

INTRODUCTION

The manuscript that this book brings to publication represents a unique and remarkable event. The 39 handwritten pages which comprise its main text are an exposition on ultimate Reality in the handwriting of the very personification of that Reality — the Avatar of the age, Meher Baba.

Words that proceed from the source of truth carry an impact that words of the intellect never can: revelations of the Avatar are unlike the inspired pronouncements of philosophers and poets. What is the meaning of “Avatar”? As Meher Baba explained, “Avatar” means the descent of God into human form. When God becomes man as Avatar, Christ, Rasool, He truly *becomes* man in the fullest sense of the word, taking upon Himself all the limitations of the human mind and body while at the same time experiencing the Knowledge, Power, and Bliss of God. The Avatar is one with God and simultaneously one with everyone. In this way He spans the gap between the Real and the illusory, helping to raise the level of consciousness of His entire creation. He is the Soul of souls; yet it is His all-embracing love and the simplicity, humility, and humor of the divine life He leads that makes His Advent, time and again, so adorable to humanity and draws the countless millions to follow Him in the centuries after He has passed away. An Urdu poet Kamar has said of the Eternal Beloved’s charm and magnetism: “*Tayraa husna hai tayri saadgi, tayri saadgi tayraa husna hai,*” which translates: “Your beauty is Your simplicity, and Your simplicity is Your beauty.”

So these 39 pages in the Avatar’s hand do more than record words and ideas. They register a process in which God, who is beyond understanding, brings forth an image of the unfathomable Truth for the limited human mind. We can never grasp the true significance of the Author of creation writing as human author, or the universal work that He accomplishes in doing so. But what we *can* see in these pencilled lines is a trace of that process. Much of the beauty of this manuscript lies in its handwritten expression, which brings a sense of closeness to Him as a man, and through this,

to His immediate, direct experience of what He is writing about. Man amidst human limitations, Meher Baba writes as the One who *knows*.

In reading this facsimile, we are carried back in time (as it were) into the presence of Meher Baba Himself in the mid-1920s, still in the full fire of His youth, impatient with the cramping conventions of language and style and grammar, expostulating in swift, bold strokes of the pencil on the theme of one God in Ignorance and Knowledge, Darkness and Light. Sometimes He crosses out a sentence or misspells a word, sometimes He goes back to insert phrases between lines; at one juncture He even appears to have jotted down a note, possibly for future reference, and then to have scored it out again. Writing predominantly in English, He interjects a Gujarati word or expression when no English word suits and then suddenly switches to Gujarati for several pages; He quotes a Hindi quatrain of Kabir but writes it not in the Hindi script (the Devanagiri) but in the Gujarati script. Sometimes He inserts diagrams and expresses relations through equations and formulas, as if summoning the modern language of logic and mathematics to the exposition of an ancient spiritual theorem — that “God = the ‘Is,’ and the illusion of creation = the ‘is not.’” In the heat and intensity of these handwritten pages, we can almost imagine the Infinite Intelligence fashioning a verbal likeness of Itself in the crucible of time, space, and the workings of a human mind.

In this way the manuscript gives a new picture of Him, who is both limited and limitless, bound and free. The eager energy, naturalness, and concentrated focus of the writing are the outflow of the divine personality as a writer, where words — now streaming freely, now pausing in reflection, now checking and circling back upon themselves — give voice to a Truth that ultimately defies description. Thus the writing process, like other activities, is brought into the compass of the Avatar’s work. For nothing that is human is strange to God. As Meher Baba has said, true spirituality, based on the Everything, embraces every aspect of the Nothing.

The vision of Reality that *In God’s Hand* sets forth is, in essence, the same as that which underlies the *Discourses*, *God Speaks*, and other books and messages which Meher Baba composed and that were published in later years. Those subsequent works were addressed to a wider, broad-based following that included Westerners as well as Easterners, neophytes to spirituality along with advanced seekers. Accordingly, in formulating these later explanations, Meher Baba adjusted His terminology and took pains to bring out the consistencies underlying seeming paradoxes. *In God’s Hand*, by contrast, appears to have been written without regard to the constraints of audience. For this reason it sometimes seems to be obscure and esoteric. Yet when one comes to grasp the language that Meher Baba is using, the theme which He is developing emerges with great power and clarity.

The subject of this book is nothing less than the ultimate question of metaphysics: what is? And what is the relation between the Real and the apparent — God

and the creation? Meher Baba's explanation hinges on the difference and interrelations between four states of God — as Natural Light (or Self), as Natural Darkness (Spirit), as unnatural darkness (mind), and as unnatural light (body). These four states are encompassed in the game of consciousness, which lies latent in sound sleep, dreams in both ordinary human dreaming and in the divine dream of the planes, and comes to full wakefulness in ordinary human awareness as well as in the Divine Awakening of God-Realization. What God in the states of ignorance (unnatural darkness and unnatural light) must bring to pass is the complete cessation of all activities of the mind. Though yogis try to accomplish this through various techniques of concentration, Meher Baba explains that this method runs up against almost insurmountable difficulties. However, the God-Realized Perfect Master ("Salik Guru") can silence the mind in an instant. When the mind is thus eternally silenced, the Infinite Ego of God experiences the Sound-Sleep-in-Awake state; the link between consciousness and the mind (unnatural darkness) is broken; the Spirit sees the Self; and the Goal of existence — to experience God-Realization — is attained.

This is the theme, ancient but contemporary, regarding which the Avatar pencilled these notes on inexpensive notebook paper, sometime in the opening years of His Advent. Though many clarifications and further illuminations followed in later decades, in the end, all that the mind really needs to understand is contained here. Truly, these 39 pages speak volumes.

Concerning the actual manuscript and its history, little is known with certainty. The title page identifies it as having been written "in Baba's own hand, probably in 1925." The handwriting of this title page is that of Ramjoo Abdulla, one of Meher Baba's close disciples from the 1920s. After commencing His long silence on July 10th, 1925, for a year and a half Meher Baba communicated primarily through writing with chalk on slates. It was during this period that, with His own hand, He wrote "The Book," which Baba later referred to as His most important and comprehensive exposition on spirituality. On January 1st, 1927, however, He gave up writing altogether (except for signing His name, which He resumed after an interlude of three years); and for the last 42 years of His life He expressed Himself either by means of an alphabet board or through hand gestures. These 39 handwritten pages, therefore, capture the concrete image of one of His human activities that was rarely in evidence after 1927.

The manuscript was kept for a number of years by Mani S. Irani, Meher Baba's sister, among her personal papers. We have no sure information as to how, from where, or through whom it came into her hands, although it is possible that Ramjoo himself, when he gave his diaries to Meher Baba in Meherazad in the 1960s, delivered these handwritten pages at the same time, and that Baba then entrusted them to Mani. In any event, it has recently been discovered that certain portions of this text have been incorporated, sometimes verbatim and sometimes in paraphrase, into a

much larger manuscript on “Infinite Intelligence” that is not in Meher Baba’s handwriting but that presumably dates from the same period in His life and was based on His explanations. This larger manuscript itself bears an interesting relationship to Bhau Kalchuri’s *The Nothing and the Everything*, which develops upon points which Baba dictated to Bhau in 1967-68 during a period of intense seclusion. At that time Baba told the mandali that what He had given to Bhau constituted 10 percent of what He had Himself written in “The Book” forty years earlier. In 1998, when the manuscript on “Infinite Intelligence” from the 1920s came to light, Bhau went through it and immediately felt that it contained a full explanation of the points given by Baba to him. It appears, then, that some of the same contents on the subject of Infinite Intelligence were given by Baba in the 1920s and again in the late 1960s, that is, in the opening and final years of His Advent.

Many lovers of Meher Baba and students of His work naturally will want to see for themselves the Avatar’s own handiwork in the 39-page manuscript. To make this experience available to a wide public, the Avatar Meher Baba P.P.C. Trust under the chairmanship of Bhau Kalchuri has prepared this facsimile edition for publication. Every effort has been made to reproduce the original manuscript as far as practicable, in page size, color of the pencil graphite, color of the notebook sheets, and other particulars. The original 39 pages, now fragile and yellowing with age, are being housed in the Trust’s archive collection.

No doubt this unique book will elicit diverse responses. Among those readers drawn into its spell, some will be intrigued by the philosophy and metaphysics, others by the sheer visual impact of the God-Man’s own handwriting, still others by the feeling of His intimate presence that the manuscript conveys. These are all imprints of His humanity that lead us closer to a glimpse of the true humility and sheer loveliness of the human face of God.

Of this One who is the Beloved of all mankind, the celebrated Urdu poet Seemab — one of Meher Baba’s own favorite poets — has written:

*Manzil milee, muraad milee, muduaa milaa,
sab kuch mujhay milaa, jo tayraa nakshay paa milaa.*

A free rendering of these beautiful lines reads:

I reached the destination, won all that my heart longed for,
and attained the object of my desire;
verily, I achieved all there was to be achieved,
when I found Your footprint!

— the editors