physical food was eaten that morning.

Later we would sit around his couch, perhaps as he read our dreams, which we had been instructed to record on the nights when he was there and give to him the next morning. Usually, after reading the dream to himself he would look intently at the dreamer, as if conveying some secret information which would someday become known to him. Often he would laugh merrily, and shake his head, as if to say: "Just wait and see what this means!" I recall one of my own dreams which had made a deep impression upon me because it was linked with Baba in a wonderful way and seemed to indicate my part in future work with him. After reading this dream he looked so deeply into my eyes that to this day, whenever I think of his face, I see those pools of infinite love reflecting into my soul, as if re-establishing an eternal connection between us. When he handed the dream back to me, he ordered me to return it to him on a particular date. Perhaps one of these years, on that date, the prophecy of the dream will be fulfilled.

Later in the morning, after we had attended to our necessary duties, Baba would send for us to meet him in the main house. Sitting around him on the floor or on low stools, we would partake of the spiritual food he offered. By means of his board, he would discourse on Divine Love; the Cosmic Plane of spiritual consciousness; on the Realization of God. Sometimes he would discuss some future phase of his work, or someone's immediate problem. Often a crisis would develop for a member of the group – as if by chance, but always it bore the unmistakable imprint of Baba's skillful maneuvering.

In the afternoon, after tea, when the heat had somewhat abated, we would gather on the main veranda while Baba and some of the group played table-tennis. This game, which he seemed thoroughly to enjoy, he played with great zest and concentration. One always had the

impression that in some way he used the game and energies aroused for his inner activities. No score was ever kept, but he loved a swift clever return, and he himself hit hard and skillfully.

At times his playing of this game was used by him for a very different purpose. There was one period in which his universal work took him out of his body a great deal during waking hours. A far-away look would come into his eyes and the next moment he would be lying prostrate and motionless on the couch, with his head covered. After a while he would pull himself up with considerable effort, and force himself to the table, motioning one of his partners to follow. Then, supporting himself by holding on to the table with one hand, he would begin to play, slowly, laboriously. Sometimes he would clutch the table to steady his swaying body. Then he would proceed with the torturous game. These moments with him were heart-rending, because one could see and feel the agony to which he subjected himself, in compelling his consciousness to return to the physical body. Occasionally he would stop the game and drop into a near-by chair, with his head back and eyes closed. The group would stand by, silently watching, wondering, longing to help, but powerless to do anything. One or two of us would feel impelled to drop down on our knees beside his chair and touch his feet or limbs. From the look of grateful love which he would turn upon us we gathered that this helped a little to hold him to the earth where he elected to stay to fulfill his destined mission. Later he would walk briskly through the garden with the group and by dinner time he would be his beautifully poised and tranquil self. After dinner he would again give us spiritual food, or if the night were warm enough we would sit with him silently in the garden under the brilliant stars, as the velvety warmth of an Indian summer evening merged with the glowing halo of divine love which Baba would shed upon us.

Shortly before nine o'clock we could *feel* Baba starting to withdraw, and if his eyes were visible, we could see

that far-away liquid expression which heralded his imminent departure from the restrictions of this earth-plane.

SYMBOLIC EXCURSION

Seldom was the pattern of these days with Baba duplicated. Though his roots are imbedded in that which never changes – the Eternal – the foliage of his being, in this world of illusion, is subject to constant mutation. He is one who knows that there is no such thing as a good habit, except as it may be the stepping stone to a better one. Our birthdays were always the occasion for a special celebration; and since there were fifteen of us in the Ashram, we had frequent parties, with the time-honored embellishments of ice-cream and cake. Movies also diversified our rhythm. The leading motion-picture house in Nasik, owned by some of Baba's disciples, always provided us with the best seats in the house. During these performances, as on similar occasions in the West, Baba was deeply engrossed with his inner work. I recall one picture in particular because of the point Baba made to ask me, especially, how I liked the story. The theme concerned a woman who had relinquished great human love for the divine – for the Master. I remember that Baba looked smilingly interested when I expressed complete approval of the outcome of the story, no doubt because he knew that it dramatized the same principle which was active in my own life – a progressive relinquishment of the personal for the impersonal; of the human for the divine.

Sometimes a picnic or a pilgrimage to a place of spiritual significance would alter our routine. One of these took us to Trimbak, the source of the Godavari, one of the sacred rivers of India which are held in reverence by all Hindus.

I was still far from robust health, but Baba said he wished me specially to go. As usual we left in the cool of the night and arrived at the base of the mountain as the first rays of light were dissolving the darkness. As we emerged from the cars in the hushed expectancy of early

dawn, we could hear the chanting of monks in a near-by temple. It was a touch of the India of yesterday – of age-old religious observances – and it struck in us a deep chord of response; but only for a moment were we permitted to revert to the past. Baba signalled us to draw near him. No doubt he felt our pull backward to a phase of consciousness with which he did not wish his disciples to merge. Baba – in so far as he belongs to any one country, by virtue of his physical birth – represents the India of the future, the India whose resurrected spirit will some day transcend all dead forms and rituals when it exercises its rightful prerogative as spiritual leader among the nations of the world.

As we gathered around him he gave us a few general instructions, then told us to begin our climb of the seven hundred wide steps which formed the way of pilgrimage to the river's source. To reach the steps we had to cross a wide field. I started on my way with Malcolm beside me. He, knowing what little energy I had, was much concerned at my attempting such a long climb. I felt, however, that if Baba expected me to climb those steps he would give me the necessary strength. So we continued on our way. But in a few moments we heard a call from one of Baba's men who was running after us, beckoning us to return. As I approached Baba he looked at me with a deep smile and spelled out on his board that he wished me to be carried up the mountain in a basket-seat, by bearers. I returned his smile and climbed into the seat which hung between two poles. In such a manner I made my ascent of the sacred mountain.

Shrines and temples lined the path-way. The chief one was supervised by Brahmin priests who were greatly excited that Baba was blessing their place of pilgrimage by his presence. Though they had never met him outwardly before, one of their number had prophesied that Baba would be coming soon, and they felt that his visit had deep significance for them and their temple.

After viewing the source of the broad river – which appeared as a tiny trickle between rocks – we found a suitable

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shady location in which to relax. The sun was high now and the climb had been arduous for the others. They looked forward to a period of rest. But Baba decided that we should eat at once. So the picnic baskets were unpacked and when the food appeared we discovered that we were very hungry. Our appetites appeased, we again anticipated a long rest in the cooler mountain air. But within an hour Baba suggested we eat again! After this second meal, in which the remainder of the food was consumed, Baba said that since there was nothing more to eat, we could go home! The purpose of leaving our Ashram in the cool of the night had been – Baba said – to avoid the heat of noon-day travel. But now the party had to begin their descent of the mountain just when the sun was at its zenith! Moreover, Baba chose another route down – a short-cut – which led through the open country without even the slimmest sappling to suggest the protection which the tree-shaded steps had afforded! I volunteered to return on my own two legs, but Baba insisted I go down as I had ascended – carried by the bearers.

One episode on this trip revealed to us Baba's benevolent attitude toward suffering. When we reached the top of the mountain, a poor emaciated dog came limping from the bushes toward the group. His face was almost eaten away by some disease. The only visible eye looked pathetically at us, as he whined miserably. A couple of the younger women cried out hysterically and involuntarily drew back from him. Baba instantly came forward and, leaning down, gently placed his hand upon the running sores. The dog sat down on his haunches and turned his face up to Baba, obviously grateful for the healing balm which was being poured upon him. His whine changed into a deep sigh of contentment as the hand of the God-man wiped away the intolerable pain. Turning to the group Baba admonished: "If you can do nothing to help suffering, don't make it worse by indulging your emotions."

The spiritual implications of this trip are sufficiently apparent to those versed in symbolism to need little elucidation. Baba had used this excursion to typify a phase of

our spiritual journey. In the darkness of night, veiled, as yet, by the ignorance of the lower mind, we had travelled to the source of the sacred river – the River of Life. Having arrived at our destination, the Bread of Life – spiritual sustenance – was given to us by the Master. The descending short-cut suggests a quicker return to normal consciousness and functioning, after the super-conscious state of God-realization, which arriving at the Source and receiving food implies. We descended again to the Valley of Illusion to fulfill our destiny as servants of the Master. Perhaps the process which Baba had initiated at the Pandulena Caves, some months before, was now consummated. That I should have made the ascent and descent of the mountain carried by bearers, rather than under my own momentum, suggests my need for a special technique which the Master's grace supplied.

MONSOON MYSTERY

Early in February Baba had predicted that April would inaugurate a period of merging more deeply with the Divine Life, and most happily this was true for some of us. I felt so closely attuned to Baba's spirit that I saw and felt him in everything. Naturally this heightened perception brought with it deep peace and joy. I felt as though I were reliving the early days of his first visit to America. Through-out May this awareness continued; then with the coming of the monsoon Baba cancelled his weekly visits to our Ashram and coincident with the withdrawal of his physical presence it seemed for me as though he withdrew an inner contact as well. The deep 'transference' which he had induced and fostered was now to be resolved. But I did not then perceive this. All I knew was that a screen of darkness seemed to shut me off from inner contact with him.

This strange gloom found its outer counterpart in the leaden skies which now over-shadowed us for weeks. The Indian monsoon has truly a disquieting effect upon one.

The tremendous tension which the physical body has been sustaining during the intense tropical heat is now released. Human beings, animals and the very earth are almost hys-

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terically grateful for the refreshing downpour – a torrent which seems likely never to cease. At first one does not care whether the sun ever shines again or not; the relief from the torrid heat is so welcome. But as the days pass into weeks, the constant deluge, the heavy skies, weigh upon one's spirit. With the torrential rains seems to come a descent of tremendous forces, both positive and negative which serve to annihilate the past, even as the sheets of rain seem to wash away all traces of yesterday's promise. A feeling of insulation from the rest of life pervaded me, and I found it increasingly difficult to respond to even the kindest overture on the part of my comrades.

From the beginning of June until we left for Europe at the end of July we saw Baba only twice. Perhaps he was preparing us for the much longer separation which was later to follow. Just prior to his absencing himself from our Retreat, a major crisis developed which involved the entire group and gave Baba the 'cue' to break up the Nasik Ashram. For a day or two he discussed with us possible alternatives of location; he suggested certain sections of India where the climate would be more salubrious, and others in southern France or Italy. Many of the group wanted to return to Porto Fino on the Ligurian coast of Italy, where they had spent such happy hours with Baba; but without opposing their suggestion, he led the decision toward Cannes, on the French Riviera. Why he chose this particular spot he never revealed, but a variety of possibilities suggest themselves. Its strategic location in the war-pattern shortly to unfold may have been a determining factor in his decision; or perhaps he wished to touch the soil which is so pregnant with legends of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Joseph of Aramathea and others of the disciples; or may be it was to keep a psychic appointment with one who was later destined to become a whole-hearted devotee of the Master.

MASTER ANGLER

Though much of his activity in the West Baba directed toward motion-pictures, the results were inconclusive until at length he came in contact with a particular man. Al-

exander Markey was drawn into Baba's orbit by some of our New York friends who had charge of the motion-picture phase of his work. He was prevailed upon – as many others had been in the preceding years – to write a motion-picture treatment incorporating certain fundamental spiritual themes which Baba had outlined. Many other treatments had been submitted to Baba, only to receive his courteous 'thank-you' and the request to his New York group to 'find another writer.' When this new man's name was cabled to Baba, prior to his beginning the script, Baba cabled his reply: "Markey is the man." When the finished treatment was sent to the Master, he cabled back that it was accepted and from that day Baba ceased his search for other motion-picture writers.

It was not until months later that Alexander Markey met the Master in London, at the time the Western group was on its way to India. He considers that meeting as the great turning point in his life. After a lifetime of spiritual groping and searching – 'mostly in the dark,' he says – he had the rare privilege of being drawn into the orbit of this very great soul – the living incarnation of what man has always conceived as his ultimate, noblest Self – Meher Baba. The Master's work and personality had made a profound impression on Markey long before he met him, but intellectually he found it impossible to gauge the nature of this impression, or the reason for it. His mind kept rejecting its influence, yet in the midst of a very active life, a vague, insistent premonition of something extraordinary about to happen, persisted in dogging him.

Then a series of mysterious, even startling, events came into his life. At the time, they seemed wholly unrelated, often without apparent meaning, at times incredible. Incidents, too many to relate, culminated in a call, out of the blue, inviting him to London to supervise the production of a motion-picture. At the time, he was so involved in long-range activities in the United States that it seemed absolutely impossible for him to accept the offer, much as he felt inclined to do so. But overnight, everything changed,

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as if by magic, and within a few days he found himself on the “Queen Mary” bound for the British Isles.

In England he was confronted with an entirely new, unexpected set of events which seemed to have nothing to do with his summons to London, the source of which vanished into ‘the blue,’ whence the call had come. To his reasoning mind these baffling developments made no sense, until the momentous day when he received a message that Meher Baba had arrived in London from India and wished to see him.

As a journalist and editor he had occasion to interview some of the world’s outstanding, most spectacular figures, nor had he ever had any difficulty in taking them all in his stride. Crowned heads, the great in the world of letters and the arts, dictators, had been just so much grist to his editorial mill. But when he stood at the door beyond which Meher Baba was waiting for him, he felt ‘like a bewildered little child.’ For the first time in his memory, he admits, he was ‘wholly at a loss to know how to behave, what to do, what to say.’ It was an astonishing sensation and he was utterly confounded.

Then the door opened, and he found himself ‘in the presence of the most sublime embodiment of purity in human form I had ever beheld.’

Before he realized it and without conscious volition on his part, he and Baba were in each other’s embrace, like ‘two long lost brothers, who had at last found each other again, after eons of anguished search.’ And in that supreme moment, all Markey’s doubts, all intellectual questioning, all bewilderment dissolved, like snow at the loving touch of the sun. As if a magic touch had adjusted the focal lens of his vision, he saw things in a light that had never before been his. He knew within himself that this moment was the real reason for his being in London and that the whole bizarre kaleidoscope of events which had preceded it had been wondrously pre-arranged for this one purpose, by the unspoken command of the silent Master. In a flash he saw vividly the beauty and perfection of the whole pattern which now culminated in this supreme meeting of his

career. He felt for the first time the full surge of that divine solvent of which we hear so much and speak so often, but which few experience; the Love that transcends human limitations; the Love that embraces the world. Nor is he the least reluctant to admit that he found himself weeping, for the sheer inexpressible joy of it. Between the time he stepped into Baba's room and the time he left it, a new world had been born for him. So overwhelming was the experience that, in 'boundless ecstasy,' he walked the streets of London all night, completely oblivious of time, space and such archaic habits as sleep. Since that incomparable event, he affirms, life had taken on an entirely new meaning and momentum for him.

Some months after my return to America, I met 'Zander' – as Markey is known to his intimates – and he told me of a further arresting chapter in his experience with the Master. While we were on our way from India to Cannes, a year later, Zander – who was then in Paris – had a strong urge to start work on a particular play which he had long been mulling around in his mind. The ideal setting for the writing of it, he decided was, of all places in the world a certain hotel in Cannes, which overlooked the Mediterranean. He had not been in touch with Baba or any of our group since that momentous meeting in London, so had no way of knowing of Baba's plans. Packing up, he went to Cannes, wondering why he had chosen it. On arrival there, he found a radiogram awaiting him. It had been forwarded from London by way of Paris, and was from Baba, somewhere in the Indian Ocean, asking Zander if he could arrange to go to Cannes, as Baba would be visiting there for some months and would like him to be near him. Suddenly Zander knew why he had been drawn to that particular spot at that precise moment in time! Such is an example of Baba's drawing power with those who are deeply in tune with him, and may possibly have been one of the reasons why Baba chose Cannes as his headquarters in Europe at that time.

CHAPTER VII

TO EUROPE WITH BABA

MY DEPARTURE from India stirred in me the opposing emotions of sadness and relief, as I recalled the poignant moments associated with my life there. I was still smarting under the drastic discipline of being compelled to face the dark side of my nature, alone, unaided by any apparent help from my Master. I sensed that a phase of this discipline was about to terminate and for this I felt a genuine sense of relief, even though it meant leaving India. I sensed also, as I drove away from the Nasik Ashram, that it would be many years before I would return there. Regret and joy danced together in my heart in a strange counterpointal rhythm. The part of me which was still unredeemed delighted to be leaving the scene of so much pain. The better part of me wept that a phase of my life with Baba was over. I felt that after our European visit, I would be separated from him for some time. Mercifully, the Master veiled from me the knowledge that it would run into many years.

Our voyage through the intense August heat of the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea was a trying experience for everyone, but especially for the group of secluded women from the Holy Hill at Meherabad. Baba wished this seclusion to continue, in symbolic form, even on this long voyage. To ensure this, some wore dark glasses, taped at the sides, to shut out as much as possible, the distracting sights of the mundane world. Others used the hoods of their capes to cover their heads and eyes when passing people. Due to this enforced blindness, they were led at each stage of the journey by some of the Western women, symbolizing the role that she, the awakened woman, must

play in leading her blind sisters to the realization of their true destiny. This is not, of course, to suggest that these particular Eastern women were spiritually unawake, but merely that they were being used by Baba as symbols of the inner redemptive work which he was effecting through them for womankind everywhere. This blindfolded journey also illustrates the child-like faith which surrenders utterly to the will of the Master, asking nothing but to be led by him. On board they kept strictly to their cabins, except during the early hours prior to dawn, when by special arrangement with the purser, they were permitted to walk with Baba and the Western women on an upper, first-class deck which was free from the intrusion of other passengers. Baba appointed two of the Western women to watch over their Eastern sisters – to safe-guard their cabins from outsiders, and to attend to their bodily needs. During the rough part of the voyage this necessitated their acting as combination nurse and chamber-maid. One night when Baba foresaw possible embarrassment to the Eastern women, he asked Norina to sleep on the floor outside the door of the women's cabin which had to remain open to give better ventilation. She was suddenly startled out of sleep by the form of a man stumbling over her as he tried to enter the women's cabin. Having stayed too long at the bar, he was reeling his way back to his cabin, and in his confused state of mind got into the wrong passage-way. Thus did Baba's prevision and a Western woman's devotion prevent an unhappy experience for the little nuns.

VIA CRUCIS

As our ship ploughed through the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea, I was compelled to face the full impact of the negative images in the Unconscious – which, of course, the sea typifies. The reverse current which Baba had instituted in India at the time of his withdrawal from our Retreat became more and more intense. Even before boarding the ship my inner darkness seemed to shut me off from all contact with Baba or the group. I, who had been so close to the Master's heart, now felt like an utter stranger.

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On board, outer circumstances confirmed this feeling of estrangement. The cabin which had been assigned to us was in the hold of the ship, with no possibility of any ventilation. The portholes were sealed, because they fell below the water line. Just a few yards from our cabin door was the hold in which sheepskins shipped from Australia were odorously drying!

Just one visit to the cabin was sufficient to convince us that sleeping there was out of the question. Malcolm was considerably disturbed, chiefly for my sake, because of my physical condition which was far from normal. When Baba was told about the accommodations he made various suggestions, one of which was that I take a first-class cabin – since there were no other cabins available in second – and he would see that the difference in price was paid for it. Naturally I refused this offer. When he, the Master, was travelling second, I had no desire to travel first. He sent word back to me that he wished me to accept a first-class cabin, but again I refused. I sent the message that I could not obey such an order. Later, word was brought to me that he was very happy about my decision. When I saw him some days later I laughingly suggested that there were apparently circumstances when one would be compelled to disobey his outer order if it conflicted with one's inner guidance. He agreed that this had been one of those rare occasions. It was finally arranged that we remove the mattresses from our bunks and sleep on deck; and I was given permission to use the first-class washrooms and toilet which saved trips up and down-stairs. Being very ill and weak this new arrangement was a great boon. Twice a day Malcolm would descend for a few brief moments to our cabin to bring up our mattresses and night clothes and to return them in the morning.

As the trip through the Indian Ocean progressed I became more ill in body and more desperate in mind. Baba, who was constantly watching over the other, I saw just twice; once in the beginning of the trip and once when I asked permission to see him, regarding the terrible hatred I was experiencing for everyone and everything. I recall

that he asked if I knew why I had such feelings. My answer – that I must be a very wicked person – was not highly discriminating, as his shake of the head indicated. Now, of-course, I recognize that I was being brought face to face with the inner darkness which is resident in every human being, but at that time I was unaware of this psychological necessity. Consequently, I unconsciously projected this ‘Shadow’ upon everyone and everything outside of myself, in the form of negative emotions of hatred, resentment, bitterness and self-pity. In such a state of mind I naturally felt completely cut off from any contact with Reality. I was imprisoned in a dark, enclosed universe and a very minute one at that. All that might have comforted or sustained me was non-existent. Even hope had vanished. Though my physical eyes were open, they saw nothing but dead form. My ears heard only the moaning of my own heart. Again I tried to surrender more deeply, but now there was nothing – no one – to whom I could surrender. I was at length compelled to accept this living death, but I did so not with the high valor which the saints have displayed in their dark hours, but with the pitiful acceptance of one whose soul is still resistant to the Master’s touch. I am now aware that behind this resistance was the unconscious fear for my body. Much as I tried, I could not ‘let go’ of body-consciousness, which this trip and much of my painful experience in India was bringing into the foreground, to be faced and transcended; such facing and transcendence being essential on the path of discipleship, because so long as there is fear for the body, there can be no Realization for the soul.

Two things were taking place during this *via crucis*. All secondary centers of consciousness – even those which one would normally consider good and legitimate – were being shut off as karmic forces converged upon the soul’s citadel. At the same time, Baba was unloosening the *personal* fetters which bound me to him, the youthful period of discipleship being at an end. He was preparing me for the more mature role which would involve for me greater depth of insight and full-hearted acceptance of responsibility; and

lead eventually to the merging of my consciousness with his universal Self. These are really two aspects of one process – and essential one for the soul which seeks union with its God-self. But only subsequent soul-searching brought to me this understanding. The best I could do – and a very poor best, I must admit – was to bear this period of trial with as much fortitude as I could muster. So skillful a divine psychologist is Baba that even in one's Calvary he leaves little room for glorying in one's tribulations. That one comes through such an experience unmaimed in mind and spirit is more through the grace of the Master – even though unfelt at the time – than through any heroic efforts of one's own.

That which in psychological terminology we call the 'abyss,' is the same condition which the mystic terms the 'Dark Night of the Soul.' Both terms graphically depict the mental state through which everyone, apparently, must pass in making the transition from a self-centered life to a God-filled one.

In *The Spiral Way*, John Cordelier writes:

"The love of God is never idle, for it constrains us to follow the Way of the Cross. Pressing in on us, transfusing us . . . thrusting Life forward on its long quest of perfection, that stern and tender Love compels its children to the only journey which leads Home. It blocks all other paths . . . to force us to a path of unutterable harshness, that leads us, it seems, to the place of death, yet *shall* lead us, if we trust it, to the only country of the soul . . . He desires to consume our very life, in order that He may change it into His own . . . When He has utterly devoured us, then it is that He gives Himself to us . . ."

I now had embarked on that phase of the 'crisis,' initiated in India, in which I felt utterly out off from Baba, from God; and since this unrolling of the 'film' in *reverse* was now in the slowest of 'slow motion,' it was to be many months before the robin's song across the meadow would awaken my soul to the peace of God again; so much there was, apparently, that I needed to assimilate; so much of the little self to be eliminated. Yet, now in retrospect, the pain-

ful memory of this voyage is mingled with a haunting ineffable joy, which I am sure must have been there all the time, had my channels been clear enough to sense it. I can now apprehend the truth of Baba's words, "For one who has no self-interest, even Hell is Heaven."

When, before leaving India, we expressed to an Eastern disciple the wish that he were going with us to Europe, he smiled and shook his head: "I've travelled with Baba and it's never a picnic!" If the vicissitudes attendant upon travelling with Baba occurred only occasionally, one might ascribe them to coincidence. But when over the years they occur without fail whenever Baba travels, one is induced to look for a less circumstantial reason. Whenever the Master journeys negative, as well as positive forces, are called into action. That one is often more aware of the negative or 'Shadow' side is due to the fact that our egoistic selves are too much concerned with the elements of discomfort and dislike to discern the 'Light' which I now realize is also present at such times.

Some weeks after we were settled at Cannes, one of Baba's men who had been on the boat with us told me that every morning around three or four o'clock Baba took them to the upper deck where I was sleeping and stood quietly watching over me for a few minutes. So I was not as utterly deserted as I had thought myself to be!

THE FILM UNFURLS

When we arrived at the villa in Cannes, which one of the English group had acquired prior to our coming, Baba found it inadequate for his Indian women whose seclusion had to be maintained. Within a day or two another house was leased a few miles away and here the Eastern women lived with a few of their Western sisters. Baba spent most of his time there, coming down to our house only for interviews in the morning and for the bathing and feeding of Mamoud – the chief *mast* who, at Baba's order, had been brought to Europe, shortly after our arrival, by some of the Indian men.

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After the various movings from one room to another, which have been earlier described, Malcolm and I settled down in a very large room in the main house, with a beautiful view of the Mediterranean seen through large, waving palm trees in our front garden. Physically, the surroundings were ideal. The climate was most beneficial for those of us who had suffered from the tropical heat of India. Renewed physical life began to stir in me. But how little this counted when my heart and mind were so ill at ease. With me Baba was continuing his inner withdrawal as well as the outer. I saw little of him and when I did he assumed a remote and casual role, for the most part. Added to this trial was the increasing tension between Malcolm and me, which the 'crisis' in India seemed to have brought to a head. He was now under the discipline imposed by Baba, of being confined to our room, eating but one meal a day and maintaining complete silence. Difficult as this no doubt was for him he derived some real joy from it, as it gave his naturally reflective temperament opportunity for deeper introversion.

If a human relationship is too possessive, too dependent – one upon the other – it will constitute a serious obstruction to the free flow of divine life and must therefore be dissolved and reformed. It was this process which Baba had initiated. Furious 'images' from the Unconscious were released, and even though Malcolm was pledged not to speak – and he obeyed this order faithfully – I became the recipient of all the dark and repressed emotions which were being stirred in him. No doubt to him I seemed to be the provoker of his moods, just as he seemed to me to be the occasioner of much mental anguish. Less and less was I the indulgent 'mother' who catered to his moods; more and more was he the antithesis of the comforting 'father' who would fortify me in my weaknesses. If he seemed to fail me, certainly I must also have failed him. Since in both of us there was so much unconscious longing and adolescent craving which we were trying to fulfill through each other, it was inevitable that Baba should stir up these hidden

forces and bring them into the light of consciousness for us to face and assimilate the power resident in them.

But during those days at Cannes I was too close to the problem – both physically and emotionally – to have much understanding of it. To escape from the tempestuous atmosphere of our room I took to spending the day up in the hills. Fortified with a few raw carrots and a piece of cheese, a sketch-pad and crayons, I would set forth in the morning into the mountains which overlooked the town and the ever-enchanted sea. To ‘let-off’ some of the pressure which I was experiencing, I would dance and sing with complete abandon when I found myself far enough away from houses and people. This proved to be a providential safety-valve, because during this period I came as close to the border-line of mental disintegration as one could go and yet retain some degree of balance.

Baba was, of course, watching and guiding behind the scenes as I realized even then, but see much more clearly now. One night, just before dinner, I had reached such a zenith of desperation that I left the house and again climbed into the mountains. Some of our family had encountered enormous snakes – which we had been told were poisonous – on their tramps through the wooded section; so into this part I hiked, hoping, praying that an obliging snake would relieve me from any further responsibility to this life. As it became very dark and I became weary from climbing, I sat down in the woods and played with the thought of how sweet death would taste if it should suddenly come upon me there in the cool dark of night. “To cease upon the mid-night without pain,” or even *with* it, seemed a most desirable fancy that night. After about two hours of this eerie vigil I was compelled by some inner force to pick myself up and walk back to the house. With no sense of jubilation, but with the realization that a low-water mark had been passed, a new surrender plumbed, I trudged homeward. Life must be *lived*, not cowardly rejected. In spite of the anguish of soul; in spite of everything, I must go resolutely forward. With this conviction I found my way home. As I approached our property, I heard the voices

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of searching parties who were scouring the neighborhood for me. Humiliated and ashamed, I slunk in through a back lane without encountering any of the group. Stopping at the kitchen, I made apologies to our housekeeper for being absent from dinner.

The next morning when I saw Baba he never showed by even the flicker of an eye-lash that he knew of my escapade. But I was aware that he had been with me every moment in consciousness and knew even better than I the motivating causes of my reckless behavior. That afternoon when I saw him again, as I knelt beside his couch, he took my head between his hands and poured upon it such healing balm that most of the anguish dissolved. Again he had proved himself the Master of consciousness who takes one to the breaking-point, but not one hair's breadth beyond that which the mind can, with safety, endure.

During this period he said to me once: "You think I am cruel." Feeling rebellious, I exclaimed: "You are cruel!" "I must be temporarily cruel," he replied, "in order to be permanently kind." Then looking at me compassionately for a few moments, he added: "The day will come when even the memory of this pain will be completely obliterated by the all-consuming joy which will flood your soul." When I remonstrated that the 'Night' was *so* long, he assured me that when daylight came everything I had borne would be seen to have been a thousand times worth while.

Illustrating another aspect of his dealing with souls, he said to me toward the end of the European visit: "I push you away, then I draw you close; again I push you off and draw you even closer; now I push you far away and the next time I draw you back to me it will be to remain one with my Universal Self, forever."

This period of darkness which I have related was, of course, the pushing-off part of the process; painful in the extreme, but how necessary and beneficial I now comprehend it to have been. Through it was generated in me greater intensity of soul-desire for union with God.

One of the strangest and probably most significant episodes of the European visit was the trip which Baba made to Paris, accompanied by a few of his Western women devotees and all of the secluded Indian women. On this journey – made by motor, in cars driven by two of the Western women – the same strict regulations were observed to assure the privacy of the Eastern women. When they arrived in Paris they were received by Consuelo Sides – a devotee of Baba – whose charming house faces the left bank of the Seine. Probably never in the whole history of Paris – or any city in the world, for that matter – had such a strange sight-seeing party graced its precincts. During the three-day visit Baba and the group rode up and down the Seine; drove around the city and the neighboring localities, with the Eastern women looking up or out only when instructed by Baba. The main feature of their sightless-sight-seeing was a trip to the Eiffel tower, one night, during which Baba held one of his most important ‘inner meetings’ with saints and Masters of the sixth and seventh planes of consciousness. If my supposition is correct – that the consciousness of womankind is being raised by the special work which Baba is doing through these Indian women – then the women of Paris – who by reputation have particular need of a more spiritualized concept of life – must have been subjected to a strangely unfamiliar rate of vibration that night! Fantastic as this supposition may seem, it would appear to have been somewhat substantiated by the amazing action of the new post-war government in France which has outlawed prostitution and bawdiness as it has also granted to the French woman for the first time in the history of France, equal rights with man; both actions indicating radical changes in the French attitude toward women.

Baba and his party arrived back at Cannes in the evening and the next morning he came to our room. When he entered I saw at once that he was almost wholly in a super-conscious state, so I ran to take his arm and lead him to the couch. I sat down beside him while Malcolm stood before us. Baba looked first at one, then at the other with

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the expression of a little child who is dazed by some unearthly beauty which no words can describe.

“What is it, Baba dear?” I asked.

Looking at me as if I should know, he spelled out: “Hadn’t you heard about the ‘meeting’?”

His eyes were so eloquent with anguished joy, that I could inwardly hear the plaintive tone in his unspoken words. This was one of his beautiful childlike moments.

“No, dear,” I answered, “I hadn’t heard.”

Then he told us that a most important ‘meeting’ had been held in the Eiffel Tower, and that ever since it had been difficult to hold himself in his physical body. He rested his head on my shoulder for a few moments, as he gathered his forces together to go on with the next phase of his daily work which never ceases. Finally, at his signal, we helped him to the door, where a couple of his devoted Indian men were waiting to assist him. When I saw him an hour later the painful transition had been accomplished. He was his usual dynamic self, playing again his cosmic game with the forces of the universe.

BABEL OF TONGUES

During our visit to Cannes, people from all countries of Europe came to see Baba. Frequently at lunch or tea, a veritable cross-section of the League of Nations was seated around our long table. French, Italian, German, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Swiss, Scandinavian, different Indian dialects and of course English, vied with each other for vocal supremacy. But what a different mission these people had! Most of them shared with the rest of us the conviction that only through a change of the consciousness of mankind will the ideals of universal brotherhood – which underlie the original concept of the League – come into being. These men and women – many of them diplomats, statesmen, leaders in their particular fields of art, science and religion – came humbly, to sit in the presence of one whom, they believed, held, the key to the world’s problems – the divine solvent of selfless love. In talking with them, after their meeting with the Master, one could see in their eyes

that Baba's life-giving leaven was already quickening in their souls a purer love, an altruistic ambition to become better instruments for the power of God to work through.

One of these visitors was Alexander Markey who came daily to sit at Baba's feet as he outlined for the Master a program of spiritual, inspirational and educational motion pictures, which Baba said will some day form the basis for an entirely new trend in motion pictures.

SYMBOLS OF HEALING

After the Paris visit, we began to scent change of plans, and within a week or so we were told that in October Baba would return to India with some of the group while others of us were instructed to return to our home in the West. My health had been steadily improving, but Baba said I was not yet able to cope with the Indian climate; that I would, in fact, give up my body if I returned to India at that time and this he did not wish. He needed me for his future work, he said.

The healing process, which was an intrinsic part of the wiping out of karma, began shortly after our arrival at Cannes and was initiated by two techniques ordered by Baba. One involved writing for an hour every day, the words: "Jean is not body, Jean is soul." After a few days of this practice, I found myself awaking in the morning with this affirmation on my lips; and throughout the day it continued to repeat itself automatically. Gradually, I became more and more aware of the soul-quality in myself and in all expressions of life. This was the healing aspect of the psychic-surgery which Baba had been performing for many months. It indicated the mental attitude which the disciple must acquire toward his body.

The second technique might be regarded as the sacramental aspect of the healing, which had for its objective the making of the mortal immortal – the overcoming once and for all of body-consciousness. One day Baba brought to me a small bottle which contained pills about the size of pin-heads. These, he informed me, were pulverized gold, pearl, silver and a few rare Indian herbs. He had ordered them

specially prepared before leaving India, just for the purpose of facilitating my recovery. He instructed me to take one each morning before breakfast, on a small piece of butter, and under no circumstances was I to omit taking them. Almost immediately my health began to improve. Though aware, at the time, of the part which my mental acceptance necessarily played in the healing, I learned only some years after my return to America the symbolic meaning of the pill and butter strategy.

Through the study of Jungian dream analysis in which I was engaged, I was led to delve into the mysteries of Alchemy. Here, in the source material of Hermes, the great Master of Greece, I discovered that the properties contained in those pills, plus the butter on which they were to be taken, symbolize the processes which man must undergo in order to attain immortality. The pearl, of course, is the precious jewel of consciousness found by man in the innermost cavern of his soul when he turns his eyes God-ward. The gold represents the positive life-principle – the spiritual Sun; the silver the receptive moon element in the human soul. Together they form the psychic circuit which the individual must utilize if he would achieve God-consciousness. The herbs effect in the body that glandular balance essential to the immortalizing of the vehicle of the Spirit. The butter, with which the miniature pills were to be taken, is the product of churned milk to which we find reference in the *Mahabharatta*, Book 1, Chapter 15: “The Suras, and all the glorious hosts of heaven, having ascended to the summit of this lofty mountain sparkling with precious gems, and for ages raised, were sitting, in solemn synod, meditating the discovery of the Amrita, or water of immortality. The Dewa Narayana being also there, spoke unto Brahma, whilst the Suras were thus consulting together, and said, ‘Let the ocean, a pot of milk, be churned by the united labour of the Suras and Asuras (good angels and bad angels) and when the mighty waters have been stirred up the Amrita shall be found. Let them collect together every medicinal herb, and every precious thing, and let them stir the ocean and they shall discover the Amrita’ ... It was

from this milk-like stream of juices produced from those trees and plants and a mixture of melted gold that the Suras obtained their immortality. The waters of the ocean, now being assimilated with these juices, were converted into milk, and from that milk a kind of butter was presently produced.”

That the churning of the milk sea suggests the profound stirring of the waters of the Unconscious will be evident to the students of symbolism and Jungian psychology. The butter represents the individualized consciousness of God which the churning of the waters of the Unconscious precipitates.

Having through force of circumstances been made deeply aware of drastic changes taking place in body and mind, since returning to America, I am satisfied that Baba's pill-prescription set in motion a process which is now bearing fruit.

The parting from Baba was an extremely painful one. In my farewell moments with him I was moved to thank him for all the joy and pain of my life with him, to which he replied: “Thank me *only* for the pain.” Now, years later, I fully appreciate the wisdom of these words. The expression ‘growing pain’ is just as applicable to the spiritual life as it is to the physical, and without it no growth is possible for the human creature. In the process of self-regeneration all veils of self-excuse and self-pity must be torn asunder by repeated experiences of pain and humiliation. Were we free of egoism and self-will our spiritual growth would be as effortless and painless as the unfoldment of a rose. The human, however, has to deal with the problem of *conscious* unfoldment which requires a focal point, such as the ego, around which his impressions can be centered; but being only a provisional center, it must some day be relinquished in favor of the true God-center. When this time comes, both pain and effort are necessarily involved in its elimination. In the ignorance which our ego fosters we set up resistance to the activity of God in our souls, when he undertakes to free us from our self-centered, body-conscious limitations.

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Were we enlightened enough not to rebel, but to accept fully the will of God as it manifests in our life, then our inner reaction would bear the imprint of joy. As one great soul has expressed it: “we should be grateful for each messenger of pain that reveals at once our weakness and our Self to us.”

As I have been re-living in retrospect the days I spent with Baba in India and Europe, I find more and more that the moments which then, in my darkness, embraced the keenest anguish, now, with many veils removed, give to me the purest joy. I am also aware of joyful overtones which were present even in the painful moment of parting from him. The *deeper* mysteries of divine love can only be known through the alembic of pain.

I intuitively felt that for those of us who were returning to our homes in the West it would be many years before we would be with him again in the flesh; and that many momentous changes would, in the meantime, occur in our individual lives and in the world situation. Certainly no intuition ever proved more true.

In my own case, the dramatic sequence which began – or was previewed – in India continued to unfurl in “slow motion” for a number of years; so much latent darkness was there that I needed to face and assimilate. No cobweb corner of consciousness was permitted to go undiscovered, unswept, ungarnished.

SILENT PARTNER

The trip which Malcolm and I made from Cannes to Paris by motor bus, and thence to America by the “Queen Mary,” provided many soul-testing ‘curtain-raisers’ which the Master was directing from behind the scenes. My husband was still under the disciplines of silence and one meal a day until he reached California, so it became my job to act as the man of the party, in buying the tickets, making all the arrangements and generally supervising the trip. This constituted no hardship until we found ourselves in circumstances where Malcolm’s excellent French would have

served us well, while my being limited to the English language proved a distinct handicap.

I had been told by the agent at Cannes that our tickets provided for a stop-over and hotel accommodations at Lyons – where reservations had been made for us by the company – and that we would be deposited by the bus at the hotel. But when we arrived at Lyons, at night – in a remote section of the city – the courier, who had evidently dined and wined well that evening, indicated that we would have to pay extra for a taxi fare across the city to the hotel. We suspected that this was one of the famous tricks played on unsuspecting tourists by palm-itching natives, and since we neither felt like encouraging the agent's rapacity, nor, in fact, were financially able to do so, we insisted that he fulfill the contract which I had made with the bureau at Cannes.

These complications had already provided tremendous emotional fermentation. Malcolm, who knew French, was not permitted to speak; I, who knew only English, could speak as much as I liked but to no purpose! Malcolm had a small alphabet board which had once belonged to Baba, and by means of this he could communicate somewhat laboriously with me; but when he tried it on the courier, the man burst into a torrent of what sounded like very adequate French abuse! Then Malcolm tried writing what he wanted to say. This was worse yet, for even his best friends claim that one must be psychic in order to read Malcolm's hand-writing! Obviously the agent wasn't. He seemed to regard Malcolm's silence as an unpleasant kind of practical joke, and my inability to speak French as a personal affront. At length we managed to compel the gentleman – by a series of graphic gesticulations and ominous grunts from Malcolm, and imploring looks from me – to see the light! But at the hotel we encountered further difficulties. The agent declared that the bus would not pick us up in the morning; we would have to taxi across the city. Since their calling for us had also been part of the original arrangement made at Cannes, we again insisted that they fulfill their contract. By this time the altercation between Malcolm and the man

had reached its peak. Then in his excitement the agent touched me on the shoulder. This was too much for Malcolm. His hands sought the man's collar! Silent he remained, but when the basic urge of protecting his mate was called into play, only brute force was apparently adequate to express his pent-up emotions! The cave-man technique worked. The man agreed to stop by for us in the morning. Inside the hotel, however, we encountered another problem – no reservations had been made for us, they said, and no room was available. Again the pantomime started, with much hand-waving, scowling, writing and spelling on the board in French, only in the end to find out that the woman at the desk understood English! Whatever we said or did must have been formidable, because she finally consented to materialize a room without the bribe for which she, too, was evidently angling.

The ten days in Paris deserve a book to themselves. We were there for the purpose of buying French silks, with which Malcolm would resume his business of manufacturing and selling men's neckwear. To present to his Hollywood clientele, a month before Christmas, a choice assortment of ties made from Charvet, Rodier and Bianchini silks seemed an auspicious way of re-establishing ourselves financially. Our idea proved to be a good one, though I'm sure the clerks at these silk houses must have wondered how on earth a dumb man could be a salesman! Leading Malcolm around Paris with my inadequate French, asking for directions on trams, ordering in restaurants, buying in shops, while he stood by silently squirming, was a most unique experience which only a Perfect Master could devise for the further elimination of our egos.

Nor was the homeward trip on the "Queen Mary" without its moments of awkward fun. Malcolm was continuing to eat but one meal a day – at noon. At one of the meals at which I sat alone, a young man from across the way came over to my table. With the usual camaraderie of shipboard travel, he offered his condolences for my husband's 'affliction.' Had he always been dumb? He asked. I assured him that it was only a temporary indisposition of his vocal cords.

“He seems to eat so seldom – is that part of his treatment?”

I was grateful to him for giving me that answer! Yes, I assented, fasting was part of the treatment. He shook his head in sympathy. He seemed to think that it was a serious situation and that I was very brave. There were moments when I thought so, too!

On the day of landing in New York – as we filed by the passport inspector – I went first, handing him our joint passport. He looked at it and asked the usual questions: was I an American citizen, and so forth. My replies satisfied him, so he turned to Malcolm who stood behind me. To his queries, Malcolm merely nodded his head. The officer repeated his questions. Again Malcolm nodded. The man became very angry: “I didn’t hear you!” he snarled.

Standing beside the official was the ship’s purser who had come in contact with Malcolm on board. He informed the inspector in a stage-whisper, loud enough for the whole waiting line to hear: “He’s dumb – he can’t speak!”

We had an anxious moment as the officer looked Malcolm over. For less than this, innocuous travellers had been incarcerated on Ellis Island, pending medical examination. I debated quickly in my mind what I should say, were I asked any probing questions. To tell them the real reason would hardly have helped the situation. What would a passport official understand of a man who does not speak on orders from a spiritual Master? He might think it a blind for something subversive. Or, if I said that Malcolm had contracted this strange ailment while abroad – because his passport showed no indication of his being ‘dumb’ when he left the country – the inspector might conclude he needed medical examination before entering New York. But my momentary concern was quickly relieved. Apparently thinking Malcolm was deaf as well as dumb, he shouted at him the usual form questions, while all down the line I could hear kind old ladies and gentlemen commiserating with me: “Poor young woman! How sad to have a deaf and dumb husband.”

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Malcolm's father met us at the dock. To say that he was shocked by his son's silent greeting is greatly to understate his reaction. Though a kind and gentle man, his exasperation became almost explosive when I told him that Malcolm was not permitted to speak until he reached California. "You mean to say he's going to visit me for the next week without talking?"

My explanation did little to appease his bewilderment!

Though on the surface a simple thing, this silence of Malcolm's created the most astonishing complications which had the effect of making one or both of us appear ridiculous or pathetic; all of which was, of course, grist for Baba's mill of further eliminating the ego.

CHAPTER VIII

ON TOUR WITH THE MASTER

JUST as we arrived in New York, in November, 1937, Baba and his party landed at Bombay. With him were the Eastern women, the Eastern men and three of the Western women. Three others were to follow later after brief visits to their families in the West. Three weeks after their arrival Baba, with a few of the Eastern men and two Western women, made a nine-day tour to the towns and cities of various of his devotees.

The first stop was at his childhood home in Poona, where his Mother played the part of the gracious hostess in showing them through the house which had sheltered Baba in his childhood and provided the earthly rendezvous for the momentous descent of Godhood into man. In sympathetic imagination the group entered a little into the supernal joy and agonizing pain of those months in which he was compelling the human spirit to fulfill its divine destiny by balancing itself in the physical body.

Baba's Mother is a lady of great natural charm and intense spirit. The contour of her mouth and chin indicate a determined will and her twinkling eyes still retain the fire and enthusiasm of youth.

Some interesting anecdotes were told us in India of her reactions to what she felt was an abnormal development in the life of her favorite son. Often, after Baba had gone to live with his second Master, Upasani Maharaja, his mother would travel to Sakori – Maharaj's 'seat' – to plead with him to give Baba back to her.

"You've taken my best boy away from me," she would remonstrate. "Give him back to me!"

Once, Upasani called Baba and told him of his mother's

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pleas and gave him permission to return home with her. But Baba ran away.

Another time she visited Babajan, Baba's first Master and accused her of taking away her son: "My boy has gone to stay with Maharaj and it's all your fault! Make him come back to me," she cried.

Babajan, from the depth of her great heart, looked upon her compassionately: "But Merwan is with you now! Don't you see him?" Then she called: "Come, Merwan, come," and turning to the anxious mother, asked: "Don't you see him? He is here. He is everywhere!"

On another occasion, when she visited Maharaj, shortly before Baba's return home, she told Maharaj that she wanted him to tell her son that he must obey her in every respect. The Master, knowing what was in her mind, smiled, and replied that as long as Baba lived at home he would obey her in all things except one; he would never marry, as that was not his destiny. The mother was greatly annoyed because that was precisely what she had in mind to achieve!

Knowing, however, by this time a little of the implacable ways of Perfect Masters, she had to relinquish this fond desire and soon afterward found consolation in having her son home with her again. One day while a neighbor was calling on her, Baba's mother expressed her joy at having Baba with her again and boasted that he obeyed her every command, just as Upasani had promised. The friend, a little dubious of her claim, persuaded the mother to ask him to do various things as a sort of private demonstration. Cheerfully and promptly Baba complied. Then the neighbor whispered: "But these are such simple things. Tell him to do something more difficult – walking around the block, naked, for example!"

His mother's eyes flashed: "I wouldn't think of it," she declared. "He would do it instantly, without question!" Thus ended the demonstration of implicit obedience!

As the years passed and Baba gathered around him his group of disciples who revered him as a God-man, his mother's former possessive attitude changed. Though still

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at times puzzled at the extraordinary destiny which life had cast for her and her son, she is now one of that devoted group of women disciples who give to the Master the whole-hearted allegiance due and incarnate God.

The next step of the travellers was Talegaon, where Baba was received with the usual enthusiastic and loving devotion of his followers. In the home of some devotees where they put up for the night, a complicated emotional situation had arisen between two brothers who were partners in business. No difficulty, however apparently mundane or trivial, is too unimportant for Baba's attention, if it vitally concerns the lives of his disciples. Like a loving father, he gives freely of himself, his wisdom, his love, in helping those who are still caught in the snares of illusion. He therefore proceeded immediately to unravel the tangled human threads. All night long one of the contenders sat outside Baba's door waiting to surrender himself to the Master's judgment. At four o'clock Baba opened his door to the repentant one who was now willing to relinquish his self-will and pride of position in his family. Later in the day Baba departed for Bombay leaving behind re-established harmony and peace.

In Bombay the procession of needy, hungry souls prostrated themselves at Baba's feet, giving to him the love which he himself inspired, and seeking from him the touch, the look, which would fortify them to continue with the life ordeal which, as some faces revealed, seemed too great to be borne.

One lovely Parsi mother brought her two-weeks-old baby who was subject to spasms of rage so violent that it was torture for onlookers to behold it. Baba having been informed about the case, deliberately postponed the interview, thereby generating greater expectancy on the part of the mother, and preparing, in the sub-conscious of the child, greater receptivity. During the waiting period the tiny, doll-like baby, apparently responding to the subtle alchemy of Baba's invisible help, became calm and finally fell asleep. A little later Baba sent for the mother and baby. As he held the child in his arms the little one's eyes

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opened and were caught by Baba's powerful focussed look. Those who witnessed the silent drama relate that an unmistakable expression of smiling peace spread over the little face. The mother, too, was aware of the redemptive work which Baba's look had accomplished. On leaving the room she carried the child high in front of her, as if dedicating it to the higher life which she felt had been awakened in its consciousness.

Among those whom Baba interviewed was a devotee long associated with the Master. An unusually energetic and excited discussion took place between them in an Indian dialect, when Baba spelled in English on his board and had one of his men read aloud for all to hear:

"A man who cannot control action is not a man!" Little self-pampering among his men is tolerated by Baba.

During the interviews the group learned that another of the Mandali was to undergo further testing through a prolonged separation from Baba. To the one so designated, Baba sent the message: "I suffer every second of my life untold agony, in which you must share. This is the last phase. When you see me again, you will see me as my true Universal Self." Then he gave directions that this one was to go on a begging tour. He predicted that it would be very difficult for him, for he would be abused and taunted by many, but he would endure it all bravely.

On the twenty-third of December they boarded the train for Navsari, where they were to visit the Desai family. While on the train, to still the speculative thoughts of some of the party Baba spoke of selfless service:

"God as God *alone* is not conscious of being man, nor is man as man alone conscious of being God. Only the God-man is conscious of being *both* God and man; so the God-man is both Lord and servant of the universe. He is Lord or Master in his capacity of helping all souls forward on the pathway to Reality. He is servant in that he continuously bears the burden of humanity. To serve him who serves *all* is to serve the universe.

"Selfless service and love are twin qualities of divinity. Only one who loves can truly serve. When you serve your

beloved God-man you are serving your own Self in all other Selves.

“The service which the Master exacts is for your own spiritual benefit; but this service expectation of reward. Serving him may constitute an ordeal which tries body, mind and spirit. But wherein would lie the perfection of serving, if it were easy and suited to one’s convenience? Yet, in spite of the body’s suffering and the mind’s torment, the *spirit* of the selfless server experiences the bliss of true satisfaction. Only he who without any question or thought of reward serves the God-man, really serves. Any other attitude is no more than *paid* labor.”

The Desai family, with whom Baba’s party stayed at Navsari, are great land-owners in the Baroda State. They have been the Master’s devotees for many years. Sorabji Desai was the author of about a hundred volumes on a variety of subjects: social, religious and philosophic. One book entitled, ‘Hundred and One Names of God,’ was written directly under Baba’s inner guidance and later received his outer confirmation. The day that the last proof was submitted to Baba for verification an interesting phenomenon occurred. Baba was holding the book and pointing, on a chart which it contained, to the highest point in divine existence – God -- when a brilliant light in the form of an arrow shot forth from his head and then changed into a luminous spiral, filling the room with a golden glow. This was visible to all present and infused them with a feeling of heavenly Oneness.

Now, at the time of Baba’s visit, the Desai family was being brought face to face with the two great cosmic forces of life and death. Within a few days one of the daughters was to be married and extensive preparations had been made for the large gathering of family and friends. Also, at any moment, although only Baba knew the hour – and seemed in fact, to be playing the role of Time-Keeper -- Sorabji Desai was to experience the great drama of physical death. The morning after their arrival

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Baba, after visiting Sorabji's room, gave orders that no other visitor was to see the sick man, and instructed the household to recall the invitations to their three hundred guests for the wedding ceremony to be held three days hence. Only the few near relatives and friends were now to be invited.

Later in the afternoon, as the group sat around Baba's low divan, listening to the strains of music from an Indian orchestra, a message came from Sorabji requesting, as his last wish, to pay homage to his Master. A short while later, with superhuman effort – as two members of his family supported him – he stood before Baba, then shook off the protecting arms and dropped on his knees at Baba's feet. He had offered the final oblation of himself to the Master whom he had long loved and served. Suddenly Baba gave the order for him to be carried back to his bed.

The next morning the group heard that the patient had slept but little. Baba went in to see him for the last time and left with him the benediction of his own great joy and serenity. The departing soul was happy that his earth life was ending with the Master's blessing and he rested contented in the knowledge that shortly he would embark upon a new phase of soul-life.

Shortly afterward Baba and his party left for Bombay and the next day journeyed on to Nagpur. While there, the telegram which Baba had been hourly expecting arrived from Navsari, announcing the death of Sorabji Desai, just twenty minutes after the wedding ceremony. Thus did the lords of Life and Death graciously fulfill their appointed functions. While reading the message Baba appeared pleased, and spelled out on his board: "Well done."

One of the outstanding features of the Nagpur visit was Baba's interview with a mentally – deranged child – a boy of seven – whom the Master had, weeks before, ordered to be found and brought to him when he would arrive at Nagpur. When the boy – usually extremely shy – saw Baba he immediately jumped up on his lap and threw his little arms around Baba's neck. Every day during their visit Baba bathed and clothed the little chap, even as he had done

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with his *masts* – the God-intoxicated – at Rahuri, thereby cleansing and renewing the boy's mind even as he cleansed and clothed his body. Before leaving, Baba instructed the child's father to bring him to Meherabad the following April, when the work of redemption would be completed.

Like forest-fire the news spread that the Master would see anyone whose life was destitute, defective or despairing, with the result that a steady stream of sick and sorrowing – many of them little children – passed before him for blessing. Placing his holy hands upon their anguished heads, he poured upon them the spiritual balm which both heals and quickens.

The next evening was devoted to 'open house' for those who desired Baba's *darshana* or blessing. Police had to be called to clear a passage outside among the waiting throng. In the center of a large hall, Baba sat on a beautiful couch richly adorned with pillows, shawls, carpets – all loving offerings of his devotees. Again Indian music throbbed and sighed, charging the atmosphere with its soul-quickening crescendo.

The next day again vast crowds of soul-hungry human beings – seven thousand of them – waited in line for hours for the sight and touch of the Master. Then came the moment of parting from his gracious hosts. He embraced them, as a loving father does his children, caressed their faces, looked deep into their eyes as though imprinting upon them an invisible gift. To a few he also gave visible gifts. He took a handkerchief from Norina's pocket and after holding it for a few moments in his hands, he passed it on to one of the family. One child he held tenderly in his arms. Accompanying all these simple, human gestures, there was traced upon his face the suffering which he was experiencing as he took upon himself the pain and the burdens of these eager, wistful souls.

When Baba arrived at the station a little later, thousands were waiting there to bid him farewell. As the train pulled out into the enveloping darkness the echo of the crowd's

reverent cheers reached Baba's party. "*Shri Sadguru Meher Baba Maharaj ki jai,*" – the same salutation which had rent the air at Nasik at the time of the birthday celebration – "Hail to Meher Baba, the Perfect Master, the Supreme King!"

Arriving early in the morning at a railway station a few hours distant from Meherabad, they found one of Baba's men waiting for them with a car. As they drove along the dusty road Baba suddenly declared he was hungry, so they stopped under the ample shade of a banyan tree and unpacked the lunch which the family at Nagpur had prepared for them. After being bountifully fed, Baba suggested that they all take a siesta. Not long, however, did they relax, for Baba was in a light, playful mood. As he played a game with them, a man appeared on the road, apparently very poor, carrying heavy bundles. Instantly on seeing him, Baba ordered the food unpacked and an excellent luncheon of patties, cheese, bread and fruit was presented to the man, with the words, dictated by Baba: "Shri Sadguru Meher Baba is the giver," to which the man answered in a serious but natural manner: "It is my good fortune that I should be fed by him."

It seemed evident to those accustomed to the Master's psychic appointments which frequently attend his journeys that this man was one of his spiritual agents whom Baba knew he would contact at that place and hour.

A similar 'appointment' was described by Ruano Bogislav, one of the party who journeyed with Baba to Hollywood in December, 1934. When their train halted at Albuquerque, New Mexico, for half an hour, Ruano, who was with Baba as he walked up and down the long brick platform, relates how he suddenly stopped and turned toward her as he spelled out on the palm of his hand the word 'Indian.' Ruano, thinking he wanted to see some American Indians, looked around and spied an old squaw sitting in front of a shop, whom she pointed out to him. But Baba's inner attention was elsewhere. He motioned to his four East-Indian disciples, linked Ruano's arm through his and swiftly

made his way toward the end of the long platform; there he turned abruptly to the left and continued up a street as though he knew precisely where he was going. Ruano, unaccustomed to Baba's strange ways, and as yet unconditioned in that state of mind which leaves everything to the Master, was wondering if they should be going so far afield, hunting Indians! The train might leave without them. But on they walked. After a few blocks, Ruano spotted two Indians standing on the corner of the next street. She was delighted, and turned to Baba as they approached the figures: "Here are your Indians, Baba!" One, short in stature, who was selling bows and arrows walked away as the party approached. Before the other – a tall, impressive figure with a red band tied around his head – Baba stopped. They looked at each other intently for a few minutes. Ruano murmured: "I wonder if he speaks English?" But no one paid any attention to her. The East Indian disciples stood in silence. Abruptly, Baba turned and taking Ruano's arm again, strode quickly toward the station, reaching the train just as it was about to pull out. Later, Ruano asked Baba if he had expected to see that particular Indian, to which the Master nodded his head in affirmation and indicated on his board: "One of my spiritual agents."

These incidents, so strange to the average Westerner, are taken for granted by Baba's disciples after years of repeated experiences of this sort. Many of these 'agents,' Baba informs us, are unaware of him as the *person*, Meher Baba, until such an outer meeting as occurred with the Indian in America and the Indian in India. Prior to such a meeting, their contact is wholly on the inner planes, where names signify functions rather than personalities.

UNIVERSAL SPIRITUAL CENTRE

In March, 1938, Baba took the entire 'family' to Panchgani, the scene of the famous cave mentioned earlier in the story. This move served two purposes. One was to spare the Western women the unaccustomed heat of a tropical summer at Meherabad – which, owing to its low altitude,

is oppressively hot; the other was for some special inner work of the Master. A large bungalow was rented just on the outskirts of Tiger Valley. Here the women, Eastern and Western, lived; some distance away in a smaller house, the male members of the party stayed, in as much as the seclusion of the Eastern women was still in effect. After allotting comfortable quarters to everybody Baba selected for himself a small store-room attached to the kitchen. It had a very low ceiling and no ventilation except an old creaking wooden door, and it was in a sad state of dilapidation. The men, however, quickly got busy and soon transformed it into a spotless little cell. A special room was also reserved for the use of the chief *mast*, Mamoud. With him Baba continued the daily symbolic ritual of bathing, clothing and feeding.

During the visit to Panchgani, Baba made several short visits to Bangalore in Mysore and to Belgaum in the state of Hyderabad. These visits were for the purpose of looking over the territories as possible sites for the International Spiritual Centre which Baba was then proposing to establish. The keen interest and co-operation of the late Maharaj of Mysore, and his able Dewan, Sir Mirza Ismail, together with the central location and salubrious climate of the Mysore state, were strong factors in favor of Bangalore – chief city of the province. Here, some months later, the cornerstone of this unique institution was laid. When it is completed, Baba predicts, men and women all over the world will gravitate to it; among them will be great souls from all sections of life.

In this Centre, which will accommodate about one thousand people, Baba proposes to have six departments. One will be *The Spiritual Academy* – which will prepare men and women to give intellectual expression to the world's need for international selflessness and harmony. *The House of Advanced Souls* – will prepare men and women to become practical mystics who will translate their higher consciousness into terms of everyday life. Another, *The Abode of the Saints* – will prepare souls to enlighten the ignorant by quickening in them the realization that only God is real and all else is illusion. *The Mast Department* will minister to

those God-intoxicated souls who have become unbalanced in traversing the inner planes of consciousness. *The Solitary Quarters for Meditation* will afford opportunity for those whose spiritual development can best be furthered by prolonged meditation under the guidance of the Master. *The Resting Place for the Afflicted* will devote its attention to the care and alleviation of suffering of all kinds. This department will train men and women for a life of selfless service. All six departments will be under the direct supervision of the Master. Enrollment in this spiritual Centre will be determined solely by Baba and those whom he will appoint.

Beginners, as well as the most advanced yogis and saints, will find their way to its doors. The chief requisite will be love of God and longing for union with Him. Excerpts from his message at the time of the foundation Laying, read:

“..... The time for a universal awakening is imminent, and important aspect of which will be this Universal Spiritual Centre, founded here today. Mysore will some day realize its singular good fortune in possessing among many other progressive features the Spiritual Capital of the world as well. I bless you all in the greatest scheme of spiritual regeneration which the world has ever known, the foundation of which you have witnessed today. This Universal Spiritual Centre symbolizes the character of my divine mission on earth.”

At this time Baba also decreed that six other Centres would have to be established throughout India before he would break his silence and inaugurate his public work. Four had already been established at Meherabad, Nasik, Madras and Toka, and the foundations laid for another at Mandla, on the Narbada in the Central Provinces, in addition to the one just laid at Bangalore. Sites for the other six – bringing the total to twelve – were then under consideration.

STRANGE DRAMA

A few weeks after their return to Meherabad an extra-ordinary dramatic performance was given at the men's Ashram in the presence of about two hundred guests.

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Though only Baba knows the full significance of this amazing drama we may read a little between the lines and see another evidence of his use of drama – real or imaginary – to set in motion certain forces which express themselves universally or individually, as the case may require.

This performance was given by the God-intoxicated men under the direction of Pleader, the disciple whose severe testing and training was earlier described. *Raja Gopichand*, the king who renounced his throne for the quest of God, was the theme of the play. When one considers that most of these men could scarcely stand in one spot for more than a moment without doing something erratic, with little or no cohesion of thought, the feeling and concentration which they brought to their performances were quite astonishing. For the duration of a two-hour performance these men not only remembered accurately their lines and songs, but they portrayed their roles with fervor and real understanding. Much of the credit was due, of course, to Pleader's wise direction and Baba's constant supervision; yet, the fact that a dozen or more deranged men could so miraculously adapt themselves to direction was in itself an unprecedented achievement.

One deviation from the accurate rendering of their parts occurred when one of the men, apparently overcome by the underlying theme of the play, broke through his lines with the spontaneous cry of a soul to his God-self:

“I fall at your feet; I give you my life; I die for you!

Baba attached much importance to the successful performance of this play, as symbolical of the ultimate successful outcome of the world drama of ‘madness’ in which mankind was about to be engulfed. It remains to be seen how long it will be before the selfishness and self-seeking of individuals and nations will be superseded – as in the play – by the quest for true righteousness.

HAVEN OF MERCY

Shortly after this performance a hospital on the Hill was opened for female patients. A woman doctor was placed in charge of the hospital, while under her served Countess Nadia Tolstoy, as Matron, with the help of other

Eastern and Western women devotees. This hospital was more than a place of physical healing. Through the constant benediction of Baba's love which quickened the afflicted and inspired those who served, this place became a haven of mercy and refuge for many. The first baby was born of a poor demented woman, cast off by her people, who was picked up one day by some of Baba's men about twenty-five miles from Meherabad. Baba was the first to hear the little one's cry and immediately went in to see and bless it. He gave special instructions for its care, and often caressed and fondled it.

With all the patients, it was Baba's presence more than the medicines which revived their drooping spirits, and effected that cure of the soul which alone insures lasting healing of the body. Nor were the patient, the only recipients of grace. Those who served at the hospital learned the priceless lesson of real, selfless service, which sees beneath the squalor to the anguished spirit, pain-racked and sorrow laden. They were learning the wisdom of Baba's words: "Do not think that in serving others you are doing them a favor. Be happy that they have favored *you*, by giving you the opportunity to serve."

Such selfless service Baba himself constantly exemplifies. It is in this characteristic – of the servant supreme – that the true greatness of a Master should be judged. His continual outpouring of mercy; the hand placed upon the head to bless and redeem; the heart ever open to share the infinite love of God; these unflinching, human acts of spontaneous service are the insignia of true God-hood, and these the Master Baba wears with simple grace and beauty.

HOLY HILL

Upon the return of the women to Meherabad they found that a second story had been added to the one-room building which had been the home of the Eastern women for many years. On this second floor lived about eight Western women in a dormitory with their cubicles partitioned off by muslin curtains. Quite a contrast was this to the comparative luxury of the earlier Nasik Ashram! Yet one of the English women writes from India that though all

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the Nasik luxuries have been withdrawn they do not miss them. In fact, she believes them to have been the cause of many of the serious difficulties which arose while we were there.

No doubt in the beginning of this new regime the lack of privacy to which they had all been accustomed must have offered many emotional handicaps to be overcome. But, as my correspondent says, their life on the whole was happy and serene. Two factors contributed toward this: they were living in the rarified atmosphere which had been Baba's headquarters for many years; and they had the blessing of his daily supervision and loving encouragement.

One strange yet psychologically understandable department which Baba inaugurated was a Zoo! A donkey, a monkey, a goose, a snake, a lamb, a miner-bird, a peacock, a gazelle, a pig, a cat, and two dogs had to be fed twice daily by two of the Western women and their pens or cages kept clean! At one period Baba gave orders that the monkey – then in Norina's sole charge – must always be with her even to the extent of sleeping on her bed! Thus does Baba dramatize and make acutely realistic the psychological truths which the western psychologist deals with intellectually. Baba, of course, knows the particular instinctual energies which are typified by the different animals, as he also knows well how to utilize and transmute them.

Kitty Davy, one of the English disciples who returned to India with Baba, has given an intimate picture of their early days on the Hill with the Master. She tells of the conflicts, the difficulties, the crises, and shows how Baba watches over them all and leads them beyond the little self into his own universal life. Perhaps one has become angry with another. The ego is hurt and one starts to see the inside. Then Baba who senses these things immediately calls the offending parties and rebukes them for their lack of love. "If you cannot love each other, then learn to give in, one to the other; when you feel resentment and anger surging up within you, begin to dance, or laugh, or go outside for a moment until the mind and emotions are under control. At all costs, these must be controlled."

Brooding and remorse are two characteristics which Baba strongly discourages, because they so completely insulate from the spiritual life-current those who succumb to them. They act as negative conductors for all the self-centered forces of the universe.

Jealousy is another of the binding cords of the ego which Baba brings to the surface; then in an unforgettable manner reveals its ugliness, its selfishness. The guilty one is now faced with a painful problem which he must somehow solve, because only through self-mastery does the individual spirit evolve. Eventually one realizes that there is but one Beloved Life, with no division, no sense of separation. Toward this realization the Master leads his children step by step, by making himself the Way through which they may see and participate in the Oneness of all life.

If one is attached to money or possessions, Baba creates the circumstances which will make this tendency apparent; as he will also provide ample opportunity to transcend this limitation. To those devoted ones who have given him all their earthly goods, he says: "You have given all for love. All mine is yours. You are my own; and I will look after all who are mine."

Not only does attachment to *things* circumscribe the life of man; attachment to the results of our actions impedes also its spontaneous flow. To surmount this egocentric tendency, Baba suggests that all our actions should be for the purpose of rendering service: "If, for example, it should be your duty to kill a dog to save three cats, let your thought be of helping the cats. Have no attachment to the act of killing."

Again he advises: "Be attached neither to violence, nor non-violence. Fight if you must, but let your motive be only to help. Eat, to serve the God-life in you, not for the pleasure of eating. Only so can you be free from all desire and be attached only to Love."

For those who are aware of the superior value of linking their consciousness with a living incarnation of god, he suggests, as Krishna did in days of old: "Think always of me, whatever you may be doing; then gradually you will

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realize that it is I doing everything through you. 'I', the Doer – not you. What concern need you then have with the results?"

Through one and a hundred ways in his daily life with his beloved ones, the Master leads them to a deeper understanding of divine love, until finally, perfect in service, selfless in their devotion, they become so much part of him that no thought of self remains. United in consciousness with the God-man, they arrive at their own true Centre.

One of the greatest privileges which the disciple has in serving the Master is that of sharing a little in his universal suffering. Yet how few at the time of the sharing are able to rejoice in it and make it a creative experience. Baba never condemns, however, this natural revulsion from pain. With a sad smile he will turn upon one his compassion: "You are not to blame. I threw upon you the tiniest part of my burden, but you did not understand."

SPIRITUAL HUNTSMAN

On Baba's return to India from Europe he focussed most of his outer attention upon those men whom he calls the god-mad. To discover these souls and then persuade them to submit themselves to his compassionate ministrations was the chief purpose of the extensive journeying all over India, which occupied much of his time from December 1938 until December 1945.

In word recently received from India, Baba has further elucidated the object of his work with these souls. It has been his purpose not only to balance their consciousness but to awaken them to the wider responsibility which they must assume in the stupendous task of Universal quickening. During his stay at Hyderabad alone he contacted 125 of these God-intoxicated souls – and many hundreds in other parts of India.

It was by no means an easy task to induce these individuals – absorbed in their beatific vision – to depart even for a brief time from their chosen 'seat' or headquarters where, in many cases, they had lived for years. Had Baba himself contacted these souls directly the task would have been

relatively simple. Being peculiarly responsive to spiritual vibrations they would instantly have felt the divine love which emanates from him and willingly have yielded to his direction, as they all did, once they came into his presence. But this was not Baba's method. He delegated certain of his disciples for this task, and often their ingenuity was taxed to the utmost in trying to find ways and means of persuading these God-intoxicated beings to follow them! Their task was rendered even more complex by the fact that Baba wished his identity undisclosed. Often crowds would gather around the disciples, curious to know why decently clad men were so anxious to take with them the derelicts in rags which most of the *masts* appeared to be. The mention of Baba's name in most cases would not only have struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the God-mad, but would also inevitably have drawn to Baba the usual crowds seeking blessing from the Master.

Sometimes among these people were those who knew the God-intoxicated man and revered him as a spiritual guide. They would then become aggressive as they would try to prevent Baba's disciples from taking their holy man away from them. At all costs a public row had to be avoided, yet Baba's men must accomplish their Master's orders. It was a delicate undertaking, requiring the utmost in patience, perseverance and skill; but in the end the disciples would achieve their mission.

One of these God-intoxicated men was worshipped by thousands as a saint. Baba confirmed his spiritual status. He was brought to the Master by a tipsy *tonga-walla* (a cabman) whom the disciples had requisitioned to help them in their work of gathering up holy men! This particular dazed soul was of the mild type, resisting or hesitating only if the order in some way conflicted with the higher consciousness in which he was absorbed. When these souls are lost in their spiritual ecstasies they feel greatly disturbed and often cry, if told to do something which pulls their consciousness down to earth. Those who are less advanced will use cruder methods to express their displeasure, such

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as Mamoud did when he spat in the face of the Indian disciple in Europe. It is for this reason that Baba – considerate of their delicate psychic mechanism – strictly orders that no coercion or force of any kind is ever to be used with them. The disciples are instructed to watch over them and serve them in all patience, just as Baba himself does. If for any reason they are obdurate, Baba sits quietly waiting until, of their own accord, they signal their willingness for him to continue his services.

Another one when brought to Baba sang in his ecstasy: “I gave my heart to One, but that One disappeared . . . I have searched for him all these years . . . Now I have found him . . . I found him *here today!*” Later, he sang: “To love is no easy task . . . Love is for those who are heroes, who have courage, patience, who can suffer . . . Love is the real thing!”

After days of persuasion by one of Baba’s disciples, a woman saint finally consented to be led to Baba. She was very reticent. Only once did she give expression to her feelings after she had been staring fixedly at Baba for many minutes: “Why don’t you let me have just a few drops of water from the Ocean of Divinity that you are?” she pleaded.

Another of the many who gave vent to their spiritual emotions was a Mohammedan who, when lovingly touched by Baba, cried out: “My heart is intensely burning – you have set me aflame!” indicating the fire of divine love which the Master had kindled in his heart. Later, as he was being fed by the Master, someone asked him where he was and at whose hands he was being fed. “I came to the court of Allah,” he replied, “and ate my food at His Palace!”

Many other were the expressions of ecstasy and recognition of Baba’s spiritual eminence on the part of these lovers of God. One who saw him as he was driving with some of his disciples through the streets of Ajmer, shouted in great joy: “Look! Shankar (*a Hindu incarnation of God*) is here! Run, hurry! Receive God’s blessing!”

Once, in Panchgani, an advanced soul ecstatically chanting a devotional song stopped suddenly when he saw Baba

SPIRITUAL HUNTSMAN

approaching and exclaimed: "You are the great Avatar!" Later, in parting from Baba he declared: "None here knows you, but I recognized you at once. In meeting you my life's desire is fulfilled. Hail to the God Vishnu!" In each case these souls would recognize Baba as their own chosen manifestation of Deity.

Speaking of these outbursts of ecstasy on the part of these God-lovers, Baba explained: "They feel happy with Baba because they see and know who Baba truly is; something which you with a merely human eye cannot see. The special eye which sees the divine form of Baba is quite distinct from the human eye. With your physical eyes you see the plaything of *Maya* -- tables, chairs, couches. The *internal* eye sees *through* all these things to God."

Later, he added: "I love these Lovers of God. They know nothing of the world; even to their bodily needs they are blissfully indifferent. While the whole world craves the playthings of illusion; while human beings rush at each other's throats for self-gratification, these souls are absorbed in their love of God."

Elizabeth Patterson, an American member of the party who travelled with Baba on these journeys wrote that she had seen these weary, tortured souls leave Baba's presence, after the symbolic 'bath,' with an unmistakable expression of regeneration upon their faces. "They were like a garden of humanity, purified and shining, after celestial rains."

Through the 'touch' of the Master, such joy was bestowed upon them that their expression of bliss could not be concealed. It radiated from every atom of their being.

Like most journeys with the Master, these extensive trips from East to West and from North to South of the vast continent of India were laden with diverse difficulties and delights; ample were the opportunities of self-sacrifice, and frequent were the moments of deepening love and veneration for the Master, to whom these men and women had dedicated their lives. Their faith, too, was strengthened as they witnessed the profound reverence which these saintly souls accorded to Baba, and observed how unflinching was their instant recognition of his spiritual supremacy.

ASHRAM ON WHEELS

About thirty men and women – Eastern and Western – accompanied Baba on these journeys. A huge motor-bus was especially designed to suit the requirements of the party, with a partition one or two seats in back of the driver's seat, forming a closed compartment for the Indian women who were still in relative seclusion.

For the Indian men, who are nothing if not vocal in their contacts with each other, this trip must have constituted a peculiarly arduous discipline! In order to make sure that no male voice was heard by the little nuns, Baba instructed the men not to raise their voices above a whisper whenever they were in the bus, or within hearing distance of the Eastern women!

All the luggage -- which included pots and pans, stove and buckets, for the ablutions of the *masts*, as well as thirty travelling bags and bedding rolls – was packed on top of the bus! The moment of departure in their six-wheeled dinosaur always provided plenty of laughter and excitement for the party. Baba usually boarded the bus last – after carefully supervising all the final details – and made his way to the front of the car, which meant that the gangway seats could not, of course, be occupied until he had passed. With their camp-stools pushed back, the occupants of these seats would stand to one side to make an aisle for Baba. The next moment he would snap his fingers, giving the signal to shut the door. Then before the door was shut he would tap on the window motioning the driver to be off. As he speeds up the circumstances of daily life, he accelerates the consciousness of his disciples. These moments of departure always provided him with ample opportunity for this work of acceleration.

Needless to say, he never lost an opportunity to bring to the surface whatever latent shortcomings needed to be faced, or to drive home an overlooked truth. One of the group relates how she had occasion to wait in the car for a number of mornings at the same spot in a particular town. Each day the same beggar – miserable and destitute

as only an Indian beggar can be – would come to her whining for alms. At first she gave him something, but as his demands persisted, she became annoyed and pretended to be asleep when she saw him approaching. Later when she told Baba of the annoying incident, she said: “I don’t know why he persists in coming to me every day.” Looking at her seriously, Baba replied: “He gets *hungry* every day.”

Some nights, after a three-hundred mile journey, the group would find only an empty bungalow for their shelter; and if they were to make an early start in the morning they would sometimes not even unroll their bedding, but would curl up in their coats on the hard floor, or on tables or chairs if the bungalow provided these luxuries. The next night, perhaps, they would find themselves quartered in some Maharaja’s palace, where they would luxuriate in soft beds. Thus, Baba weaned them from their attachment to comfort or asceticism, from their likes and dislikes. Under ordinary conditions such an ordeal might seem insupportable, but with Baba as the guiding spirit, giving encouragement where it was needed, gently teasing to lift one into a lighter mood, the greatest hardship became embellished with beauty, the darkest moment transfigured by the divine radiation from the great heart of the Master. As Rano Gayley, one of the Western group who accompanied Baba on these tours, has expressed it: “The love one has for Baba overcomes all obstacles. To give up all for love of the Master is no hardship, for one gives up nothing and gains all.”

WHIRLWIND TRIP

Baba’s journeys – of which at least one object was the finding of God-intoxicated souls – have continued throughout the years. He has declared that it was necessary for him to contact at least seven out of every ten of these souls before he would break his silence and initiate his public work. This percentage has now about been reached, which may be another indication that the long-awaited world quickening may be imminent.

These journeys have taken him and his disciples many thousands of miles across desert and mountain; they have

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skirted dangerous jungles and forded turbulent streams; they have driven through torrential rains and under scorching sun, from the languorous beauty of Ceylon to the rugged majesty of the Himalayas.

One whirlwind trip-made by Baba and two of his men disciples-in search of these God-intoxicated souls, was particularly arduous. They covered five-hundred miles within seventy-eight hours, during which time none of them slept nor bathed, and they ate but one scanty meal a day. Five days later a similar trip was undertaken, but this one had the distinction of being made in a bullock cart! Such a mode of locomotion over the rough roads of India would have been difficult enough, but nature also added to their discomfort by drenching them with rain and soaking their bedding beyond any possibility of use.

RISHIKESH – ABODE OF SAINTS

Contrasted with such experiences was the delight which the group experienced in visiting Rishikesh, for centuries the abode of saints and yogis. Baba led them to every nook and corner of the district, pointing out to them some of the more outstanding figures of spirituality, among the many who make that mountain shrine their home. They visited one of the jungle Retreats at the far end of the valley through which flows the torrent of the sacred Ganges. Suddenly they came upon the immobile figure of a man standing naked in the stony river bed, with his face turned toward the sun. Baba explained that it was this man's function to perform this duty of establishing contact with the sun, for seven continuous days, without changing his position; then for two days he is relieved by another advanced soul. In such ways, the spiritual titans of the world attune themselves to the laws of the cosmos and even aid in their direction. This saint gave the impression of a mighty oak tree, whose top-most leaves gleam in the sunlight and whose powerful roots tunnel deep into the dark cavern of the earth.

Later they passed a forest where ten advanced souls were taking turns in meditation. One of them sat covered with a long sheet, merged in his meditation and oblivious

of outer things. Evidently, however, he felt the presence of Divinity, for on the way back, as the group passed this shrouded figure, he sprang up from his coverings as Baba approached him and prostrated himself before the Holy One.

One of the favorite places of pilgrimage in this section is the great mountain, reaching eighteen thousand feet into the region of eternal snow, where the Lord Krishna is reputed to have laid down his sacred body. To this high level dauntless pilgrims crawl and climb, many of them sacrificing their lives for the attainment of their goal.

Only on the sacred soil of India can be found such passion for God; such willingness to sacrifice what is generally conceded to be man's most prized possession – his physical life – for the attainment of this supreme objective. And unique even in India is this section, Rishikesh. Here, Baba says, people come *only* to realize God. All lesser goals have been relinquished. This naturally endows it with one of the most spiritual atmospheres in the world.

SECLUSION ENDS

Throughout much of this period of travel Baba was observing strict fasts and relative seclusion, seeing only those of his immediate group, or the God-intoxicated with whom he continued to work daily. Outer contact with his other devotees, who have always had comparatively free access to his presence, was curtailed shortly after his return to India in 1937. Even when he passed through towns or cities where some of his devotees lived, strict secrecy of his movements was observed. Then in March 1943 came word that he had ended his long period of seclusion. His re-entry into more public life was marked by visits to three large towns, Sholapur, Barsi and Akalcut. The news of his impending visits spread like brush-fire, with the result that wherever he went throngs of people were waiting to see or touch him, and if possible to obtain his blessing. At one city the local traffic was so disorganized by the fifty thousand people clamouring to get near him, that the police had to call out reserves to handle the crowd which had organized itself into

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a singing procession with a band at its head, as it led Baba through the town, for four and a half hours.

Two amusing incidents are told of this trip. In one town a man actually stole the sandals from Baba's feet. Fortunately, he had the forethought to bring new ones to replace those which he stole! In another place Baba had to be literally rescued from the attentions of a violent admirer who with tears streaming down his face grabbed Baba and shook him! With such ardent fervor does the Indian mind sometimes react to saintliness.

At the time of these public appearances Baba issued a few messages, giving the keynote of his world mission, which were read and distributed among the devotees. In the introductory one he declared that it is time that man had a fresh vision of the Truth that all life is One. "God alone is worth living for; and God is also worth dying for; all else is a vain and empty pursuit of illusory values."

In another message which is concerned with the freedom of humanity, Baba stated that though the world is talking and fighting for various kinds of freedom, the basic freedom – and the only one which has any true value – is spiritual freedom. "Even when all the external conditions of free life are completely fulfilled and guaranteed, the soul of man would still remain in woeful bondage if it failed to realize spiritual freedom . . . One important condition of spiritual freedom is freedom from all wanting. It is desire that fetters life and enslaves the soul. When the soul breaks asunder the shackles of desire, it emancipates itself from its bondage to the body, mind and ego. This is the spiritual freedom which brings with it the final realization of the unity of all life and puts an end to all doubts and worries . . . There is no gift greater than the gift of spiritual freedom and there is no task more important than that of helping others to attain it. . . . The time has come for all those who would help in the regeneration of man to offer their services in my mission of helping humanity to tread the spiritual path, which leads to the Realization of God. Those who participate in this God-willed, divinely-planned and predestined task of bringing spiritual freedom to mankind, should know

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that every type of suffering and sacrifice – even to giving up the physical body – may be required of them. . . . However, through their untiring activities, humanity shall be initiated into the new life of abiding peace and dynamic harmony, unconquerable faith and unfading bliss, immortal sweetness and incorruptible purity, creative love and infinite understanding.”

CHAPTER – IX

PRELUDE TO DESTINY

TREMENDOUS as Baba's effect has been upon the lives of many thousands who have had a close inner or outer contact with him, his life activity so far has been largely preparatory, because his public manifestation – which many of us believe will substantiate his claims of Avatarhood – is yet to begin. His claims of Mastership can hardly be repudiated by any unprejudiced person who is acquainted with the facts of his life; and if we understand what the role of Avatarhood implies, we may see in many of these facts indications that this claim also is true.

Since in the West we have no literature which deals with the concept of the Avatar as a recurrent manifestation of Godhood in human form, we must turn to the *Bhagavad Gita* – the great sacred classic of India – for enlightenment on this subject. Here we find a dramatic situation which is wholly analogous to the present condition of man. Then, as in our time, a dreadful war – as related to the *Mahabharata* -- was destroying the old order with all its vices and virtues. Both individuals and nations had come to the place where all the intellectual, moral and emotional values had collapsed, leaving man in a state of spiritual bankruptcy and utter bewilderment. The man of action – Arjuna – was asking himself, even as we are asking ourselves today, whether bloodshed ever achieved anything of lasting worth. Did it not perhaps merely help to keep the balance of power in the hands of one group of people or nations rather than in another? With Arjuna, however, directing the battle behind the scenes, was the beloved friend and counselor, Krishna, for whom Arjuna had the deepest love and respect. In his moment of utter frustration, hopelessness and doubt of all his old values, he turns to his wise friend and guide, asking him for a clear rule of conduct by which he may confidently walk.

This man Arjuna is the representative man of his age who has – like modern man – exiled God and spirituality in favor of ethical, social and humanitarian ideals and practical reforms. Both individually and collectively this man of the *Gita* and of today has reached the moment of his soul's greatest need – when he must face his own inadequacy. Up to this time, Krishna's help has been largely that of spurring his friend on to disinterested action in defending his position against the opposing foe; the outer foe who is, of course' but the objectification of the inner. But now Arjuna – having reached the end of his own egoistic action – turns to Krishna in despair, pleading for his help. He begins to suspect that this beloved comrade is more than human friend, more than mere man. He implores him to show him his true form, his real nature. And because the soul of Arjuna – almost like that of modern man – has been sufficiently conditioned by suffering; because his egoistic self-sufficiency has been punctured, Krishna consents to satisfy the soul's urgent desire. He reveals himself in his aspect of universal Saviour or Avatar, and proceeds now to guide Arjuna to the higher state of consciousness for which he knows him to be ready.

In the person of Krishna, we find one in whom the eternal divine nature is fully conscious; one, therefore, who is fully aware of his *destiny* as the spiritual leader of mankind and in that consciousness, directs the destinies of men and nations. In his own right as the incarnate God for the whole of humanity – not merely for a restricted group of close disciples – he lifts the consciousness of the entire created world, for even the animals respond to the magic of his divine flute -- the symbol of the irresistible drawing power of God in the soul. Krishna also recognizes that his role of guide and awakener of the whole of life is one which he has always, since the dawn of humanity, fulfilled.

Of this same consciousness, Baba has given countless indications both in his dealing with people and by his own admission. Once, when a questioner asked him how he knew that he was the Christ, he replied: "I knew it before anything was," which is perhaps another way of saying:

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“Before Abraham was, I am;” or, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

In the instruction which Krishna gives to his disciple Arjuna, we find basically the same technique of life which Baba today gives to his twentieth-century disciples. At some stage of their inner unfoldment he gives them a glimpse of his true nature and mission, and then encourages them to surrender themselves wholly to his will – his guidance. He teaches them how to live in the world, yet not be of it; how to perform all action without regard for the fruits, by thinking of themselves as channels for the action of the Divine Being within. He gives them a new Law of Life by which action may be performed free of bondage yet powerful enough to achieve the will of God or the Avatar. He lifts them above the plane of the opposites, with its endless conflicts and perplexities, into the center of true knowledge, peace and joy – the Divine Self. Also like Krishna, Baba first leads the disciple as the beloved friend, father, comrade. Then, when the time is ripe, he reveals himself as the soul's Saviour, the immortal Being who lives in the heart of every man, while at the same time he takes form as the human Avatar. With Krishna, Baba says: “Seek refuge in me, for you are very dear to me. I will release you from all sin. Do not grieve; do not worry.”

Surely today as in that far-off time of Krishna, we have reached an impasse in man's development. Of himself alone, he seems powerless even to protect his physical existence. This is the psychological moment when man should – and indeed must – turn once again toward God for help. To the least mystical person, it should be apparent – as it was to the pragmatist, Arjuna – that unless some divine means is found to enable man to transcend his greed, selfishness and fear, this civilization will rapidly retrogress to the jungle state of consciousness, or be totally destroyed by the pressure of a button in the hands of a man or nation gone berserk. War has obviously not taught us the lesson that mankind is *One*. War can never teach that lesson. Only as individuals become aware of the basic unity of all life will nations be

able to cooperate in a spirit of universal brotherhood and assure the further spiritual progress of mankind.

Clearly, such a development in man's consciousness presupposes divine intervention of some sort. Not by intellectual means, not by *conscious willing*, can man learn to love his fellow-man regardless of color, creed or nationality. For this, the constructive forces of the unconscious must be released. Fortunately for humanity there is, in the form of Meher Baba, a Divine Force who has the power to arouse these latent powers of Light; and what is more important, who has the *authority* to use that power, as the testimony of many advanced souls and saints has corroborated in this, his life story. Only the Leader – the Avatar – knows when the God-force shall speak his word of power and effect for man his gravely needed spiritual awakening. We can, however, as Baba tells us, speed its coming by surrendering ourselves wholly to the will of God, with the recognition that only divine aid will save mankind from total destruction. When humanity has come to the end of its own resources, at the moment of its greatest need, then, Baba says, he will initiate his public work through the breaking of his silence.

WEARING DOWN THE EGO

This long silence – now in its twenty-second year – has been an enigma to many people and his continual postponement of breaking it has proved a stumbling block to many others. So many times has he set the date for his speaking and then apparently changed his mind. The skeptical person assumes that Baba has lost his power of speech, or that he is using his silence for a novel publicity stunt. Once, in India, when I spoke to him about it, he said that from the outset, he knew, of course, precisely how long he would remain silent – and he knew therefore that it would run into many years. Had he told his disciples in the early days how long it would be and how long, therefore, would be their period of probation (since their full-fledged discipleship depended upon his speaking) they would in many cases have lost heart, become too discouraged. So, like

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a wise father, he led them on year by year, developing their capacity for patient waiting, by promising them their release in but a fragment of the time he knew his silence would have to last.

Though Baba's silence serves many purposes which lie beyond my present comprehension, one of them may be found in its effect upon the disciples whom he is training to take their places as spiritual leaders in the world of tomorrow. One of the most outstanding features of Baba's technique with his disciples is the means he uses to develop their capacity to endure tension and to cultivate patience. Almost everything he does in relation to his Circle in some way contributes to these basic requirements for psychological health and maturity.

He first holds before one a goal seemingly impossible to attain – certainly impossible by one's own unaided efforts. Then he promises aid but only at some hypothetical date when he breaks his silence. When we consider the dynamic power which he has of quickening consciousness and of intensifying longing for the infinite, and at the same time realize how he deliberately withholds that desirable goal, tantalizingly just beyond one's reach . . . always with the promise of 'tomorrow, next week, next year,' it becomes clear how almost unbearable becomes the tension of waiting. Many people have, of course, refused to play his game by reacting negatively against him and by turning away. Their action is understandable. But there is also the constructive way of viewing this puzzling procedure.

I have come to realize that through his unique strategy, Baba *wears down the disciples' ego*. At first the disciple rebels against the prolonged delay in reaching his lofty goal. In his innermost self he knows himself unfitted, unready at the time for such a momentous step. But his accentuated desire fosters in him the belief that anything is possible. And Baba deliberately encourages this reaching for the stars. But as the years pass and Baba continues his silence while the disciple continues to wait, little by little the longing becomes cooled and latent, the ego becomes less demanding, more compliant with the exigencies of the mo-

ment, more surrendered to the Master's will. In this way the disciple becomes more mature, riper for whatever unfoldment his soul is ready. As Dr.Fritz Kunkel says in *In Search of Maturity*: "The most destructive feature of ego – centricity is its rebellion against time. Complying with time means growing older and more mature, slowly and patiently. It requires creativeness, or at least flexibility."

LETTING GO

As the disciple becomes more mature, more fluid; as he learns to wait patiently but without any diminution of his spirit's intensity, he finally reaches the place where he lets go – abandons himself utterly to the will of god or the Master. His intensity of spirit is now turned to the consideration of the present moment. He accepts himself as he is now; he becomes aware of the wonderful potentialities of the present and ceases to focus his attention solely upon the future. The sugar-plum which Baba has been dangling before his eyes no longer makes his mouth water with desire. He is too intent upon finding spiritual meaning and value *now*. The task of assimilating the profound realizations which the Master has stirred in him becomes an ever-present adventure of momentous importance. Gradually his life becomes more deeply integrated, more consciously attuned to the heart and mind of the Master.

Since writing the above I have found in some of Baba's recently received *Discourses* confirmation of this intuition that, for a time, he deliberately fosters the attitude of mind which he would ultimately have the disciple transcend. In his article, *The Infinity of Truth*, he says: "If Truth were to be found only in the future and not in the past or present, it would not be infinite; it would automatically be limited as an event which has its origin in time. All that is inherent in life is deprived of its intrinsic significance if the present is regarded as merely a stepping-stone to some far-off attainment. This is definitely a false point of view . . . It is not right to deprive the present of all importance by subordinating it to an end in the future. It is only through a clear and tranquil mind that the true nature of spiritual infinity is understood to be something not to be

attained in the future, but as that which already has been, is and ever will be an eternal self-fulfilment. When every moment is rich with eternal significance, there is neither the tenacious clinging to the dead past, nor an expectant yearning for the future, but an integrated living in the Eternal Now."

It has been my experience with the Master that in this dual intensification of feeling – tremendous yearning for God on the one hand and a kind of divine despair on the other – he creates in one a longing so acute, so insupportable, that one is finally *compelled* to 'let go'. To the degree that we are able to do this, without any egoistic thought intruding, we are aware of Him – of Reality – here and now; not in some far-off day. Even if this blessed moment of clarified awareness is not the ultimate one, and we find ourselves again constrained to 'let go' more spontaneously, we now find joy and interest in the process of stripping off the veils of illusion which cloud our apprehension of Truth.

Should Baba *tell* his disciples this fundamental fact, before they have experienced it for themselves, he would belie his role as a supreme psychologist. He knows that a condition must be created in the depths of man's soul that will cause his whole being – both conscious and unconscious levels of his mind, the full battery of his emotional nature – to revolt against all self-imposed limitations, and then to let go and let God take over. Merely to understand this truth intellectually would, at best, effect but a temporary and partial release. Only a profound *need* can give one the necessary incentive to face and accept oneself as one *now* is, unadorned, unashamed. This need Baba certainly creates. His teaching or way of life is basically the same as the teaching of Zen Buddhism – as it is essentially the same with all true teaching, whatever the religious approach to God. Confirmation of this is found in Alan Watt's *The Meaning of Happiness* in which he describes the essence of Zen as: "Total acceptance, which seems to be a response to bondage, is actually a key to freedom, for when you accept what you are now, you become free to be what you are

now; and this is why the fool becomes a sage when he lets himself be free to be a fool.”

MASTER PSYCHO-THERAPIST

Someone has recently said that the new Messiah, when he comes, will have to be a master psychologist; and those who know him best would certainly place Baba in this category. We who have been closely associated with him recognize that his technique with souls includes the best which psycho-therapy has to offer, but also that it goes far beyond it. He does not, for example, need to know a person's dreams to become acquainted with the state of the dreamer's Unconscious. Nor does Baba need recourse to any technique of 'free association' to discover the stumbling blocks on the disciple's road to a free and more abundant life. With his supra-normal insight he sees not only what in this life has bound the individual soul, but what in past lives has contributed to his present degree of unfoldment or retardment. Moreover, he avoids the pitfall which besets many analysts – of knowing better how to break down the personality than to release the soul – for at each stage on the way to individuation Baba both integrates the true individuality and destroys the egoistic factors which blind the soul to its *real* nature. With consummate skill he takes one to the breaking point, but never a hair's breadth beyond.

“Modern psychology,” writes Baba, “has done much to reveal the sources of conflict; but on the whole it has yet to discover the methods of awakening inspiration or supplying the mind and heart with something dynamic which makes life worth living. This indeed is the creative task before the saviours of humanity.”

Unequivocally he states that the cause of man's suffering and unhappiness is his egoistic outlook upon life. This must, therefore, be dissolved. “Man will again and again be dislodged from his illusory shelters by fresh and irresistible waves of life; and he will invite upon himself fresh forms of suffering by seeking to protect his separative existence through escape. But life cannot be permanently imprisoned within the cage of the ego; it must, at some time, aspire

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toward the Truth. In the ripeness of evolution the momentous discovery is made that life cannot be understood and lived fully as long as it is made to move around the pivot of the ego. Man is, therefore, driven by the logic of his own experience to find the *true* centre of experience and reorganize his life on the basis of the Truth which he discovers there.”

He points the way to the solution in these words: “If consciousness is to be emancipated from its limitations and made to serve the original purpose for which it came into existence – to realize God – it must draw its directive momentum, not from the ego, but from some other principle. The ego as a nucleus of integration must be renounced and a new centre found.”

In the same sense in which Jesus said: ‘I am the Way,’ Baba says that the Perfect Master – whose consciousness is one with God-becomes the new centre of integration for the disciple who gives him his whole-hearted allegiance. Since the Master is a living affirmation of the unity of all life, allegiance to him gradually dissolves the separative propensities of the ego. Baba makes it clear that in surrendering to the Master the disciple surrenders to the embodiment of *Infinite and Universal Truth, not to another limited, finite ego*. The disciple’s consciousness, therefore, is freed from its bondage of ignorance, instead of being further bound, as would be the case if he became identified with another *finite mind*.

“When the ego disappears, there arises the knowledge of the True Self; one’s consciousness is then that of the eternal and infinite ‘I am,’ in which there is no separateness, and which includes all life.”

Baba is, however, fully aware of the deep-rooted difficulties attendant upon this renunciation of the ego as the centre of life and action. By some means the aspirant must find a way to act without any sense of “I do this,” or “I do that.” Yet he must also avoid the extreme of utter passivity. A way must be found by which he may carry on a life of creative action, yet not be caught up in the bonds of the ego-life. To avoid inaction on the one hand and the

pride of action on the other, Baba says that it is necessary for the spiritual aspirant to construct a *provisional and working ego which will be entirely subservient to the Master*.

“Before beginning anything, the aspirant should think that it is not *he* who is doing it, but the *Master* who is working through him; and when the work is finished he should not claim or enjoy the fruits of the activity, but relinquish them by offering them to the Master. By training his mind in this spirit, the aspirant creates a new ego, which, though *provisional*, imparts the feeling of confidence and enthusiasm and possesses the motive-power which true action must express. Since, however, this ego derives its life and being from the Master who represents infinite freedom, it is harmless and can, when the right moment comes, be discarded like a garment. The construction of such an ego – which is entirely subject to the Master – is indispensable in the dynamics of spiritual advancement.”

Such merging of the disciple with the Master should not be confused with the idolatry which often arises in relationships where one party seems to embody many of the other’s unconscious and therefore unexpressed qualities. These ‘projections,’ though for a time they may induce a temporary expansion of consciousness, are not conducive to freeing the person from his limited ego-life. That Baba is fully aware of this danger of becoming identified with a secondary finite centre is revealed in his words: “When we become identified with a narrow group or section of life, or with some limited ideal or person, we do not experience a real merging of the separative self, but only a *pseudo* merging. The real merging of the limited self in the ocean of universal life involves complete surrender of all separate existence in *all* its forms . . . The final and complete surrender to the Master is identical with the relinquishment of all segregated consciousness and leads inevitably to the attainment of Truth, which is the ultimate goal of all spiritual life.”

For those whose need compels them to find the true centre of integration in themselves, this linking of their consciousness with that of the Master provides the swiftest

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and surest means towards their goal. This should not be misinterpreted to mean that such a devotee makes no effort on his own part. It is true that he does not strive for any specific psychic attainment or degree of initiation such as occult teaching offers to its students. He does, however, seek constantly in his meditations and daily life to become more deeply attuned to his Master's consciousness – that central Sun of divine love, whose radiant warmth melts the frozen shell of all egocentric consciousness.

The disciple's attitude toward his Master is not one of unconscious projection but *conscious introversion*. The saintly woman Rabia – of Sufi fame – has said that if God shall turn toward us, we will turn toward him. Thus, the disciple's turning inward is in reality the inner activity of the Master, which is like a mighty undertow of the Spirit drawing the disciple's consciousness into the pivotal point of his being.

Baba's method of dealing with the well-known inferiority and superiority complexes, shows how almost simultaneously he destroys the false personality and rebuilds the true nature of the disciple. In order to bring about a rapid dissolution of the two chief ego-masks—inferiority and superiority – the Master deliberately stirs both of these complexes alternately. If the disciple is on the verge of losing heart and giving up the spiritual search, he may arouse in him deep, self-confidence. If he is on the verge of being unduly egoistic, Baba may break through this façade by creating situations in which the disciple is compelled to accept and recognize his own incapacity or futility. Thus the Master wields his influence over the disciple to expedite the stages through which the melting ego must pass before its final disintegration. Nor does Baba exclude the spiritual ego from the need for dissolution. “When the ego is overpowered by a flood of spiritual notions and actions, it is just as binding as the more crude ego which makes no lofty spiritual pretensions.”

SPIRITUAL DYNAMITE

There are those who say that Baba is dangerous, and they are right. He is spiritual dynamite in the soul of any-

one who comes under his influence. He catapults him out of his protective shell; he demolishes carefully erected intrenchments of pride and self-complacency; he explodes pet prejudices and opinions; he shocks one out of one's virtues just as surely as he reveals one's innermost sins; not a comfortable procedure by any means, but one which ultimately lifts the personality from its self-imposed serfdom into the untrammelled life of the heaven-born. In the Master's words: "You, yourself, are the cause of your separation from the Beloved. Annihilate what is *called* your 'self' and you will thereby gain union with Him – the *true* Self."

Illustrative of the loose-rope method which he advocates for his followers was his reply to a questioner who thought that belief was something which could be coerced: "Always do what you feel like doing; if today you feel like believing in me – in God -- do so; and if tomorrow you feel the reverse – don't believe."

To the critic who passes judgment upon the unconventional outlook and life of the truly great Teachers who cut through the enclosure of man's artificial standards of conduct he says:

"Many conventions express and embody illusory values, since they have come into existence as a result of the working of the mass mind which is spiritually ignorant . . . The freedom from convention which often appears in the life of the spiritual aspirant or Master, is due, not to any willful rebellion against conventional standards or superficial approach to life, but to the exercise of discriminating thought. Those who would transcend the level of conformity to an external code of morals and conduct and experience the inner world of Reality must develop the capacity to distinguish between false and true values, irrespective of man-made conventions. Though such intelligent discrimination is of utmost importance, the newly-perceived values become fruitful only when they are lived out in daily, practical life."

They must be acted upon – made creative. It is not theory but practice which counts in the spiritual life.

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Such precepts and practice would naturally subject Baba to the criticism that he and his teaching are dangerous. "The deeper secrets of the spiritual life," he declares, "are unveiled to those who take *risks* and who make bold experiments with life. They are not intended for the weak-kneed who seek guarantees for every step. He, who, from the shore, speculates about the ocean, shall know only its surface; if he would know the depths of the ocean, he must be willing to *plunge into it*."

If this is dangerous, it is also profound wisdom and leads to that state of consciousness in which the lover loses himself in the being of the Beloved and knows that he is one with the infinite.

THE KEY

It is this transcendent life which Baba would share with mankind when it is ready to receive it.

"Love," he writes, "holds the key to all problems, in as much as under the Law of Love the Infinite is realized completely for all time, in every walk of life – in science, art, religion or beauty."

He adds that this down-pouring of Eternal Love will be released upon humanity when it reaches the spiritual turning point. Everyone – regardless of his former outlook – will participate in the new life-current. Even materialistic people will be affected by the profound stirring of consciousness which will then take place. He recommends, however, as a wise preparation to those living in the world and sharing the worldly viewpoint, that they attend to their worldly life and duties as usual, but at certain times each day they should long for something beyond material life. This will gradually detach them from dependence upon material things and prepare them to receive the higher vibration of Divine Love.

To those for whom some form of art is their 'yoga,' Baba explains that art is one of the great avenues through which the soul expresses itself and inspires others. But to express art clearly, one must have his deeper emotions thoroughly released. "Love your art, and that art will

open for you the Inner Life. When you paint, for example, you forget everything except your painting. When you are keenly concentrated upon it, you are lost in it; and when you are lost in it, your ego diminishes, Love Infinite appears; and when such Love is experienced God is attained. So you see how art can lead one to find the Infinite.”

The greatest mystics of all time have been in complete accord with the viewpoint that through Love God is most readily and perfectly known. In our own time and country, William Jefferys, a great mystic, now on the ‘other side,’ writes: “In the final step which is Union, God reveals himself in His ultimate nature to those who love Him; and God is only completely known in His supreme character – Love.”

In his *When Words Become Life*, he also states: “Furthermore, every step, every act, every moment of fellowship between one person and another in any field of life, brings nearer the day when the whole race will know God as He is. We talk a lot about creeds and life. There is an underlying unity in which one may say that *all creeds will find their union at last in Living Love*. It is, as St.Paul says, the thing which will last forever.”

CORE OF BABA’S TEACHING

To bring about such a living syntheses of all religions is Baba’s avowed purpose. He does not seek to convert mankind to a new religion. He does, however, intend to quicken in man the experience of Reality which is the basis of all true religion. He sums up briefly his purpose in these words: “I shall bring together all religions and cults like beads on one string, and revitalize them for individual and collective needs.”

That it is the *essence* of religion and not the crystalized form which he will revivify is exemplified by his statement that it is time that religion goes and God comes. Apparently religion is to transcend its spirit of exclusiveness, even as races and nations will.

Once, when asked whether he believed that Jesus, the Christ, was the one and only unique prophet, Baba replied:

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“Unique indeed, from the standpoint of his state of consciousness. But not the only one. Each religion claims this for its leader. But making such claims does not help you to know Christ. To *know* Him, one has to *live His life*. *All are Christ, but very few can become Jesus.*”

The above statement contains the core of Baba’s teaching, and the essence of his life. He comes to make man *aware* of his Christhood. He comes to free man from his bondage to self and to lift him to a higher plane of being. He comes to demonstrate anew God’s love for his children by making himself the Living Way. For those who have the spiritual capacity to recognize him – for spiritual perfection can only be spiritually discerned – he represents the highest each one is capable of realizing.

The Eternal Christ comes to us throughout the ages as the living embodiment of the personal aspect of God, and it is with this human manifestation of God that we must make contact if we would enter fully into his impersonal and universal aspect. Something of this thought must have been in Jesus mind when he asked: “How can you love the Father whom you have *not* seen, if you cannot love me whom you *have* seen?”

This Perfect One incarnated originally in the primitive days of man’s earth life, and will continue to incarnate so long as the evolutionary process requires periodical quickening of consciousness through the physical presence on earth of the Avatar. This One manifests each time in a wider synthesis of perfection; always the same supreme Master of his age; always the same divine awakener of souls. What else could Jesus, himself, have meant, when he said that he would ‘come again’?

There are those who say that he did not mean that he would come again in a physical body, but merely in the hearts of men. But how shall those hearts be awakened to receive his exquisite vibration unless he comes again in *person* to recharge the rundown battery of human consciousness? Can we honestly say that the Church – his supposed channel – is making the hearts of men more selfless, purer, more filled with the love of God and his creatures?

Are greed, the lust for power, the warfare between groups and nations evidences of his sublime spirit? Have the heads of the Church been able to turn the tide of the recent devastating holocaust of self-destruction? Even the most purblind among us will recognize that today many needs desperately a great spiritual catalyst if he is to be saved from his own folly and ignorance.

SPIRITUAL POWER-HOUSE

Perhaps the most striking indication of Baba's power to change the consciousness of mankind is revealed by those who have not yet had the opportunity of meeting him in the flesh, but whose lives have been transformed by his quickening spirit. Of the many stories which might be told of his influence upon those who have not met him outwardly, few better illustrate the potency of his appeal than the experience of a violinist in one of America's most outstanding symphony orchestras.

A friend, Frederick, who himself had been deeply stirred by inner contact with Baba, was sitting on the beach at Carmel, California, one brilliant afternoon, at sundown. Though profoundly moved by the glory of the sunset and wishing only to merge in its beauty, he felt strongly impelled to speak to a man who sat near him on the sand.

As they talked, Frederick discovered that the man was under a severe mental and emotional strain, the exact nature of which he did not disclose. Perhaps, thought Frederick, a booklet which he carried in his pocket – *Silent Revelations of Meher Baba* – would meet the man's need. Though reluctant to relinquish it, he offered it to him as they parted.

They were to meet the next afternoon at the same place but when the hour arrived the man was nowhere to be seen. Nor was he at the Carmel address which he had left with Frederick. My friend was puzzled and determined to look him up in Los Angeles when he returned there the following week.

By happy coincidence the orchestra, in which the man was a violinist, was giving a performance the same evening

that Frederick arrived in town. Purchasing two tickets he and a friend found their way into front balcony seats. During a particular number the concert-master arose to play a solo part. It was the man from Carmel and he played as one aflame with inspiration. The house burst into a torrent of applause as the man finished. Frederic wondered at the change from the desperately crushed individual who had talked with him at the seaside to this dynamic, creative artist.

When, two days later, they had dinner together, the man told him this story: Though by virtue of his skill and artistry he had earned for himself the place of first violinist in this great orchestra, it had been some years since the conductor had commended him, as he did others, for any of his performances. The man knew that some vital spark was missing and he was at a loss to know how he could generate it. He had been brooding over it for months, until that day on the beach at Carmel he had come to the breaking point. Suicide was the only way out for him, he had decided. But that evening after his encounter with Frederick, he opened Baba's little book with the photograph of the Master on the frontispiece. In a flash a current of light seemed to penetrate his innermost being. He was instantly healed of his desperate resolution and the next morning returned to the city to resume practice with the orchestra. The solo part which had been assigned to him – and which had precipitated the crisis – he now knew that somehow he would perform creditably. Little did he realize, however, that God would take over and play through him. He states that he was aware continually of the sustaining power of the Master during the practice days which followed; and when he arose to play his solo at the concert, he could see nothing but Baba's luminous face before his eyes. His whole being seemed illumined by the Master's consciousness. A well-spring of emotion and power, such as he had never before experienced, was released in him and poured out through his sensitive fingers and through his equally sensitive Stradivarius in such richness of tone and depth of feeling that it penetrated to the

heart of every one of his listeners, judging from their tremendous, spontaneous ovation.

After the concert the conductor looked at him in puzzled wonderment as he heartily commended him for his superlative performance. But the man was still looking into Baba's eyes; feeling the embrace of his presence. He needed now no other assurance.

PRODIGAL'S RETURN

In attempting to review Baba's redeeming activity in my own life, I find that it falls into two main categories; a cleansing, purging process which has entailed ruthless self-facing and profound changes in mind and body; and a gradual release from constricting habits of thought and emotion, until now a wide-spreading clarity and peace permeate my consciousness. For a woman who had loved much, whose emotional nature largely controlled her life, to find herself now free of that emotional bondage, yet loving more deeply, more honestly, is an achievement possible only under the guidance of a supreme Master of the soul.

If, in addition, such a woman has, through the Master's grace, been guided out of weakness into strength, out of timidity and self-consciousness into God-assurance and greater power of life-expression, then she knows how merciful has been the Master's activity in her life. If she has become aware of blinding veils being lifted in her consciousness, of joy which is unmarred by the pin-pricks of daily life, of love which is independent of persons, flooding her soul, then she knows even more deeply how true has been her life long intuition that it was her destiny to meet again the Christ in the flesh and to become his disciple.

In earlier days, when my life was passing through a maze of kaleidoscopic experiences, so varied, rapid and apparently unrelated, I found it impossible to discover any dominant pattern in it. Again and again the pendulum swung from the sun-lit mountain-top to the darkest valley; both experiences being apparently beyond my conscious control. With Baba's coming, however, consciousness tended more and more to converge toward the mid-point of

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balance. No longer is life lived at the extremes, with transports of joy today and chasms of anguish tomorrow. What formerly seemed like a crazy piece of patchwork is now revealed to me as a life-pattern of tremendous contrasts, held together by the cohesive power of the Master, who, long years before I met him outwardly, had been guiding my life and destiny behind the scenes. I am inwardly aware that the supernal glimpses of Reality, which came to me from time to time, were gifts from the Altar-room of the Master's consciousness, by which my soul was wooed to return Homeward.

Steadily, surely the Divine Magnet has been drawing me closer to himself in order that he may use me in this life and throughout Eternity for his own ends. Through dark days and light, through weakness and strength, through imperfect forms of love and through divine yearning, he has guided my footsteps lovingly, strongly, patiently, until now my pathway to his heart is clear of rubble and waste.

William Blake sums up in a few lines what I have come to regard as the only possible attitude of the disciple toward the redemptive work which the Master effects in him:

“I will go down to annihilation and death
Lest the last trump sound and find me unannihilate
And I be given unto the judgement of mine own soul.”

All souls, whether they are conscious of it or not are seeking God; to aid them in their search the Master Baba now comes as the Perfect Manifestation of that love and wisdom for which the human soul yearns. His words illumine the way:

“The sojourn of the soul is a thrilling divine romance in which the lover – who in the beginning is conscious of nothing but emptiness, frustration, superficiality and the abrasive chains of bondage – gradually attains an increasingly fuller and freer expression of love. Ultimately, his separate self disappears as it merges into the Divine Beloved. In this unity of the lover and the Beloved is realized the supreme and eternal fact of God as Infinite Love.”

FINIS