

PERFECT MASTERS

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SRI SAI SAMAJ

120-B, RASH BEHARI AVENUE,

CALCUTTA-29

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by

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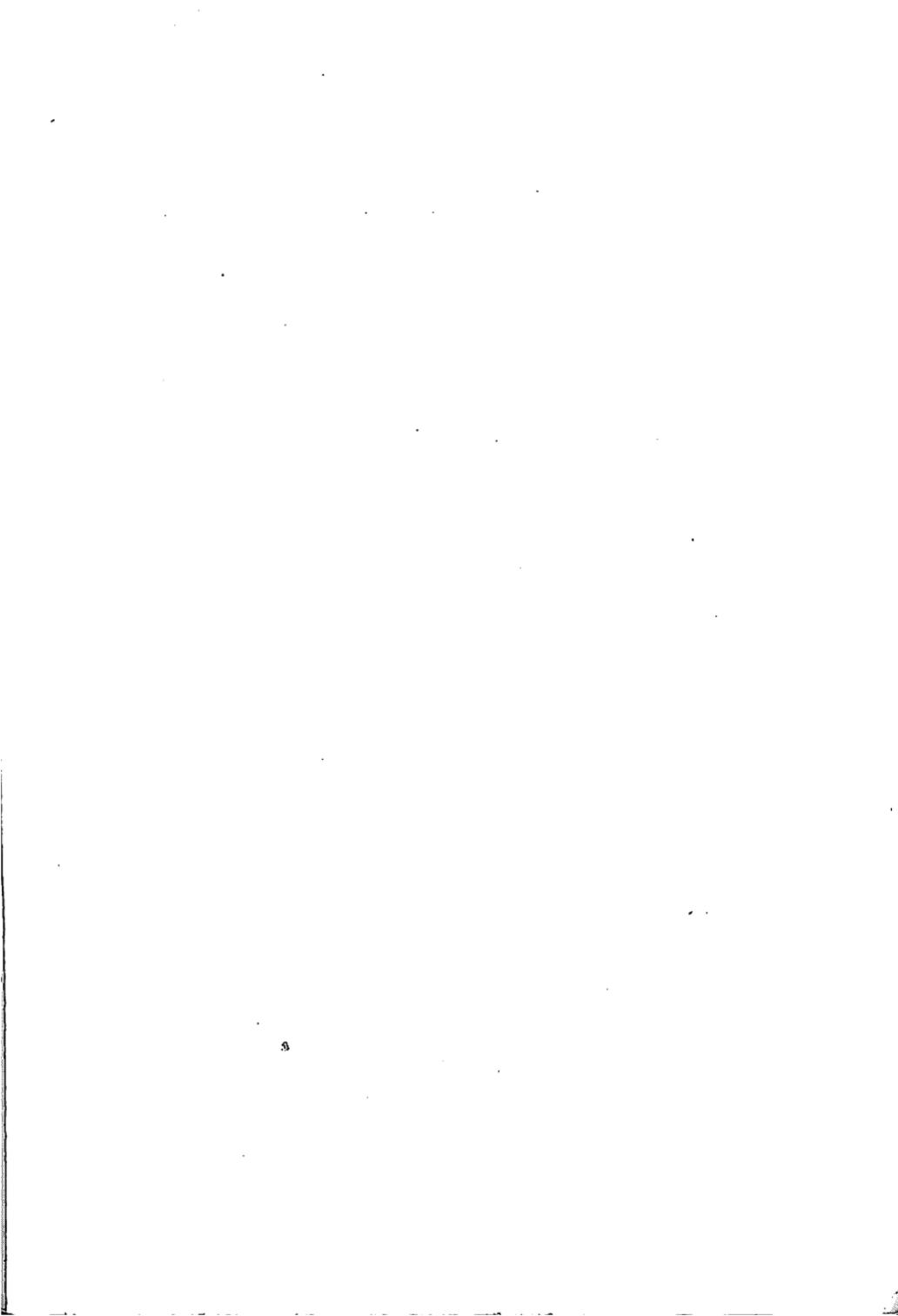
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following pages contain biographical sketches of the Perfect Masters. The account of Sri Narayan Maharaj is based upon a biographical sketch in Mahrathi by Sri Rama Krishna Gopal Bede, Sub-editor "Kesari", Poona. The accounts of Sri Sai Baba, Hazrat Baba Jan and Tajuddin Baba are derived from materials furnished in articles by Abdul Ghani Munsif and that on Sri Upasani Maharaj from an article by Dr. C. Deshmukh, Ph. D., which have appeared in the Meher Journal. We adore Avatar Meher Baba whose works have helped us with very valuable information concerning the Perfect Masters and their role in our evolution.

We take this occasion to acknowledge the help of Bro. A. C. S. Chari, Komala Vilas, 73 Rash Behari Avenue, Calcutta-26 for very kindly making the above mentioned publications available to us and for his valuable suggestions. We are thankful for the kind permission to us to publish the Group picture of the Perfect Masters, Mr. S. B. Krishna, Hon. Treasurer, Sri Sai Samaj, Calcutta, for taking keen interest and rendering valuable assistance in bringing out this publication, and, Misra & Co. Calcutta, for printing this at a nominal cost.

120/B, Rash Behari Avenue
Calcutta, the 1st October, 1959.

P. S. V. AIYER,
Hon. Secretary,
Sri Sai Samaj, Calcutta



PERFECT MASTERS



SAI BABA



BABA JAN



MEHER BABA



UPASNI BABA



TAJUDIN BABA



NARAYN MAHARAJ

like the Egyptian, Assyrian, Phoenician, Median and other empires. Economic forces have contributed to phenomenal prosperity, or abject poverty, of the nations. Cultural trends have revolutionized the very outlook of the nations of the world.

In a strange manner, all these forces are linked to and are controlled by certain Powers which remain too subtle for human understanding or perception. Their existence is at times felt and experienced and is sometimes disclosed to us directly or in veiled language by seers, poets and God-realised persons. We obtain glimpses of these agents who pass for ordinary people and are but rarely distinguishable in everyday life. We come in for a wealth of details about them in the teachings of a contemporary Silent Perfect Master, Avatar Meher Baba.

They are referred to as Perfect Masters and are believed to be working for the welfare of the entire universe. They are blissfully free from the bondage of re-incarnation or Karmic commitments. They are at perfect liberty to remain in their most exalted state of eternal bliss, but they have chosen to bear the Cross on our behalf and share in our joys and sorrows and labour ceaselessly for our uplift.

Although they have passed the stage of Illusion and have become one with God, these Perfect Masters remain surrounded by Illusion and carry on their work through the Universal Mind..

“.....These Perfect Ones or God-realized Ones are fifty-six in number in the world at all times and this number

includes five Perfect Masters who come out in the open and are ever present. They are always one in consciousness although they are different in function.....”—*per Avatar Meher Baba*—.

While ‘Avatar’ means the incarnation of God as Man, “Perfect Master” (Sadguru) is a human being who has attained to God-realization. Of the five Perfect Masters stated above, in our Age, SRI SAI BABA holds the highest place. He, along with the other four, is even now directing the forces of the Universe in its different spheres and is actually moulding and shaping the fortunes alike of nations and individuals.

“.....There are five Perfect Masters who are God-personified and who control and look after the affairs of the Universe.....”

—*per Avatar Meher Baba*—.

The Avatars and the Perfect Masters always function in co-operation with a band of workers and this varies in number. It may be interesting to recall on this occasion how before He incarnated as Sri Ramachandra, Lord Vishnu wanted the Devas to incarnate as Vanaras to assist Him in His mission on earth. In much the same way, Lord Krishna had worked in co-operation with the Gopis of Brindavan and the Gopalas of Gokula who had in their previous incarnation served the world as greatest Rishis. Lord Jesus the Christ carried on His ministry with the aid of His twelve apostles. Lord Buddha had His own band of missionaries and we may cite similar examples in regard to Avatars in various ages. Besides these workers, the Avatars and Perfect Masters reach individuals in distant places through local agents

called "Chargemen". These Chargemen have attained to different planes of consciousness and they in their turn take the assistance of local devotees through whom they distribute the grace which they have obtained from the Avatar of the Age or the Perfect Masters.

The spiritual administration of the Universe is thus being carried on by a regular hierarchy of beings who are charged with unlimited power, of course, for doing good to the denizens of the different spheres in creation.

It is proposed to discuss in detail the personalities and functions of the different Perfect Masters. While already plenty of literature is available concerning the life of Sai Baba, certain peculiar features are alone being discussed here. As Sai Baba has Himself deposed before a Commissioner's Court, His mission was to serve the Universe and His age unlimited. He was given to apparent fits of temper and what He did invariably in the towering rage was to bless, although the result of His be blessing could be experienced only long afterwards. He gives rather than promises. He is not interested in what we possess but in what we surrender to Him. He was particularly interested in the sick, His special favourites being the lepers and the needy. Although revered as a God, He unblushingly demanded cash repeatedly from some who had brought the barest minimum required until He had drained them of the last pie and left them to face the problem of the return journey. But He spent whatever He had obtained by distributing the amount immediately amongst others. He did accept cash, food, sweets and other gifts, but He received them from particular persons. What He takes He returns a million-

fold. Sometimes He shocked the orthodox-minded by asking them to eat on a fasting day and to eat prohibited articles, like onions, etc. He used to make serious gestures in the air in different directions, and it was later on found that by means of these gestures He had actually rescued individuals from grave mishaps and saved critical situations in the world. He bade the recitation of the Koran in the Hindu temple and the performance of Puja and Arathi in the mosque. An outstanding achievement of Sri Sai Nath is the communal harmony that He had been able to bring about among all His devotees in Shirdi while He was in the flesh and everywhere in the world in our own times. He manifested His divine nature by being present simultaneously in different places. A peculiar statement of His, namely, "Those who see Baba in Shirdi have not seen Him at all" is very significant.

More details concerning SAI BABA will be given while discussing the other Perfect Masters.

2. SHRI UPASANI MAHARAJ

The belief is held, at any rate in India, that the way to spiritual progress of woman lies through man and that woman cannot by herself do anything towards her own spiritual uplift. Lord Buddha who raised the standard of revolt against Vedic religion innovated the order of "*Bhikshunis*" (nuns) in our country. Among other things, the personal charms with which Nature has endowed her expose the woman to a considerable amount of risk, as the poet has observed that "beauty provoketh thieves sooner than gold". There is, again, the question of sex complications; in this, however, men are as much prone to err as women.

Under these circumstances, the path to the spiritual regeneration of women solely by her unaided efforts had to be shown by man. This might appear strange; but truth is stranger than fiction. It was given to the Perfect Master Shri Upasani Maharaj of Sakori (Bombay State) to show the woman how to break down her shackles through her own efforts. An account of the life of Shri Upasani Maharaj may therefore prove not only of some interest, but of value in this connection. In his pre-ascetic life, Maharaj was known as Pundit Kashinath of Satane in Maharashtra. Born on the 15th May, 1870, of Govind Shastri and Rukmani Bai, Pundit Kashinath came of an orthodox Brahmin family of Sanskrit scholars, his grandfather Gopala Shastri being a Pundit himself and in his later life an anchorite. After perfunctory schooling, Kashinath left home when

he was only fourteen or fifteen and sought sanctuary in a cave eight miles off Nasik, for eight years. In 1900, he was, however, traced and brought home and persuaded to enter the life of a householder. Till 1910, he practised successfully as an Ayurvedic doctor at Sangli and edited with renown a medical journal entitled "Bheshaja Ratnamala". In 1910, he contacted at Nagpur Shri Narayan Maharaj of Khedgaon who had even at that early stage discerned his greatness. He was later on directed by Kulkurni Maharaj of Rahuri to go to Shri SAI BABA whom Maharaj met on the 27th June, 1911, for the first time at Shirdi.

That contact proved to be the turning point in his career. Pundit Kashinath had undergone for a period of four years, with a brief interval, his apprenticeship under the strict vigilance of Lord Sai Nath. It was a period of fiery ordeal accompanied by fasting, blindness for some time, physical mortification, insult and other forms of austerity. Out of that fiery furnace, Maharaj emerged as the purest gold, being thoroughly smelted of the last particle of dross that might have clung to him. Lord Sai Nath Himself called him Maharaj" and declared before His devotees that He was leaving the "Keys of the Treasury" in the hands of Shri Upasani Maharaj.

It is interesting to note that during his novitiate under Lord Sai Nath, Maharaj was tormented by lust and he sought BABA's direction to overcome the temptation. Sai Baba reminded him of how Sriman Narayana had alone remained Purushottama and that all other individuals were but His consorts and that he should also try to perceive the inner Self in every individual and should not be carried

away by external charms. BABA prescribed the practice of wearing the cloth like a saree and mixing among women as one of them and behaving in similar ways. Devotees of Shri Upasani Maharaj might have noticed him dressing himself as a woman and offering cocoanut and other articles to women.

The life of Upasani Maharaj and the doings of Lord Sri Krishna contain very valuable lessons to earnest spiritual aspirants. Lord Krishna has been thoroughly misunderstood and misinterpreted by superficial critics in regard to His dealings with the "Gopis". Shri Upasani Maharaj had in his own life-time to be defended in Court by Brahmashri B. V. Narasimhaswamiji for what was considered to be a breach of the law in married life. The mistake that is committed in understanding these personalities consists in our judging them to be occupying the same level as we do. Most of us are not capable of perceiving the individuals beyond their physical bodies, or of resisting the temptations of the sex. When we understand that Lord Krishna had in his dealings with the "Gopis" and Shri Upasani Maharaj had in his relations with his "Satis", specially in the Ashram, nothing whatever to do with their physical bodies but had every concern with their spiritual selves, there can remain no room for misunderstanding at all. If we grasp this principle and try to apply it in our everyday life, we are sure to find that the conquest of the promptings of the sex is not such a hazardous enterprise as it may at first appear to us. Pilgrims to Sakori Ashram had sought the help of Upasani Maharaj in this direction and he had unreservedly assisted them in this. He also showed by his example that woman

is not to be regarded in any way different from man and that she has as much right to do spiritual work as man himself.

After his training under Lord Sai Nath, Upasani Maharaj left Shirdi and visited among other places Kharagpur, Amraoti, Nagpore etc., until he settled down in a burning-ghat of Sakori village. It is significant that Maharaj had chosen the burning-ghat as the site of the Ashram. It at once symbolises the perishable nature of the physical body as emphatically as it does the eternal nature of that Inner Self which the aspirant is taught to perceive in his efforts to subdue the lower self. Devotees of Maharaj cleared the spot of unwanted trees and bushes and built a palatial Ashram for him. Maharaj left the physical body on the 24th December, 1941. The founder of the Sakori Ashram was alone a man. The Mother Superior of this famous Convent is today SATI GODAVARI MATA who is a source of inspiration to all earnest aspirants. There she continues to carry on with the assistance of the "*Kanyas*" the work of spiritual regeneration of the womanhood of the world which was started by Shri Upasani Maharaj.

Shri Upasani Maharaj had delivered very valuable discourses on spiritual matters in Maharathi. English rendering of these is now available in three volumes. Copies can be had of: Sri N.S. Sahasrabudhe, M. S., Professor of Anatomy (Retd.), "Ashirvada", 377, Canal Road, Ramdas-peth, Nagpur (India.) Publications of Sati Godavari Mata can also be had off the same address.

3. HAZRAT BABA TAJUDDIN.

Forgiveness is essentially a divine quality and is inherent in almost everyone of us, but in varying degrees. As the Poet has aptly put it: "To err is human, to forgive divine". Forgiveness is reckoned in spiritual parlance as "remission of sin".

While a volume of ideas is current concerning "remission of sin", absolution, etc., it is indisputable that a Perfect Master is empowered to absolve an individual, to any extent. That power is, however, sparingly exercised. It is very rarely in spiritual history that one comes across a Buddha or a Christ or a Sankara or a Ramanuja who aimed at mass-uplift, irrespective of the forces they release against themselves by such actions. The Law of Karma is inviolable and the results of actions, good or bad, have to be faced squarely and endured individually or vicariously. A Guru has to undergo the necessary expiation for the Karma of his *Chela* until that *Chela* attains to a position on a par with his Guru. It naturally follows, that by lavishly bestowing favours on a mass scale, these Masters had to take the responsibility for their actions on their own shoulders and to undergo the necessary amount of suffering. Herein lies the explanation for the life of hardship, pains and penalties of every description, that God-men had to lead whenever they had incarnated through the Ages, in order to serve us.

Lord Sainath had led a rigorous and disciplined life in a neglected hamlet in Ahmednagar District in Western India.

It fell to the lot of his contemporary, another Perfect Master, *Hazrat Baba Tajuddin* who carried on in Central India the same mission, for which Sri Sai Baba had incarnated. It is believed by the devotees of the Perfect Masters mentioned in this series that Tajuddin Baba had carried on his work in perfect harmony and understanding with the rest of the Masters among whom Sri Sai Baba is considered to be the Chief.

The peculiar feature of Baba Tajuddin is that despite his rough exterior, he considered no one bad enough to be lost altogether, and forgave delinquents with a magnanimity that is not only incomparable but is simply incredible. Litigants, criminals, sufferers from chronic ailments, physical or mental, candidates, doubtful of their results in their examinations, and people on whom society may be said to have turned its back, sought for his intercession in their difficulties, and not one of them was sent back without the favour being granted. The belief is current that such miracles happen even now, that is to say, long after he had left the flesh, in favour of those who sincerely pray for his aid. For this purpose, many pilgrims are found to visit his tomb at Nagpur even to this day.

Among the responsibilities of the Perfect Masters in their work, one is that they have to carry on their mission with whatever materials they may find. This they are obliged to do by keeping their less developed co-workers secure from their Karmic commitments, by various kinds of adjustments or by vicarious suffering. Baba Tajuddin preferred to undergo vicarious suffering. An account

of his life may therefore prove of engrossing interest to all earnest spiritual aspirants.

Born on the 27th January, 1861, as the only child of Mahomed Badruddin, a Subhedar of the Madras Regiment settled in Kamptee, Central Provinces (Madhya Pradesh), Tajuddin Baba was said to have remained silent for long as a baby and was, according to the prevailing custom, branded on the forehead and temples to be aroused to consciousness. Having lost his father before he was barely one year old and his mother at the age of eight, Tajuddin was brought up by his maternal uncle and grandmother. Till his fifteenth year, he learnt Arabic, Urdu and a little English and enroled at the age of 18 as a sepoy in the 8th Madras Regiment. While the Regiment lay encamped at Saugor, he was reported to have been lured by a voice that led him to meet with Hazrat Dawood Christi a renowned Saint, in the depth of the woods in the vicinity. That meeting proved to be the turning point in Tajuddin Baba's career. He left military service, became dazed and passed for a man out of mind. His grandmother brought him back to Kamptee and tried all manner of treatment to restore him to normal condition, until she passed away. He was teased by children who threw stones at him. Far from retaliating, he rather revelled in the sport and collected the stones in heaps. Gleams of spirituality broke through his apparently demented condition in the form of miraculous favours that he bestowed on those who appealed to him for help. In view of his valuable assistance in temporal affairs, the mad Fakir was spared the teasing by urchins.

But he made up his mind to live among the lunatics. One day in 1889, he walked stark naked in a tennis court maintained by the English Club in Kamptee. This led to his arrest and incarceration in the lunatic asylum at Nagpur, where he is said to have spent eighteen long years.

Dr. Abdul Majid Khan, under whose care the asylum was maintained, has left us a faithful record of Baba's life during this period. To mention only a single incident out of the innumerable strange events that had occurred at this time, Baba refused any preferential treatment and insisted on carrying heavy loads on his head, like other inmates. The loads lifted themselves right above his head and followed Baba wherever he went. Multitude of visitors poured into this lunatic asylum to have his *darshan* despite a nominal fee charged by the authorities for this favour. Among those who visited was Bi-Amma, a woman of extra-ordinary spirituality, who came to him under the direction of Hazrat Dawood Christi. Tajuddin Baba seemed highly pleased with her devotion, and, she also grew in spirituality after her contact with Baba, and led a very valuable life until she passed away and was buried at Waki, a suburb of Nagpur.

In 1907, Raja Raghujirao of Nagpur prayed Baba to come out of the asylum and on Baba's acceding to the request, the Raja was glad to furnish a security of Rs, 2,000 to Government for the release. Tajuddin later declined the offer of life in a palace at Shakerdara by the Raja. Baba preferred roaming about in the jungles until he settled at Waki. Here, large number of people wanting various kinds of favours used to come to him. He grouped them

in different departments around his residence. He directed those who required cure of ailments to assemble under a tree which he called 'the hospital', candidates desiring success in the examination to meet under a mango tree which he called 'the school', those who had litigation and financial troubles to assemble at another spot called 'Court of Justice', and those who prayed for spiritual progress to congregate in 'the Mosque', while some whom he wished to help in self-control and discipline to go to a place called 'the parade ground' and perform drill. He poured forth his blessings in abundance on each one of the groups with sure and unerring results. In order to accommodate and attend to the convenience of these pilgrims, a satellite town had developed and this formed the nucleus of what is now called 'Chhota Nagpur'. Here he lived till he passed away on 17th August, 1925, when, according to a report in "The Times of India", Bombay, the stone image of the household Deity of Raja Raghujirao was said to have shed tears of grief.

Hazrat Baba Tajuddin had incarnated to bless us all, to relieve us of our temporal distress, to confer on us material prosperity and then to transform our gratitude into devotion to God. He stabilised the faith of those in whom faith in God seemed for a moment shaken by difficulties or dangers. In doing this work he had naturally to undergo enormous suffering and sacrifice. This is precisely what Sai Baba has been doing in Western India. A Perfect Master like Tajuddin Baba blossoms like a rose in a bush of thorns.

4 HAZRAT BABA JAN

The Vedic Rishis communed with Nature and had taught a religion that had become universal in character and outlook. Later on, elaborate rituals and ceremonials were introduced. The Lord Buddha revolted against these forms and formalities and pleaded for a religion of Truth and freedom from exploitation of any kind. Our impact with Western culture had led to certain far-reaching changes alike in our society and in our religious outlook. The Arya Samaj and the Brahma Samaj have been the products of such impact. But substantial contribution towards spiritual thought has been made by Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who had, after observing the practices of the major religions of the world, discovered certain essential unities to be underlying them and then preached universal brotherhood. It was about this time that Madame Blavatsky had founded the Theosophical Society, which had, apart from aiming at a rational and scientific interpretation of Religion, sought to reveal to a sceptic world the existence of the occult region. Madame Blavatsky had to resort to abnormal phenomena for this purpose in the same way as Bhagwan Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa had done on some occasions. HAZRAT BABA JAN had also similarly shown in her life and activities the existence of the occult world and demonstrated that in spirituality there was no room for distinctions of caste or community or even sex, or for mystifying fundamental principles. She had also performed miracles purely in the service of

humanity. An account of her life is, therefore, bound to be of inspiration to earnest spiritual aspirants.

Hailing from Afghanistan or Baluchistan, Hazrat Baba Jan was the daughter of one of the ministers of the Amir of Afghanistan. The year of her birth is said to be 1790 and, as her birthday was observed once on 28th January, we might take it that she was born on the 28th January, 1790. Gul-rukh was her name and she was brought up as an Afghan aristocrat and had learnt the Koran at a very early age. Gul-rukh spent her youth in prayer, meditation, seclusion and in a manner that was altogether unusual to her surroundings. Blessed with surpassing beauty and charm, when she was only fifteen, she was sought for in marriage to which her parents had gladly acceded. She managed to escape on the day fixed for her wedding through Peshawar to Rawalpindi where she was initiated by a Hindu Saint. The initiation was followed by severe austerities for seventeen months on a mountain in the vicinity. At thirtyseven, she obtained 'Realisation' by the grace of a Muslim Saint at Multan. After visiting many places in northern India, she settled down in 1903 in the shade of a *neem* (margosa) tree in Char Bavadi, a place in Malcolm Road in Poona. She became universally known as HAZRAT BABA JAN. Bent with years and shabbily dressed in long apron, pyjama and a linen scarf, with a mass of unkempt snowy hair reaching down her shoulders and moving about restlessly, smoking "beedis", she still retained the blue of her eyes and a magnetic charm. Tea-stall vendors and

fruiterers welcomed her to their establishments and let her help herself as she liked, for her visits were followed by phenomenal prosperity in their trade. The place where she lived—a neglected spot full of squalor and haunted by riff-raffs—was quickly transformed into a centre of pilgrimage with scent of incense, sound of music and presence of her devotees. But she remained perfectly unconcerned. Irregular and scanty food and frequent tea-drinking failed to affect her health. In 1903, she left for Mecca on a pilgrimage and when the vessel in which she was sailing was caught in a sea-storm, she bade one of the passengers beg pice from the rest with which to propitiate Allah by feeding the poor near the Kaaba; the ship was saved. She diagnosed all diseases as due to bad Karma and cured the patients. She used to mutter "Vermin are worrying me always. I sweep them off, but again they swarm around me." She was as much a benefactor of those that wanted material well-being as of the spiritually enlightened. Referring to Baba Tajuddin, she used to observe that Tajuddin gave unto others only what she had herself granted him.

Of the innumerable miracles performed by her, to cite only a few: On account of her challenging statements she was once buried alive at Rawalpindi, by the very persons who later on found her very much alive and active at Poona. Remaining where she was, she once saved people from an accident of fire which had broken out in an opera, twenty miles off Poona. She helped a man find his missing horse. She cured fevers, restored sight and saved people from all

kinds of dangers. She rejected gifts of cash or of any kind offered in gratitude. Her greatest gift to the Universe is her initiation of Meherwan to become *Avatar Meher Baba* about whom details will be furnished later. She used to call herself God and a source of all creation and advised people always to aspire to what concerned the spirit which alone had remained eternal.

On the 21st September, 1931, Hazrat Baba Jan left her body. After a grand funeral, her remains were interred in a tomb at the very spot where she had lived. Her tomb has become a shrine attracting numerous pilgrims throughout the year.

Hazrat Baba Jan had come from the mountainous regions in the northern boundary of our holy land to the plains of Hindustan as a messenger of hope and spiritual regeneration of humanity.

5 SRI NARAYAN MAHARAJ OF KHEDGAUM

The belief current mostly in our country is that occult powers may be developed by invoking particular Deities through intensely devotional and formal worship. Instances of this kind are not lacking particularly in some of the temples, Mutts, (monsteries) and even private houses. These powers can be developed also by means of selfless service or cultivating particular virtues like truth-telling or chastity or silence. The essential condition for the proper maintenance and growth of such powers is that they should not be exploited to serve selfish ends, but that they should be dedicated, whole and entire, in the service of the universe. The prospects of deriving powers by this method are brighter in the case of an unmarried person, as the responsibilities of leading a single life come to almost little or nothing, and, hence the temptation to utilise occult powers for selfish ends is also by far less than in the case of a householder.

Sadguru Shri Narayan Maharaj had incarnated to dispel the false notion that a Perfect Master need necessarily be unorthodox or unconventional, or that formal worship is fit only for immature or undeveloped minds. In order to establish this truth, it became necessary for him to lead an orthodox life and incarnate in a family that was traditionally orthodox. Sri Bhimasankara and his son Sivaram, his illustrious ancestors, who had lived at Sindgi, a village in Karnatak, were ardent devotees of His Holiness the Jagat-

guru at Humpi. They had the gift of composing hymns in honour of their Gurudev in Mahrathi and Kanarese languages. In June 1885, Sri Narayan was born at Bhagal-kot as the youngest son of Sri Bhima Rao and Srimati Lakshmi Devi. Sri Narayan became an orphan in his infancy and the family migrated to Hyderabad to live under the protection of Kashinath the elder brother. Later, his prosperous maternal uncle who was living at Nargund brought up Sri Narayan and made him heir to his fortunes. Once Narayan visited a cave in a jungle near the house and had darshan of a Yogi who was seated on a plank suspended by chains and lighted by four lamps and guarded by a serpent. Narayan spent his time in Sandhya, Surya-namskara, meditation, etc. The refusal of his grandmother, one day when he was nine years old, to give him clarified butter supplied the pretext for Sri Narayan to leave the house and remain untraced for seven years.

In about 1902, he arrived at a Hanumanji temple in Ravivar Gate in Poona City. He begged cooked food from door to door which he washed and ate. At this time, Trayambak Rao Mama Atre of Bopgaum took him away, under inward promptings, to a place called Arvi where he was living. Trayambak Rao's wife Srimati Lakshmi Bai was regarded with great affection and addressed as "mother" by Sri Narayan. A Jagirdar of Pareygar village near Pomalvadi Railway Station was ordered, in a dream, to take Sri Narayan to Gangapur, which he did. Sri Narayan lived at Gangapur under a neem tree by the side of a river. He never left the tree even when the river was swollen in

floods during the monsoons. At such times, he would go up the branches and stay there. One day, he entered a Mutt at Gangapur where he met with an old man, who said that he had so long been doing pooja for the welfare of Narayan, and he initiated the youth. He asked Narayan to fetch food for him. Returning to the Mutt, with the food, along with some of its inmates, Narayan found that it was empty. The inmates pleaded ignorance of any such stranger and assured Narayan that it could have been no other than Lord Dattatreya Himself; and having had the darshan of and direct initiation by the Lord, Narayan was twice blest indeed. Narayan who was overcome with joy for the meeting and filled also with sorrow at missing the Lord, in material body returned to the "neem" tree, where he waited for three days with the food he had brought as commanded by the "old stranger". On the third day, it was revealed to him in a dream that his offering had been accepted and that he could now eat the prasad.

Nana Saheb Deshpande of Supe, a jagirdar, had received commands to take Shri Narayan to live with him. Nana Saheb had lands in Badhani, where a small cottage was built for the accommodation of Shri Narayan and himself. This spot was suitable to meditation, but Maharaj had attracted a stream of visitors with whom he conducted Bhajan. One day, he removed the earth at the foot of an "oudumbara" tree, and revealed to the congregation a wooden image of the Lord's feet covered with fresh floral offerings. After this he is said to have performed miracles solely in the cause of humanity.

*fig

Another day, during a walk, Narayan Maharaj came across a rock covered by jungles, about seven miles off Khedgaum Railway Station. This station is situated at a distance of 34 miles from Poona. Narayan Maharaj decided to settle here permanently. In 1912 was acquired the property where a temple dedicated to Lord Dattatreya and a resthouse were constructed. Today, the place is covered with buildings valued at lakhs of rupees and it has become a shrine. Shri Narayan Maharaj organised festivals on Vaishak Sukla Panchami, Guru Poornima, and Dattatrya Jayanthi. These days continue to be observed at Khedgaum even now. Shri Narayan Maharaj had visited Calcutta, and Sri Vasantha Sett, a wealthy businessman of Calcutta, had offered 200 totals of gold to make images of Shri Dattatreya.

Narayan Maharaj liked Satyanarayan Pooja very much and it is often performed at Khedgaum. For the past 30 years, the Mutt at Khedgaum has been managed at a cost of Rupees 50 to 60 thousands annually. Here, Shri Narayan Maharaj used to lead a princely life wearing silk garments and costly ornaments and conduct poojas on grand scale and feed large number of devotees at a time. But Maharaj had remained a strict vegetarian and a poor eater.

Notwithstanding the refreshingly unconventional and seemingly heterodox ways of Lord Sainath, Shri Narayan Maharaj had directed a Brahmin Yogi like Pundit Kashinath (who later on become Shri Upasani Maharaj), and an earnest seeker after Truth like Brahmasri B. V. Narasimhaswamiji to go to Sri Sai Baba of Shirdi. Avatar Meher Baba used

to occasionally direct His devotees to have darshan of Shri Narayan Maharaj whom He regarded as "one of the five Perfect Masters of the Age". Narayan Maharaj passed away on 3rd September, 1945, at Bangalore.

Shri Narayan Maharaj is an example of how an orthodox and devotional minded personage may yet possess breadth of vision to discern greatness in others who had chosen paths which seemed to be somewhat different from what he had himself followed.

6 AVATAR MEHER BABA

“SAI BABA made me what I am, BABA JAN made me feel what I am ; and UPASANI MAHARAJ made me know what I am”.

“We can love God by surrendering to the PERFECT MASTER who is God’s personal Manifestation.”

Meher Baba

The Age of unquestioning belief in God and God-men is passing away. The days of rituals and ceremonials, priests and sooth-sayers are fast vanishing and even those who keep up caremonials observe them in forms which have become largely modified to conform to the pattern of contemporary life. Prostrating before the elders or touching their feet is scoffed at as a medieval superstition and betraying servile mentality. Dry intellectualism, scepticism of the scientist and incredulity threaten to replace implicit faith and juicy devotion. Prayer and Bhajan halls are taken up by libraries and discussion groups. If a Messiah or an Incarnation of God were to appear in such an atmosphere, he has to avoid unnecessary paraphernalia, talk less, face criticism and win even the most unfriendly inquirer over to his side by sheer LOVE.

MEHER BABA, popularly known as AVATAR MEHER BABA proves challenging and disturbing to the

revolting youth by assuming the title "Avatar" for himself and claiming Christhood. Just as Lord Krishna claimed himself to be more ancient than Vivaswan, so Meher Baba calls himself The Ancient One. He says : "I am The Ancient one. I am The Highest of the High. I am The One Whom many seek and so few find". He disarms opposition by stating that those who vilify and criticize him also do his work in the same way as those who love him.

Merwan Sheriar Irani was born on 25th February, 1894, in a Zoroastrian family, in Poona. He was initiated in November, 1914, by Hazrat Baba Jan, Sufi saint in Poona, resulting in a trance for nine months. At the tail end of this phase, Merwan visited Shirdi and paid his respects to Sai Baba. Then he moved to meet Upasani Maharaj, a Hindu saint, who was at the moment living in Shirdi, himself undergoing novitiate under Sai Baba. Maharaj threw a stone at Merwan with great force wounding him in the forehead. That brought him round to world-consciousness. Meher Baba says that it took him seven years of acute struggle under Upasani Maharaj's active guidance to become established in normal consciousness while yet experiencing continuously his superconscious state. Meher Baba had visited Narayan Maharaj of Khedgaon and Hazrat Baba Tajuddin of Nagpur. Both Babajan and Maharaj directed their visitors to go to Meher Baba. Once, in May, 1922, Upasani Maharaj while addressing a large gathering is said to have declared that he had "handed over his keys" now to Merwan and then added that all should

stick to him as he instructed them. ("LISTEN, HUMANITY," page 250.) It may be recalled in this connection that Lord Sai Nath had similarly told his devotees that he had "handed over his keys" to Upasani Maharaj.

In 1923, Meher Baba had a large tract of land which was the site of military buildings constructed ^{near Ahmednagar} during World War I, repaired with the help of his Mandali (devotees) and brought into existence ashrams for boys, men and women and shelters for the poor and the lepers. Hospitals were also opened for the benefit of the poor villagers in the vicinity. In November, 1926, he closed down all these institutions at Meherabad. These humanitarian activities are to be regarded as a symbol of the inexhaustible Love that he has for the universe. According to him, all these are "only the external expression of the internal work I am doing". Millions upon millions of trusts founded by many a Rockefeller or Fullbright or Nuffield can at best mitigate, and, and, by no means, check the appalling poverty, illiteracy and sickness which are persisting and are rapidly spreading all over the world. The whole problem has to be tackled from an entirely different angle and from an altogether different plane; and that is what Baba and other Perfect Masters have been doing for "orphan humanity." If Baba cared, he would have succeeded in building up an international organisation of stupendous magnitude. But these are not in his plan. He has not come to found a new order or religion or to teach, but simply to awaken slumbering humanity to realise the glories of its Self in which alone,

bliss is to be found and which knows no separateness between the individual and the rest of the universe; and in this recognition of the Self in others lies the principle of LOVE of the highest order. Washing the feet of the poor, the lepers and even criminals and distributing clothes and cash among them, embracing the blind, etc., are all symbols of Baba's boundless Love for one and all, however lowly and humble they may be.

An outstanding feature of Baba is, more than the teaching that he gives, the profound influence that he exercises on his devotees. The sphinx that he is, whatever one might say before meeting Meher Baba, when brought face to face with him, one cannot escape the influence of his magnetic personality which radiates powerful currents of peace and abiding Love. He may truly be described as the strong silent benefactor. His very presence, or the recollection of even a momentary association with him, or his picture—any one of these is sufficient to disintegrate the gloom and make men and women open a new chapter in their lives. To give us opportunities for this, he had undertaken tours, not only throughout the length and breadth of our vast sub-continent, but ten times around the world. He has in recent times also been holding camps called "Sahas gatherings," for instance, once in 1955, and again in 1958 at Meherabad (India) and in America to which batches of devotees numbering a few hundreds at a time were invited and attend seminars conducted by him.

On 10th July, 1925, Meher Baba started the vow of silence which he is preserving even now. He neither writes nor employs the alphabet board whose use was abandoned in October, 1954. Baba's silence which is absolutely unaffected by his gestures and discourses remains a mystery to everybody. The world is waiting to hear him "break his silence" by uttering, as promised, "THE ONE SACRED WORD."

Born in a Zoroastrian family, initiated by a Sufi, and and later on trained by a Hindu saint, Baba presents a synthesis of various cultures. He reiterates the fundamental Theosophical principles relating to Universal Brotherhood, Law of Karma, Re-incarnation, Perfect Masters, etc. He also presents in himself a focal point of particular aspects of the five Perfect Masters of the Age and he frequently refers to them as being instrumental in bringing about his Avatarhood. His discussions of the Perfect Masters contain materials which have largely helped us in drafting this series.

A special work that he has been doing is what concerns God-intoxicated persons called "Masts" who have attained to varying planes of consciousness. Sometimes, he would send his workers to fetch these "masts" and on other occasions, he would himself travel with them in search of these strange persons and help the masts reach up to still higher planes, so that he may secure their active co-operation and assistance in his spiritual work. Details of his activities along this line can be had in a publication entitled

“WAYFARERS” and its Supplements, by Dr. William Donkin.

Meher Baba has given us an entirely original interpretation of that greatest gift of God, namely, LOVE, and he has not only delivered the message of Love but he lives it and creates plenty of opportunities among his devotees to put it into practice. He has made it abundantly clear that anyone who claims to be a lover of Baba should strive one's utmost to cultivate this virtue and the more intensely and deeply one fosters it, the brighter are one's prospects to come near to Baba's heart. He says : “True love is no game for the faint-hearted and the weak. It is born of strength and understanding.”

Next, he wants everyone to understand the meaning and significance of life, of religion, of rituals, of ceremonials, and after grasping the principle behind all these give them up internally and rise above them to a state in which he is living.

Referring to the greatness of Lord Sainath, Meher Baba has declared : “You will never be able to understand thoroughly how great SAI BABA was. He is the very personification of Perfection. If you knew him as I know him, you would call him the master of creation.”

It might appear somewhat strange that the Master who is wedded to silence is credited with giving discourses of a size that has gone into volumes. He makes gestures which are interpreted in English by one or other of his

devotees. Meher Baba's discourses have been compiled in books entitled "God to Man and Man to God", "God Speaks", "Listen, Humanity", "Life at its Best," "Beams from the Spiritual Panorama," etc. and his messages, sayings and activities are appearing in a quarterly entitled "AWAKENER" which is published from New York, U. S. A., a Telugu monthly published in Ellore (Andhra Pradesh) entitled "AVATAR MEHER," and a Hindi monthly published in Hamirpur (U. P.) entitled "MEHER PUKHAR"—all these exclusively dealing with Meher Baba.

Meher Baba is now living at Pimpalgaon, a village, about nine miles off Ahmednagar Railway station (on the Dhond-Manmad line, Central Railways) observing seclusion, silence and his lifelong celibacy. He occasionally grants interviews to aspirants at their request. He lives on plain fare consisting of rice, dhal and milk. He mixes freely and keeps one at ease in his presence and embraces one and all that go to him. He does not encourage devotees prostrating before him or touching his feet. News about him and instructions are conveyed in what are called 'Life Circulars' by his Secretary, Mr. Adi K. Irani, to his devotees all over the world. Publications by and about Meher Baba can be had of Meher Publications, King's Road, Ahmednagar (Bombay State).

OTHER PERFECT MASTERS.

Planning has come to stay as a special feature of modern national economy. It does not matter whether that planning is drawn up to exploit the resources available in the country or it is planning by deficit financing, plan we must if we are to exist within the present set-up of the world. Once the planning is started and the machinery is set going and the bonafides are assured, there are other nations in the world to come forward with aids or loan in making up the deficit. Planning is done for five , ten or twenty years; but we are concerned here with a plan which stretches unto Eternity and a plan not confined to material prosperity of the nations of the world but to their all round progress, and undertaken on a universal scale.

As has already been stated in the opening of this series, certain invisible powers have been working and are still busy with planning for the well-being of one and all of us. In order to carry out this grand plan of the Supreme Being, highly evolved persons have appeared among us from time to time and have, actuated solely by altruistic motives, laboured ceaselessly to promote our evolution.

The world has witnessed a steady stream of Masters coming out to do this work in almost every country, namely, ancient Egypt, Chaldea, Asyria, Babylone, Judaea, Greece and Rome. To that illustrious line belong such noble

Laotze

souls as Orpheus, Pythagoras, ~~Tao~~, Zoroaster, Lord Buddha, Jesus Christ, Mahomed the Prophet, Vardamana Mahavira, Guru Nanak, Lord Sankara, Sri Ramanuja, Sri Madhvacharya and their respective successors. There are Perfect Masters to whom the Hindu offers his prayers three times a day bowing to the East, West, North and South, the heavens, the earth and the world between, meaning thereby that he is offering his salutations to all those Masters who are tenanted these regions. In our own times, we had Perfect Masters like Lord Chaitanya (Gouranga Mahaprabhu), Bhagwan Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa, Bhagwan Sri Ramanamaharishi, Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ananda Swarup and numerous other illustrious sons of this sacred land. We are blessed to have in our midst His Holiness Swami Sivananda Saraswati Maharaj of Ananda Kutir, in Rishikesh on the slopes of the Himalayas. He is a source of ineffable peace and bliss and his beneficial influence over a large circle of his devotees all over the world is, to say the least, simply magical.

We do not mean to imply, by giving detailed accounts of the five Perfect Masters and Avatar Meher Baba only, that we do not acknowledge the existence of or the good work turned out by others of the same category. We have merely attempted at outlining the lives and teachings of those Perfect Masters who formed a circle with *Sri Sai Baba* as the chief; and we are leaving it to those readers who have not dedicated themselves to one or other of this circle, to remain faithful to the particular Perfect Masters to whom they have already devoted and surrendered themselves,

and taken a vow to serve those Masters with unflinching devotion and loyalty. It is essential to remember, however, that even long before our births, our Masters have been pre-ordained for us and they do come when the proper moment arrives and take charge of us either as a result of our search after them, or voluntarily through their own compassion for us. Everyone of us is a spark of the Divine Flame and each one of us works out one's destiny through one or other of the millions upon millions of rays that come out of that Flame. We are guided along our particular rays by our respective Masters until we attain to perfection and thereby fulfil the grand plan chalked out for us by a merciful Providence. It is not only desirable but absolutely necessary that we should exercise perfect self-control and we should guard ourselves against being betrayed into fanaticism which will lead us to criticise those Masters who are not our own or their respective followers.

There are not only many such Masters but, according to one School of Philosophy, there is still room for more and some, at any rate, if not many among us, are qualifying to become fellow workers among these Masters in their altruistic service.

We conclude this series by extending our most cordial greetings to our readers and wishing that they progress in every aspect of their lives under the able guidance of their respective Masters.

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