

**GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN**  
**MEHER BABA**  
**Volume II**  
**(Jan. 1949 - Jan. 1952)**

By

Bal Natu

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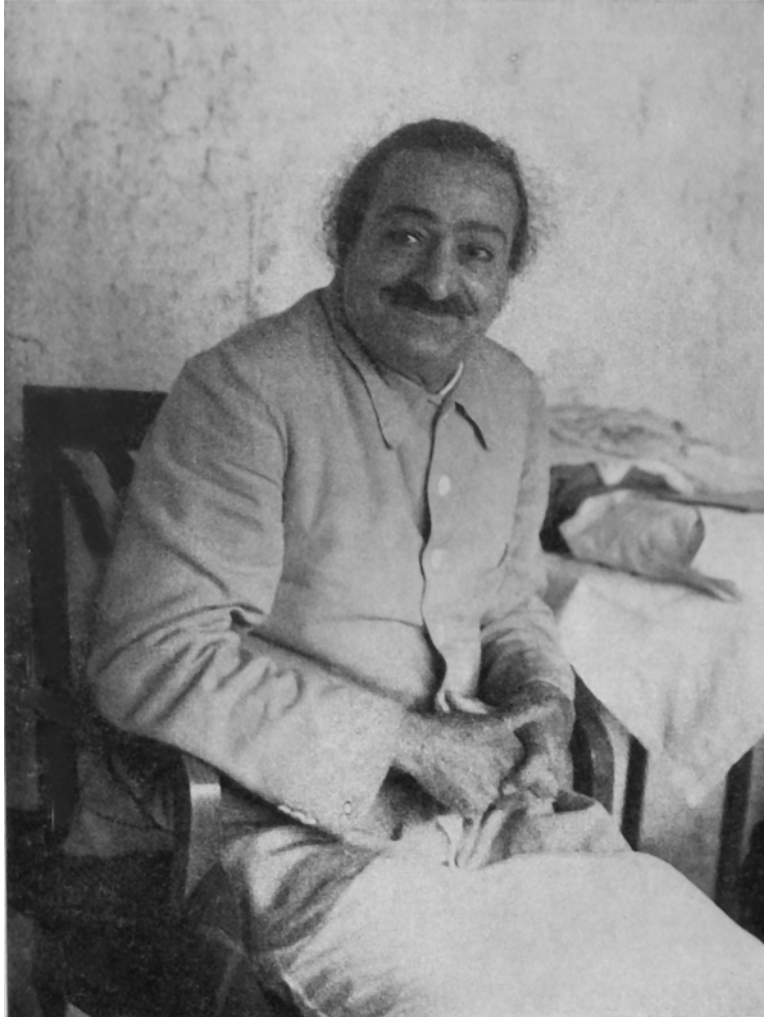
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## Glimpses of the God-man, Meher Baba



**AVATAR MEHER BABA**  
*October 16, 1950*  
*Mahabaleshwar*  
*M.S. India*

Glimpses  
of the  
God-Man  
Meher Baba

Volume II (Jan.1949 – Jan. 1952)

Bal Natu

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*To the Loving and Abiding Presence  
Of the God-Man, Meher Baba*

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With much love and gratitude in the Eternal Beloved, to all those who have helped me in various ways in this work.

BAL NATU

Meherazad  
October 16, 1978

## *Preface*

AVATAR MEHER BABA, who observed silence for over four decades, once conveyed through His graceful gestures to a large group of His followers:

I am the only Beloved and you are all my lovers; or

I am the only Lover and you are all my beloveds.

I am the Ocean of Love.<sup>1</sup>

Meher Baba's life, lived as the Divine Beloved and Lover in one, is the theme of the two volumes of *Glimpses of the God-Man*. The first<sup>2</sup> narrates a part of His Old Life wherein He asserts Himself as the Beloved and the second mainly presents His New Life, the life of a lover.

The terms, Old Life and New Life, may sound strange to readers for they have not been used in the life story of any *Avatar* — the God-Man. So, instead of commenting on these two terms, I prefer to quote an excerpt from a message given by Meher Baba in October 1950 when He stepped into the Old Life for a few hours from the New Life. It reads:

My Old Life places me on the altar of Absolute Godhood and Divine Perfection. My New Life makes me take the stand of a humble servant of God and His people. In my New Life, Perfect Divinity is replaced by Perfect Humility. In my New Life I am the Seeker, the Lover and the Friend. Both these aspects — Perfect Divinity and Perfect Humility — have been by God's Will and both are everlastingly linked with God's Eternal Life.

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<sup>1</sup> Purdom, *The God-Man*, p. 299.

<sup>2</sup> *Glimpses*, Vol. I, published by Sufism Reoriented, Inc., Walnut Creek, Calif., USA, 1977.

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To be frank, it is beyond my ability to explain, even remotely, the significance of these two terms. Nevertheless, I somehow feel that these two phases in the life of Meher Baba are not antithetical but complementary and it is only when they are taken together that the life of the God-Man as the Ocean of Love, in relation to His work for humanity, can be expressed. Based on this meager understanding, I have dared to "rush in" to narrate what I have gathered from various incidents and messages as well as explanations given by Meher Baba! My main intention, however, is to present a factual account of the New Life phase of Meher Baba, and the subtle implications can be judged or felt by the readers themselves.

As I commenced writing this particular account, time seemed to unfold backwards and the incredible stories I had heard from Meher Baba's companions — Eruch, Pendu, Adi and others — often flooded my memory, adding to the remembrance of the paltry part He allowed me to play in it. Arid intellectualism or coldhearted mysticism will not help one to appreciate the profundity of the New Life led and lived by Meher Baba. Unless the mind, of its own volition, is completely silenced, its chattering will continue, and my mind is no exception to this. I presume that one of the ways of effacing one's mind is to share with others the *lilas*<sup>3</sup> of the God-Man or to sing His praise. And who knows, this may lead to that blessed event of being struck by a glance of the Eternal Beloved, and at the opportune moment the awakened heart shall blossom into songs of His praise, eventually drowning all thoughts and words in the Infinite Silence; the drop merging in the Ocean of Love!

But until that time one has to find, maintain and enrich one's relationship with the One worthy of being served and loved. This may in a way appear simple, but

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<sup>3</sup> *lilas*: The incidents revealing love and knowledge of the God Man through the Divine Game He plays with Creation.

## PREFACE

isn't it most difficult? Why? Avatar Meher Baba once stated:

The humor of the Divine Love-Game is that the One who is sought is Himself the seeker.<sup>4</sup>

What fantastic fun! And in this incredible game, writing and reading can be one of the *Avatar's* infinite moves, to bring Him closer to Himself, in His Ocean of Love.

This book is a continuation of *Glimpses, Vol. I*. Those who begin reading *Glimpses* with this volume may not feel conversant with some of the non-English terms frequently used in this book; I request them to refer to the Glossary for their meaning. The opening chapter of Vol. II succinctly introduces readers to the New Life phase of Meher Baba while continuing to narrate His work with the *masts*, the God-intoxicated souls.

The New Life of Meher Baba has no parallel in known spiritual history. However, there is some mention of God-absorbed souls in *Vedantic* and *Sufic* traditions. Such God-intoxicated souls, also known as *masts*, are spiritually advanced individuals overpowered with, and absorbed in, their love for God — the Beloved. In the 1940s, contact with the *masts*, in different parts of India and Pakistan, constituted one of Meher Baba's main external activities. He had clarified that these contacts had a spiritual purpose of recharging and raising the consciousness of the *masts*. *The Wayfarers* by William Donkin, with a profound foreword by Meher Baba, is a monumental work, the only one of its kind. In this book the different characteristics of the *masts*, experiencing sublime states of consciousness in which they are oblivious of the gross world, are recorded and their significance elucidated. Those who are interested in the study of inner realities of existence will be fascinated and enlightened by the material provided in

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<sup>4</sup> Meher Baba, *The Everything and the Nothing*, p. 17.

## GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN

that book. The *most* contacts mentioned in Vol. II, from 1950 onwards are not recorded in *The Wayfarers*.

Owing to these two intricate and puzzling subjects, I often thought of giving up totally the compilation of the inscrutable events and episodes mentioned in this volume. But, somehow, I don't know how, I summoned up courage and ventured to put on record through this volume the external features of the God-Man's life, led during the New Life phase.

In this narration of Meher Baba's life I have tried to create a pattern by shuttling back and forth often presenting an incident from the earlier years or quoting bits of messages given by Him during the later years. I have taken this liberty with the hope that in this way I might be able to weave a more comprehensive picture of His Life. A short life sketch of Meher Baba by His secretary-disciple, Adi K. Irani, forms the Introduction to the first volume of *Glimpses*; its reading will be helpful in arriving at a basic understanding of the life and work of Meher Baba — the *Avatar* of the age. To represent one of the common reactions regarding the role/mission of the *Avatar*, I intend to quote below a part of an interview which Meher Baba gave to a journalist at Nasik, India. The reporter was greatly impressed by Meher Baba's simple and profound replies on different subjects. But as he was not interested in the deeper aspects of life, he asked Meher Baba:

"What then is your philosophy about?"

"I have no philosophy."

"If you have no new philosophy to preach, what is your Job?"

"My job," Baba answered, without wincing at the word, "is to awaken the feeling of Godliness in *humanity*."<sup>5</sup>

During one of His visits to the West, in reply to a question, "What is God's business?" Meher Baba, with His unique sense of humor stated:

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<sup>5</sup> *The Awakener*, Vol. X, No. 2, (1964), p.1.

## PREFACE

God the everlasting and indivisible, transacts His universal illusory business of duality by playing His dual role of opposites simultaneously and eternally. Saints are God's assets and sinners are His liabilities. God, the infinite source of wisdom and justice, goes on eternally turning His liabilities into assets.<sup>6</sup>

And the Advent of God as the God-Man is to quicken this "business" through "the nobility of a life supremely lived, of a love unmixed with desire, of a power unused except for others, of a peace untroubled by ambition, of a knowledge undimmed by illusion."<sup>7</sup>

In other words, the *Avatar's* "business" is to awaken the heart of humanity, to the innermost presence of God. Meher Baba has often stated, "I have come not to teach but to awaken." The *Avatar* is the first, perfect miracle of the eternal awakening of God as God in Man, so He is known as the God-Man. In His unbounded love and compassion for humanity, age after age, the "first-born" assumes a human form and this is known as His Advent and as time is immeasurable He is also the Ancient One. In conclusion, I quote one of Meher Baba's messages declaring His divine status. He categorically stated:

I was Rama, I was Krishna, I was this One, I was that One, and now I am Meher Baba. In this form of flesh and blood I am that same Ancient One who alone is eternally worshipped and ignored, ever remembered and forgotten.

I am that Ancient One whose past is worshipped and remembered, whose present is ignored and forgotten and whose future (Advent) is anticipated with great fervour and longing.<sup>8</sup>

In the early years of my contact with Avatar Meher

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<sup>6</sup> Meher Baba, *Life At its Best*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Meher Baba, *Discourses*, Vol. 3, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Meher Baba, *The Everything and the Nothing*, p. 48.



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Baba, His overwhelming presence used to bother me a lot. The enormity of His Divinity would confuse me about the nature of my relationship with Him — the mighty, Infinite One. Sometimes I even feared that my weaknesses and drawbacks might take me away from Him! Then one day at Satara, as I was sitting in Meher Baba's presence, He asked me, "Any worry?" I said, though a bit shyly, "Baba, you are so Great and Infinite that I wonder whether I will hold on to you (to your *damaan*) till the very end." Baba looked at me with an expression conveying what a foolish question I had asked Him! He gestured that He is the Greatest and He is also the Smallest. Then He just smiled at me and it was a perfect answer. From this little event I gathered that whatever "great or small" is offered to Him in His loving remembrance pleases Him and takes one closer to Him. So in my own simple way, I am trying to please Beloved Avatar Meher Baba through *Glimpses*, and if others too feel pleased to some extent, glory be unto Him; it will be another joke of the Perfect Puppeteer!

I have tried to be accurate in the narration of Meher Baba's life and have quoted His statements and messages from authentic sources. In this important and responsible work, Eruch Jessawala, one of Meher Baba's closest disciples, greatly helped me by graciously going through the entire manuscript of *Glimpses, Vol. II*. His suggestions and corrections were most valuable and I feel greatly indebted to him for his loving guidance. If, however, a few errors have crept in, then I, as an amateur in this venture of writing, am responsible for them. However, when anyone sincerely tries to love the Eternal Beloved, Meher Baba, then a part of his heart becomes consecrated to Baba, to be used as He wishes. The lover's very being starts to become hollow as a reed. And when unaware of its "fluteness", Baba in His own time, plays a few good notes. If some lines from this writing appeal to anyone, the secret rests in the whim and pleasure of the Perfect Piper — Meher Baba.

## PREFACE

As a drop of rain finds its way to the ocean — its source and goal — so also, I hope that this writing, a feeble response to Avatar Meher Baba's love, shall reach Him, the Ocean of Love.

BAL NATU

Meherazad  
October 16, 1978

## *Meher Baba at Mount Abu*

1949 — Part I

### The Most Profound Phase

THE Advent of God as the God-Man is the perfect blending of the human and the Divine in one. So the life of the God-Man appears simple and appealing and yet mystical and puzzling as well; it cannot help being so. This quality manifested itself abundantly in the life of Avatar Meher Baba. Those who met Him, and especially those who lived with Him were amazed to watch Meher Baba's creative responses, so loving, so surprising! Countess Nadine Tolstoy, one of Meher Baba's disciples, has very aptly dealt with this aspect revealed through the life of the God-Man. She writes:

Everything in him is a wonder, yet he is the most simple and selfless man that ever existed. His state of constant and unceasing oneness never changes under conditions of any kind. It is really beyond all human understanding. So marvelously human, he is obviously beyond the human plane, yet he is the Friend, the soul and the heart of everyone.... He is perpetual, universal life-activity, reaching to all planes and forms, constantly helping, ordering, raying its power and love — in all directions simultaneously. Never at rest, yet always divinely at rest — he is the motion in stillness and peace ... In applying to him our human terms, we can give him all names and definitions, but it will be only a part of the truth, and only so far as our perfections can go. He remains ever beyond the definitions of the human mind. Being a

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super-conscious divine-man [God-Man], he is limitless, infinite, free and impersonal — "The Universal One." <sup>1</sup>

In the life of Avatar Meher Baba, the year 1949 will be especially remembered for ushering in the most human yet divine phase of His work. Its inauguration was veiled with unpredictability, and the mystery, which surrounded it for its duration, was not in the least dispelled at its termination. This phase, which commenced on October 16, is known as the New Life. Meher Baba lived this New Life to its fullest extent, but rarely explained much about it. When asked by one of His companions if such a New Life had been undertaken by anyone in the past or if He was the first One to introduce it, He replied, "I do not know and therefore I cannot say anything more than this viz., 'This is it whatever it is.'" This answer clearly shows that He did not wish to disclose the significance of this phase through words. We know something of its external aspects and have a few explanations given by Baba during this period, but little do they help us understand the link between His Old and New Life. Once Meher Baba stated:

Although the New Life has emerged from me, I am not at all bound by it . . . This New Life is endless, and even after my physical death will be kept alive by those who live the life of complete renunciation of falsehood, lies, hatred, anger, greed and lust; ... who do not let go the hand of Truth, and who, without being upset by calamities, bravely and wholeheartedly face all hardships with 100% cheerfulness, and give no importance to caste, creed and religious ceremonies.

This New Life will live by itself eternally, even if

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<sup>1</sup> Countess Nadine Tolstoy, "Meher Baba and My Spiritual Path," *Meher Baba Journal*, September, 1941, pp. 621, 623.

## MEHER BABA AT MOUNT ABU

there is no one to live it. [Reference missing]

From this it can be concluded that Meher Baba expected those who earnestly wished to know more about this phase to get into it boldly and that He would be their Eternal Companion. More about this profound phase as we come to that account in the latter part of the year — a most significant year!

### *A Special Circular*

To begin with, on New Year's Day a special circular<sup>2</sup> was sent to all the disciples and devotees of Meher Baba. The gist of some of the points mentioned therein is given below:

- (1) Meher Baba hinted at an impending personal disaster.
- (2) Meher Baba's close disciples were to be in readiness to face real tests and trials.
- (3) All those who believed in Meher Baba were asked to observe complete silence for the month of July, 1949.
- (4) From February 1 till the end of the year, the followers were not permitted to write letters to anyone, anywhere; however, for emergencies, telegrams were allowed.
- (5) The year 1949 will mark the artificial end to an artificial beginning and the Real Beginning to the Real End.
- (6) Although Baba is in everyone and in everything His work of spiritual awakening remains aloof from politics of any kind.

Everyone who received this circular was expected to acknowledge it. As regards communications, particularly those containing some instructions from Baba, He

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<sup>2</sup> *Circular NL 5*, issued on 10-3-1950.

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generally insisted on having signed acknowledgments. Perhaps He wished to ascertain that the offer of participating in His spiritual work had reached all His dear ones in time. In earlier days owing to this habit, a few even criticized Meher Baba by calling Him a "Circularwala Baba!"

In January, Baba did not disclose to the people in Meherazad<sup>3</sup> (near Pimpalgaon-Malvi) or at Meherabad<sup>4</sup> (near Arangaon), the New Life phase of complete renunciation, though indirectly He frequently hinted at it. About the *ashrams* at these two places He often conveyed to the resident *mandali*,<sup>5</sup> "I do not feel like caring for anything that is retained or given away. In spite of this, from now on, an immediate cut of 50% in all expenses should be effected." Did He wish to acclimate them to a harder life? He also instructed those who lived near Him to abstain from lust and greed of any kind. He advised the men to avoid even a formal handshake with women. Once Baba asked each of them whether he preferred to be buried, cremated or carried to the Tower of Silence in case he died! First and foremost, He expected them to remember Him wholeheartedly, while discharging their daily duties. In short, there was a remarkable change in Baba's attitude towards the closer ones as He was secretly preparing the ground to break the news to them at an opportune time about the New Life — "The Life of helplessness and hopelessness."

### The God-Man Contacts the God-intoxicated

In the first week of January, 1949 Baba resumed His work with the spiritual wayfarers who were deeply and

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<sup>3</sup> 15 kilometers to the north of Ahmednagar (M.S.), a place where Meher Baba resided during His last years.

<sup>4</sup> 9 kilometers to the south of Ahmednagar (M.S.). On a low hill is the Tomb of the Eternal Beloved, Meher Baba.

<sup>5</sup> Meher Baba generally referred to the group of His close disciples as *mandali*.

madly in love with God, the Beloved. To begin with, the appropriate Sufi term that Baba used for such a person is *mast*<sup>6</sup> meaning the God-intoxicated one. Just a few years after establishing Himself in the God-Man State, in August, 1924, Meher Baba inaugurated this unique phase of His work of contacting the *masts*. It was at Pathri, a place a few kilometers to the south of Hardwar. Here, Baba visited a recluse who was residing in a small hut by the roadside, which he rarely left. Baba later conveyed that this hermit was a high *mast* and added, "Any *mast* contacted before this one was incidental and anyone thereafter was purposely contacted." This particular and peculiar type of work gathered momentum as years passed by. In the 1940s it was in full swing. By 1965, a few years prior to the dropping of His body, this phase of Baba's work was practically over. The last outstanding *mast* contacted was Nilkanthwala from Rishikesh, who was especially brought to Meherazad.

There are hardly any references in the annals of religious and spiritual literature concerning the contacting, feeding and blessing, and bathing of God-intoxicated souls. Only in the *Ramayana* is it mentioned that Rama, the *Avatar*, visited the *ashrams* in the forest and, under some pretext, also visited many out of the way places to contact and guide the *masts*. But there is no account of it ever being done on the scale on which Baba did it. The *masts* whose hearts get drenched with "God's Wine" live far above the "bread-line". They not only perceive the Divine but live in It. In this immense, creative intoxication, they care little about outward cleanliness. *Masts* seem to overrule the laws of hygiene. Some of them dwell in incredibly filthy surroundings. But love has that grace which no dirt can defile. The life of a *mast* is an honest expression of what he feels within. His involvement in the internal life is so profound that his external actions of body and speech appear enigmatic and puzzling. Being devoid of

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<sup>6</sup> An Urdu word to be pronounced as "must".

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social influence and selfish motives, he behaves to please the Divine Beloved. But this makes him a laughing stock and he is regarded as a mad person!

Meher Baba has explained<sup>7</sup> the subtle points of difference between ordinary madness and divine intoxication. He has also thrown some light on how the God-Man draws these souls out of their self-sufficiency and uses them as the media for relaying spiritual power and help to humanity at large. In the *Avataric* Age the number of such souls, it seems, increases considerably. Meher Baba journeyed to distant cities in undivided India from Peshawar (in the north of Pakistan) to Trivandrum (in the south of India) and also to far off mountainous regions to meet these souls.<sup>8</sup> He wanted to awaken in them the need to cooperate in His Game of awakening humanity by sharing the spiritual responsibilities of the higher "planes of consciousness" on which they were stationed.

In January, 1949 Ali Shah, known as Bapji, was brought to Meherazad for Baba's contact. He was a *mast* of the fifth plane. He was exceptionally responsive to shouldering his spiritual responsibilities and Baba regarded him as one of His "Five Favorites". After his first contact in 1943, Baba called him more than twenty times to stay with Him for both short and long visits. Bapji's smile was warm and inviting, his voice was quite pleasant but his speech was disconnected and repetitious. For the rest of January, 1949, Baba regularly fed him with His own hands and sat alone with Bapji, in a room for solemn, speechless conferences. Sometimes, as Baba stepped out He looked very weary and the *mandali* gathered that the day's session had been rather tiring.

By the end of this month, one more *mast* named Mama who roamed about in Ahmednagar was brought to Baba for a few hours' contact. Mama was quite a bit

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<sup>7</sup> See: William Donkin, *The Wayfarers*.

<sup>8</sup> See: Bal Natu, *Glimpses of the God-Man, Meher Baba, Vol. I*



## MEHER BABA AT MOUNT ABU

taller and heavier than Ali Shah. His body was well shaped, but his shaved head, half-closed eyes and calm countenance distinguished him from others. Two decades later I chanced to see him in Ahmednagar. People told me that there was practically no change in his outward appearance, including his favorite dress of habitual red and white checkered garments. He would sit and rest anywhere he liked, whether on the dusty road or on the dung hill. Shams-e-Tabriz befittingly wrote, "The man of God is a treasure in a ruin."

### A Move to Mount Abu

By the first week of March, Baba decided to shift to Mount Abu. This was to be His headquarters for three months. It is a small hill-station in the Aravali Hills, in Southern Rajasthan. Owing to the spiritual atmosphere vibrant with the associations of many saints and some Masters, Hindus and Jains regard this region as exceptionally holy. This particular area abounds in the bounty of nature. In the evening, the hill tops, aglow with the setting sun, look marvelous. In the memories of those who visited Abu such scenes continue to linger with unfading enchantment. Abu Road is the nearest railway station. A special bungalow for Baba and the women *mandali* was taken on lease. The men *mandali* accommodated themselves in the rooms near Bhisti Nullah. In March, Baba set out on two long trips, one to Ajmer, the other to Ahmedabad, and two short visits to nearby places, Oria and Dilwara.

On March 8, Baba was at Ajmer to contact dear old Chacha whom He first met in February, 1939. It was during this meeting that Baba coaxed him into having a bath which was long overdue! Believe it or not, those who know him during this period said that it was his first bath in 30 years! Nur Ali Shah Pathan, known as Chacha, hailed from Peshawar. He came to Ajmer to teach Arabic but his love for the Arabian Prophet invited Divine Grace and, thoroughly drenched in love,

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he became a Perfect *Majzoob*. In that divinely absorbed state, Baba told the *mandali* that he consciously experienced Unity with God and was completely oblivious of the world. Chacha's physical actions could be likened to the rotations of a switched off ceiling fan. His body lay in a squalid hovel while he was enjoying the infinite Bliss of the "I am God State."

Baba wished to sit with Chacha where they wouldn't be disturbed, so Chacha was taken to Taraghar, an old fortress that overlooked the holy city. He was carried there in a sedan chair and Baba sat alone with him continuously for eight hours, which was quite unusual. During this period, Baba plied Chacha, at intervals, with tea and cigarettes. At the close of this meeting, Baba presented him with a turban, a blanket and also a silken coat that He was wearing. Chacha was then sent back with great care to his original place. What spiritual transactions were carried out in and through such meetings we do not know; Baba was most reluctant to explain the details and the significance of these visits.

On the fortress at Taraghar about forty Muslim widows belonging to the Shia sect were brought together and Baba very sympathetically gave some money to each. About such "gifts" William Donkin writes, "It is a kind of catalyst by which Baba is able to bring out a certain spiritual reaction." After visiting Kishangarh, Baba reached Sojat where the famous *mast*, Nuru Baba stayed. This *mast* originally came from Punjab. One fine morning he came to Sojat which is in Rajasthan and started living on the verandah of someone's house. Nuru Baba was a born *mast* and wore no clothes. Who would welcome such a strange nude visitor? The *mast* was driven away. But he adamantly sat on a nearby slab of stone for days, in sun and rain. Owing to some striking experiences, the owner of the house finally felt compelled to request Nuru Baba to sit wherever he wished. It was on this verandah that Baba first met him in 1941. At that time the *mast* was surrounded by a band of dogs.

These details are recorded to indicate how unbelievable

are the life stories of the *masts*! A few Westerners may treat them as "Oriental nonsense" but they are true. Like the birds, the *masts* do not leave the footprints of their spiritual journey; it is for the physicians and psychologists to debate over the physiological and psychological issues involved in such incredible states. The inconceivable miracles which the *masts* have performed can provide them with another field for extensive investigation. The God-Man clearly knows the real worth of the spiritual states attained by the *masts* and their potentialities which can be used for His inner spiritual work. On the whole, Baba was happy to meet Nuru Baba in Sojat, on that memorable verandah. With reference to such *masts*, pointing at His fingers, where people generally wear rings, Baba used to gesture, "These are my gems." What an incredible Jeweler!

On the way back to Mount Abu the party stopped at Abu Road where after a lapse of eight years Baba again contacted Khuda Baksha. This *mast*, with steadfast devotion and with a vow of silence, had stayed in a shrine for many years. This time he offered Baba a *lungi* and Baba honored his gift of love by wearing it once. On March 11, He reached the headquarters.

The second tour of the month began with a visit to Ahmedabad. Baba was pleased to contact an old God-intoxicated person and offered him six cigars. After meeting Rehman and Bapu of Khambat, He returned to Mount Abu. For the rest of the month Baba met *sadhus* and *yogis* residing in nearby places. The two contacts worth noting were of Matragiri Maharaj at Oria and Haridas Nirvan at Abu Road. Matragiri greeted Baba warmly. He had penetrating, deep set eyes. In all seasons he wore only a loin cloth and ate whatever was offered to him. Hence he was also known as *aghor* — the indiscriminating one. He was tall and slim but his age was a subject of guess work. Some *yogis* have about them this quality of agelessness. Haridas Nirvan belonged to this category. He sat under a patched umbrella, its handle tied to a big stone. When he saw Baba he was

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overjoyed to see the *Avatar*; out of sheer joy, tears began to roll down his cheeks. Baba consolingly stroked him and helped him to compose himself. Baba was also happy to meet a good *yogi* who had been undergoing severe penance for forty years at Dilwara. He was known as Bengali Baba. With such loving and lively meetings with the advanced souls around Mount Abu, the month of March was over.

### Baba Feeds a Love-hungry Mast

In the second week of April, 1949, Baba wished to visit Akola, one of the biggest cities in Maharashtra. Here He contacted a few God-intoxicated souls who were moving in the city like the dutiless doves and harnessed them to work as they played with the Divine Presence. Among these was Chamma Mai, a fat *mastani*. The carefree attitude of the wayfarers generally kept them healthy and sometimes made them chubby too.

On the way to Nagpur, the party reached Badnera where Baba learned about a very good *mast* — Badri Baba who had moved to a small village named Chandratara. News of a high *mast* would invariably make Baba impatient to meet him. It was evening but He was not willing to wait till the next morning. Baba's men made inquiries about transportation to the village. The road was very rough and the journey of 15 kilometers was only possible by bullock cart. Baba readily agreed to this bone-shattering conveyance, so they all huddled into a bullock cart and started off. As it left the town the road deteriorated and the wooden wheels alternately lurched over the rocks in the path or slid into the well-worn ruts, causing the cart to jolt violently. About two hours later, during one such jolting, a bundle of currency notes worth seven hundred rupees slipped out of Eruch's well-buttoned coat; one of his shoes followed suit. When he became aware of this he told Baba about it, who gestured, "Don't think in the least about the money now. At present contacting the *mast* matters most." So the *mandali*

continued the journey, without wasting time searching for the wallet.

The party reached Chandratara after midnight. This *mast*, Badri Baba, had a few peculiar habits. If he so wished, he would sleep or sit at any place not only for hours but even for a couple of days! Owing to the reverence that people had for him, no one would disturb him. After Baba's arrival the *mast* repeatedly cried aloud, "I am hungry. I am hungry." Was he asking for *prasad* at the hands of the God-Man? Baba was very particular in fulfilling the wishes of the *masts*. So Baba's men, even in the dead of night, secured a bowl of goat's milk, raw sugar and millet bread. Baba offered this to the *mast* and both felt very pleased. Baba picked this particular time to be with Badri Baba for a secluded contact. The meeting was not over until 2:30 in the morning and then the party started back. To light their way Chhagan walked ahead holding a torch in either hand. Luckily, after a few miles he spotted Eruch's shoe and then the bundle of notes intact. The *mandali* were very relieved to get the wallet back, not for the money it contained, but because it represented a sacred trust. Baba was very particular about the use of every paisa or cent offered to Him by His dear ones. In spite of the night's vigil Baba looked very cheerful. This was mostly due to His contact with Badri Baba. By dawn the party reached Badnera to prepare themselves for the next move.

#### The God-Man Invites Suffering!

On April 15, Baba reached Nagpur. One of his disciples named Jal Kera-wala was working there as the Commissioner. He wished to offer his car to Baba for the *mast-tour*. To ensure that it would be in good working order he had specially sent it to a workshop for a check-up and necessary repairs, if any. In all journeys with Baba the *mandali* carried many pieces of luggage; they knew Baba's needs and always tried their best to provide Him with the things He might require in response to His

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inner spiritual work. So the luggage rack on the top of the car was overloaded with packages of all sizes. The car had to carry a complement of six — Baba, Kaka, Baidul, Eruch, Chhagan and Vishnu.

The same day Baba left for Seoni, a place 130 kilometers to the north of Nagpur. After a drive of 40 kilometers the party reached Ramtek. It was nine at night. By the side of the road there was a low hill about 230 meters high. At every stop Baba's disciples would ask people about the *masts* and saints residing in that area. Here they learned that in one of the huts on the hill, there lived a saintly personality. At Baba's instructions, two from the group left to confirm the news. The saint, who was perhaps engaged in his daily prayers and devotion, refused to open the door to meet Baba's men. The One whom he was worshipping had come to bless him, but unfortunately the saint missed this precious meeting! So it was ordained. What an irony! Didn't Baba know this in advance? The God-Man knew that His men would go up the hill and return unsuccessful, but as Man, in His mission of "doing good", Baba could not pass by without inquiring of the saint.

As the car sped on, things began to go wrong with it in quick succession. The car got two flats and was crippled. Patching them with a small repair kit they had with them they moved on. When they got 10 kilometers from Seoni they got another flat and in addition the engine developed minor troubles. All patching, pumping and repairing failed. The car could go no further than a few yards at a time. It was 4 A.M. and the Baba-party was thus held up on a lonely road. Chhagan volunteered to walk the distance and get the necessary new parts from the town. In his haste however, he forgot to take money with him. Hence Vishnu had to follow him into town with the money. That same night there had been a robbery in Seoni. The police were milling around. When they spotted lanky, fatigued Chhagan they suspected that he was one of the bandits. This incident gives an idea of the arduous and awkward situations

which the *mandali* had to endure in mast tours. Chhagan managed finally to convince the police officer that he was not a burglar but a prospective customer on the way to buy necessary parts for a stranded car. Luckily he met Vishnu and the purchases were able to be made. By late morning Baba reached Seoni. The night's drive illustrates how the God-Man, in relation to His inner work, sometimes deliberately allows Himself to suffer, and those who accompany Him have to participate cheerfully in this *Avataric* Game!

In the 1930s Baba used to dictate letters to His close disciples and then add His signature, M. S. Irani. In one of these letters, pertaining to His relationship with the *mandali*, Baba wrote to William Donkin, "I am very strict with all the *mandali* and extract the last ounce from each. You will not find it always easy. It will be difficult at times but interesting. Still, if you love me then you will be prepared to face up to anything and obey implicitly. So, above all love me more and more. Only those who love can live near me." The type of tours mentioned above illustrate very well such statements of Baba. By the way, it may be stated that in the subsequent journey there was no further difficulty with the car. After contacting a *mast* at Seoni, Baba left for Jabalpur.

"I Take Nothing; I Give Nothing"

In 1939, Baba had opened a *mast ashram* in Jabalpur (M.P.). Baidul knew the lanes and streets where the *masts* dwelt or roamed about. One by one, the old-timers were contacted. One of them wandered in the city holding a long piece of bamboo in his hand; another carried a bundle of rags, while a *mastani* named Raji had a basket over her head with all sorts of junk in it. Various were the outward fancies of those who were intoxicated with the beatific visions on the Path. From skin to core they longed and lived only to see God. On the way to Katni, a fairly big town, the Baba-party

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reached Jumunia where an "adept pilgrim"<sup>9</sup> named Dada Thanthanpal stayed. His striking personality shone through his features. He was much revered by the people. They believed that his blessings brought them good luck in business and many other mundane affairs. Dada, however, often blurted out, "I don't take anything from anyone; I don't give anything to anyone. I don't care a fig for anyone and anything." But this very attitude of total indifference drew large crowds to him. Baba was happy to contact him and it seemed that his company gave Baba a genuine delight. Later, He conveyed to the *mandali*, "Dada is very loving and lovable as a 'lamb'." And then He added, "But he also radiates high spiritual power. If one were to sit near him longer one would feel that he were in the company of a [spiritual] 'tiger'" Dada Thanthanpal represented a rare blending of the *jamali* and *jalali* qualities.

The party proceeded to Mandla where Baba renewed His meeting with Dhaniram. Baba's presence flooded the heart of the *mast* with Divine love. Beholding the God-Man, the *mast* with eyes aflame, stared at Baba and spoke lovingly, "I know who You are!" Such spontaneous utterances from the spiritually advanced souls often disclosed Baba's divine status as the *Avatar* of the Age.

### The Astounding Fact

Katni is about 160 kilometers from Mandla. The Baba-party arrived in this city to contact the God-Man and the God-intoxicated ones. It was learnt that years ago a *mast* had arrived here from Mandla, on horse-back. As soon as he got down, the horse galloped back to its owner. The name of the *mast* was Mehtab Shah. He lived with a tailor who accommodated him in his small shop. Another *mast* contacted wore on his arms and legs over twenty

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<sup>9</sup> A spiritual wayfarer on the fifth or sixth plane of consciousness.



iron and brass rings. It seems that iron is a favourite metal with the *masts*.

The remarkable contact at this place was with Sobha, a *majzoob-like* mast of a high order. He was spotted at the back of a *dharmshala* — a free and charitable rest house. His seat was by the public latrines which were most unclean. Sobha was probably one of the filthiest *masts* contacted by Baba. Over a heap of refuse of every sort he continued to sit for hours and days. He was reluctant to leave his seat even to answer the calls of nature! Yet, he looked perfectly healthy. The hygienic laws of the gross world are nullified by the supervening laws of the spiritual planes. About the squalid and soiled surroundings in which the *masts* were found, Baba, a few months later explained at Poona:

To live in dirty surroundings, such as in or near a latrine or urinal, is one way of utterly forgetting one's bodily existence. And the beauty of it is that when the body is utterly neglected or forgotten — because the consciousness is aware only of love for the Divine Beloved — it does not deteriorate but takes care of itself automatically. The minds of ordinary people are constantly busy looking after their bodies, but they find that, in spite of taking every kind of precaution and care, deterioration can never be avoided altogether. Kabir said,  
Tan tajye tan rahe, *tan rakhe tan jue*;  
*Yehi achamba hamne dekha, mada kalko khae.*

Discard the body, it remains,  
Preserve the body, it goes;  
And so the astounding fact emerges  
That the [uncared for] corpse eats up death.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> William Donkin, *The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, the Mad and the Poor*, p. 23. (San Francisco: Sufism Reoriented, Inc., 1969).

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From Katni, Baba proceeded southeast to reach Rewah. Here a very advanced soul named Hafizi was contacted. Baba mentioned to the *mandali* that he too was an "adept pilgrim" like Dada Thanthanpal. With a *dhoti* — a piece of white cloth — Hafizi used to cover his whole body from shoulder to ankle. Though he was a centenarian he looked quite radiant. He was respected by Hindus and Muslims alike. He generally lived in a village named Maignaj. The car sped on to Allahabad. In this holy city another *salik-like* person was contacted. He was an old Hindu Sufi, well-versed in Persian. Because of his knowledge of Sufism, some began to address him as *Inayat* Sain while he referred to himself as a *paramhansa*; Baba mentioned that he was a good *mast*. But what is there in a name or term whether Hindu, Muslim, Jew or Christian! It is the name of God and one's love for Him that leads the way.

Following Baba's instructions, Jal Kerawala sent his chauffeur to Allahabad and the car was taken back to Nagpur. Baba, nevertheless, wished to continue His mast work. He proceeded by train to Gonda in Uttar Pradesh via Fyzabad. In 1942, He had visited these two places and most of the *masts* had the guiding touch of the God-Man. At that time in Gonda, a *mastani* named Nurjehan was contacted in a brothel. Baidul had entreated her to get into a rickshaw with her mass of rags piled beside her seat. This time too, she was taken to the same place where Baba contacted her. No place is sacrilegious for the *Avatar* to meet the real lovers of God.

### Effect of Refusing the God-Man's Gift

Baba reached Bahraih. A *mast* of this place was fascinated by the workings of the railway station. The changing of railway signals, the distant whistles and the clack-clack of the railway joints had a musical appeal for him. He roamed about, mostly on the railway premises. His additional fancy was for iron rings. Hence

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he was called Lohewala Baba (*loha* means iron). He did not immediately agree to accompany Baidul to his "Elder Brother", Baba. Instead he got into a railway engine and, like a locomotive inspector, watched the clocks and keys, expressed his satisfaction and got down. This was the right moment for Baidul to lead him to the waiting room where Baba was waiting for the *mast*.

Another God-intoxicated one passed most of his time in the compound of the Magistrate's Court. On the day of contact, Baba and Baidul saw him coming out of one of the court rooms. He asked Baba for a *dhoti*. Baba had it purchased immediately, offered it to him and in addition gave him some sweets. Through this physical exchange, Baba seemed to have established the required contact. Perhaps it should be mentioned that, incredible as it seems, during those days in India it was often possible to find the "holy mads" even living in railway yards and courts.

The next contact was with a *majzoob-like* soul. In his state of *majzoobiyat*, he did not partake of the *prasad* given by Baba. To refuse the gift of the God-Man is to deny the operation of Universal Compassion. Such refusal by Divine Law, adversely affects the spiritual progress of the person concerned. So Baba felt rather sad at this. He sent His men, one by one to see whether the *mast* ate the *prasad* or not. Only after getting the news that the *mast* swallowed or nibbled all the eatables did Baba feel relieved and happy too. Baba worried not for Himself but for the good of the *mast*.

This reminds me of an incident in the later period known as the "Fiery Free Life". It was in this phase that Baba visited many places in the north and south of India to give *darshan* to the public. At a place in the district of Hamirpur (U.P.), a person running an orphanage asked Baba for some financial help. Baba assured him of a large sum but expressed a wish to wash the feet of the orphans. The person agreed to this, willingly. Accordingly, Baba commenced pouring water on the feet of the first boy. He was just about to place His forehead

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on them when the teenager, though unintentionally withdrew his feet. This made Baba extremely displeased and He became very serious. He left the place and conveyed to His people that He wished to cancel all the succeeding programs and return to Meherazad. At the request of His lovers in Hamirpur, He, however, suggested an alternative to counteract the adverse effect created by the boy's withdrawing his feet. He asked them to bring 14 boys, all fourteen years old, together next morning before sunrise for His contact. He wished to wash their feet and bow down to them. The frantic search in that illiterate area, where the parents did not know the years in which their children were born, was a story in itself. Suffice it to say that by dawn the Baba lovers had succeeded in this strange task entrusted to them. Baba felt happy and the programs were carried out as scheduled.

### "Permitted and Allowed"

From Bahraih, on April 24, 1949, Baba reached Benares. During His short stay the meeting with Batwa Shah who was a renowned personality in Benares is worth recording. Born in a wealthy family, he could have easily continued to live the so-called good life. But his wallowing in luxuries came to a sudden end. Batwa Shah was blessed with God's gift of Love. Divine Love has a strange quality of reversing one's values completely. In his deep devotion and intoxication he would at times be in a *majzoob-like* state and then sometimes numberless lice would swarm around his body but he would remain unconcerned. On some occasions, when in a *salik-like* state, he seemed very affectionate and children looked upon him as their *chacha* (uncle). He was fond of carrying a few sheets of paper and a very long pencil. Sometimes he was engrossed in writing which was illegible. Baba has stated that this trait of scribbling, whether on paper or on roads, belongs to the *jamali* type of *masts*.

When the Baba-party approached this glorious personality,

Baidul asked him to go into a nearby mosque where it would be convenient for Baba to meet him all alone. But Batwa Shah refused and replied, "I have left visiting any mosque!" He was then asked to go with them to some other secluded place but he was unwilling to leave his seat. Therefore, Baba left him and continued His work with the other *masts* in Benares. In the evening the party returned once again to this majestic *mast*. Baba instructed Eruch to plead with consummate skill and win him over. With Baba's help Eruch succeeded and Batwa Shah agreed to keep an appointment at 9 o'clock the same night.

When Baba arrived there were no people around Batwa Shah and he was lying on a *charpai* (Indian bed made by interweaving criss-cross ropes of coir). Baba sat by his side and His loving touch evoked the necessary response. The *mast* exchanged looks with Baba and commenced eating from a plate, lying on his bed. Soon he pushed it towards Baba, gesturing that He should partake of the rest of the food. To please the *mast* Baba gradually finished the leftovers. Just then another of Batwa Shah's devotees brought some food. He ate a few morsels and fortunately the rest of it was not offered to Baba but to the one who had handed it over to him.

After supper this *mast* — partly *salik*, partly Majzoob — had a peculiar whim. He asked Baba to scratch his back! Baba was well conversant in this art as His first Master, Hazrat Babajan, had often asked Him to scratch her back. Baba lovingly commenced this service. The *mast* did not feel satisfied till Baba had done it diligently for about an hour! Was not Baba's love and service for the *masts* matchless? At the close of this contact the *mast* most unexpectedly said in English, "Permitted and allowed." No one from the *mandali* expected Batwa Shah to speak in English, much less so correctly.

A few years earlier the *mandali* had a similar surprise when a *mast* in Mathura presented Baba with a new copy of *The Perfect Master* by Purdom, published in England, which he fished out of a heap of dirty rags

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over which he was sitting. The *masts* are not what they appear outwardly, and Batwa Shah's words indicated Baba's specific working on the inner plane of consciousness. With reference to this, William Donkin wrote, "The whole thing is a mystery as deep and insoluble as Life itself." However, those who accompanied Baba on His *mast tours*, including William Donkin, intuitively believed and genuinely sensed that Baba was accomplishing great spiritual work by contacting the *masts* at different places.

From Benares the Baba-party journeyed on to Gaya which is regarded as one of the holy places in Bihar. A few *masts* and an "initiate pilgrim"<sup>11</sup> had the good fortune to have Baba's spiritual touch. By the end of April, Baba returned to His headquarters at Mount Abu.

### A Strange Way of Maintaining Contact

In the first week of May, after a little rest, Baba resumed His work with the advanced souls on the Path who were residing near Mount Abu. Bengali Baba, Haridas Nirvan and Matragiri Maharaj had been contacted a month ago; Baba revisited them. A few *sadhus* living in caves were also contacted. During this stay, Baba adopted a new method for maintaining contact with a certain *mast*. In Benares, Baba had met a person named Lakaria Baba. He was a middle-aged fat person. He used to give talismans to people to relieve them of their anxieties. Outwardly he looked like a well-fed, happy-go-lucky person. Baba, nevertheless, told the *mandali* that he was "an advanced pilgrim"<sup>12</sup> and asked Eruch to get his name and address. He also instructed Eruch to give it to Him after their return to the headquarters. At Mount Abu, Eruch gave that slip to Baba. He kept that piece of paper on a table by His bed for

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<sup>11</sup> A spiritual wayfarer on the first or the second plane of consciousness.

<sup>12</sup> A spiritual wayfarer on the third or fourth plane of consciousness.

a few days. On May 4, He crumpled it into a small ball and asked Eruch to drop it into a certain well near Bhisti Nullah where the men *mandali* resided. The meaning behind this peculiar procedure Baba alone knew, for He sometimes gestured that His work with the God-intoxicated souls was a personal spiritual affair, and none need expect to know the why and wherefore of it.

On May 12, the Baba-party left for a long tour in the south. The first *mast* contacted during this tour was a majzoob-like person at Palanpur. It was a small state. The uncle of the *Nawab* had great regard for this *mast* named Amir Shah. He had built a special room for him. The *majzoob* dwelt there absorbed in and overpowered with the love of God. He was devoid of any artifice and never courted any reverence. People, however, brought food and placed it before him. But Amir Shah would often be so preoccupied with his esoteric ecstasies that goats and dogs would enter his room and leisurely munch the food, fruit or whatever was there. With a smile that was genuinely compassionate, Baba visited the *majzoob*. He was very pleased with this contact. The reason may be that through such *majzoobs*, life flows in its most pure and sublime expression, unhampered by self-conscious thoughts.

### Concealing and Revealing Baba's Identity

From Palanpur, Baba proceeded for Gulbarga via Bombay. The journey was, as usual, by a train which was overcrowded. This particular station, Gulbarga, brings to mind an incident which illustrates one of Baba's typical ways of meeting those who yearned for His *darshan*. It was 1942 and Baba with a few of His *mandali* was traveling on this route. The Baba-party managed to accommodate themselves in the corner of a crowded compartment. At one of the stations an old bearded Mohammedan, with a five-year old boy, was trying to get in but was pushed back by the passengers. As the

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train was about to start he wholeheartedly appealed, "For God's sake, at least take the boy inside." And the God Man was there to help him. In spite of the volley of protests from the other passengers, Baba asked His men to take the boy inside. Meanwhile the old man hung on to the handle bar of some other compartment. At every station the old man would get down and come by the window to have a look at his dear child. Seeing this, Baba suggested that His disciples also make room for the old man near them. It was again a difficult task. He had to be pulled inside through a window. Baba tucked His legs under Him and asked the old person to sit rather comfortably. The old man felt extremely relieved. He was going as far as Gulbarga.

Baba silently gestured to one of the *mandali* to ask him if he knew of any saintly or mast-like people living near Gulbarga. The venerable old man asked him, "What place do you belong to? May I know your intention in meeting such saintly personalities?" He was told that they were from around Poona. It was also made clear that they had no intention of reaping any material gains by contacting saints and *masts*. They revered them just for their love of God. At this the old man interjected, "You look like Parsees. You live near Poona. And Ahmednagar is quite close to your place. And yet you do not know about Meher Baba! What a pity!" Baba's men had to suppress a smile and to listen attentively to what the man was saying. He continued, "I had been to Ahmednagar twice, but unfortunately could not see Meher Baba. I am determined to visit Ahmednagar with my family to pay my respects to Him. So, dear brothers, instead of inquiring of other saints and Masters, I strongly recommend that you meet Meher Baba."

During *mast* tours to conceal His identity, Baba generally wore a Kashmiri cap and dark glasses. After some time the old man thanked the Baba-party and got down at Gulbarga. A few minutes later Baba asked Eruch to go and find this aged gentleman and present



him with a copy of the *Meher Baba Journal*<sup>13</sup> which had a picture of Baba in it. Eruch was also to disclose to this person that he had been fortunate enough to sit in the compartment by Meher Baba's side and that he and his family had been blessed by Him. He no longer need visit Ahmednagar to see Baba in person.

Eruch found the old man just as he was about to get into a *tonga* (a horse carriage) and Baba's message was conveyed to him. The man was astonished and could not believe what had happened. He left the boy in the *tonga* and followed Eruch, who was making his way back to the train, "cursing" him all the way for not revealing Baba's identity sooner. He thought that young Eruch had deliberately concealed the secret to make fun of him. By the time Eruch got into the compartment the train whistled and started up. Just in time, Baba with the tender heavenly radiance that beautified His face, leaned out of the window. He had taken off the cap and the glasses and therefore the old man could easily recognize Him as Meher Baba. As the train pulled out Baba placed His healing hand on the old man's head and blessed him. As the man lifted up his face, the train was slowly leaving the platform. Wonderful are Baba's ways of concealing and revealing His identity!

### A Marvelous Meeting

To get back to the account of 1949, Baba reached Gulbarga and proceeded for Khandal to meet a high *mast* named Guru Appaswami. Formerly, he went about completely naked, but lately he had started wearing clothes. *Masts*, in fact, need no footwear or headgear. In their madness to see and unite with the Infinite, they become "footless and headless". Appaswami at the beginning was reluctant to meet Baba. A few *masts*, at the outset, behave like naughty children but the God Man is like the Divine Mother. Therefore, Baba sat

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<sup>13</sup> A monthly devoted to Meher Baba (Nov., 1938 to Oct., 1942).

beside Appaswami and lovingly gazed at him. Baba's presence penetrated and enlightened the consciousness of the *mast* and this delighted him. There was a marked change in his manner and his unwillingness melted into cooperation. Baba offered him sweets. Like a child, this little favour mollified him and he became quite affectionate. He asked for tea and even asked Baba to have a little of it. In the end, Appaswami very affectionately embraced Baba. As a token of love Baba gave him a bed-sheet and a carpet as parting gifts. This "give and take" of things, whatever they may be, is a symbolic expression of communion on the inner planes of spiritual existence, where words have no access.

On Baba's return to the city, He contacted the *mast* Lal Mohammed known as *Buddhi* (meaning an old woman). Baba gave him some cigarettes. Later the same day, the Baba-party left for Hyderabad with a short break at Yadgiri, to meet Tilgur Swami, the *Jivanmukta*<sup>14</sup> who stayed in a village called Tumkur. According to Meher Baba, Tilgur Swami was a God-realized soul in *Turiya Avastha* — the Divine Junction. When last contacted, he was fully dressed but this time he had no clothes on. He seemed to recognize Baba and very ardently embraced Him. A wonderful scene and a marvelous meeting of the two God-realized Ones. One, as *Jivanmukta*, had no spiritual duty, while the other, as the *Avatar*, was eternally duty-bound. About Tilgur Swami having given up the use of his clothes, Meher Baba explained, "Although a *Jivanmukta* does not himself change his habits, his habits, nevertheless change of their own accord."<sup>15</sup>

### Mast Contacts at Hyderabad

Baba and the party reached Hyderabad by May 16,

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<sup>14</sup> A Perfect One who has God-consciousness with Creation-consciousness. For details see: Meher Baba, *God Speaks*.

<sup>15</sup> William Donkin, *The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, the Mad and the Poor*, p. 28.

and stayed there for three days. On the first day three *masts* were contacted. One was an ex-serviceman and another was a policeman. Dina Shah, the one from the army, was very old. He carried three bamboo sticks with him wherever he went. These seemed indispensable to him. The other *mast* who was living in a mosque often cooked food and distributed it to the visitors. Nazir Ali, the third one, was very particular about collecting bits of paper. He felt that some pieces might have God's name printed on them. He wished to save people from committing the sin of trampling over the Holy Name. A good job and a worthy duty!

The second day's mast-work commenced with the contact of Amir Ahmed, a *wali* who was fond of *pan* (betel leaf). As was the case in 1945, Rajah Mastan was spotted while moving through the city. Baidul pleaded with him to get into a rickshaw and Baba had a secluded time with him in a room in a cemetery. At parting, Rajah gave Baba a lot of broken china. Baba asked Vishnu to count the pieces; there were 70. Vishnu was instructed to keep them safe till the party reached Mount Abu. Kale Khan had a good physique and he looked like a well-dressed gentleman; this was unusual in the case of a *mast*. When he passed by the road Baba recognized his spiritual worth and asked Baidul to get him. He was led to a restaurant where Baba fed him with His own hands. After a few more contacts in the city, the second day's work was over.

On the final day, in the early morning Baba visited Saiyid Moeinuddin. In 1945 he was contacted thrice. At the first meeting, Baba had to wait patiently for three hours to find him in a favourable mood. He loved sweets. These were offered to him but that did not dampen his hot temper. This time, despite all entreaties, he refused to be with Baba for a quiet contact. Some of the *masts*, anticipating that the *Avatar's* contact would mean their shouldering greater responsibility, tried to evade Him. Baba in His ineffable love and inimitable patience never contacted a *mast* against his wish. Hence, Moeinuddin

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was not contacted that day. Baba, however, might have felt that His spiritual work had to be shared by someone on the higher planes.

The *mandali*, therefore, tried to find some other *masts*. They were informed of Anand Swami who daily bathed at a certain tap. He had a peculiar habit of using dust to scrub his body. The party set out to meet him. On the way they unexpectedly noticed Shastri Bua. In his snuff-tinted and tea-stained dirty clothes no one could have guessed that once he was a *shastri* (a scholar) of great repute. But now he was a *mast* of the sixth plane and was not concerned with the scriptures at all. On the sixth plane, one sees the Beloved (God) face to face everywhere, continuously. The "finite" sees the Infinite; it is a strange stage! The bliss of seeing God and the agony of being separate from Him are simultaneously experienced. The final Union of the soul with the Oversoul needs the grace of the Perfect Master. Therefore, Meher Baba's contacts with those on the sixth plane had special significance. Baba had met this great *mast* on His last visit to Hyderabad. On this day he was taken to a *sarai* (a free rest-house), where Baba sat alone with him. After some time, Anand Swami too was seen near the tap. Baba was pleased to meet him. He conveyed that these two short meetings lifted the heavy spiritual burden that lay on Him. The same day Baba left Hyderabad. He reached Mount Abu on May 29, 1949.

### Baba The Emperor

In the last week of May, Baba with all the *mandali* left Mount Abu for Meherazad. On the way He stopped for a day in Bombay as His heart went out in sympathy for His "dear children" — the *masts*. He met three of them. Bora was an old person. One easily felt in him the presence of a highly evolved soul. Under an awning made of cardboard and sack, he received Baba's divine touch. The name of the next *mast* is not known. The

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day he arrived in Bombay he started observing silence. People would see him sitting on Sandhurst Road, by the pavement of a cemetery, absorbed in communion with the Divine. In spite of his dirty clothes, his face shone all the more gracefully. At the time of contact the flashes in Baba's eyes must have conveyed many messages to this anonymous *mast* who had exceptional lustre in his eyes.

During Baba's visit to Dhamangaon, in 1944, He waded through muddy fields for three miles to contact "an adept pilgrim" named Mungsaji Maharaj. To one of Baba's men, he later conveyed that Meher Baba was the Emperor of "*masts* and saints". It was learnt that he had come to stay at Churchgate, a suburb of Bombay. Baba paid a special visit to him. With these three contacts, Baba left Bombay for Meherazad, His permanent headquarters. Next day the *mandali* placed before Baba the gifts given by the *masts*. He instructed them to store "this treasure" neatly and safely in the boxes specially kept for this purpose. If Baba ever loved any material things, it would be these gifts from the *masts* which He regarded as His precious possessions!

On Baba's arrival, Adi sent Him the mail collected at Ahmednagar during Baba's tours. In spite of the ban on correspondence there were letters addressed to Him. These were mostly from those who had recently heard or read about Baba. He consented to hear the gist of each and Adi was asked to convey Baba's blessings and the necessary instructions, if any, to them. In reply to a letter to one of the old timers, Baba humorously spelt out, "No personal letters; and Babadas is not to send me even impersonal letters! " In this correspondence there was a telegram from one of His devotees in Gujarat, telling of the passing away of a dear one in the family. In reply Baba sent a message that the family should not mourn over the departed one's freedom from delusion and illusion. Among the foreign mail, Von Frankenberg and Gabriel Pascal had asked Baba for guidance in their lives and work. Frankenberg was the

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Khalif — the leader of the Sufi movement in Australia. Pascal was a renowned Hollywood personality and he had a plan to produce a film of Baba's life.

### The Saviour "Saved!"

In between the strenuous mast tours from the headquarters at Mount Abu and the impending Great Seclusion that was to commence by the third week of June, Baba wished to rest for a short time by the sea; though for Baba, rest didn't differ much from work. Vengurla is a place to the south of Bombay in the district of Ratnagiri. The Government rest house, which in Maharashtra is called a dak bungalow, was reserved. Baba with a small group stayed here for a short while. During this period a rare event took place which for years even some of the resident mandali did not know about. After many years, Eruch casually referred to this incident.

One morning at Vengurla, Baba went out with the mandali to swim in the sea, and selected a far-off secluded beach for the purpose. All had a good time. Baba asked the mandali to continue swimming for a while and then to return to the rest house on foot. It was quite a long walk. Baba, however, decided to leave earlier with Eruch for He wanted to contact a certain mast before lunch. So He preferred to reach the town by taking a shorter route through a narrow creek.

There were some fishermen's children there, with a hollowed-out palm tree which served as a canoe, who offered to ferry them across. After admonishing them to be careful, Baba and Eruch got in, and the boys proceeded to paddle them across the creek. For awhile all went well. But then other boys, seeking to tease their friends, swam alongside and in their playful struggle with their friends, the canoe was inadvertently tipped over. Baba and Eruch were flung headlong into the filthy water of the creek, but fortunately, as they sank Eruch was able to grasp Baba's arm and then, holding Baba

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with one hand, and the satchel, alphabet board, etc., with the other, he managed to swim to the shore, using his feet only. Both of them were thoroughly soiled. Baba told Eruch to run back to the rest house and obtain clean clothes for Him, so Eruch found a secluded spot under a tree behind an old building for Baba, and ran three-fourths of a mile to the rest house. The *mandali* had not returned to the rest house, and Eruch had to "break into" Baba's room through a bathroom.

On his return he found Baba sitting blissfully under a tree. Eruch recalled that as far as he knew, this had been the first time in many years that Baba had been left entirely alone in a town with no *mandali* nearby. Eruch obtained water from a well and helped Baba to wash Himself and to change His clothes. Eruch still looked filthy. They both, however, proceeded to the town and Baba contacted the *mast* of His choice. Baba was in an exceptionally happy mood and conveyed to Eruch, "As you rescued me today from the filthy water of the creek, so one day I will release you from the filth of Illusion!" An enviable promise!

## *Seclusion Preceding Meher Baba's New Life*

1949 — Part II

### About the Blue Bus at Meherazad

MEHER BABA's forty days' seclusion was to commence in the last week of June, 1949. He knew that He had to accomplish great and glorious spiritual work in that period. Immediately after His return from Vengurla where He had had a few days' rest and relaxation, Baba resumed His work with the *masts* on June 7, by inviting Ali Shah to stay at Meherazad. For eleven days Baba daily fed him, bathed him, and sat alone with him for an hour or two. Ali Shah, known as Bapji, with an innocent smile readily consented to Baba's wishes.

These God-intoxicated souls on the fifth or the sixth plane of consciousness were the media through which Baba channeled some of the divine power in the higher realms for its release in this world at an opportune time. Among those who cooperated with Baba in this task, Ali Shah was the foremost. With his heart set aflame with intense longing to see God as He should be seen, Ali Shah had established himself on the fifth plane. In a way he was also the luckiest to have the God-Man as the Guide to lead him on to Him — God, the Beloved.

Simultaneously, final preparations were being made for Baba's seclusion quarters. Baba chose the old body of the Blue Bus in which He, with His cosmopolitan group of disciples, had extensively traveled throughout India. The chassis was a Chevrolet model with a 29.5 HP engine. The body was specially designed and built at Bombay to accommodate His eastern and western disciples. For a small group of women who had been



observing strict seclusion for years, a special compartment at the back of the driver's seat was made available. These women had to remain beyond the sight and sound of men. The body of the bus was painted in dark and pale blues; the curtains too were blue and hence it derived its name, "The Blue Bus".

With many bags and bed-rolls piled atop, this big bus looked like a hillock moving over the rough and narrow Indian roads. As it left Meherabad, on December 8, 1938, a few of Baba's men who knew the sort of load the bus had been designed for, feared that it would not even reach its first stop at Hyderabad safely. The bus, however, completed its journey throughout India, fairly well. Elizabeth (Patterson), Donkin and Eruch drove the bus. The entire itinerary provided a few unforgettable experiences to those who toured with Baba.

A few years later Baba wished to dispose of the bus. Someone suggested a raffle. Baba in a humorous mood agreed to this. The tickets, 100 rupees each, were purchased by Baba people. A Baba lover from Delhi was the fortunate one who won the Blue Bus. He, nevertheless, humbly requested Baba to keep the bus as a blessed monument to the unique, all-India itinerary. Baba consented, yet He temporarily gave it to Sarosh (Irani), one of His disciples, who owned an automobile shop in Ahmednagar. He overhauled the bus and later enlisted it as a public bus in the city. A few years passed and the coachwork became so battered that the bus was dumped in the garage.

In March, 1949, when Baba left for Mount Abu, He asked Sarosh to keep the engine and the wheels for himself and take the body of the bus to Meherabad to be used as Baba's seclusion cabin. The seats were removed and the body was placed on empty barrels. It was fixed in mortar, bricks and lime. By the time Baba returned from Mount Abu, in May, the old body of the bus with its bleached colors was transformed into a neat, clean, beautifully painted cabin. At present, the

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Blue Bus stands well sheltered by the side of the *mandali's* hall, at Meherazad.

### Reading of the Holy Books

Three sides of the bus faced the walls of the adjacent rooms. The remaining side was closed with bamboo matting. In the small enclosure there was a neem tree with its drooping branches swaying over the bus. According to the circular issued in January, Baba people were to observe silence for one full month — July 1949. Baba wished to commence His special spiritual work on June 22. A day prior to this He invited the men devotees and disciples from Ahmednagar and Meherabad (Arangaon) to Meherazad (Pimpalgaon-Malvi). Kaka Baria, the manager of Meherazad, decorated the cabin enclosure with bunting to signify the day as a festive occasion. One of Baba's colored pictures was displayed on the bamboo matting and the seven-colored flag fluttered by its side.

The main program for this day was the reading of the Holy Books. Baba asked those present to listen attentively to the parts that would be read and the points He would explain. Kalemama, one of Baba's old disciples, opened the session by reading the Ninth Discourse from the *Bhagavad Gita*, entitled "The Yoga of the Kingly Science and the Kingly Secret." At its beginning Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, "To thee I shall declare the profoundest secret which would free thee from Evil." Khaksaheb read the first twenty *ayahs* of the Second *Sura* named Baqara from the *Koran*. Baba casually mentioned that the essence of Mohammed's teaching did not differ from Krishna's; he had, however, to adapt himself to the needs of the time.

Donkin read the Sermon on the Mount from the New Testament. It commenced: "And seeing the multitude, he went up into a mountain; and when he sat, his disciples came up to him, and he opened his mouth and taught them saying,

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven ... Our Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come . . . For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever . . . Amen.

As Donkin read from the Sermon, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," Baba conveyed that this was the *gol gol* (roundabout, indirect) way, Jesus used to tell people that God-realization is the goal of each individual and that everyone is potentially God. At the close of the Sermon, Baba spelt on the board, "My favorite." At the end Kaikobad read, *Hormaj Yest* from the *Avesta*. The gist of what Baba explained during the reading session was, "These Books represent different approaches to Truth. Any of the ways, if followed honestly and with love, leads one to God. The impending seclusion in which I am getting myself bound, voluntarily, is neither *tap* [penance] nor *chilla nashini* [austerities]. I have my own reasons for retiring in seclusion." In retrospect some of the *mandali* thought that the parts of the sacred texts read on that day had some close connection with Meher Baba's New Life phase which subsequently emerged. Possible!

After this solemn session there was a short break. When all gathered again Dr. Deshmukh performed a *kirtan*. It is a typically Indian way of explaining the divine truths with the help of stories from the lives of saints and Masters, interspersed with the singing of poems and songs, composed in praise of God and the God-Man. The main theme of Dr. Deshmukh's *kirtan* was the narration of the life of Shri Shankaracharya (686 A.D. to 718 A.D.) who is regarded as the founder of *advaitism* and *Mayawad*.

On a few occasions, Baba has explicitly mentioned that Shankaracharya was a Perfect Master. Baba liked the Sanskrit hymns composed by Shri Shankaracharya revealing the secrets of *Vedanta*. These compositions are exceptionally rhythmical and

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gracefully meaningful. Baba particularly liked the one ending with "*Shivoham, Shivoham.*" The atmosphere during this gathering at Meherazad was vibrant with Baba's divine presence. As the performance was going on, He gave a look of love to each one; no one was overlooked. In this silent communion He touched the hearts of all. After *arti* Baba distributed *prasad* and the day's program was over.

### Nine Days of Inconceivable Suffering

Next day Kaka was busy attending to the duty charts and timetables to be followed during the forty days. The persons concerned were asked to be very punctual and particular about their respective duties. Only four men disciples were to stay at Meherazad. They were Kaka, Nariman, Meherjee and Jal (Kerawala); Jal maintained a diary during this period. Kaka who was Baba's personal attendant had to be a jack of all trades, for no one else was allowed to enter the Blue Bus or the cabin enclosure, without Baba's permission. Among the westerners who stayed with the women disciples were Norina Matchabelli and Elizabeth Patterson.

On June 22 at 5:30 P.M., Baba entered the Blue Bus and thus inaugurated the period of seclusion and quietude at Meherazad. Four days later, 21 poor persons, not beggars, were taken to Meherazad. One by one, the group was led to the cabin enclosure where Baba washed the feet of each and gave ten rupees to everyone as *prasad*. On June 29, seven people, mostly mad and God-mad, were brought to Baba. He clipped their hair, bathed them, dressed them in new clothes and gave a packet of sweetmeats to each. Special phases of Baba's inner work generally commenced or concluded with the external activities of serving the poor, the mad and the God-intoxicated ones.

From July 1, Baba's work took a serious turn. That was the day when hundreds of His dear ones joined Him in observing fast and silence. The disciples at Meherazad, including Kaka who had to attend to Baba's

personal needs, also observed silence. During the seclusion period Baba slept very little. On some nights He did not get even a wink of sleep. Till the end of June Baba had only one meal a day and His regular tea. Referring to this period, the first nine days in July, Baba later stated, "Although infinite restlessness is my constant companion, I have never been so restless as from July 1, to July 9, [1949]. No one except myself and God knows what I went through during those days."

This reminds me of the "nine months"<sup>1</sup> mentioned by Baba (in one of the meetings) as a period of infinite, incredible suffering which He underwent after the final experience of God-realization in January 1914. Only the *Avatars* have to pass through such agonies. The "coming down" of the Infinite Consciousness from the eternal blissful seclusion of God-consciousness to Creation-consciousness, as the God-Man, is the cause of these agonies. What an infinitely incredible state! In this seclusion, the suffering referred to by Baba, if I might hazard a guess, was due to the inconceivable "stepping down" from the All-powerfulness of the Old Life to the hopelessness and helplessness of the forthcoming New Life!

Ratanshaw Ghyra owned a house in the adjacent field. Along with Meherjee and Nariman he too was on night watch for fixed hours. During this crucial nine day period Meherjee once heard the sound of heavy breathing in the bathroom, nearby the cabin enclosure. He opened it but there was no one inside. Instantaneously the sound ceased of itself and simultaneously, he began to hear the same type of sound from Baba's cabin. This continued for about three quarters of an hour. At the end, he heard heavy footsteps, then he felt as if Baba were getting up from His bed and all became calm and quiet.

Jal Kerawala in his diary, has mentioned a few more instances of knocking and tapping, of light thumping and hissing noises at night, the origin of which could not be definitely located. On other occasions, over the

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<sup>1</sup> Meher Baba, *Listen Humanity*, p. 245.

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years, the close disciples had met with some similar uncommon happenings but Baba always insisted that they should not make much of these incidents. He often pointed out that in the natural course of His work, they just happen; that's all.

It was noticed that when Baba suffered severely He became more communicative. During the period of nine days He often sent messages about His health to the disciples through Kaka who also was observing silence. Baba would dictate the words on the board in Gujarati or express Himself through gestures; Kaka would hurriedly write down the contents on a slate. This slate or note was circulated among the resident people. The health report freely translated was as follows: "Today I have taken butter-milk twice; yet there is burning, and water is not to be drunk!" The next note read: "Firstly, there are thoughts; secondly there are the sittings; thirdly the fast and along with it this burning!"

The following day the slate conveyed: "I eat nothing thoughts continue running; I have my sittings; and at night I lie tossing. The cabin hits me in the head every day. Today, the part above the door hit me so hard that I began to feel giddy." A little later there was an addition. "Don't give these knocks against the low ceiling of the cabin any supernatural interpretations as our dear old Chanji<sup>2</sup> would have done out of his deep, undying love for me. These hard knocks on the skull show us how brave the real *yogis* must have been who lived in dark low-roofed caves, in remote wild jungles." In this way, while Baba was intensely working in the higher realms of consciousness, such indirect yet intimate gossiping with the disciples, perhaps helped Him to maintain the link with the physical plane.

During this seclusion period, Baba also composed some couplets in Gujarati which Kaka gathered from Baba's gestures. In the last stanza, out of His sense of

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<sup>2</sup> F. H. Dadachanji known as Chanji was Meher Baba's very close disciple and secretary. He passed away at Srinagar (Kashmir) in August 1944.

humor, in addition to Gujarati, Baba used Marathi, Hindi, Urdu, Persian and even English words. The meaning conveyed through it was solemn and profound. I give below a free rendering of the first couplet: "People feel blessed to have a dip in the holy Ganges but the Ganges itself gets sanctified by 'bathing' in the tears shed by the lovers of God who love Him for the sake of Love. Such lovers become the objects of meditation even for God!"

### Period of Partial Relaxation

After July 10, there followed a period of partial relaxation. Baba resumed taking solid food once a day. Mehera and Mani were allowed to see Him for a few minutes in the morning. As a change of pace in His work, Baba instructed His men to bring Ali Shah, the *mast* staying at Meherabad, to Meherazad. He was accommodated in a room by the Blue Bus. Baba sat alone with him everyday till the end of the seclusion. Gustadji, one of His dear disciples, was also called to Meherazad to look after the needs of Ali Shah.

A few days earlier, a note had been sent to Donkin instructing him to mark out important passages in some books on Christian mysticism and to forward these books to Meherazad. He was specially asked to send the book of Friar Juniper. The other books were, *The Little Flower's Life* and *Mirror of Saint Francis*, *Classics of the Inner Life*, and *The Cloud of Unknowing*. From July 11, began the reading of the sacred books. Nariman read the passages marked by Donkin. The next day Meherjee read from the *Dasateer* — the holy book of the Zoroastrians — about the causes of suffering in this life and the importance of kindness towards all.

Jal Kerawala read the commentaries by Shankaracharya on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, translated into English. In conclusion he read the Divine Theme by Meher Baba. I think this was rather significant, for the Theme indirectly represented the essence of all the

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spiritual explanations read. Nariman, Meherjee and Jal were allowed to break their silence during this hour of reading. They would sit by the door of the Blue Bus but were not allowed to have a direct look at Baba's face.

About this time, Baba wished to shift to some other place, preferably Poona, for a period of nine days. Eruch was given the duty of finding a provisional residence in Poona that would suit Baba's requirements. The villa had to be in a secluded place where Baba could have a stroll without being seen by outsiders. Eruch was about to send a telegram reporting his inability to secure such a solitary bungalow. Just then, by a stroke of luck, he heard about a place on the outskirts of Poona. It was on a chink-hill that overlooked the city. This property, on the Poona-Satara road, was known as Thube's Bungalow. Except for the noise caused by the monsoon winds and the adjacent telephone lines, the place fulfilled Baba's other requirements. The details were sent to Baba and He agreed to visit Poona.

In the morning on July 16, Adi drove his car near the cabin enclosure at Meherazad. Those not going with Baba got inside their rooms for they were not to have even a cursory glance at Baba during the forty days. The *mast*, Bapji, Gustadji and Kaka accompanied Baba to Poona. Ghani, Jal S. (Baba's brother), and Eruch were asked to stay in Thube's Bungalow with Baba. They were to break their silence during Baba's stay in Poona.

On His arrival, Baba conveyed to the disciples that after the strenuous spiritual work at Meherazad, He wished to have some recreation and entertainment. His spiritual work, nevertheless, was not to be discontinued; so He wished to be by Himself for two hours each day. Two hours were to be devoted for mast-work and two hours were allotted for light talks, humorous stories and games. Time permitting, Baba wished to have long walks in unfrequented areas. This was a period of both work and relaxation. Therefore, Ghani and Jal S. entertained Baba with many jokes and funny stories. Eruch had to attend to outdoor duties, of bringing *masts* to Baba.



Beloved Seeks Union with Real Lovers

In the morning on July 17, Eruch and Jal went out in a jeep to bring a good *mast*. Meanwhile Ghani read some *ghazals* from *Divan-e-Arzo* to Baba. Then Baba had a silent conference with Ali Shah. Eruch returned with a *mast* named Keshav who had radiant eyes and an innocent smile. Originally he was from north India and belonged to the class known as *Bhayya*. He was a noted personality in his locality. But where did he pass most of his time? It was near the public urinals of the filthiest type! These children of God somehow get attracted towards such places and it is surprising that their bodies are rendered immune to the dreadful and poisonous germs and bacteria. Theirs is a life lived in a different dimension!

After great persuasion Keshav consented to get into the jeep and off it sped to Thube's Bungalow. Baba was waiting near the bath-room to give Keshav a good bath. But the *mast* would not allow Baba either to touch his feet or bathe him. He repeatedly said, in Hindi, "Baba, I am like your son. How can I bear for you to touch my feet?" In this mood of reverence and humility, Keshav expressed a wish to get back to his seat. Baba asked Eruch to take him to the jeep. He got into the front seat but there the disciples repeatedly entreated him to let Baba bathe him. This pleading continued for an hour, Baba patiently waiting for the right moment.

At last, Keshav agreed that instead of touching his feet or bathing him, Baba could pour water on his feet, right in the jeep. This turned out to be an auspicious beginning and thereafter he submitted to Baba's wishes. He was offered tea and bread. Finding him in a good mood, the disciples disappeared from the scene so that Baba could be alone with him. In the end, the *mast* on his own asked for a coat and a rupee from Baba. This was a sign that Baba's work had been done to His satisfaction. It was noticed that Keshav was in raptures when he left Thube's Bungalow for his habitual seat near the public urinals.

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Baba felt pleased with this first contact. Pointing at Ghani He gestured, "What is more difficult — to give up one's life or be resigned to it?" Ghani replied that the latter was definitely more difficult. Baba agreed and added that one could sacrifice one's life under the sudden impulse — noble or otherwise — but to resign oneself wholeheartedly to the Divine Will continuously, was possible only for the heroes like Keshav. Later in a short discourse He explained, "If I really like anything, I like two things — *masts* and children. I like *masts* for their strength and children for their helplessness. The fire of love is very terrible indeed, and *masts* present a challenge of this terrible fire of love — to God, the Beloved."

Then Baba touched the subject of total resignation of the *masts* to the Will of God. "It is not given to everybody," continued Baba, "to be a lover of God. Such lovers are so consumed in the fire of love that they are not conscious of their stage of spiritual progress and they do not have any thought of union with God. They simply 'enjoy' the torture of love, and long for more and more of it. These lovers don't have any thoughts about their separation from the Beloved . . . They are resigned to the state in which they find themselves, and when their resignation reaches its climax, it is the Beloved who seeks Union with them."<sup>3</sup>

After the discourse, Baba conveyed that, to Him, Keshav was endearingly lovable. Thus Baba's work in Poona had a favourable beginning. A few months after this contact, special photographs of Keshav were taken to be included in the Supplement to *The Wayfarers* by William Donkin. The next day the news was received that Keshav dropped his body to live eternally with the Beloved, far beyond the clean and the unclean of this dual world.

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<sup>3</sup> William Donkin, *The Work of Meher Baba with Advanced Souls, Sadhus, the Mad and the Poor*, pp. 23, 24.

Talkative Nannubhai and Silent Mounibaba

On July 18, during His morning walk Baba visited a nearby temple. He liked the place and wished to spend two hours in seclusion in its inner chamber. This was arranged the same day before lunch. During this time Baba's men kept watch so as to prevent anyone from entering the temple premises. Baba's disciples were asked to be alert but were not allowed to look towards the temple. After lunch Baba wished to play a game of table tennis, but as the table could not be brought in such a short time, He played a game of cards.

The two people brought in the morning for Baba's contact were not on the spiritual Path. They were ordinary mad people. Eruch left again in the jeep to bring any God-intoxicated one for Baba's contact. He returned with an amazing fellow called Nannubhai, a *Bohari*. He too was not a *mast*. Baba referred to him as one with *hawa* — the one who is neither a *mast* nor a madman. He was not on the Path, but he was not far from it either. Baba bathed him and fed him like a *mast*.

This person had the capacity to quote Urdu couplets non-stop, in a sonorous voice. He was extremely talkative. In conversation he would freely mix couplets of the saintly people with lines from common Urdu songs in a funny way that would make the listeners fall into fits of laughter. To heighten this joviality, Baba gestured at Ghani to quote verses on different topics which served as starters. In response to them, Nannubhai, in his loud rather shrill voice, repeated line after line that made Baba laugh heartily. Baba's eyes lit up as He smiled and sometimes, as was His habit, He held His fingers over His eyelids.

In the end Baba signaled Eruch to ask Nannubhai, "Who is greater, Allah or Mohammed?" "Mohammed, of course," came Nannubhai's unhesitating and earsplitting reply, "for God goes begging to Mohammed with outstretched hands — and by remembering Mohammed

you will have a daughter by night and a son by day!<sup>4</sup> A queer answer that reflected Nannubhai's psychological state. Anyway, Baba had a good time in his company, a few moments of real relaxation. For Nannubhai, that time spent with the God-Man might have resulted in leading him to the path as a *mast*.

In the afternoon, Baba indicated that He would not step out of the Bungalow for the next three days. He wished to be more by Himself in seclusion. Therefore, it was suggested that Baba should have a long drive that day, in Poona, towards the mango tree in the Bund Garden where *Hazrat* Babajan used to sit. Baba agreed. In the evening while passing by Wadia College, perhaps across from Guruprasad, He pointed to a person in an ochre colored robe with a white flowing beard. It seems that Baba had a special fondness for old men with white beards.

At Baba's instruction Eruch got down and asked this man some questions. It turned out that he had been observing silence for the last seven years. In Poona he was staying in a room along the river, by the cremation ground. Kaka recalled that he was the same person named Mounibaba contacted at Hardwar. Baba wished to be alone with him. The person was asked to get into the car. Instead of the garden the car sped towards the Hindu cremation ground. Baba sat alone with Mounibaba in a small room. Even in a period of rest and relaxation Baba would not miss an opportunity to pass on His help to deserving aspirants. There are many incidents and interesting stories where Baba had incidentally pointed out some people and they turned out to be genuine seekers, observing spiritual disciplines.

*Dnyani Mast, a Rare Type*

From July 20, Baba commenced His three days' work in a vacant and secluded room on the first floor. When

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

He was working, the disciples had to maintain quiet in the entire bungalow. Baba had a cup of tea in the morning and one more by 10 A.M. By noon a *mast* named Ram was brought to Baba. He was staying near one of the Rama Temples in Poona. The real name of this person was not known. But as he stayed in the temple, repeating Rama's name, people began to address him as Ram Maharaj or Ram Mast. He was revered in the locality where he lived. He had a carefree look and he wore an unassuming, unfading smile. Unlike Keshav he did not resist being bathed or fed by Baba. This pleased Baba all the more. At Baba's indication Eruch asked him, "Where is Rama?" The *mast* replied, "Rama is here and is in everyone." The next question was "Have you seen God?" Ram Mast answered, "I see God before my eyes and He is everywhere."

Baba classified this person under the category of *dnyani mast*. The gist of Baba's explanation about this type is given below:

*Majzoob-e-Kamil* of the *seventh* plane is merged in God. In his super-conscious state he asserts himself as "I am God." Generally a *mast* on the fifth or the sixth plane does not proclaim himself as God. Nevertheless there is a class of *masts* who, though not on the higher planes, honestly feel that they have become one with God. This is neither a fact nor a complete delusion. A *mast* who belongs to this category can be termed as *dnyani mast*. Here it should be noted that the term *dnyani mast* does not stand for one intoxicated with infinite Knowledge (*Dnyan*). But such a soul in his divine intoxication expresses himself as one who is God-realized.

In the course of light conversation about the contact with Ram Mast, Baba conveyed that when He was feeding this unique visitor a rare thing happened. The *mast* lovingly offered back to Baba half of the sweets. It was a coincidence that Baba too was feeling very

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hungry. But as He was fasting He could not have accepted food from anyone except a good *mast*. Thus with the "*prasad*" from a *dnyani mast* Baba's work with the God-intoxicated souls in Poona was satisfactorily concluded.

For the rest of Baba's stay in Poona no more *masts* were brought to Him. He, however, continued His contacts with Ali Shah each day. Baba seemed more absorbed in His work. He would not see the disciples till late noon. He would remain by Himself in the room on the first floor. At the close of His spiritual work in Poona, He went with His men to witness a cricket match between Fergusson College and Deccan College. This was a fine recreation for Him. On July 24, Baba left Poona for Meherazad. He arrived late in the evening. Getting down from the car He went straight to the Blue Bus and the atmosphere was once more vibrant with His silent yet dynamic presence.

### Baba Comes Out of His Seclusion

During the last week of the seclusion, Baba seemed more and more occupied with His work. He started observing a fast on liquids and passed most of His time in the Blue Bus. His personal attendant, Kaka, was scarcely called. On the last day — July 31 — even the servants at Meherazad were asked to participate in that sanctifying silence. On August 1, Baba people staying at Ahmednagar and Meherabad who had observed silence for one month were called to Meherazad. They were to be present there before seven in the morning, without having tea or breakfast. They were instructed not to offer any homage to Baba, not even to fold their hands to Him. A special message was to be read out to this audience.

To quote Jal Kerawala, "When exactly at 7 A.M. Baba came out of the cabin enclosure, He appeared to be the very picture of freshness, radiance and health as if instead of forty days' privations He had just returned

from a holiday trip." This brings to mind some occasions of people meeting Baba, especially after the two auto accidents. Those who stayed near Baba knew well how excruciating Baba's physical pain was. But when He met the groups of His lovers, He looked so cheerful and graceful that the veil of radiance baffled the visitors and they wondered what the circular meant which conveyed the news about Baba's intense suffering.

Those who read the passages from different Holy Books, on June 21, also read Baba's message on August 1, that was dictated earlier for this special occasion. The text in English was first read by Donkin. It is given below:

May God whom the Muslims call *Allah*, whom the Zoroastrians call *Ahuramazd*, whom the Hindus call *Ishwar Paramatman* and whom many others call by many other names, may He whose union the lovers seek in self-annihilation, whom the seers see as the only Reality, and whom the knowers know as their own real Self, may this Supreme Conscious Being, this conscious Soul of souls who eternally manifests as *Avatar* and Perfect Masters, may He through His All-merciful act bestow on us His grace, and may He solve our difficulties by the end of this year, and may He decide everything for us by the end of this year, and may He according to Baba's Circular of 1949, finish everything by the end of this year, to enable Baba to break His silence in the beginning of the next year, to speak the one and the last Word of all-embracing Divinity.

The copy of the above was sent in advance to all those who observed one month's silence. They were instructed to read it at seven in the morning and then utter the sacred word Amen or *Amin* or *Tathastu* meaning "So be it." After reading the above message in four languages, all assembled near the Blue Bus and pronounced aloud one of the sacred

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words and broke the silence. Baba's physical presence transported all the visitors into a region of cheer and sunshine. Baba distributed *rava* (a sweet dish) as *prasad* and the programme ended.

The work in which Baba was engaged in this great seclusion is inconceivable. But it is believed that the *Avatar's* work for the betterment of humanity, particularly in relation to posterity, was worked out and directed during such periods. As we study Baba's life we notice that after every significant seclusion there emerged a new phase. It was after this period that Baba began to give out hints about the New Life. To me, the Blue Bus stands as a link between Baba's Old Life and New Life. As for the work accomplished during this particular seclusion, mostly in the Blue Bus, Baba later stated, "The work I have done at Meherazad, I have not done in any [other] part of the world."

"Dumb" Officer and Night-blind Orderly!

July 1949 was a memorable month for the Baba followers in India who observed complete silence. When necessary they were allowed to communicate through gestures, signs and writing. Baba conveyed that the orders in the circular were quite clear and that no one should try to interpret them according to one's convenience; better they did not follow them at all. Some of Baba's followers were shop-keepers and businessmen. They used slates, paper and pencils to deal with the customers or to instruct the staff. This was unusual for the people. It provided an interesting news item for the local dailies. One of my friends who was a teacher in a high school secured permission from the headmaster to engage and to teach the class by conveying instructions through gestures or mainly by writing on the blackboard. The permission was granted! My friend managed to get through it all, fairly well. What the pupils thought about him and his ways, God knows!



I had not this daring. I applied for leave but the headmaster hesitated to sanction a long leave. The managing body of the school, however, passed a resolution in my favour. For me this was a period of silent introspection, sometimes boring, sometimes very creative. This month of silence brought about eventful episodes for each one who participated in this discipline. Instead of narrating the experiences of many Baba-lovers (which is not practicable), I intend to relate as an illustration, the experience of one, Keshav Nigam from Hamirpur (U.P.) and the readers may well imagine the plight and delight of others who joined in this spiritual schooling!

At midnight on June 30, the members of the Cosmic Meher Family founded by Keshav Nigam, lovingly hailed aloud Baba's *Jai* and initiated one month's silence. Keshav had not yet met Baba in person. But so strong was his faith that the superior officers and the subordinate staff in the Secretariat where he worked at a high post, promised to cooperate so he could maintain his silence. In a way this made them think of Meher Baba more often. During this period, Keshav unexpectedly had to appear in court. He had received a summons from the Session Court to give evidence in a murder case; he could not refuse to attend. So he left Rewa (capital of former Vindhya Pradesh), for Datia, a district in the adjoining state. He left by train with an orderly named Brij Mohan. It was quite a long journey. After sunset they reached Manipur where they had to get down to catch the connecting train.

To save time the attendant got off the train by jumping through the window. Unfortunately he fell right over a pitcher of milk. It was night and he was night-blind. The milkman caught hold of Brij Mohan's neck and started a quarrel. Keshav got down, looked angrily at the milkman and gestured vigorously to set the servant free. What else could he do! His gestures somehow had the desired effect and the orderly was released. As they marched on Brij Mohan, for the second time, dashed

against an old woman who staggered to the ground. Keshav had to console her through soft silent gestures. He now learnt that his orderly was night-blind but it was too late and Keshav was "dumb". The blind leading the dumb and the dumb guiding the blind, a good Baba joke!

In the train Brij Mohan could not understand completely what Keshav wanted him to do. It was an uncomfortable situation for Keshav. But to his great relief, because of his silence, a young girl in the compartment treated him with affection and reverence. She began to address him with respect and tried to see that he was not disturbed by others. By morning the train arrived at Jhansi. Here again they had to change trains to reach Datia. With sunrise the orderly's eyesight was restored but the troubles did not end. The orderly carried the luggage and the bedding to the train standing on the other platform without any mishap; Keshav felt relieved. He accommodated himself in the compartment and gave his purse, containing all the money he had, to Brij Mohan with a short note to the booking clerk explaining which tickets were required. The train whistled and steamed out of the station but Brij Mohan did not return. It was clear that either there had been a long queue for the tickets or this simpleton had not been able to find the booking office. This put Keshav in an awkward situation. On the one hand he dared not miss his appearance in court and on the other, he now found himself without a ticket or money. There was nothing for him to do but to continue the journey, remembering Baba all the more.

To his great surprise in the same compartment he soon met one of his close acquaintances from Hamirpur. He was the sub-inspector of police and was bound for Datia in connection with the same case. Most willingly he offered to assist Keshav not only in the train but also in the court at Datia. Keshav finally made it there where his attendance, as a special officer of the Vindhya Pradesh government, was required. However,

his unusual conduct of maintaining silence in the Session Court became a widely discussed affair and because of it many people heard about Meher Baba.

By the time Brij Mohan arrived at the railway platform the train had left and so instead of proceeding to Datia by the next train he returned to Rewa. He told Keshav's wife who was also observing silence of his plight. This made Mrs. Nigam worry about how her husband would manage to return home with neither his money nor his companion. But Baba constantly accompanies each of His dear ones, especially when they are following His orders. Therefore it is not surprising that Keshav received help whenever he needed it and arrived in Rewa in a cheerful mood. Those who came in Baba's contact and sincerely tried to follow His instructions or those mentioned in circulars, often found that the embarrassing situations were seasoned with Baba's humor and compassion. Such sweet surprises in that "season of silence" — the month of July — were not uncommon.

Adding the "Sweet" to the "Bitter"

To resume the account I prefer to quote from Kitty Davy's article concerning Baba's meeting with the women disciples on August 1, at Meherazad. She writes:

Mehera and Mani were to see Baba first at 6:30 in the morning. At 7:00 A.M. Baba would be with the men *mandali* and the women were to listen to the reading of Baba's message, to be read aloud by different members of the *mandali* in different languages. At the end of the last Urdu translation, all were to simultaneously say "Amen" or "Amin." . . . Apart from saying "Amen" we, the women, were not to break silence till Baba came over to our side and gave the sign to speak. Baba then had *rava* and tea with us. We were then all dismissed and Norina and Elizabeth were called by Baba for a private interview and given final

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instructions for his work regarding his forthcoming visit to the United States and his Center at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. After a final embrace from Baba, they left by car for Bombay to board the plane for New York. They left with the promise that Baba would come to the West very soon.

Mehera and Mani, realizing the strain of this long seclusion and fast for Baba, had taken the opportunity to think out some surprise for him when the seclusion and fast ended. Amidst all her other work, this effort on Mani's part was really her *chef d'oeuvre*. It was a puppet show. Figures and dialogue were all her own creation ... Needless to say, Baba enjoyed it immensely, and we had no idea of the "bomb-shell" awaiting us all, later in the day. This performance with Baba in our midst was literally adding the "sweet" to the "bitter," a favourable device of Baba's. In short, Baba told us briefly what he had decided during his seclusion. We are prepared for changes. Seclusions always meant a new phase in Baba's changing activities. However, we were totally unprepared for the New Life phase. It was fortunate perhaps that it had such a numbing effect on us all, or we could not have carried on as we did.

Baba had decided to close all *ashrams*, dispose of all their contents and relinquish all properties in India. The majority of those living with Baba at the time were to be sent back into the world to work. A few disciples would form his "chosen companions" to accompany him in the New Life, starting October, 1949. Those agreeing to the severe conditions of the New Life (hence called "yes-wallas") had to be prepared to look upon themselves as already dead in the sense that the dead have no desires, concerns, attachments, questions or even provisions for the morrow.<sup>5</sup>

Accordingly, Norina and Elizabeth left Bombay by

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<sup>5</sup> Kitty Davy, "Recollections Part II," *The Awakener*, Vol. VII.

TWA on August 3. Banjo, Elizabeth's pet dog, and a double-sized bed made from the best type of Indian wood, with proper length webbing for criss-crossing were booked in advance. The bed was meant for Baba's use, in His forthcoming visit to the United States. Later, during His stay in South Carolina at the Myrtle Beach Center that He regards as His Home in the West, this bed was used by Him and I hope it is still there. Through an oversight of the Postal Department, some necessary certificates of these two disciples were dispatched to Ahmedabad in Gujarat instead of Ahmednagar in Maharashtra. This caused some inconvenience to them but at last the things were set in order. Perhaps by way of maintaining the link, till these two disciples returned to India, they received Baba's telegram at Bombay: "Give my love to my lovers in the West." This was promptly answered: "Shall deliver your message. All else you know." A cable dated August 6, conveyed their safe landing in the United States.

### In Silver Oaks at Panchgani

In view of the New Life, Baba gave specific instructions to His closer ones and, maybe to grant them time to absorb this most unexpected change, He proposed to leave Meherazad to spend a few days at some hill station. It has also been observed that by the end of every important seclusion, Baba generally preferred a short change of scene. The inquiries were made and this time Panchgani, which is a hill station on the Poona-Mahabaleshwar Road, was chosen. Dr. Alu Khambata is one of Baba's dear ones. Some months earlier she had leased an estate with three cottages called Silver Oaks to lodge and board paying guests. Owing to her family's circumstances there was no one to look after this business and the cottages remained practically vacant. Alu felt herself very fortunate to be able to offer this place for Baba's use.

To digress for a moment, Alu Khambata had first

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heard of Meher Baba during a visit she had made two decades earlier, to the Tiger Valley Cave at Panchgani, where one of Baba's disciples named Pleader used to stay. A few years later she became a doctor of medicine and opened a hospital in Bombay. The Dadachanjis — a group of Baba's most devoted family — were residing in the same building. About 1934 when Baba visited this family Alu first saw Him going upstairs. He wore a white turban which was rare for Him. She was much impressed by His regal gait and appearance. To her He appeared much like an Arab gem merchant, with a mystical aura about Him.

She felt drawn to Him but not with any spiritual intention. Later she expressed a desire to Mrs. Dadachanji, the mother of Arnavaz, to see Baba if that was conveniently possible. Later, when this request was brought to Baba's notice, He of His own unexpectedly visited Alu's hospital. He has that ancient habit of visiting His dear ones unawares! Alu felt happy but shy, delighted but confused, not knowing how to receive Him. She forgot even to greet Him formally or to offer Him a seat. Chanji, Baba's secretary, did that for her.

Baba expressed His happiness to meet her. He permitted her to ask Him whatever questions she had in mind. Although she was greatly interested in philosophy, theosophy and even spirituality, the idea of following someone as a spiritual Master was alien to her, so Baba's proposal put her in an embarrassing situation. At the time she was at a complete loss and couldn't think of any questions on any subject. As the talk opened, her voice quavered but subsequently became composed, one of her questions was whether she should visit England for a special medical course. Baba's prompt reply was, "Not now. I will let you know when." The moment the questions were over Baba left the room. He left the dispensary as suddenly as He had arrived. The *Avatar* is always in a hurry to meet his dear ones and also to withdraw His presence hurriedly!

Some months later when Baba sent word that Alu should visit the United Kingdom there was a financial crisis in the family. But she tried to carry out His instructions and several times she received unexpected help from out of the blue. Things got adjusted and she sailed for England. Some time after her return from England, Baba asked her to discontinue her practice as a doctor, for her health's sake. Physician heal thyself! These do's and don'ts revealed to Alu different aspects of Baba's divine wisdom and compassion. Soon it turned out that thinking about Him was not a fleeting thought; it had resulted in an acute longing. This made her accept Baba as the Perfect Master — God in human form. Now she longed and waited for an opportunity to be of intimate service to Him. Baba's decision to visit Panchgani was a loving response to her patiently longed for, ardent aspiration. No wonder that she spared no pains to make Baba's stay as comfortable as He could wish. By the time He arrived at Silver Oaks, Alu managed to have the cottages clean, with garlands of sweet scented flowers decorating the doors and windows. It was a simple yet most devoted and delightful reception.

Eruch, Jal S. (Baba's brother), Mehera, Mani and Arnavaz were among those who accompanied Baba. Everyone felt at home with the loving arrangements made by Alu. During the stay one night Arnavaz and others heard a loud noise. It was as if a big stone had rolled onto the roof of Baba's room with a great thud, Arnavaz got out of bed, the clock struck twelve and again the spell of silence fell over the cottage. She did not dare make inquiries lest that might disturb Baba. Next morning in casual conversation, the women referred to this incident. With a look of surprise, Baba asked them what it could be. Alu said that one of the neighbors might have done it as a prank. Someone remarked that Baba might have released a spirit hovering in and around Silver Oaks. Baba smiled and made a sign that meant, "Quite possible!" and that ended the matter. He never expected that His dear ones should

pay any extra or exclusive attention to such occurrences. To those who lived and moved with Him this was nothing new. Baba in the earlier days had explained a little about such happenings. Sometimes "spirits" have tried to contact Baba with the intention of serving Him, particularly when He was resting at night. They knew that His blessings alone could liberate them from their "state of suspense". The presence of a human being — one of the men *mandali* who would invariably remain awake at night by Baba's side — prevented them from touching Baba's physical body. The one on night watch would also attend to Baba's needs who would be mostly engaged in His Spiritual work.

There were, however, rare occasions when Baba of Himself blessed a few "spirits". Kaka Baria once narrated that in July 1933 at Portofino — a village in Italy — the Baba-party was staying in Villa Altachiara overlooking the Mediterranean. One night Baba rushed out of His room, Kaka following Him. On His return Baba conveyed that a "spirit" had been set free from its most dismal state. Perhaps this meant that the obstacles barring this bodiless spirit from reincarnating as a human being were removed. Different kinds of events have occurred during Baba's night rest which outwardly indicate the depth of His inner spiritual work.

### Baba, the Divine Humorist

The important decision about the New Life had been made by Baba and it seemed that at Panchgani, He was in a carefree holiday mood. He enjoyed long walks and drives. Sometimes, the intimate ones would play indoor games or charades. Baba would ask them to guess a number He had in mind and the winner would get some gift from Baba. During these informal sittings, with the help of the alphabet board, He sometimes referred to couplets in Marathi and Hindi, composed by the Perfect Masters of the past. His favorite poets were Tukaram and Kabir. About Tukaram He often gestured, "He is the chip of my Heart."



Baba once quoted Tukaram's *abhang*<sup>6</sup> with reference to the inborn nature of a person which mostly remains unchanged. Its meaning is: "Since his early age, Tukaram in the company of saints took great delight in singing the Name and Glory of God. Later, (with the grace of the *Sadguru*) he became One with God the Beloved — Pandurang. Yet, the innate inclination of singing *bhajans* continues; the original nature persists." Was Baba, through this quotation, hinting at His personal nature of playing the Divine Humorist? Once He stated, "Before I met my Beloved in Union — I lost everything, ego, mind and lower consciousness, but thank God, I did not lose my sense of humor."<sup>7</sup> On another occasion He cited a profound couplet of Kabir. The simple words of the Perfect Master are not born of intellectual inferences; they are the luminous flowers from the garden of spiritual wisdom. They have a perfume of deep unfading meaning. The original couplet is as follows:

*Fikar sabho khagai, fikar sabka pir;  
Fikar ki jo faki kare, uska nam Fakir.*

Rendered freely in English it reads:

Worry wears out all, worry lords over all;  
One, free from worry, is the *Fakir* amongst all.

One day in Silver Oaks, before going out for marketing, Arnavaz was whispering a song to herself. Baba called her and asked her to sing it out loudly. The song seemed to have two meanings, one apparent and one latent. The obvious meaning contained in the refrain of the song was: Oh traveler, be very vigilant and discreet as you pass by the road. Beware, there are many distractions on the way. The implied meaning of the song is: Oh wayfarer, the (spiritual) Path is very

<sup>6</sup> The name of a meter in Marathi poetry.

<sup>7</sup> *The Awakener*, Special Issue, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1955, p. 14.

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slippery. May it not happen that you get enticed with the experiences in your journey. Baba listened to the whole song with a serious expression on His face. When the song was over, with a playful smile that flowed from His lips and glittered in His eyes, He gestured to Arnavaz, "Be careful as you pass by the road, be cautious in your dealings and return soon." Such instructions from Baba often indicated His humorous method of imparting spirituality, associating divine truths with our everyday affairs. And the *Avatar's* Advent is the perfect association of the Divine with the human. He is God; He is man; He is the God-Man.

## Meetings Directing the New Life

### 1949 — Part III

#### Raising the Curtain for the New Life

Now he entered his Great Seclusion of forty days — Curtain, in his divine Play, between the two Acts of Glory and Helplessness; and with the first act established in the hearts of the Audience in potentiality of being, stepped lightly onto the stage for Act II, inviting whoso to Join him.<sup>1</sup>

— Francis Brabazon

FOLLOWING the seclusion in the Blue Bus, Baba with a small group, left for Panchgani in the district of Satara. Those at Meherabad and Meherazad were busy working on the drastic guidelines given by Baba. A few felt that it was just a test and that Baba might reconsider His decision to totally dispose of the two *ashrams* for good. But on His return, He expressly stated that from August 15, He would be holding meetings to disclose the details about His New Life.

I was at Kurduwadi and did not get wind of the fact that Act I (The Old Life) was to end so soon. The first bell, prior to the raising of the curtain for Act II (The New Life) chimed on August 1, but was audible only at a short range and to a very small group. Personally I had not met Baba since January 1949, and I was wholeheartedly looking forward to seeing Him. The previous year, in the summer, one of my friends named Mauni — the silent aspirant — had had an audience with Baba.

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Brabazon, *Stay With God*, p. 137.

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He was asked to visit the places of pilgrimage throughout India, for one year. He returned to Kurduwadi in July. I took this opportunity to inform Baba of his arrival and to express his ardent longing to meet Him. Baba graciously granted the request and I was asked to accompany him to Meherabad. The date of *darshan* was August 15.

Accordingly both of us were at Meherabad in a very cheerful mood, awaiting Baba's arrival. Dr. Daulat Singh, Minoo (Kharas) and a few others were specially called to see Baba. By 10 A.M. we were summoned inside the cabin facing the hall. Nilu, Vishnu and a few others were in the room. As Mauni was observing silence, I briefly related the main events of his itinerary of the past year, including the difficulties and temptations which he had had to face. Baba listened to the account with interest and conveyed, "What I have heard has made me happy. If Mauni is willing, I intend to ask him to observe a few more instructions." As soon as Mauni heard this he looked extremely happy. In fact he had had it in mind to ask Baba for some directions which he might devotedly follow for the rest of his life. Baba continued "This time, I do not wish you to wander from place to place but to stay at one place for a period of six months. Now, go outside; discuss and decide with Bal the town or village that would suit you best. Then come again to see me in this cabin."

### Six Months' Sadhana (Discipline)

We sat in the hall discussing some places in India that Mauni had visited. In the end he decided to stay in the vicinity of Hardwar-Rishikesh. In this area, free lodging in huts was easily available for aspirants.

In addition to this, through religious and charitable institutions, each day food was served to *sadhus* and *sanyasis* without charge. Mauni seemed well-acquainted with the nooks and crannies of these twin centers of pilgrimage at the foot of the Himalayas. We returned to Baba's

cabin and He gestured, "Which place?" I replied, "Hardwar-Rishikesh area." Pointing at Nilu, Baba conveyed to me, "A minute prior to your coming I told him that Mauni would choose this particular region." And He smiled, a knowing smile. Many times it had been revealed to those who stayed near Baba that He knew what they had in mind, before it was expressed in words.

Baba commenced giving instructions. They were: "Not to touch money; not to touch women; not to cook food but to beg for food. Once you decide to stay at a certain place do not change it for six months. Repeat daily the Divine Name — *Parabrahma* — ten thousand times. Don't repeat it loudly but it should just be audible to you. For the last seven days of this period no other liquid except water should be consumed. In consideration of the last instruction, to observe fast on water, you may, for that week, shift to some convenient place, if desired. During the period of fast do not repeat the Name audibly. After the completion of this *sadhana* come and see me." Mauni wrote on his slate, "Where will you be then, Baba?" Baba gestured, "I don't know! You find that out for yourself." As I had no idea about the forthcoming New Life, I wondered why Baba had given such a reply. Mauni, the silent devotee of the silent Master folded his hands and with a happy smile expressed his willingness to obey Baba.

Baba told Nilu to repeat the Divine Name — *Parabrahma* — in a very low voice and asked Mauni to hear the intonation and to say it in the same rhythm during the six months' period. He also asked Nilu to pray to God for Mauni's success in his *sadhana* and gave Mauni a few pieces of sweet cakes as *prasad*. He spelt on the board, "*Ho gaya*," meaning done or accomplished. The interview was over. We stood up to leave. As I looked at Baba, He incidentally asked me whether I was married. I replied, "No, Baba." He spelt on the board, "Good," and continued, "I have in mind to call you soon for an important meeting. Don't fail to come." I had not the least idea what that meeting would be

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about. Was it necessary to know? The propitious prospect of seeing the Glorious One within a few days was enough to fill my heart with joy. I folded my hands in gratitude for this unexpected appointment at Meherabad. What great significance lay in Baba's casual inquiry about my personal life I didn't realize then.

Both of us left the cabin with backward steps. It is an Indian custom that as far as possible one should not leave the Master's presence with one's back turned towards Him. As we came out I congratulated Mauni for his spontaneous response to Baba's instructions. In a jovial mood he brushed his fingers over his black beard and long hair and wrote on his slate, "Of what avail is this beard and wearing of long hair if I hesitate a bit to obey the Master!" Those staying at Meherabad knew a little about the impending change in Baba's activity but during our stay, no one referred to it even remotely. By the afternoon train we left Ahmednagar for Kurduwadi. Within a week, Mauni, with a few belongings but without carrying any money with him, left for Hardwar-Rishikesh, about sixteen hundred kilometers to the north near the holy Himalayas.

### "You Will Join Baba in New Life"

After a week I received a registered letter from Adi, with postal acknowledgment for me to sign. This was not the usual procedure when receiving letters from Baba. The contents of that letter dated August 22, 1949 were as follows:

Baba orders you to be at Meherabad on September 4, 1949 morning at 8 o'clock for one day without fail. You alone should come and if you don't come then you will never come.

I read the lines again and again and wondered what sort of meeting it would turn out to be and why the invitation had been sent by registered post. In all the

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previous letters some encouraging words from Baba along with His love and blessings would comfort me. But here was an ultimatum !

Some days later I happened to visit Poona on some private work. In the city bus I incidentally met one of my dear elderly friends — Baba's disciple, R. K. Gadekar. We used to call him Gadekar Saheb. Both of us were happy at this chance meeting. With an inquiring look he said, "Did you receive a call from Baba? I hope you have, and you must have decided to join Him in His New Life."

"Yes, I received the invitation for the meeting," I replied. "But I don't understand what you mean by joining Baba in the New Life." Instead of answering the question he simply repeated,

"You will join Him in the New Life."

"Of course, I will feel myself most fortunate to be with Baba in any of His activities but for God's sake tell me what this New Life is about," I insisted.

He either did not know much about it or he somehow felt reluctant to talk further about it. Some minutes later we had to part and had no time to meet again. His words "The New Life" aroused my interest and I wondered about its nature. I deeply felt, however, that if a chance was ever offered in the meeting to go with Baba, I should jump at it no matter what. This decision was not the result of careful thought after weighing the pros and cons; it was just the unpremeditated response of the moment. As I first heard about the New Life, my decision to accompany Baba on it met no challenge from any corner of my mind.

### Some Preliminary Meetings

The period from August 15 to August 31, was a very busy time for Baba. Practically every day He visited Meherabad. He had instructed all the men disciples to be present in the hall at Meherabad in the morning when He would be specially discussing the points connected with the New Life. At the first meeting on August 15,

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a few members were late owing to a mistake in the typed notice displayed on the board. Baba nevertheless, informed all, "Even if I do not arrive from Meherabad, be in the hall by 7 A.M." Baba was invariably present by 6.30 in the morning. He entrusted the work of noting down what transpired in the meetings to Feram Workingboxwala, a steno and long-standing disciple of Baba. He instructed him not to miss anything that He (Baba) would convey to anyone during these meetings.

On the first day of His arrival, He embraced Gustadji and Kaikobad, the elderly members among His disciples. He seated Himself in the chair and the first general meeting about the New Life phase, with the closer ones, commenced. Here are the four main points that were discussed and decided during such preliminary meetings held on subsequent days.

- (1) The persons who would decide to join Baba in His New Life would be entirely responsible before God for the decision. No one was to ask Baba's advice over this matter. Everyone who would wish to accompany Baba was expected to abide hundred per cent by the conditions that would be laid down by Baba.
- (2) In the New Life, Baba would be absolutely helpless in the true and literal sense of the word.
- (3) Meherabad and Meherazad *ashrams* were to be disbanded.<sup>1</sup>
- (4) October 16, 1949 was the date fixed for the commencement of Baba's New Life.

On August 16, Baba had a meeting with the women

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<sup>1</sup> Within a month and a half Meherjee Karkaria and Nariman Dadachanji, two of Baba's disciples became the owners of these two places. Yet, they both through their love for Baba kept these places entirely at the disposal of Baba and His disciples. Years later, in August 1968, Meherjee made the Gift Deed of Meherabad over in favor of the Avatar Meher Baba Trust, Ahmednagar. Meherazad is still owned by Nariman's wife, Arnavaz. Nariman died on July 2, 1974.



disciples in upper Meherabad.<sup>2</sup> Baba placed a four-point plan before them. He conveyed that if some of them wished to leave Meherabad and work independently for their living, He had no objection. Everyone was allowed to exercise her honest choice. The last alternative He offered was that they could leave everything to Baba accepting with full faith whatever decision He made for them. This proposal was unanimously accepted. All promised with pleasure and without the slightest demur to obey Baba. As a token of love and sincerity Baba asked each of them to kiss His hand. With a smiling face but retaining His dignity He gestured, "Let not this kiss be the kiss of Judas. Maintain it as the seal of your obedience to me."

Before continuing the discussion in the hall about the New Life on August 17, Baba asked Ghani to repeat the following prayer, "May God give '*buddhi*' [sense of discrimination] to the *mandali* and full '*shuddhi*' [perfect awareness] to Baba." He made it clear to each of His disciples that everyone was free to join Him or not, in His New Life. In spite of living with Baba for many years, if anyone so wished, he was allowed to live an independent life. But once one resolved to join Baba in His New Life phase, he had to obey Him in all matters. Baba agreed to give some guidelines to those who wished to stay behind.

#### Dying for Nothing

On August 18, morning, Baba asked four of His disciples to each bring the Holy Book of a different religion to the hall at Meherabad for a special reading. Kaikobad was the first to perform the *kusti*. It is a ceremony among the Zoroastrians that reminds them of the three principal precepts of Lord Zoroaster — good

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<sup>2</sup> The premises on the hill comprising Meher Retreat, the Tomb, etc. were known as Upper Meherabad. The *ashram*, *dhuni*, etc. by the roadside were referred to as Lower Meherabad.

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thoughts, good words and good deeds. Then he uttered some prayers from the *Avesta* — the prayer book of the Zoroastrians. Donkin read the Crucifixion of Jesus from the Gospel of St. Matthew. Khaksaheb offered *namaz* and solemnly but silently performed two "*Raqats* of *Nafil*." Kalemama opened the *Bhagavad Gita*. He read the Sanskrit verses from the tenth Discourse named the *Yoga* of Sovereignty or the Divine Glory. The gist of the last four verses of this Discourse present an all-inclusive vision of the *Avatar's* Divinity:

O Arjuna, I am the Essence of all things. My divine manifestations are limitless. This world with its power, beauty, and glory is but a fraction of My Reality. Countless are these transient forms and needless is the knowledge of them. I alone exist and one spark of Myself sustains the Universe.

After each reading Baba asked for the Holy Book and kept it on His lap. At the close of this solemn ceremony He signaled all to stand up. He spread all the Books on a table and asked Ghani to place both hands on these Books and say aloud the prayer dictated by Him: "May God help Baba to make definitely this step, which He is taking, to give up everything and irrevocably to go away so that from October 16, when He enters the New Life there will be no turning back." About this incident Ramjoo wrote in *The New Phase*, "This was the first prayer of HELP ever before heard from Baba to God during the last 28 years and the *Mandali* were so taken aback and confused that no one could think of or dare say Amen!"

When all were seated Baba gave some additional points to Donkin. He was to prepare the final draft of the New Life conditions, with the help of Ghani. Baba was to approve the final text on August 21. Once, while referring to the tests and trials of the New Life, Baba casually gestured, "If you want to die for nothing, come with me!" The New Life as explained by Baba was an

art or *yoga* of dying to the past completely and living in the present fully, without creating any future.

### Touching the Feet and Twisting the Ear

I cannot leave out the following incident that happened on this day. It brought to the notice of the would-be companions the necessity of obeying Baba without any reservation or resistance. While dilating on the clauses and elucidating the qualities required to cope with the New Life, Baba incidentally admired Aloba's (Ali Akbar's) readiness to obey Him. In those days, Aloba was rather emotional; now he has considerably calmed down. On that day he was sitting quite close to Baba's seat. In response to Baba's words, out of deep gratitude, but quite unawares, he stretched out his hands and touched Baba's feet. This simple action changed the atmosphere of the meeting. Baba's standing injunction for the close ones was not to touch His feet as a gesture of reverence to Him. Even during the *darshan* programs when thousands were allowed to press their heads on His feet and unburden their *sanskaras* (impressions of thoughts and emotions), the intimate ones were not permitted to do so unless especially instructed. Hence, Baba became very displeased and appeared very serious. He decided to literally reciprocate the homage. He bade Aloba stand up and leaned down Himself to touch Aloba's feet.

All this was so unusual and unexpected that it was too much for Aloba to bear. He screamed and sprang up clean off the floor. To save him from falling on the stone floor and hurting himself, those nearby, as well as Baba, stretched out their hands to catch him. He was sobbing profusely and shedding tears. Baba, however, insisted that He must touch Aloba's feet and He did. The meeting continued. After some time Aloba calmed down. Baba used this occasion to clarify a few more conditions of the New Life. Baba conveyed, "In my New Life, I may ask anyone to spit on my face or slap me,

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the companion will have to act without the least hesitation."

After a little while Baba, the Master Psychologist, pointed at Aloba and in a very natural way asked him to twist His (Baba's) ear. Aloba silently got up and without any resentment was quick to act as ordered. Just then Jakkal, who was known in the *mandali* as Anna 104, raised his hand. When asked for the reason he said that the too was ready to twist Baba's ear! Hearing this, with a smile Baba gestured that if anyone wanted to pay off the old scores by pricking His ear He would gladly allow anyone to do so. But it was necessary to understand well that there was a world of difference between twisting His ear on one's own and doing it in response to Baba's order. In the ripples of laughter that followed the meeting was over.

Dr. Donkin and Dr. Nilu examined Baba's hand that bore the brunt of Aloba's body. The delicate muscles of Baba's fingers were strained and for some days Baba had to use a sling. The throbbing pain in the fingers caused Him many sleepless nights. After a week He could, though with great strain, put His signatures on important documents. Before leaving for the New Life, He did not wish to maintain anything in His name. As advised by the doctors, Baba had to hold a hard rubber ball in His palm and press it lightly; that was the exercise for the sprained hand. Baba's loving training, in helping His dear ones to obey Him, even at the cost of such physical suffering, stands unexcelled.

As Baba had instructed, Donkin was ready with the final write-up of the New Life conditions on August 21. Prior to its reading, on behalf of Baba, Ghani offered the following prayer, "May it please God to give His absolute strength to Baba to adhere to everything that is in his conditions, to the very end." With a few alterations and additions the draft was approved. At first, it was suggested that these conditions should be sent to all of Baba's followers. After a little discussion, however, it was decided that a list of over a thousand Baba lovers,

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men only, should be read out to Baba for selection. These were the people who, in one way or another, had in the past expressed their readiness to offer their services in Baba's cause. Excluding the Arrangementwallas (those who were assigned certain duties in view of the New Life), Baba finally selected only 32 men, including the resident *mandali*. They were to have the choice of accompanying Baba in His New Life.

### Baba's Decision about the Women Disciples

August 25 was the momentous day for the women disciples who had been staying with Baba for years. The bell rang. It was a call for the meeting with Baba in one of the rooms at Upper Meherabad. Baba looked radiant and happy and yet He appeared serious. In the previous meeting He had made it clear that though He would decide for each of them, nevertheless, everyone would be wholly responsible before God for whatever might happen to them after October 16. He told them that He might ask some to find jobs, some to remain celibate, and some to get married. All the statements made at this meeting were equally serious and grave as the women *mandali* waited to hear Baba's final instructions.

Baba was sitting on an iron cot with Mehera by His side. Mani was reading the board. Baba declared that Mehera, Mani, Meheru and Goher were to accompany Him in His New Life. Katie (Goher's sister), Naja (Pendur's sister), Masi, Khorshed, Rano and Kitty were to stay in Bombay. They were allowed to work and earn money if it were conveniently possible. At Bombay, Rano and Kitty later served as teachers for some months at Queen Mary High School. But all their earnings had to be spent in purchasing household necessities. No personal savings were allowed. They were allowed to go for outings but were not permitted to lunch or sup outside. They were not to accept anything as a gift from anyone. Nariman and Meherjee were to look after the necessary

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arrangements of their stay in Bombay. The women were not allowed to go to the movies for entertainment. In short, they had to lead an austere life.

Jerbai, wife of Kaikobad Dastur, with her three daughters and Mansari (Desai) were to reside on the hill at Upper Meherabad. Gulmai, Adi's mother, and Meheru (Eruch's sister) were to continue their stay in Ahmednagar. Baba asked them all to completely give up any hope of seeing Him again. He, however, advised them to carry out His orders with love and devotion. It was the best course open to them to share His New Life, though physically away from Him. In the end He added, "All the trouble is from hoping. . . Where there is no hope there can follow no disappointment." A difficult lesson indeed!

### Love Is Unconditional

Among the women *mandali*, Mani Desai was from Navsari and Mani Jessawala was from Nagpur. For the sake of convenience and with a sense of humor, Baba added the last letters of the places they came from to their names and nicknamed the former as Mansari and the latter as Manpur. For years, in accordance with Baba's instructions, Mansari has not crossed the railway lines that pass by the hill, except for medical reasons or under exceptional circumstances. Even after her death, her body, as instructed by Baba, will be buried on Upper Meherabad. In the above-mentioned meeting Mansari asked Baba to permit her to reside permanently on the Hill. There is an interesting story behind Mansari's simple request.

She first met Baba at Meherabad in 1927. The Desai family in Navsari revered Baba as a Perfect Master and most of its members were deeply devoted to Him. Mansari as a teenager was not drawn to Baba. Perhaps her mind was thoroughly occupied with a frightening skin disease which she had suffered from since she was five. There were boils and boils on her

body and nobody could look at her without feeling a deep sympathy for her. After years of treatment the specialists declared that the disease was incurable. She was extremely miserable. It was April 1927 and as a matter of course — not with the longing to see Baba — she joined members of her family leaving for Meherabad. There must have been a special *darshan* program, for many had gathered there. The visitors formed a queue to offer their respects to Baba. Mansari was standing near a window staring at Baba with a blank mind. When she was unlacing her shoes, Baba beckoned her. At that soft casual glance her eyes glistened with tears. And unaware of them she let them fall down her face, some falling on her neck. This continued for a long time. She could not make out what had happened to her. It was a strange indefinable feeling.

Mansari joined the line of visitors and as she reached Baba's seat, she offered Him homage as one would offer to any saintly person or great personality. At this first meeting, Baba, with a face beaming with motherly love, embraced this tiny, thin, sickly girl and affectionately asked her to tell Him all about her disgusting disease. Hearing sympathetically all about the terrible tragedy, He conveyed, "Don't worry. You shall be cured." For Mansari it was too good to be true. Later Baba gave her some ash from the *dhuni* and instructed her, "Repeat my name and put a pinch of it in your mouth every morning before tea." Not with faith in Baba's divinity but merely out of respect she followed His counsel. And within a month, though unbelievable, Mansari was completely cured of her skin disease, declared incurable by the physicians of the day. Rarely did such miraculous cures occur in the lives of Baba people. And Baba strongly discourages those who follow Him from expecting such healings from Him or seeking them from others.

Anyway with this magic cure, Mansari felt strongly drawn to Baba. She intuitively felt that Baba was the Perfect Master, the Eternal One, for whom she

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should live and die. She sincerely longed to leave everything of the world to stay near Baba permanently. But she had to wait for about a decade. In 1930 she met Baba at Bombay at Kaka Baria's house and expressed her desire to join Him. Baba replied, "I wanted you since long ago but you have to wait till I call you." Later, on other occasions, whenever she put forth the same request, Baba's answer would be, "Wait till I call you."

Finally in July 1937, Baba granted her request and she was called bag and baggage to stay with Him as one of the resident women *mandali*.

At that time Baba was residing with a small group in the government rest house at Ahmednagar known as the Irrigation Bungalow. Jal, Baba's brother, was at the station to take her to this place. It was night when they arrived there and most of the members had gone to sleep, but Baba was awake. Mansari offered her respects to Him. He was happy and gestured, "I wanted you since long but this is the time that you had to come. Now that you are with me here, you have to do what I say." Mansari said, "Yes, Baba, surely everything except separation." To this Baba replied, "But, love is always unconditional and you are binding me!" Mansari responded, "Okay Baba. I will do whatever you say." It has been noticed that Baba never unduly emphasized the proximity of His personal presence but positively affirmed the importance of His impersonal Omnipresence; this is the basis for real understanding of spiritual life. Love for the God-Man may or may not bring occasions of being physically near Him but His loving remembrance will never fail to awaken the heart.

After several days Baba shifted His headquarters from Ahmednagar and Mansari, with the women *mandali* commenced her stay on the hill. During that year whenever Baba visited Meherabad for His work, He found time to go up the hill and meet His disciples. Once, during His morning visit He asked Mansari to finish her breakfast and see Him. As she approached Baba, He held her by the wrist and strolled round the Retreat.



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Through gestures Baba conveyed that the whole world belonged to Him. And pointing to the compound wall of the Meher Retreat He conveyed, "This is specially mine. Do you like this place?" Mansari answered, "Yes, Baba. I like it all the more because it is yours." Baba continued, "Will you then like to stay here if I go out on tour leaving you here, taking the rest of the women *mandali* with me?" After a little pause, He continued. "Of course, I will provide you with the necessities for a year." The very thought of separation brought tears to Mansari's eyes and she whispered, "I have not come here for that, Baba." Looking lovingly at her, Baba asked, "Are you crying? I don't like that. I just cracked a joke and it seems that you don't like my jokes." Mansari explained, "But Baba the joke was like a bomb exploding for me." Baba smiled ending the conversation by conveying, "Forget all about it. I won't crack any more jokes with you." However, through this first joke, it seems that He had planted the seed of her stay on the Meherabad Hill.

### "Not Your Wish but My Will"

About 1944-45, Baba commenced staying in Meherazad (Pimpalgaon-Malvi). Whenever He visited Meherabad Mansari would say to Him, "When will you come back to Meherabad and stay here as before?" Baba's silent reply through gestures would be, "We'll see." Once He replied to her in a different way. He conveyed, "Instead of putting me the same old question again and again if you say, 'Baba, go anywhere you like, I will stay at Meherabad' it will make me happier." Was this an indication that Mansari had to stay there permanently?

In 1947 those staying at Upper Meherabad received a message from Baba about His special visit to the hill. Accordingly He was there by 9:30 A.M. All the women *mandali* were called. In the course of the meeting Baba conveyed, "Whosoever has any hope that I will come back and stay at Meherabad should think no more about

it. Under these circumstances if any of you wants to leave Meherabad and go somewhere else, she may frankly inform me about it by 2:30 this afternoon. Such a decision will not displease me. On the other hand," Baba jokingly added, "I will pay for her ticket, garland the person concerned and arrange a lift to the railway station!" When this meeting was over Mansari was busy talking with the visitors from Poona. After awhile Baba called her and asked, "Have you decided?" "About what?" she asked. Baba gestured, "Don't you remember why I have called this meeting? What's your decision?" To this Mansari replied, "What's there to decide, Baba? It was already decided years ago. I will stay at Meherabad."

Baba looked very pleased. He referred to a line in Urdu, "*Jeena teri galime, mama teri galime*" (I wish to live and to die in your lane O Beloved), and added, "Are you really ready for this?" Mansari's spontaneous answer was, "Certainly, Baba." All these incidents spread over many years arrayed themselves before her and prompted Mansari on August 25, 1949 to put the above-mentioned request of permanently staying on the hill. Baba happily agreed but conveyed, "I am glad to hear this. You can stay here. But remember, you will be residing here not because of your wish but because of my Will." Mansari understood what Baba meant.

#### Response from the Women Mandali

Baba had already disclosed that He was going to disband the *ashrams* at Meherabad and Meherazad. He was to leave Ahmednagar on October 16 for good, so He wished to make provisions for the future requirements of those persons and families whom He had Himself made dependent upon Him. The women disciples responded wholeheartedly to this appeal by showing their readiness to sell their personal belongings to make the necessary arrangements. Kitty Davy was staying at Meherabad. She writes:

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We too wanted to share. Chinese coats appeared from trunks that had lain there since our arrival in India in 1933. Jewelry rarely worn was brought out and other treasures. All displayed their "wares" on the beds and one morning Baba came up the Hill and went around systematically viewing what was laid out. He was deeply touched at our willingness to share in the spirit of the New Life, owning nothing but the barest necessities. Baba had made it clear that we could not dispose of anything that was really necessary. Not everything displayed was allowed to be sold. All I had of value was an amber necklace from Japan and a mandarin coat from China. I was fortunate. Baba allowed both to go "to the general fund."

Packing and dismantling, one bhagulla (saucepan) remained on the last day. From August 25th, in the midst of all this upheaval, Baba began coming up the Hill every afternoon at 3:00 to be with us. The time for departure was drawing near. Here was a test, — to forget the packing, play ping-pony, act charades, tell jokes, all with smiling faces and without tears! <sup>3</sup>

### In Spirituality Take Every Risk

August 21 was the day when Baba approved the final draft of the New Life conditions. It was a very busy day for Him from morning to evening. This was a red letter day for a small group of Baba lovers from Poona, anxiously waiting in Ahmednagar just to have a glimpse of Him. Half of the group had not met Baba before. This included Madhusudan Pund, one of Baba's favourite poet-singers of Hindi songs about Baba. On this day he met Baba just for a few minutes, but in the course of time Madhusudan was intimately linked with Him. Madhusudan's coming to Baba was more incidental

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<sup>3</sup> Kitty Davy, "Recollections Part II," *The Awakener* Vol. VII. No. I (1960), p 12

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than planned. It was a Baba-coincidence. And every coincidence that draws a Baba lover closer to Him reveals a unique glimpse of the Divine Beloved, Baba.

Madhusudan was in his teens. His family's circumstances did not permit him to continue his education. In addition to this he was not keeping well and was passing through a phase of mental crisis. His love for music provided some consolation in life. This resulted in his friendship with Ramchandra Rao, a singer from north India. His rhythmical sweet voice so charmed Madhusudan that he started attending the different *bhajan* programs in Poona. This comradeship led him to participate in Meher Baba's birthday program, celebrated and arranged by Gadekar at his residence in Bhavani Peth, Poona. It was here that Madhusudan contacted the Baba people and gave a performance before Baba's picture. Unaware, at the time, that small incident not only brought him into Baba's fold but also introduced him to his sweetheart, Subhadra, whom he later married. A happy Baba-day!

Madhusudan was not very interested in lectures on Baba, but nevertheless he wished to continue his visits for the weekly *bhajans* at Gadekar's house. These programs gradually awakened in him a longing to see Baba in person. But there was a circular restricting *darshan* and even correspondence with Baba. Sule, who generally delivered talks at the meetings, convinced some of the youngsters to take the risk and have Baba's *darshan*. He told them that by imposing various restrictions, Baba was trying to create thirst in the hearts of His dear ones to see Him. The circular banning *darshan* was one of His ways of intensifying the longing. In fact Baba is ever ready with open arms to meet anyone who has a daring heart. While concluding his personal opinion about the ways of the Master, Sule added, "If you honestly feel the urge to meet Baba, why don't you try now?" This reminds me of Baba's words. As far as I remember they were, "In trifles take no risk; in business take a few risks; in spirituality take every risk." Thus

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a young group of seven Baba lovers resolved to risk a visit to Baba in Ahmednagar and Madhusudan was one of them.

### Soft Light Flooded Madhusudan's Soul

In the morning on August 21, all of them presented themselves at Adi's office in Khushru Quarters, now called Meher Nazar. The preparations for the New Life were being made at breakneck speed. Adi was overworked with the details that he had to see to. When he found this group in the office he was amazed and said, "Haven't you read the circular? Who advised you to come over here for Baba's *darshan*?" The group was nervous; no one expected a cold reception at Baba's office! Someone apologized to Adi for troubling him. But the way in which all behaved and the overflowing longing that was visible in the visitors' eyes made Adi say, "You see, Baba is very busy and He does not see any visitor. In the morning I drove Him to Meherabad; in the evening I shall take him to Meherazad. If you can wait till evening, and can risk waiting on the road, nearby the railway station, I will drive slowly and you may have a glimpse of Baba. This much I can do and nothing more." "Thank you, Adi Kaka," said one. "We really do not want to disturb Baba, but somehow we could not help coming over here," added another. The auspicious moment was decreed and the group left the place quite happily.

By late afternoon all began to stroll or sit under the shade of the trees, about the spot fixed by Adi. The eyes of all were set in the direction of Meherabad. They anxiously waited and waited but there was no sign of the blue Chevrolet carrying Baba. Time weighed heavily on their minds. It was past seven. The last bus for Poona was at eight and yet there was no car in view. Though unwillingly, they decided to leave for the bus stand in a few minutes. Madhusudan folded his hands in the direction of Meherabad as a salutation to Baba. Just then

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a car was sighted. It was Adi's car and in Baba's time — the moment of relief when self-centered efforts are surrendered to the Divine Will. Madhusudan felt that a tender beam of soft light flashed from the car and flooded his soul. As the car passed by rather slowly, he saw Baba smiling; beauty and majesty seemed blended in His expression. Baba's marvelous look reminded him at once of the dream he had had the previous night.

### Baba Blessed Madhusudan

In the dream, Madhusudan had seen the huge and mighty, but most tender and noble figure of Lord Vishnu, the Sustainer (*Parvardigar*), gracefully smiling. As he moved on to approach the Lord, His form miraculously disappeared and in its place there shone a disc of bright light, rotating and rolling farther and farther away. At last it entered a very small temple of Lord Krishna — the Flute Player. As the halo touched the statue, it got merged in the idol of Krishna. Was it to signify that *Paramatma* — the Infinite God — through the symbolic aspect of Vishnu — the Sustainer — assumed the form of Krishna and later of Meher Baba? With the vivid recollection of this meaningful dream and with the vision of tender light touching the core of his heart, Madhusudan could not contain himself, he lay on the road as if dazed.

Adi's car moved some distance and stopped. The Poona group hastened, rather ran, to meet Baba. He called all near Him and blessed each of them. At Baba's instructions Vishnu, one of Baba's disciples, helped Madhusudan walk to the car. Baba smiled and placed His healing hand on Madhusudan's head. He gestured, "I know you love me. Continue to love me and remain happy. *My nazar is on you.*" And the car sped off in the darkness of the night and within a minute it was out of sight. But the light of love, kindled in the hearts of His young lovers, was inextinguishable. The risk was richly rewarded!

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Madhusudan's fondness for music was an excuse for Baba to draw him in the orbit of His love, in His own unique way. In the aforementioned dream, when Madhusudan found himself at the threshold of Lord Krishna's temple, there came out the words from the inner chamber, "Sing a song." And he sang one. Baba's divine touch not only inspired Madhusudan to sing but even to compose beautiful songs for Baba. His compositions in Hindi and Marathi were later very much appreciated by Baba. Many of these songs were sung in Baba's presence and in the public meetings too. Especially the *arti*, *Meher mana arti swikaro* (I offer my mind to Thee, O Meher, accept it as my *arti*), was sung in chorus before Baba by hundreds of His lovers. This *arti* carries with it a unique Baba perfume; many feel so and I wholeheartedly agree with them.

### "I Am the Servant of the Universe"

In the last week of August, like the group from Poona, a batch of four from Uttar Pradesh had a chance to meet Baba. This audience was in connection with the *darshan* programs in the district of Hamirpur (U. P.). Through the circular Baba had banned correspondence and visits of His devotees to see Him. These few, however, were called to Meherabad to discuss the plan for a public *darshan*! Baba had definitely decided to enter the New Life, yet He wished to discuss the plan for meeting the masses. His only concern, it seems, was to fulfill spiritual needs, though sometimes His ways appeared rather contradictory. The Hamirpur group was headed by Shripat Sahai. Babu Ramprasad from Nauranga and Keshav Nigam accompanied him. Both of them were seeing Baba physically for the first time. The significance of this meeting was gradually revealed as years passed by; for this small group was instrumental in sowing the seed of Baba's work in the Hamirpur area — the garden of Baba's love.

This party had arrived at Meherabad in the evening of

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August 29. The next morning, Baba, as usual, was at Meherabad by 7 o'clock. Soon they were summoned to His cabin. They were called for a five minute interview but Baba graciously spent half an hour with them. He spelt on His board, "People call me the Lord of the Universe but I am the Servant of the Universe. I am the Washerman come to clean the dirty clothing of humanity. You are all lucky to be here at the moment when I am about to enter my New Life." After some intimate chat Baba continued, "Now listen. Here are three instructions: do not touch money; do not touch a woman; observe fast for twenty four hours once a week. Think sanely and seriously over these points and communicate your decision to me before you leave the cabin. I will not be displeased if you express your inability to follow any one or all these instructions. But once you promise me to obey one or more orders, you must not break them. Be honest in your reply."

Then Baba discussed with them the subject of giving *darshan* in the district of Hamirpur. A draft of the leaflet regarding the programs was read out to Baba. He expressed His readiness to visit Hamirpur before October 16, if Sahai, Nigam and others would promise that the people coming for *darshan* would not fold their hands or bow down to Baba! Such an assurance they dared not give and so the mass *darshan* programs were cancelled. Was it for the postponement of the programs that Baba asked them to undertake such a long journey; two nights by train? This could have been done by sending a telegram. It was, perhaps, the deep and sincere longing of the lovers that compelled the Beloved to make an exception under some excuse and meet them personally. At the end of this interview, Keshav Nigam said that he would obey the first and the third order. The others also openly told Baba their decisions without any reservations. Baba was pleased with their sincerity. Enraptured, they left Baba's cabin. As they came out no one felt like speaking, for the highest joy often dwells in silence. After lunch they left for the railway station.



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About his first meeting with Baba, Keshav Nigam wrote, "August 30, 1949 was not only the blessed moment of my present life but it also marked the culmination of all the blessed moments, of all my previous lives and the long vista of my evolutionary sojourn, for on that day I saw God Himself, on the earth, in the form of Avatar Meher Baba ... This first *darshan* of God-Baba initiated me into a new life and also bathed my heart in a new light. The flame of Baba's love was intensely kindled within me and before it, all the world and its mundane activities appeared absolutely petty and unreal."

### Some Instructions

The date of the meeting called in connection with the New Life as mentioned in the registered letters was September 4, but later it was changed to August 31. I was one of those invited to it. By the afternoon of August 30, I reached Meherabad. As I got down from the *tonga* (horse-cab) and entered the hall, I saw Baba sitting with the *mandali*. He looked fresh and radiant but His eyes had an expression of deep thought. I gathered that He was discussing some serious matter. I folded my hands to Him. With a welcoming smile He gestured at me, "Sit down." Without disturbing anyone I took my seat at the end of the carpet. I noticed that Baba was holding a small hard rubber ball in His palm and was pressing it lightly. I wondered what the matter was. Later, I learned that it was due to Baba's love and compassion for Aloba, in teaching him the way to obey the Master.

When the discussion was over He made some casual inquiries about my journey and health. While leaving for Meherabad, He gave the following general instructions: "Tomorrow the meeting will commence at 8 A.M. Everyone must have a bath in the morning." Turning to Ghani He specially asked him not to forget this. Ghani was in the habit of bathing once a week on Friday. Jokingly he would say to us, "I wonder why you people

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have a bath every day! As I stay near Baba, I do not wish to wash off the holy dust of the *Avatar's darbar*<sup>4</sup> that I daily collect on my body!" On August 31 we were not to fold our hands to Baba to offer *namaskars*. Baba instructed Padri that the stone flooring of the hall be washed by next morning. No one was to enter the hall after it was cleaned.

All of us were to get inside with Baba by 8 A.M. We were also told not to discuss among ourselves anything in connection with the New Life. The Baba people who had arrived for this meeting from the outstations included Dr. Daulat Singh, Kishan Singh, Minoo Kharas, Babadas, Dr. Deshmukh, R. K. Gadekar, and Sadashiv Patel. After supper some of us gathered around Ghani and listened to the jovial and lively incidents from Baba's life which he narrated. We conversed on many topics of general interest except the forthcoming New Life.

### In the Hall at Meherabad

Those who were staying in Ahmednagar and were called for the meeting arrived at Meherabad before sunrise. All of us eagerly awaited Baba's arrival. As He got down from the car He looked more than beautiful. No one was allowed to enter the hall before 8 o'clock so Baba sat on a bench on the verandah. We gathered around Him, particularly those who had come from the out-stations. Baba asked Gadekar and Babadas to come forward. Pointing at them, He made a joke, "Babadas has more *chelas* (disciples) than I have; and Gadekar more *gurus*!" Baba was thus referring to the fact that Babadas who had a long beard, wore long hair and used a *kafni* (long robe), was regarded by many villagers as a *sadhu* or a *guru*. They would revere him as a master. Gadekar was not particular about his dress though he was a high-ranking officer. As he had an innocent heart,

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<sup>4</sup> The Royal Court.

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he treated every *sadhu* as an advanced soul and would serve and revere him as a guru. In such a humorous mood Baba started inquiring about each and everyone called for the meeting.

Raosahab Afseri had been the principal of the Hazrat Babajan School at Meherabad in 1927. Later he stayed with his family at Bombay. He was asked to attend the meeting. But it was noticed that he had not yet arrived. Baba conveyed, "If he comes after eight he will neither be allowed to enter the hall nor to attend the meeting." Just then the Bombay-Manmad railway train passed by Meherabad and we saw Afseri waving a handkerchief at those standing on the road. Baba ordered that a car be rushed to the station. The one going in the car was instructed to take Afseri right to the bathroom in Meherabad. This was to help him finish his bath in time to be ready by eight. The plan worked out well and a few minutes before eight o'clock we all, including Afseri, entered the hall, Baba leading. The stone flooring was covered with a green carpet. In the left wing was Baba's chair, and in the corner lay a small table. In the right wing some old photos of Baba with the *mandali* were displayed on the wall. An old clock was marking time, facing Baba's seat and it is still there.

Baba alone walked to the right wing and all of us stood in the left. He called Padri and asked him to walk across the hall seven times, in between the wings. He gestured, "The sight of a cat crossing the road is regarded as a sign of ill luck by the Hindus and Padri's walking will ward off anything that is evil!" This was, perhaps, the last joke of the day, for once the meeting commenced the atmosphere remained exceptionally serious. Baba took His seat and motioned us to sit down. Before starting the work at the meeting, He asked Padri to close all the doors and the windows of the hall. Beheram, Baba's brother, who arrived a few minutes late could not enter the hall and attend the meeting.

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### Choice of Joining the New Life

The momentous meeting commenced. All were extremely anxious to hear what Baba would explain about the New Life phase. He passed a cursory look over the gathering and conveyed, "From amongst the many I have specially called a few of you to attend this important meeting. Be very attentive. Think thoroughly over what you hear. Those who will soon get a circular should carefully go through it and arrive at an honest conclusion." The meeting began with the reading and recitation from the Holy Books. Kaikobad recited a part from *Zend Avesta*; Khaksaheb offered *namaz*. Baba was pleased with Khaksaheb's melodious and appealing voice. He gestured that if God were not to listen to such a heart rending prayer, He must be either deaf or dead. Donkin read the Crucifixion of Jesus from the New Testament. Kalemama concluded this program with the reading of some verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Lord's Song.

The different Holy Books were placed on the table. We all, along with Baba, stood up, facing the Books and Baba's framed coloured picture on the wall which is still there. On behalf of Baba the following prayer of forgiveness was read aloud:

I forgive each and every disciple, devotee and follower, all his weaknesses up-to-date, and any disobedience on his part up till now. And, on behalf of myself I forgive myself for any pain, injustice, or wrong that I may have done any of them.

There were also some members in the hall who were not to receive the circular about the New Life conditions. They were called the Arrangementwallas. After Baba's entering the New Life these were the persons entrusted with the work of taking care of the families and those people who had dedicated their lives to Baba and had been dependent on Him for years. To those whom He intended to give the choice of becoming His

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companions in the New Life, He addressed as follows:

I want you all who receive this Circular to understand once and for all that I am 100% serious about this New Life. Although you have stood by me faithfully and lovingly all these past years, with perfect faith and sincerity in spite of receiving nothing from me, and although you all might be prepared to lay down your lives for me, yet there is the possibility that your and my habits of understanding and misunderstanding each other during the last so many years, might mislead you into *not* taking this *most seriously*.

Therefore I want you all to go through this Circular word by word most carefully before you decide. It would be best if you accompany me and abide by all orders and conditions 100% thoroughly. But although your faith, love and service for me have been greater than mine would have been for my own Master, yet these conditions might prove your undoing. So unless you are ready to live the life of complete *satyanashi* [utter ruin] and absolute obedience it would be better to stay behind and obey instructions that will be given to you. But all this is by way of statement of facts and confessions. The decision is entirely to be made by you and you alone. May God give you the required strength. . .

"You, and You Alone Are Responsible before God"

Ramjoo gave a short talk in Hindi especially for those who did not understand English well, explaining in a nutshell the clauses and terms comprising the New Life. Donkin then read out the original text in English. Everything mentioned therein was to be seriously thought over by those who wished to join Baba in His New Life by being physically near Him. Here follows the gist of some of the points from the circular.

Everyone who received a copy of the communication

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was to inform Baba of his decision with a clear "Yes" or "No"; not a word more. If anyone decided not to go with Baba, his spiritual connections with Him would not be broken off. Such a one was to receive a few orders from Baba and he was expected to observe them sincerely. If one failed to answer either in the affirmative or negative his connections with Baba would automatically get severed. Everyone was expected to ponder over the following seven points with due consideration. To quote from the circular:

- (1) In this New Life of complete renunciation you will be utterly at the mercy of all kinds of good or bad treatment that may be meted out to you by others. Whatever happens, you, and you alone, will be held responsible before God.
- (2) If, by accompanying Baba your dependents or your business or private affairs suffer in any way, you, and you alone, will be held responsible before God. . .
- (3) If, due to physical or mental exhaustion, exposure to extreme weather, lack of food... etc., etc., you fall ill or die, you, and you alone, will be held responsible before God.
- (4) If Baba should give you any order that may result in your being sent to prison or in your being assaulted or even killed, you, and you alone, will be held responsible before God.
- (5) If you should disobey Baba and He should send you away from Him you will not hold Baba responsible before God for your future, whatever that future may bring. . .
- (6) The decision that you give to Baba will be considered by Him as irrevocable, and He will not accept any change of decision from anyone. . .
- (7) If, as a result of your having been sent away by Baba, you should take any misguided step. . . you, and you alone, will be held responsible before God.

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These clauses are enough to give an idea of the expected degree of preparedness from one who would want to join Baba in His New Life. In short, only those whose hearts dared to sing the song of perfect surrender to Baba's Will were eligible to follow Him. And such a response automatically implied complete faith in Baba's life of Compassion irrespective of its outward expression.

### Baba Takes the Oath

In the circular, Baba had made it clear that by accompanying Him no one was to reap the slightest spiritual or material benefit. On the other hand, one had to be in readiness for every kind of disappointment and adversity. No special care for any ailment — physical or mental — was to be expected.

In spite of this, those who wished to go with Him were to affirm their resolve before God — the Infinite. Baba too was to take the Oath about His determination to lead the New Life. Some of the standing injunctions for the companions of the New Life were: not to touch a woman; not to touch money; not to discuss politics; not to tell lies; not to create circumstances that might invoke homage, etc. The circular also stated: "It must be clearly understood that although every condition and standing order listed in the communication is absolutely binding on all who decide to accompany Baba, Baba Himself is not only *not* bound by any order or condition but is also absolutely free for all time to give any order to anyone. And that such orders might change or even nullify any or all the standing orders and conditions. . ."

When Donkin finished the reading of the entire circular a deep silence prevailed in the hall. Everyone seemed to sense the immensity of the New Life phase. Baba and all of us stood up. On behalf of Baba the following Oath was solemnly read out:

Before God the Absolute whom those who have

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realized know as their own Self and whom believers believe to be All-pervading, All-knowing, All-loving and All-merciful — before this Infinite Existence, Baba on behalf of himself and his followers, asks forgiveness for all mental, physical and moral weaknesses called sins, and for all lies and false dealings, and for all impure and selfish actions.

Before this Infinite God who ever was, ever is, and ever will be, Baba decides today on the New Life that he and those who accompany him will enter from October 16, 1949, and lead on till the end. This New Life will be based absolutely on all that has been dictated by Baba in the Circular of conditions; and Baba invokes God to make him stand by it as firmly and steadfastly as his companions in his New Life are required to be.

All the people, from the list approved by Baba, received a copy of the circular. All were asked to go through each clause carefully, word by word. No one was expected to approach Baba for any clarification whatsoever. Everyone was to convey his decision by writing just one word on the last page — "Yes" or "No" — and to add one's signature below it. This copy was to be personally handed over to Baba. When the distribution of the copies was over, the doors were opened and Baba ordered a break for tea and refreshment. It was perhaps meant to offer some time for each to go through all the pages thoroughly, to think well of the consequences and to arrive at a final decision.

### The Blessed Day in My Life

The resident disciples who already knew about the nature of the New Life had perhaps arrived at their final decisions. They did not look very preoccupied but those from the out-stations seemed indecisive, or so it appeared to me. As I was having tea, Gadekar said to me, "You must have decided in the affirmative to go with



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Baba." Before I could speak a word another of my friends seconded him and added, "You are right, Gadekar." I felt rather astonished and asked him the reason for his inference. He related that a few days ago he had visited Meherazad. There, during an incidental conversation, Baba mentioned that I, being unmarried, might prefer to accompany Him in His New Life. Baba's indirect hint that I might accompany Him removed any hesitation I had and I completely resolved to go with Him.

Here, I must also mention an earlier incident that contributed to my decision. In the morning I was standing with Sadashiv Patel near Mohammed — the resident *mast* of Meherabad. I was never interested in purposely meeting the *masts* or in asking them anything. I was just strolling with Patel. Coincidentally Mohammed, however, with his far off gaze turned towards me, stammered just a sentence, "God bless you." Patel told me that this uninvited utterance meant something auspicious. And indeed August 31, 1949 was one of the best and most blessed days of my life. These two incidents strengthened my original decision to accompany Baba, at any cost.

I must admit that I had no idea what day-to-day living with Baba was like in the Old Life, much less what it would be like in the New Life. But deep down in me I felt, "What else could be better than being in close company with Baba, the Beloved Master!" In a way this was extended selfishness. I was given the choice and I wanted to make the best of it. The only thought that clouded my conscience a bit was whether my accompanying Baba would prove burdensome to the other companions. I was ignorant of the tests and trials — physical and mental — mentioned in the circular. God willing, ignorance is not only bliss but sometimes makes it easier to decide such things! Anyway, I regarded this chance as the greatest opportunity in my life and with all sincerity I wrote, "Yes" at the end of the circular, signed it and returned it to Baba.

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### The Three Groups

After refreshment as we gathered in the hall, Baba made us sit in three groups. The first was of the Arrangementwallas — Sarosh, Meherjee, Nariman and Ramjoo. They were entrusted with the work of carrying out certain arrangements approved by Baba. The second group was of the "Nowallas". They were those who wrote "No" on the circular as they gave it back to Baba. Padri, Deshmukh, Gadekar and a few others were in this group. Baba was surprised to find Padri, one of His long-standing intimate disciples sitting among the Nowallas. Baba, however, conveyed, "Pendur, Padri, Adi and Vishnu are the four pillars of Meherabad. Three have decided to accompany me, in my New Life. In case anything untoward happens to them, at least one of the pillars is safe." Some Nowallas looked rather dejected at their inability to join Baba in His New Life. To console Gadekar who was almost in tears, Baba gestured, "May God always keep Gadekar in my heart." Pointing at Deshmukh He conveyed, "He will always be near and dear to me." He asked both of them not to worry over what they had decided.

Among the Yeswallas, those who decided to accompany Baba, Jal Kerawala's decision was a pleasant surprise. According to Baba's previous instructions, he was to be regarded as one of the Arrangementwallas. But inadvertently he received the circular and instantaneously determined to give up his high ranking government post and leave all his worldly ties. Baba appreciated his love and courage but as a special case, there and then, He absolved him of his resolve. He was asked to continue his services and to help the Arrangementwallas. Excluding Jal Kerawala there were 22 men in this third group: Gustadji, Adi, Donkin, Nilu, Ghani, Pendur, Patel, Vishnu, Murli (Kale), Anna (Jakkal), Babadas, Daulat Singh, Kaka, Eruch, Baidul, Aloba, Minoo (Kharas), Pandoba (Deshmukh), Kishan Singh, Chhagan, Manek (Mehta) and Bal (Natu). Out of these

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twenty-two, eventually sixteen accompanied Baba in His New Life.

Referring to the Yeswallas who had come from the out-stations, Baba instructed, "Be thoroughly prepared to leave your home and everything connected with your worldly things once for all. If there are any difficulties, try to overcome them, but do not inform me or ask me anything about them. You are responsible for your decision and everything connected with it. Be at Meherabad by the morning of October 1. When you step into the premises of Meherabad, don't have any money with you. Be here in the dress that you generally wear. No extra clothes. You may, however, bring one *kambal* [coarse woolen blanket]. That's all." After lunch some of us, with the firm resolve to be at Meherabad as ordered by Baba, left for the railway station.

The New Life, it seemed, had already commenced.

## Old Life Ends; New Life Begins

### 1949 — Part IV

#### Yeswallas Who Stayed Behind

OUT of the 22 Yeswallas<sup>1</sup> who decided to go with Baba, a few came in for special attention. Minoo Kharas from Karachi (Pakistan), was entrusted with an important job by Baba. He did it during the given time limit to Baba's satisfaction and Baba felt so pleased that of His own He released Minoo from joining the New Life physically, though he would remain in the Yeswalla category. Pandoba (Deshmukh) from Ahmednagar who had stayed in the *ashram* at Meherabad in 1926-27, approached Baba in the first week of September and wished to be included in the group of the Nowallas.<sup>2</sup> On second thought, Pandoba felt himself physically unfit to bear the strain of the New Life. Considering his age Baba granted the request. He, at the same time, asked him to follow some special instructions.

For quite a long period Kishan Singh had been repeatedly imploring Baba to allow him to stay near Him permanently. He was ready, at a signal from Baba, to leave his job and family. In view of this situation, Adi wrote to him in June 1949 that he should not go to Meherabad with his bag and baggage, unless definite instructions from Baba to that effect were received. In the interview that followed, Baba asked him to attend the meeting on August 31. It was quite evident that Kishan Singh had decided to join Baba in His New

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<sup>1</sup> Those who resolved to accompany Baba in His New Life.

<sup>2</sup> Those who preferred not to join Baba in His New Life.

## OLD LIFE ENDS; NEW LIFE BEGINS

Life. But God willed otherwise!

After his return to Delhi he found that if the necessary papers were not signed by him before October 16 his family would face some legal difficulties in receiving his pension. He wrote a letter to the Controller of Accounts, asking him to speed up the process. He also forwarded a copy of it to Adi for his information. In this letter he mentioned an inquiry in connection with a false charge made against him. The investigation in progress, it seemed, would not be over by October 1949. When this letter was brought to Baba's notice, He directed Adi to send the following telegram to Kishan Singh:

In view of your letter, I forgive you and free you from your "Yes" promise and want you definitely to stay home as up to now and, rest assured, your spiritual connections with me will remain as before.

The contents of the above telegram were quite disappointing to Kishan Singh who ardently longed to accompany Baba. He wrote to Adi about this who sent him an apt reply, a part of which follows: "I realize how very disappointed you have become at the sudden receipt of Baba's telegram cancelling your joining Him. In this respect I would like to tell you that you should not in any way be very much dejected and lose hope of your aspirations being fulfilled . . . The chances of circumstances changing favourably can never be ruled out and accordingly as and when Baba wishes your aspirations will be fulfilled . . ." As predicted by Adi and wished by Kishan Singh, in the year 1953, Kishan Singh did have the unique opportunity of staying near Baba, with the resident disciples at Dehra Dun.

Manek Mehta was conducting an organization at Bombay called Meher Mandal. He was the head of the Mandal. Realizing his difficulty, Baba, of His own, advised him to wind up his personal activities connected

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with it and to dissociate himself completely from the organization, to join Baba in His New Life in 1950. Manek, however, failed to resign himself to Baba's wishes. Master proposes and devotee disposes!

Chhagan, one of the old-time disciples staying with Baba, happened to ask Him whether his personal decision to be with Baba in the New Life was appropriate. Asking Baba's advice about one's decision was against the spirit of the conditions outlined in the circular. Baba felt rather sad and ordered Chhagan not to join Him on October 16. Instead, He gave him three instructions which he had to follow. The first one was to sell the ornaments he possessed. The money received was to be used to feed Mohammed, the *mast* at Meherabad, as well as to provide for his other needs, if any. The second was to serve somewhere or to find some suitable vocation for his maintenance. He was not to leave Bhingar, a place about three kilometers from Ahmednagar. The third order was to beg for his food, starting December 15, for one year.

As soon as Chhagan received the instructions he felt that he should not have changed his mind, but it was too late. The arrow had left the bow. Now the best he could do was to obey Baba, and he did so literally. The last instruction proved to be a real test. To beg for food at a place where one owns a house and a farm and where one is regarded as a man of some status is indeed an ordeal of a high order! Chhagan had to pass through this ego crushing process ungrudgingly. The date fixed in advance by Baba for the one year's begging happened to be the day following the death of his dear father. All his relatives — there were many — gathered at his house. The very next day, after his return from the cremation ground, in this atmosphere of intense bereavement, Chhagan had to pick up the begging bowl and satchel. As was customary among the Hindus, the funeral rites were carried out for fourteen days. During the last two days special feasts were arranged in honor of the dead but Chhagan could not participate. According to Baba's instructions he had started begging for food

## OLD LIFE ENDS; NEW LIFE BEGINS

daily at five houses and ate whatever was received in *Bhiksha*, irrespective of the bitter comments from the people. What a peculiar predicament! No wonder that when Baba learnt about this He was immensely pleased at Chhagan's obedience.

### Leaving All to Follow the One

Now about myself. By the evening of August 31, I reached Kurduwadi. The next morning, the first thing I did was to see the headmaster of the high school; I tendered my resignation giving one month's notice. As I did not reveal why I was leaving my job so abruptly he was a bit surprised. Indirectly he blamed my "mystical attitude" which he thought had blossomed in me ever since I observed silence, a month earlier. He, however, asked me to reconsider the matter. To me this was unthinkable. The moment I had written "Yes" and signed my name at Meherabad I was dead to the world and yet strangely alive. I was in a carefree mood. I bore ill-feeling towards none; I did not feel specially attached to anyone. I was silently bidding farewell to whomsoever I met. Perhaps it was a fine speechless performance! I was not expected to reveal to others my intention to accompany Baba for good. Nevertheless, I was allowed to give some idea about my determination to one of the responsible members of my family. The married ones were to convey the resolve to their wives.

Being a bachelor I decided to disclose my decision to my dear younger brother, Prabhakar. After taking the necessary promise that he would not reveal the news to anyone before October 16, I narrated to him in a nutshell the account of the last meeting at Meherabad. He was astonished. Our dear mother had recently passed away; I was the eldest member in the family. In spite of this Prabhakar agreed to shoulder the responsibility of the joint family. He was indeed very co-operative in all matters.

We owned some land and a house in a village. A small

bank account and some shares of a sugar company were in my name. I had to finish the legal act of transferring all these to my brother's name. Whatever could be done was attended to and the rest of it was left to the Will of God. We were ready to forfeit the property if the legal procedure remained incomplete or needed my presence after October 1. In those days Baba had bestowed on me a most carefree attitude and I must admit that at present I do not possess it to that degree. In those days nothing seemed to bother me. I used to recall the following lines (I am not sure about the exact text) from the Song of the *Sanyasi*<sup>1</sup> by Swami Vivekananda:

They know no Truth, who dream such vacant dreams,  
As father, mother, children, wife and friend.  
The sexless Self. . . .  
Is He who is but One,  
And know thou art That, *Sanyasi* bold.  
Say *Om Tat Sat Om!*

I was told by one of the old-timers that Baba in the early *ashram* days, at Meherabad, would sometimes refer to these lines to bring home the importance of renunciation and in the light of this I had resolved to "leave all" and to follow the One in all.

In the first week of September, I was under the impression that I had to present myself at Meherabad with just a coarse woolen blanket on my shoulder and nothing else. But in the second week I received a letter containing a long list of things — clothes and other articles of daily use — which I had to take with me. The first item was two cotton *kafnis* (long robes), one white, the other blue; the second was a brown woolen *kafni*. In India I had never seen anyone wearing either blue or woolen long robes. But Baba's instructions made such thoughts irrelevant. I went to the tailor and asked him

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<sup>1</sup> One who has renounced the ways of the world to realize Truth (God).



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to take the necessary measurements. He gave me an inquiring look as if I had gone mad! In addition, when I told him to sew a woolen *kafni*, he seemed extremely surprised. I come from a middle-class family and he knew woolen clothing was a luxury for me. When I ordered these robes he tried to ask me some direct questions. I was deliberately evasive in my replies and changed the subject.

The headmaster, the tailor, and some other acquaintances probably regarded me as someone losing his mental balance! Once you come in the love orbit of Meher Baba, the God-Man, you may have to pass through this phase. And people are noticed remarking, "He is a good man, very rational and sane in his conversations except for anything belittling Meher Baba's orders and Divinity." Such words remind me of the meaningful lines of the Urdu couplets Ghani once recited. I hope the following translation will give some idea of the depth of meaning contained in the couplets:

Dear friend, following the Perfect Master brings in its wake resurrection under the garb of desolation. Don't judge the Master and His Divinity from the tests and trials that you are put in.

Never think that He does not know His mind. In spite of anything that He asks you to do, He is indeed the Wisest of the Wise. . .

O worldly wise, what do you know about His Game of Love!

The list included other things like toothpaste, a shaving set, shoes, etc. Even the size of the trunk was specified. I found that the trunk purchased by my brother was a bit too long; I had to buy another, of the required dimensions. I was eagerly waiting for the sun to set on September 30, to start by the night train for Ahmednagar. But, at the end of the list there was a note informing me to reach Meherabad on October 5. I thought, "From October 1, I shall be relieved from

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my teaching job. Then my neighbors and friends will know that I have left the school. Maybe some will visit me at home, inquiring about my future plans." And I was thoroughly prepared for this Baba joke!

### A Jeremiad to Saqi (The Wine Seller)

I do not know much about the difficulties of those staying at Meherabad or Meherazad, except for those of Ghani. He was one of the Yeswallas but the necessity of providing his wife and children with a minimum income after his departure for the New Life continued to bother him. It was specially in relation to the property at Lonavla. Two decades earlier Ghani owned five houses at Lonavla, a place forty kilometers from Poona. At that time he owed 16,000 rupees to a money lender who through legal manoeuvres was successful in getting the court to order all those houses transferred to his name. In fact, the estimated value of the whole property was about 60,000 rupees. The decree of the court was a great blow to Ghani. The day this order was to come into effect, the moneylender and his wife were surprisingly murdered. The police department, in the investigation, tried to find out if Ghani, in any way, was involved in this heinous crime. Fortunately, in those days he was staying with Baba. The police for lack of evidence did not level any charges against him.

The whole affair, however, weighed so heavily on him that on his return to Lonavla, Ghani thought of committing suicide. One night in a desperate mood he went to a nearby lake and cursed all the Masters in the world including Baba for being so unjust and unkind to him. At the last moment, nevertheless, he dared not throw himself into the lake. The next morning, most unexpectedly, Baba visited Lonavla and asked Ghani why he had been calling on Him (Baba) so intensely the previous night! This revealed to Ghani Baba's omniscience and thereupon he decided to resign himself to the *karmic* debts and dues, ordained by the Divine Will.

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He also promised Baba to stay near Him, whenever called. Ghani had appealed the decision of the court and in 1939 he got back 3/5ths of his property. Later, he dedicated this property to Baba.

In 1949, when the arrangements connected with the New Life phase were being discussed, Baba casually mentioned that He had it in mind to make some definite provision for Ghani's wife and children, especially while disposing of the property at Lonavla that was dedicated to Him. As the days passed by, Ghani noticed that his particular personal problem was neither attended to nor even referred to by Baba. So thoughts about the future of his family members continued to disturb him. He had anticipated Baba doing something to help in this matter. In September, he gave vent to his uneasy thoughts through a *ghazal* which was read out to Baba.

Baba appreciated the frankness of Ghani but at the same time asked Khak (named Abbas), one of His disciples, who too was a poet, to give an adequate reply to Ghani, as from Baba. I intend to quote a few excerpts from the English translation of these two Urdu *ghazals*. They give an idea of Baba's relationship with His close disciples, and also the way He stirred up the emotions of those near Him and how, in due course, He restored harmony. The title of Ghani's *ghazal* was "A Jeremiad to *Saqi*" He wrote:

Tonight the members of the tavern are meeting in  
a session;

Tonight the Master of the tavern also is gracing the  
occasion . . .

Tonight if permitted I wish to unburden my heart,  
Hereafter the Love and Lover and this Divine Night  
will only be a dream.

I am notorious in the world as a free thinker; . . .

Excuse me if the wailing tune is not sweet to the ear.

O Saqi! Hear for once the groans of the faithful ones,

This bemoaning is, nevertheless tinged with love.

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O Saki! Do you recall to mind the plethora of  
promises?  
These — the uninvited gestures of kindness and  
favors,  
Shattered our reasoning and vanquished our resistance.  
We were caught just on the threshold of our lives.  
O Saki! Do you remember the postponement of your  
promises, to June and September?  
We often recall such incidents for amusements.  
You begin to evolve subterfuges and excuses.  
There is no one to beat you at this game.  
Often you have played the game of construction and  
destruction.  
No sooner we felt settled, there was unsettlement.  
The breeze of destruction, however, was never so  
strong as on this occasion;  
It seems — the present game implied perfect  
destruction.  
The school of Love for years underwent a routine  
course,  
What seized you to change suddenly the curriculum so  
drastically?  
Mere words can never remove the age-long ruts of  
temperament and nature,  
When it is a problem even for advanced souls!

### Saki's Reply to the Jeremiad

At the next meeting, Khaksaheb as instructed by Baba was ready with the answer. It was in the form of couplets.

This *ghazal*, on behalf of Baba, was read out openly before Baba and His close disciples. Some of the lines are given below:

## OLD LIFE ENDS; NEW LIFE BEGINS

Inmates of the tavern, do you know whose is the wailing  
note today?  
The voice evidently is one of our ... beneficiaries.  
How dare he complain about the tyranny of the *Saqi*?  
Can he truly say that the Wine eternal has not benefited  
him at all?

Don't disgrace the name of free thinking!  
A free thinker never caters for name and fame.  
The *Saqi* has not forgotten His promises,  
And His uncalled-for gestures of kindness and favors.

It would be near the mark if I were to call you  
shortsighted.  
Whatever I did was just the right thing in your case.  
The so-called freedom of your dreams, like death,<sup>2</sup>  
Would have dragged you down to the depths of ignominy  
and shame!

In the world, for one beautiful there is one better;  
In intellect and learning, there are hundreds superior to  
you.  
Just explain what particular qualification you possess,  
That amongst others you become "select" in my eyes.  
The process of purifying the heart is not a child's game.  
The ordeal of surrender and resignation is long and  
tedious.  
Your hasty temperament has blurred your vision,  
In this Path, there is tardiness, but not niggardliness.

Listen to the *Saqi*, don't lose heart.  
Success depends on the will to do and die.  
Give up all considerations of profit and loss,  
The All-merciful Master of the Tavern will no doubt  
Make you drink one day, the Wine of Immortal Life!

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<sup>2</sup> Ghani's attempt to commit suicide at Lonavla.

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Baba, the All-knowing and Compassionate One, guided Ghani inwardly to maintain his mental poise. In connection with this incident, Ghani wrote in the *Diary of the New Life*, "Over some misunderstanding in the matter of adjusting the disposal of Lonavla properties, an ugly situation developed, which Baba eventually tidied over, thereby saving for Dr. Ghani the dire consequences of his rebellious mood over the question."<sup>3</sup> Ghani was a very outspoken person. Once he said to me, "I am here (with Baba) not only for *Khuda* (God) but also for *khurda* (money) — coins of different denomination." Perhaps he was joking. Whether he was or wasn't, his capacity to quote appropriate couplets from Urdu and Persian *ghazals* and poems, to Baba's satisfaction, was remarkable. Besides, his wit and humor were superb and Baba felt happy and relaxed in Ghani's company.

In this great game of material dispensation, Baba heard that a certain mill owner often spoke proudly of having helped Baba's cause, in cash and kind, a decade ago. So Baba sent two of His disciples, including Sarosh Irani to meet this person. He was given to understand that it was not he who obliged Baba with his services but in fact he was fortunate enough to be blessed by the *Avatar* by His accepting them and he ought to have felt grateful for this to Him. From the boastful remarks he had made earlier it was clear that he had failed to understand this fundamental principle. Hence, in that very same meeting, to his great astonishment, and in spite of his repeated refusals he was fully recompensed. Poor mill owner! It was too late for him to rectify his mistake.

As for the correspondence from the West, I learnt that Gabriel Pascal from the U.S.A. sent a cable inquiring when he should visit India to see Baba in connection with the film that Pascal wished to produce on Baba's life. Baba cabled back to him, "The New Life phase

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<sup>3</sup> Ghani's unpublished *Diary of the New Life*, (October-November 1949) p. 2

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that I have just decided upon will not make possible our meeting in December, 1949 for Avatar film. See me sometime, somewhere just for the meeting of love."

### The Training Center at Belgaum

In the second week of September, Baba discussed with His companions the preliminary phases of the New Life. The first period of training, which would include physical labor, was to be at Belgaum. The second period comprising of *bhiksha* (begging) and wearing of *langoti* (loin cloth) was to be at Benares and during the subsequent march on foot, the third period, consisting of the gypsy life, was to be practiced on the way to Hardwar. At the end of this meeting Baba conveyed, "In order to help and guide the Yeswallas. . . I desire to give training by being easy with them at first, as after the end of December, 1949 this New Life with me will be an absolute *satyanashi* [utter ruin]. From January, 1950 — May God help you all!" Thus Belgaum, about 375 kilometers to the south of Poona, in the Karnataka State, was to be the first training center.

In the entire month of August, Baba did not disclose whether He wished to lead His New Life at a certain place or in a particular area. He would just gesture, "I can't say anything. We may go anywhere!" In September, He casually let out the secret that He intended to have a small piece of land near Hardwar. In the end, a small estate was purchased in the village of Manjri Mafi, four miles from the city of Dehra Dun, on the way to Hardwar. The work Baba wished to conduct from Manjri Mafi was mostly connected with the twin pilgrimage centers — Hardwar and Rishikesh. So, Baba generally referred to this estate as the Hardwar property. This was to be the headquarters for His New Life activities. The minimum essential arrangement for lodging was under construction and it required some time for its completion. Therefore, in the beginning, a short stay at Khuldabad, near Aurangabad was considered.

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This was changed and it was decided to stay at Belgaum. Nearby this city, at Thalakwadi, (a suburb), Vishnu, one of Baba's disciples, owned a piece of land. He volunteered to put it at Baba's disposal. There was already a small structure on this farm which could be used as a shelter for the four women disciples accompanying Baba. As for the Yeswallas, a small hut (20' x 30'), with tiled roof and bamboo matting on the sides had to be erected. Vishnu took upon himself the responsibility of finishing this job by October 16. Belgaum was a good distance from Ahmednagar and there the possibility of the public approaching Baba or His companions with various inquiries was much less. To ensure that the curiosity aroused by His presence, and His *mandali*, would not lead to any complications, Baba asked Sarosh Irani, who was a person of considerable influence with the government officers, to inform the superintendent of police at Belgaum, about Baba's activities and his proposed stay for about a month and a half there.

### A Game of "French" Tennis

According to Baba's orders, I was at Meherabad on October 5. Before getting down from the *tonga* I gave the driver nearly double the amount of the fare. He looked pleased and surprised to receive this large tip from a commoner like me. I too was very happy for according to Baba's instructions when entering the premises of Meherabad I had to be penniless and I now was. All the Yeswallas had come. In a way, this was simply the summation of all that He had been saying directly or indirectly during the past weeks. The new points which Baba mentioned were: "All Yeswallas are bound . . . to the fulfillment of two responsibilities. (1) To bring my body after death to Meherabad Hill. (2) Also to bring Mehera's body after her death to Meherabad Hill and to bury the same beside my tomb." He also asked the Arrangementwallas to adhere sincerely to the responsibilities assigned to them.



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The next morning Khaksaheb read some *ghazals* to Baba. I still recall the following simile which Baba appreciated. It runs as follows: "O Beloved, if you were to ask me about the splendor of the scars of longing on my heart, I may dare say that it is brighter than the brilliance of the heavenly bodies; thank you!" After an hour or so Baba was busy in His cabin calling some of the disciples to assign them some work or to give them a few instructions. In the afternoon He played "French" tennis with us. In this game one has to hold the tennis racket right on the toes; the other players have a tennis ball. When the ball is thrown at the batsman he has to hit it. He can move the racket to any side but not change the position of his feet. If he is caught he is out; if the ball hits the batsman below his knees, he is out. Baba had His own way of forming new games! By a fluke I hit the ball well that day.

When the game was over, while returning to the hall, I felt a pat on my shoulder. That was Baba's. He gestured, "You played well today." I just kept quiet. He continued, "Do you play cricket too?" I replied, "I used to play when I was in the High School." "Not now?" Baba asked. "No," I answered. "Why?" Baba inquired. "When I was in college I had a severe lung hemorrhage which was subsequently diagnosed as tuberculosis. Since then I haven't played cricket," I added trying to clarify the situation. "Will you be able to walk 15 to 20 kilometers a day in the New Life?" Baba asked pointedly. In a low voice I said, "I will try my best Baba."

Thereupon Baba instructed me, "Come to Meherazad on October 8, morning. There is a program of distributing food-grain and cloth to the poor and the other deserving people. Whatever duty shall be given to you, do it with your heart. Then I may tell you 'something!'" Baba looked so compassionately at me that Ghani who was standing near me could not help remarking later. "Bal, Baba seems to be very considerate in your case. You are lucky!" I neither understood what Baba meant by "something" nor what Ghani implied by calling me

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"lucky". I must, however, admit that from the very beginning Baba has been most considerate and compassionate towards me, in all my life with Him. Perhaps every Baba lover feels so and I believe that everyone is perfectly right.

According to Baba's instructions, I went to Meherazad. The poor people from the nearby villages had gathered in the open space. I was asked to help Baba's *mandali* in separating the men and women into rows and then leading them by turn to the room where Baba washed the feet of each and handed over a bundle of *prasad* wrapped in cloth. For a short time I was allowed to stand near the room, watching Baba at His work. That was a wonderful experience. When all the people had dispersed, He called me near. Dr. Donkin and Dr. Nilu were standing near Him. He pointed at my frail body and asked the doctors if I could bear the hardships of the New Life. Nilu touched my collar-bone and ribs. The two doctors exchanged a few medical terms which I could not follow. They reported the matter to Baba and He asked me to be present at Adi's office in Ahmednagar the next day at 9 A.M. Savak Kotwal was to take me in his jeep from Meherabad to Nagar.

### Baba Assigns My Duty

On October 9, I was at Adi's office. Baba had already arrived and Ramjoo was discussing some points with Him. Soon I was called inside. Without asking me anything. Baba conveyed through gestures. "I am pleased with you and your love for me." Then He asked Ramjoo to take out the mimeographed copy of the Circular of the New Life conditions that was signed by me on August 31, Baba told Ramjoo, as far as I remember, to write, "Bal will be with me in my New Life (to the very end)." Then he put his signature under it. Turning to me He conveyed, "Without any fault of yours, of my own Will, I free you from joining me physically in my New Life. Go back to your place. Continue the

type of life that you were leading before. You have left your service, I know; so if you need some money, I will arrange for that." All this was so unexpected that I replied only to the last statement, "Baba, with your blessings I can manage without asking for financial help from anyone." Baba added incidentally, "There is one order for you. Don't touch a woman with an intention of lust." Really this was a great blessing bestowed on me. This order from Baba, I felt, proclaimed His inner and outer help in my attempt to refrain from any lustful action. Respectfully I lowered my head to convey my consent and said, "Yes, Baba."

Baba continued, "Last night I had a thought about Mauni; you know him. In the last interview I had asked him to see me after a period of six months. According to the conditions of the New Life, no one is expected to visit me after October 16. Therefore contact him and convey my message that he should wholeheartedly carry out the instructions<sup>4</sup> given to him. But now he must never, never try to see me even if he happens to know my whereabouts." I answered, "Baba, Mauni left Kurduwadi a month ago, to stay either at Hardwar or Rishikesh. I do not know his address. How can I find him?" Baba appeared displeased with this reply. On the board He spelt out that it was a duty given to me and that I had to do it. I felt ashamed and thought, "I shouldn't have answered the way I did." I silently stood up, feeling rather guilty, Baba gestured that I should wait a little while outside the room.

After some time He called me again. I found Him in a good mood, beaming and radiating joy. He gestured, "Don't worry about anything," and smiled. I took it as a promise of guidance for the rest of my life and felt greatly relieved. A loving farewell! I was given ten rupees and Baba instructed, "Take a *tonga* to Meherabad. Have your lunch and leave immediately for the railway station to catch the train." I humbly bowed

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<sup>4</sup> *Glimpses*, Vol. II, Chapter 3.

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down to Him. I had left my job and my family to stay permanently with Baba, but now after just four days I was being sent back, with no possibility of ever seeing Him again. For me it was an astounding situation. It gave me a glimpse of what life is like with the Master.

As I came out of Khushru Quarters I found a *tonga* waiting at the gate. I regarded it as a Baba-sent conveyance. As I reached Meherabad some were surprised to see me leaving so abruptly. I told them in a nutshell what had happened. Someone remarked, "Minoo and you are lucky !" I did not know then that Minoo was also excused from physically being with Baba in the New Life. Even now I do not know the reason for this. I had my lunch, I collected my articles and within an hour left for the station. I purchased a ticket for Kurduwadi — a place which five days ago I felt I would never visit again for the rest of my life. My brother and those at home as well as my colleagues were much surprised.

When I told the headmaster that I wished to resume my duties in the school, after the winter vacation, he had every right to criticize me. Can one ever convince others, logically, of one's life with the God-Man, unless one belongs to the same flock! My friends too probably took me as a crazy person but no one said anything openly. The New Life, in fact, was to begin on October 16, but for me the new life had already been inaugurated! Baba inwardly guided me to perform the duty he had assigned me, but to maintain the chronological sequence, I intend to narrate the details of it in the next chapter.

### General Circular about the New Life

In September, Baba conveyed to his disciples and followers, through His secretary, Adi K. Irani, that He had completely stopped accepting anything from anyone in the form of a gift. On October 10, a special circular was issued for all the Baba people in the East and West disclosing the most unanticipated news about the New Life. It read as follows:

## OLD LIFE ENDS; NEW LIFE BEGINS

Baba ends His Old Life of . . . multifarious activities, and with a few companions begins His New Life of complete renunciation and absolute helplessness from October 16, 1949. Although Baba's and His companions' New Life will be known to everyone and their whereabouts will be no secret, no one should try to see Baba or His companions for any reason whatsoever, as Baba will not see any of them, nor allow His companions to do so. No one should try to communicate with Baba or His companions under any circumstances or for any reason whatsoever.

— By Order of Baba

Only Elinor (Elizabeth and Norina) from the U.S.A. were allowed to cable Baba in connection with the work that was entrusted to them during their interview with Him in the first week of August 1949.

All who learnt of this short but most unexpected circular were greatly astonished; its contents were entirely incomprehensible. To most of them the terms Old Life and New Life, were not only completely new but completely unintelligible as well. They only loved and knew about Baba's Divine Life. The One whom they loved so dearly was, all of a sudden, departing never to return again. No one could imagine why. The circular had forbidden them from even wishing their dear Master a heart-warming farewell. In addition they were not permitted to express their feelings through letters. They had to keep quiet. "Can the Compassionate One be so harsh? What sort of New Life is this?" some thought.

Even to this day, Baba's New Life phase is the most difficult to comprehend. The external details — the journeys and the diaries — are there. These, and more information gathered later from those who accompanied Baba, form the data for this narration of His New life. But it is hardly an attempt to explain it. Who knows, perhaps some statements Baba made during this period may whisper the secret of this phase to some of His dear

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ones, even now. All I can say is that Baba as the *Avatar* — Infinite Consciousness — had to work and to express Himself through a finite human form, and this helped create both the enigma and beauty of Him and His New Life.

On October 12, Baba conveyed to the Yeswallas, "This continual one month's working day and night, personally seeing every detail of winding up the Old Life and arranging for the endless New Life ... have made me literally dead exhausted, both mentally and physically . . . Therefore, I order my companions beforehand that from October 16 to October 22 . . . I will be in a relaxed mood, tired and easy, towards my companions, in order to be free from physical and mental strain . . . We leave Meherabad in early morning of October 16, and my companions should walk a furlong ahead of me and the four women companions. The men should laugh, talk and be cheerful without jeopardizing the conditions . . ." Baba's program was to enter the first New Life journey by walking the distance, on the Ahmednagar-Poona Road, as far as Chas.

A day prior to the commencement of the New Life, Baba arrived at Meherabad fairly early. He gave final instructions to the Arrangementwallas — Sarosh, Ramjoo, Meherjee and Nariman. Padri and Sidhu were to stay at Lower Meherabad. Mansari and Jerbai were to reside at Upper Meherabad — the hill. Sidhu's duty was to serve and look after the *mast*, Mohammed. Baba inspected the traveling bags of those who were to accompany Him. He instructed the Yeswallas to retire as early as 7 P.M. and to wake up at 2 A.M. A bath was compulsory. After having tea, everyone was to get himself ready to bid adieu, for good, to Meherabad by 4 A.M., on October 16, 1949. After the inspection and instructions Baba agreed to sit for a group photo with those present. The atmosphere of the day was of mixed emotions. That most eagerly awaited day was almost there. It was indeed a serious affair, and yet it had a strange thrill of its own.

## OLD LIFE ENDS; NEW LIFE BEGINS

### The New Life Phase Begins

Accordingly, on October 16, in the early morning, Baba's New Life companions were taken in a bus from Meherabad to the railway crossing, near the Ahmednagar station. Baba, with the four women disciples, arrived from Meherazad. He permitted Sarosh, Adi Jr.,<sup>5</sup> and Savak Damania to wave good bye. Just while leaving, it began to rain and Sarosh suggested that up to the first halt, he be allowed to follow the Baba-party very slowly in his car. And in case it began to rain heavily the car would be at Baba's disposal. Baba agreed.

The New Life march began at the railway crossing. After walking a short distance, Baba bade every companion to stand behind Him. Then He Himself and the companions reverentially touched the ground with their fingers. While bowing down to the ground, Baba silently took an oath, the contents of which He never disclosed. After a minute, with upraised hands, Baba asked all to utter the following prayer, "O God, make this New Life for all of us a success and joy eternal." The journey on foot continued for a few furlongs. The wind blew harder and brought more rain. In place of raincoats the companions, like the Indian farmers, put gunny bags on their heads. Baba seemed happy with this whim of the weather and gestured, "A good sign!" The rains continued unabated; therefore, Baba and the companions were taken in cars to Supa, a distance of about twenty four kilometers from Ahmednagar. The first halt at Chas, as previously planned, was skipped. At Supa, Sarosh and the others bade farewell to all and returned.

Baba and the women occupied the rest house at Supa. The men accommodated themselves in small rooms near a kitchen and a garage, in the same compound. Baba, squatting on the stone flooring, in the midst of His companions, explained the "three periods" preceding the New Life. The first was of relaxation; the second was

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<sup>5</sup> Meher Baba's youngest brother.

of training in hard labor, begging, etc. The third which He termed as a "vacuum period" was to be of ten days, at the fag end of 1949. He concluded the chat by stating, "From January 1 onwards, characterizing the New Life, there will be 100% hopelessness and helplessness which even the gods will envy!"<sup>6</sup> Baba assured all of His help in attuning themselves to the New Life. The earnest response expected of each companion was a literal compliance with Baba's orders. He also conveyed, "All should try to be hundred per cent truthful and speak the truth and truth alone whatever be the circumstances and consequences."

A new way of living started from the very first day. At Supa, Baba ordered all to take a bath and for this everyone had to fetch water from a well a furlong away. To Ghani it was an ordeal. Seeing him panting heavily, while carrying the bucket of water, Baba lent Ghani — His childhood friend — a helping hand. As if to compensate for this life which the Yeswallas were not used to, Baba, with a cheering smile, distributed chocolates and dried fruits to all. This trait of teasing and pleasing the companions was reminiscent of life with Baba in Manzil-e-Meem (Dadar, Bombay) in 1922 when He used to mix freely with His disciples.

During the first halt on the second day, Baba, sitting with the companions in the unfurnished garage, explained, "We are all on equal footing, from now on, in the New Life ... Baba is to be looked upon and treated as a friend . . . In one respect alone Baba will be a Master towards all — and that is in respect of demanding implicit obedience. In all other respects . . . perfect freedom of behaving towards Baba should be observed. Such a freedom of behaving should not smack of *beyadabi* (impudence)! Barring this, all are free to indulge in humor, joviality, jokes and laughter. Nothing will please me more."<sup>7</sup> Perhaps such a relationship holds

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<sup>6</sup> Ghani's unpublished, *Diary of The New Life*, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 12.



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the seed of the New Life wherein one has to be simultaneously friend and slave of the God-Man; fully free to remain honest to oneself, yet bound outright to the Divine Will of the Beloved. One has to be in readiness to share the Supper and to shoulder the Cross too. Was that the secret of the New Life?

### Exhausting Walk and Delightful Treat

In spite of the cloudy weather Baba decided to walk on foot, in one hike, a distance of 25 kilometers from Supa to Ghodnadi. He gestured that whether it rained or not, the march was to be continued. Subsequently on October 18, as early as 4 A.M., the Baba-party set out for Ghodnadi. The men walked ahead and the women with Baba followed a little later. After a while Baba wished to communicate with some of the Yeswallas, so He clapped but in the open air His clapping could not be heard by the companions. Goher blew a whistle but as it was rarely used, the cork balls got stuck inside. Eventually the companions heard the call and stopped. Baba joined them and impressed upon them that it should not happen again. But in fact one of their orders had been not to look backwards. So naturally they could not guess how far they were ahead of Baba. If they had walked rather slowly to avoid getting too far ahead, there was a good chance that this would have displeased Baba. As someone later remarked, "Baba expects one to sit and stand at one and the same time!" True. To live with Baba is a constant challenge to I-consciousness.

After walking half way they came in sight of Narayangaon. Baba suggested that tea would refresh the companions. Kaka Baria, however, was the only Yeswalla permitted to carry some money and he had proceeded to Ghodnadi to make the lodging and boarding arrangements. The rest of the party were the penniless companions of the perennial *Fakir*, Baba. Eruch, however remembered that according to the previous plan there was to be a halt under the shady trees at Narayangaon.

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Besides, a person staying in that village had been paid in advance for milk, etc. That was good news. Baba asked Eruch and Donkin to hasten and find that person. They contacted the man and all had good refreshing tea. This incident could be regarded as the beginning of the coincidences that followed later in the New Life.

In the morning it was cool and the walk was pleasant. But soon it started getting warmer. By 10 A.M., the October heat, as it is experienced in India, is quite oppressive. Now the walk was tiring. Baba's toes developed sores and Donkin had to put adhesive tape on those spots. A small group of villagers, as they passed by the women disciples carrying umbrellas, perhaps sensed their plight and suggested that there was convenient bus service to Poona. The women smiled away the suggestion by saying, "It's all right. Thank you." As the party approached Ghodnadi, Ghani felt extremely exhausted. He had a slight heart attack. Baba made him sit under a tree and splashed some water on his head. A little rest helped him resume the journey. The rest house on the outskirts of the city, where the Baba-party intended to halt, was already engaged by some government officers. So the advance party had to make the lodging arrangements in a cinema house that had closed down and was vacant. The theater was in the heart of the city. The women, who had led a secluded life for years, felt shy as they walked through the crowded streets, avoiding the inquisitive glances of the strangers. It was now past midday. The lunch was ready. All relished the food after the strenuous walk and preferred to relax the rest of the day.

The next day was *Diwali*, the Festival of Lights. From the early morning, indeed throughout the night, firecrackers and sparklers were set off by children and grown-ups alike. The sound of exploding firecrackers was deafening. In spite of this disturbance, most of the companions enjoyed an undisturbed sleep as they had had a tiring walk the day before. After breakfast all felt energetic, though the stiffness of their limbs often reminded

them of the long journey. Here again Baba ordered all to bathe. Therefore, unroofed urinals were cleaned; these were turned into improvised bathrooms. In the afternoon *laddoos* (sweets) were served with tea. The previous day all had *jilebis* (sweets). These two treats were not intended to celebrate *Diwali*: these were meant to celebrate the two narrow escapes from serious injury — one to Nilu and the other to Baba.

On the first day while getting down from the luggage lorry, Nilu had inadvertently slipped and fell to the road on his haunches but did not hurt himself badly. On hearing this, Baba sanctioned the expense of ten rupees for sweets as the mishap had been averted. The next night, Baba was resting on a dinner table that served as an improvised bed. Generally the least sound would wake Baba but that night Baba fell into an unusually sound sleep. It was after midnight when someone knocked and shook the door violently. Baba woke up to get the door but as the dinner table was much higher than a regular bed, He missed His footing and fell heavily on one side. Fortunately He managed to support His body with His palms and was saved from any unfortunate consequences, except for a rude shaking.

Eruch tried to find out who had knocked, but in vain. It was not known who shook the door so furiously — a stranger or a spirit! Baba later disclosed that for the first time He felt immensely relieved of the burden of the Old Life, and as a natural consequence He had an exceptionally "sound sleep". When He conveyed the whole episode to the companions, Ghani suggested that this narrow escape too should be celebrated, befitting the person concerned! Baba responded good-humoredly by allotting twenty-one rupees for *laddoos*. Thus, these two events provided timely *Diwali* treats for all, Baba discussed the transport arrangements from Ghodnadi to Belgaum a distance of about 440 kilometers. The companions were to travel in a special bus. Pendu and Kaka were asked to go with the luggage truck.

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### At Belgaum, the First Training Center

On October 20, at 2 A.M. the companions got into the State Transport bus bound for Belgaum. The Baba party traveling via Poona, Kolhapur and Nipani reached Thalakwadi (Belgaum) by 4 P.M. the same day. It had rained enough so that the road leading to the hut on the farm on the outskirts of the city was muddy and slushy. The workmen were still at work and the flooring was quite damp. To cheer up the companions Baba mentioned that whatever was happening (whether offering comforts or discomforts) was in keeping with the New Life. The temporary structure for the women was a furlong from the men's quarters but it was on the same farm with a well nearby. For everyday use the men had to fetch water from this well. Life at Belgaum was indeed a phase of hard labor, as Baba called it. In the evening the companions had only wheat bread and curry for supper. No vegetables. At night it rained periodically. This made the floor of the hut even damper and in both rooms in the women's quarters there was ankle-deep water.

In one of the sittings Baba explained, "Up to now, the life, so to say, has been of pain and suffering ... In 1950, the life will be still more acutely painful, but this pain you will enjoy. This enjoyment of pain, will in itself constitute a challenge to God. I cannot say anything more . . ." On October 22, Baba dictated a general circular for His followers. It contained information about the three phases connected with the New Life and their duration up to the end of 1949.

Before inaugurating the physical labor phase at Belgaum, Baba distributed sweets to the companions. He then assigned different duties to one and all. Kaka was in charge of cooking; Baidul and Murli were to help him. Adi, Pendu and Nilu were to draw and supply water from the well. Vishnu was given the work of marketing but he was not allowed to engage a coolie to fetch articles from the city. Eruch was to attend to

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Baba for odd jobs and Ghani had to write the day-to-day diary of the New Life. Anna was to keep watch at night. The women including Mehera willingly shared the work of cooking, washing and sweeping which they had rarely done before. Mani was in charge of cooking. She was not as adept as Naja, Pendu's sister, in preparing dishes. One day at supper time it was found that the vegetable stew lacked flavor. Baba suggested that the patties stored in the cupboard be mashed in it. This gave it such a delicious taste that the women referred to it as "Bhagwan Stew" — a famous dish of Poona.

It occasionally rained at Belgaum and the rain water dripped from the tiled roof. Hence, floor cleaning was an additional but necessary task. Mehera and Mani used to sleep in one room. As the temporary structure was in a farm, one day Mani had a rat bite and it began to bleed; Goher had to give immediate first aid. Another day Goher suddenly got up from sleep. She felt that Meheru was calling her for help. In fact it was only an owl hooting at night. In spite of the hard labor and discomforts the men and women remained cheerful. This pleased Baba.

The second period of training, in begging, was to be carried out at Benares, in Uttar Pradesh. Sadashiv Patel and Babadas were to be sent in advance to find a secluded place where Baba and the party could stay for three weeks. They were also to find a person, a friend or an acquaintance, who would accept 500 rupees and in return feed the Baba-party for twenty days. There was no special condition about the quality of the food. Baba instructed them that the negotiations with the person concerned should be carried out so skillfully that the donor should in no way feel that he was obliging the party. They were also to be on the lookout for two cows and she-donkeys which they could purchase. This task seemed difficult but the companions had to try their best. Patel and Babadas left Belgaum for Benares on October 26.

There were a few occasions when the companions

came in for an admonition. Gustadji's duty was to sweep the hut. Baba noticed that he was not particular enough in attending to his work. On another day, He found that Nilu was talking with Adi about the good old days of the Old Life. He even expressed a wish, "May those days return soon!" This remark displeased Baba. He made it clear to His companions that such thoughts were not expected of the Yeswallas. Through such directions Baba was trying to drive home the real nature of the New Life to all.

### Daulat Singh Returned to Bangalore

By the first week of October, Daulat Singh, according to Baba's instructions, arrived at Meherabad. He was one of the Yeswallas. It was about this month that his youngest daughter was to get married. She had lovingly pleaded with her father saying, "Can't you postpone joining Baba in His New Life for a few days? As soon as my wedding is over you may gladly leave us all. This is my last request of you, dear father and I hope Baba too won't object to it." Daulat Singh tried to console her but had to refuse and arrived at Meherabad on October 5. Family ties are hard to untie; they are like the knots of silk thread, very tender yet very powerful. At Belgaum, one evening after helping Eruch wash the utensils, he sat alone at night outside their hut, silently sobbing over his helplessness to grant his dear daughter's simple request. Perhaps that was the day of her wedding. He thought that he was all by himself but Baba most unexpectedly arrived at the companion's quarters and approached Daulat Singh. He asked him to tell frankly why he was weeping and what troubled him so deeply. Daulat Singh had to say what he thought and felt. Baba quietly listened but said nothing at that time.

In view of this and some other incidents Baba once again offered the choice to all the companions, to go back to the Old Life, if they so wished. At the request of the Yeswallas, Baba had a private interview with each.

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He cleared the doubts and difficulties of some in connection with the different phases connected with the New Life. Availing himself of this opportunity, Daulat Singh, who was very worried over his unsettled affairs at Bangalore, sought Baba's permission to return home for two months. He felt sure that within this period he could set matters right and would then be able to rejoin Baba with a free mind and heart.

A day later, in the presence of all the companions Baba looked at Daulat Singh with compassion and conveyed, "Listen carefully, my friend, I have now decided for you to go back to your Old Life. I send you back without any fault on your part, and on your not having failed me in the least.... But as I am sending you of my own free will, your spiritual connection with me remains as before, if I am what you take me to be. The special orders for you are: (1) Till you die, no lustful action, even with your wife; (2) You will never lie, whatever the consequences; (3) One month, in every year you will wear the *kafni* that I will give you and during this month, you will live on begging . . . If these three orders are obeyed by you one hundred per cent, you will be sharing my New Life one hundred per cent."<sup>8</sup> Daulat Singh, who in spite of having suffered several reversals in his life, loved Baba intensely and therefore felt very reluctant to return home permanently. He, nevertheless, dared not disobey Baba. It was a most touching sight to see him bidding farewell to the companions at Thalakwadi, with uncon-trollable sobs and tears rolling down his cheeks.

The way Daulat Singh was drawn to Beloved Baba is rather exceptional. It was in a dream that he first beheld Beloved Meher Baba's face, aglow with matchless radiance and an inviting smile. But he neither knew Baba's name nor His whereabouts. "Is He the Awakener of this age? Is He Nanak<sup>9</sup> come again?" he thought of

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 34, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Nanak (1469-1538 A.D.), a Perfect Master, was the first Guru of the Sikhs and he is regarded as the founder of Sikhism

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the face he had seen. Ever since this significant dream his eyes always longed to see the face of that Enlightened One, in flesh and blood. This was what he genuinely wished but hardly dared hope for. This vision seemed very significant to him (it was a sign from the sphere of ever shining light, he knew) but not knowing what to do about it he became very restless. In those days he was living in Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. He was practicing there as a doctor and was well placed in life.

In the early 1940s one of Baba's devotees visited Kashmir to spread His name and message. He carried pictures of Meher Baba with him. Once he displayed a few of these in one of the small shops on the main road in Srinagar. By a stroke of luck, Daulat Singh happened to pass by and at once recognized the face as that of the One he had seen in his dream and for whom he was desperately searching and pining. He embraced that devotee with great fervor as tears of joy trickled down his cheeks. That day he first heard the Holy Name of this Age — Meher Baba. A wonderful lover had thus been drawn to the wonderful Beloved, in a wondrous way.

In the riots that sprang up in Kashmir after the partition of this great subcontinent in August 1947, Daulat Singh unfortunately lost a big part of his property and he had to move with his family to another part of India. Once he was a wealthy, well-to-do person and now it was not easy for him to manage his family affairs well. He was put in a miserable predicament. This, however, did not lessen his love for Baba even a bit. His circumstances had not changed much when he joined Baba in His New Life. It was in consideration of this plight that the All-knowing Master Baba, relieved him from accompanying Him any further. Daulat Singh implicitly obeyed Baba's three standing orders. He generally referred to Beloved Baba as the *Huzoor* (the Lord). His last meeting, prior to his death, with his Lord Baba was very moving, when the lover and the Beloved were



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in each other's embrace. More about this event as we come to it in the course of the narration.

### The Song of the New Life

Returning to the account of Baba's New Life phase at Belgaum, it was the period when Baba resumed His fondness for playing a *dholak* (a cylindrical drum with leather on both sides), to the accompaniment of a harmonium, which Adi played while also singing *ghazals*. During one such performance Baba asked Ghani to compose a *ghazal*, comprising the cardinal qualities expected of the companions. He spontaneously dictated the following chorus in Urdu:

*Suno Meher Babaki khamosh band, isime hai sate  
ashikonki kahani,  
Hai jeena tumhe gar nai zindagani, karo tark dilse ye  
duniyae phani.*

(Listen to the silent words of Meher Baba,  
The life story of all lovers [of God] is based on the  
practice of these words.)

Baba then dictated some points to Ghani who later incorporated them in the *ghazal*. These were put into verse in nine quatrains. Baba again suggested a few points and asked him to include them at the end. He jokingly remarked that if Ghani failed to do this job well by next morning, his punishment would be a hundred *baithaks* (a kind of Indian exercise of rigorously sitting and standing). The couplets were set to a musical score. The tune was approved by Baba. This song was usually sung with the accompaniment of a harmonium and drum. Sometimes Baba played on a *dholak*, Adi on harmonium and Nilu on *tals* (small cymbals). Baba instructed that this song be sung as a morning prayer for some days during their stay at Belgaum. This *ghazal* is known as the Song of the New

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Life. The next to last quatrain is as follows:

Even if your heart is cut to bits, let there be a smile on  
your lips.  
Here I divulge to you a point worth noting.  
Hidden in your penniless hand, is a treasure untold;  
Your beggarly life will be the envy of kings  
[of the world].

In November 1949 the complete song was published and sent to Baba people, along with its translation in English by Meher Publications, Ahmednagar.

### Baba's New Life, Visible yet Veiled

Baba had regular sittings with His companions. Once noticing the discomforts of His friends, owing to the cold weather, He made provision for a *ghongdi* (very coarse woolen blanket) and an extra bedsheet for each member. During one of the meetings at Belgaum, Baba stated, "When I myself make inquiries about anyone's personal difficulties, then only should he tell me his difficulties honestly, frankly and truly without a tinge of spite or exaggeration . . . In the New Life, to commence on January 1, 1950, I might at times, make you do things which I might also do. Sometimes, I will make you do things which I might not do. In either case, we shall all be sharing the New Life . . . Extraordinary and abnormal things will be done by me and carried out by you too . . . What exactly I mean by extraordinary and abnormal things, I cannot tell you now. Such happenings will go to make the New Life and the sufferings therein, enjoyable. I assure you, the New Life, in spite of its acute sufferings, will be wet inside and outside . . . The greatest help to me will be to do willingly and unhesitatingly anything, even to my person when I give the order."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 36, 37.

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During the stay at Thalakwadi, Baba once asked one of His companions to slap Him. He then asked all to stand in a line and He touched their feet with His hands. Such actions remind me of the instruction given by a Zen Master to his disciples, perhaps to initiate them into the impersonal aspect of the Divine. In connection with this deeper form of meditation, this Zen Master once instructed the aspirants, "Even if you happen to see the glorious form of the Enlightened One, discard it and go ahead." Was this a hint to merge oneself in the Vital Void, the Everything comprising the Nothing? The New Life activities of Meher Baba were quite visible and understandable but their spiritual significance lay veiled and mysterious!

External activities of the New Life were to be carried out at and near Hardwar. In view of this particular phase of work, a small estate was purchased in a village called Manjri Mafi, a few miles from Dehra Dun. The property was in the name of two of the companions. This small estate with two rooms, a verandah, kitchen, bathroom and a court yard was situated on the road leading to Hardwar. Baba remarked that in case He moved to some other place the house could be used by the companions.

When someone raised a question as to the legal position of the property when all of them would drop their bodies, Baba in a light vein of humor cited the title of a detective novel by Agatha Christie, "And Then There Were None." In relation to the name of the village, Manjri Mafi, which in the vernacular means "cats are forgiven," Baba joked, "Here at Belgaum we have rats to trouble us; in the village [where] we intend to stay, cats are forgiven. So let us hope that at Manjri Mafi we will be free at least from rat trouble." While conversing with the companions, no subject was too important or too trivial for Baba. And the companions felt that every action of Baba's carried with it the spark of His Divinity.

The training period at Belgaum was to end by the

middle of November and the begging phase at Benares was to be over before the end of December. About *bhiksha* (begging) Baba explained to the companions, "We have to beg for food only and not for anything else. Food includes everything cooked or raw, liquid or solid — anything and everything. We should not, during begging, ask for anything special ... Ghani should not say, 'Give me mutton' and Nilu should not ask for milk or *barfi*. You ought only to say, 'Please give *bhiksha*.' How to beg and what to beg, I will instruct you fully at Benares. If people offer clothing, accept it, but don't ask for it. You cannot accept money under any circumstances . . . Animals offered voluntarily must be refused, but while thus refusing you can say that if a white horse is given, you would accept . . . Food or clothing when given, should be brought and placed before me first . . . This much we decide today."<sup>11</sup>

On an earlier occasion Baba conveyed, "From January 1, 1950, you all know we have no money. We either beg or earn for food. One point that is to be remembered by one and all is that no food should be preserved for the morrow, on shifting from one place to another. Every day will be a new day for us in this New Life.... If the picture I have in mind takes shape, the abnormal and extraordinary happenings for you all, from April, 1950 onwards will be an everyday affair. Although I said we stay at Hardwar for two or three months, it does not mean we stay there for all the time. . ."<sup>12</sup>

#### Some Suggestive and Profound Indications

In the month of November the companions found Baba in a communicative mood. So they tried to elicit some details about the nature of the impending New Life. This attempt did not prove very successful. Nevertheless, some statements made by Baba during this

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., pp. 42, 43, 46, 53.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

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period were suggestive, a few were rather obscure but profound. One day Baba conveyed, "In this New Life you must be prepared to witness and see Baba being humiliated in all sorts of ways by you, outsiders, *masts*, saints or *yogis*. You must, therefore, help [me] by not interfering unless I order you to do so."<sup>13</sup> He mentioned that the four principles underlying the conditions of the New Life were not to touch money, not to touch a woman, to carry out all orders of Baba most willingly and to remain cheerful under the most trying circumstances.

When asked if this type of New Life had been undertaken by anyone in the past and what need had He to lead it, Baba's laconic answer was, "This is whatever it is. . . I cannot say anything more than this." For the latter part of the above question He clearly stated, "This much I know, I have got to go on, and on, with you or alone. By trying to dig out something from me with regard to this New Life, you will not gain anything further. On the contrary, you will get more and more puzzled if not dismayed. . . I have been waiting these long years for this New Life, and if we live through it, it will mean life that has no end."<sup>14</sup> This clearly shows that Baba was reluctant to divulge the secret and subtleties of the New Life.

A local paper at Belgaum published news of Baba's stay at Thalakwadi. This became the talk of the town. In spite of Baba's instructions, some visited the companions' hut to know more about Baba and His work. It was difficult for the companions to satisfactorily answer the queries made by the visitors. They were told that Baba did not permit *darshan*. Yet some of them tried to approach Baba. As they came closer, Baba Himself bowed down and touched their feet. They were taken aback. They knew that Baba was observing silence and so did not ask Him any questions. Quietly they left the place. In anticipation of future incidents, the companions

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., pp. 53, 59, 60

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

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requested that Baba give them a few pointers which would help them to explain, to some extent, the nature of the New Life to such visitors. Baba agreed and dictated the following statements:

Hopelessness means renunciation of all hopes.  
Aimlessness means renunciation of all aims.  
Helplessness means renunciation of all help.  
No Master, no disciple means renunciation of spirituality.  
And the New Life I have in picture [mind], eventually Means absolute renunciation.<sup>15</sup>

From this it seems clear, Baba was not very concerned how much these statements clarified the New Life.

### Baba Leaves Belgaum for Benares

From November 1, Adi, in the company of the companions, started singing daily the New Life song in the morning. This indirectly meant coaching some of the Yeswallas to sing in a chorus, though very few of them had melodious voices. Baba continued to spend much of His time in the hut. Once He dictated a few extemporaneous couplets in Urdu about the life ahead of them. The gist of the lines is given below: The New Life will bring about a state wherein no one will depend on anyone for anything. (This could be the end, if there would be any, Baba later added). The life led in adherence to the oath taken (on August 31) will keep us together. There will also be a phase which can be termed as "enjoyment of suffering" wherein deep disappointment (a stone in the heart) and great delight (a wine glass at the lips) will go together. And I hope that Ghani will stay on with me as my companion (*sakha*).

On another occasion, the couplets Baba composed when freely translated conveyed: Whether morning or

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

evening, day or night, makes no difference for us. They are of equal importance and significance. We are not concerned with what others think about us. We are preoccupied with the agony (perhaps intense longing for a life of perfect renunciation). In the last couplet Baba's sense of humor, which was always present, exerted itself and with reference to the "beggarly life" He teased Ghani by saying that the only cash they had was the poverty in Ghani's pocket! Baba as a teenager used to compose poems in Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu and Persian under the *nom de plume* of Huma.<sup>16</sup> These early poems were mostly on spiritual subjects. Even after God-realization His love for composing poems continued. In later years they chiefly expressed His sense of humor, sometimes mixing words from different languages.

In the second week of November, Baba inquired of His friends (companions) about their day-to-day requirements, if any. He asked Eruch to note down all such items, viz. soap, thread, buttons, etc. The next day he was sent to the city to purchase the necessary articles. Marketing was usually entrusted to Vishnu but he had been sent to Poona on a special job. When Vishnu returned to Belgaum he was asked if he had brought any special news. Vishnu, in accordance with Baba's injunctions, could neither meet his old acquaintances nor read the newspapers. He, however, related that while moving through the city the newspaper boys were shouting the headlines. One of the bits of news he heard was that the persons connected with plotting Gandhiji's assassination were to be executed on November 15. It was also brought to Baba's notice that, that was the date of their projected arrival in Benares.

One of the companions mentioned that there was a group of people in Uttar Pradesh who were against the pro-Pakistan and pro-Mohammedan policy of Gandhiji. This state of affairs eventually brought about the

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<sup>16</sup> Huma is a bird mentioned in the Scriptures. It is supposed that this bird in its life span never lands on earth.

tragic end of Gandhiji's life, on January 30, 1948. In view of this political situation it was anticipated that there might be an upsurge of communal unrest in the city of Benares and it might result in the enforcement of section 144 of the Indian Penal Code by the District Magistrate. Naturally this would ban any group activity as well as visitors from entering the city. One of the companions added that ignorance of the law would not be accepted as an excuse. So he suggested that the reading of newspapers by the companions would be helpful to them in keeping abreast of such situations.

He asked Baba to reconsider the prohibition on reading newspapers. He was indirectly voicing the wish of a few others who for years had been interested in reading the day-to-day news. A few of them for certain periods had regularly read the newspapers to Baba. Baba could easily guess the motivation behind this proposal. Instead of cancelling the previous order totally, He asked Donkin alone to read *The Times of India* every day. He was instructed to mark all the news relating to the promulgation of new laws, riots, curfews, floods, etc. These cuttings, Baba added, could be read by those who so wished! He also told Donkin to forget (!) the other news and to destroy the remaining pages. Baba did not consent to changing the date of the party's entry in Benares. By the way, it may be stated that the persons involved in the Gandhi case filed an appeal against the judgment and nothing untoward happened on November 15 in the cities of Uttar Pradesh.

On November 12, in the early hours of the morning, at 4:30 A.M., Baba and His companions left Belgaum as quietly as they had arrived. The first phase of physical labor at this center consisted of cleaning and washing, sweeping and dusting, cooking and fetching water from the well. Perhaps all this was more related to the dusting and cleansing of minds and hearts of their old habits and temperaments, or it was a warming up exercise of the New Life! For Baba's companions the end of the stay



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at Belgaum marked the beginning of a life which they could not anticipate. This was the beginning of a life untouched by hope, envy, fear or passion for possessions, as was sung in the Song of the New Life:

We neither wail over lost hopes, nor complain about  
[broken] promises;  
We neither covet honor, nor shun disgrace;  
Backbiting we know not nor do we fear anyone;  
This is now the color [phase] of our New Life.

*Benares to Moradabad*

1949 — Part V

The Telegram Episode

MEHER BABA with His companions reached Benares via Poona, Bombay and Moghulsarai, on the morning of November 15. They were on their way to Hardwar, the place where the external activities of the New Life were to take shape. They had left Belgaum by train on November 12, and were at Poona the next day. Here, the party had to change trains for Bombay.

On the same day, after contacting Mauni at Hardwar in October, the duty assigned to me by Baba, I happened to visit Poona on some work. After getting out of the railway station I chanced to see Dr. Donkin, one of Baba's companions. In view of Baba's instructions I did not approach him. Not knowing Baba's program I did not dream, even remotely, that Baba was having a stroll at the end of the platform where I had gotten down. A strange coincidence of personal significance! Later the same day I learnt from Gadekar that he saw Baba and Nilu (Dr. Nilkanth) at the station. But because of the instructions in the circular he dared neither to contact any of the companions nor to linger there.

Personally I had no idea that Baba had been at Belgaum for three weeks and was on His way to Benares. I had seen Him last on October 9, when He freed me from physically joining the New Life. He permitted me to resume, if possible, my work at school. Returning home I found that the headmaster did not seem to favor rehiring me. As there were only a few days of school left before the long *Diwali* vacation, I resolved to

meet my dear friend Mauni, the mendicant, in October and convey to him Baba's message. I regarded this work as a sacred, spiritual obligation which I must not delay.

As a child I had stayed in North India with my father. But during the last decade I had not even journeyed once through this part. Hardwar was over a thousand kilometers from Kurduwadi. I had no acquaintance in those parts except Kishan Singh who was staying in Delhi. I did not know his address, so I sent a telegram to Adi, "On October 16, leaving Kurduwadi for Hardwar. Send Kishan Singh's Delhi address." To this I received a prompt reply but it was a bit puzzling. It read; "Whether Hardwar or Marwar<sup>1</sup> never, never try to see Baba stop Kishan Singh's address 55 Pandhara Road, New Delhi." I wondered about the first part of this communication. I thought, "Why should Adi reply so humorously?"

This problem was resolved on my return journey from Hardwar when I stayed for two days at Ahmednagar. There I met Dattu, a clerk in Adi's office. He knew about this telegraphic communication. I asked him about the unconnected contents. He related that my personal telegram to Adi was handed over to him in Baba's presence. In the course of attending to other matters Adi read my telegram to Baba. I had not mentioned therein that I was going to Hardwar to contact Mauni. Baba knew that very well but sometimes He could seemingly be most ignorant! He conveyed to Adi, "I have freed Bal from accompanying me physically in my New Life. I had asked him to continue his service; instead he is starting on October 16, on his own for Hardwar. Does he intend to join the New Life against my order?" So the first sentence of the telegram was dictated. "Whether Hardwar or Marwar never, never try to see Baba." When I heard this from Dattu I felt very sorry I had not sent a clear-cut telegram to Adi.

In fact, I had not the least intention of disobeying

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<sup>1</sup> Marwar is a part of Rajasthan, one of the Indian states which I never intended to visit.

## GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN

Baba. I did not know that the headquarters of Baba's New Life activities was to be near Hardwar. October 16 was chosen by me as the auspicious date because Baba was entering the New Life on that day. I wondered how, unintentionally, the situation had gotten distorted. "Have I displeased Baba? What a pity that I have been the cause of disturbing Baba's mood, maybe for a minute!" I thought. This had such a serious effect on me that for many days I felt rather uneasy, especially when alone. I would often implore Baba to forgive me and after some days Baba appeared in a dream and consoled me. With a benevolent smile He bade me forget the whole affair of the telegram and not to worry over it at all. With this dream the psychological tension entirely vanished. Thus, the telegram episode had a happy ending.

### In Search of Mauni

Before narrating further the activities of Baba's New Life, I intend to give an account of what I did about the order that He personally gave me on October 9, 1949. As soon as I received Adi's aforementioned wire, I made the necessary preparations for that long journey to the foot of the Himalayas. I took sufficient money and clothing for a stay of over a month or more in those twin places of pilgrimage — Hardwar and Rishikesh. I had decided to search every *ashram* there to find my bearded friend Mauni and to deliver Baba's message to him. Only after discharging this duty did I wish to resume my teaching, not before.

So on October 16, by the early morning train, I left Kurduwadi for Bombay and reached New Delhi the next day, by evening. On that very long railway platform I did not see Kishan Singh to whom I had sent a telegram about my arrival by the Punjab Mail. I dared not take out my luggage and was planning to proceed to the main station, Delhi. Just as the train whistled I saw the tall figure of Kishan Singh, coming with long strides

towards my compartment. "Baba be praised!" I muttered and jumped out of the carriage, pulling my bag and bedding behind me. Kishan Singh had received the telegram but the sender's name was changed from Bal Nattu to Balnath. He did not know who was arriving by the train but thought it best to come to the station. For a day I stayed at Delhi. I asked Kishan Singh to keep the extra money that I had with me. It was a provision in case I lost my purse or baggage during my stay at Hardwar. Come what may, I had determined to find Mauni and deliver Baba's message.

The train for Hardwar was overcrowded. It was night and I managed to huddle on a bench but could rarely sleep. By early morning the train reached Hardwar. It was bitter cold which I was not used to at all. A *sanyasi* was sitting beside me. I asked him about the lodging facilities. By chance he happened to be in charge of a *dharmshala* (a free rest house), near the station. He led me to a big room where I found some pilgrims already resting. I doubted whether my belongings would be safe there, but trusting the honesty of my co-travelers, I planned to move freely through the town till lunch time.

During my round I noticed that some roads were thronged with persons wearing ochre clothes. In those days Hardwar seemed to me a town of *sadhus*. Moreover, I learnt that *ashrams*, small and big, stretched about the town, particularly by the banks of the Ganges. In this sadhu-crowded area I wondered how I would find the place where Mauni stayed. I recalled the instructions given to him by Baba: "Beg for food; don't cook food. Stay at one place." So I guessed that he must be staying near a center where free food was served. I inquired about such places and was told that in Rishikesh there were some big centers of this type. I had also heard from Mauni that during his last visit he stayed for some time at Rishikesh. It struck me that instead of Hardwar I should search for him in Rishikesh.

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### Baba Orders; Baba Guides

*My sanyasi* friend gave me an address and a personal note to one of his friends who had a spacious hut at Rishikesh. It was in a secluded section of the bank of the Ganges. Luckily the person, Parameshwaranand, was there when I reached the cottage. I handed the note from his friend to him and introduced myself. Unlike the crowd in the room at Hardwar, there was only one person here, the owner. A thought crept in, "Am I safe here? Is he really a good man?" The mind is very tricky; it doubts both ways.

It was about 3 P.M. and I left the place to visit Gita Bhavan, Swargashram, Laxman Zula and other places. But my main concern was to inquire about the chief centers where food was served to spiritual aspirants without charge. I learnt that the two main places were Kali Kamliwale or Punjabi Kshetra (center). The next day was *Diwali* -- the Festival of Lights. At sunrise, facing the holy Ganges I offered my prayers, repeated some cantos from the *Bhagavad Gita* and prayed to God with all sincerity to guide me in discharging the duty entrusted to me by Baba. It was indeed a marvelous morning. The whole atmosphere seemed to be charged with a divine presence which filled my heart with confidence. I felt that I would return to my town only after completing the work assigned to me by Beloved Baba. That would be a real *Diwali*, I thought.

I had to walk a mile or more to reach Kali Kamliwale Kshetra. My plan was to visit one such place each day, right from its opening till it closes! By 8:30 A.M. I was there. After about an hour *sadhus* and *sanyasis* began to form a queue. Everyone had a cotton bag, like a satchel, and a plate or a mug. A few of them seemed absorbed in meditation even when standing in a row. The whole scene was reminiscent of the ancient Indian culture. And good heavens! There was Mauni standing at the far end of the line. I could not believe my eyes! His presence made me immensely happy. He too was much astonished

and delighted to find me there. God had surprisingly and speedily answered my morning prayers!

Mauni told me that he was staying in a room in the Brahmanand *ashram*. It was on the way to the hut where I stayed. Upon reaching the *ashram* I told him Baba's message. He was asked to observe, with heart and soul, all the instructions given by Baba. The only change was that he was not to see Meher Baba after the stipulated period mentioned at Meherabad during his last interview with Baba. Mauni willingly agreed. I felt greatly relieved. Then I told him what little I knew about Baba's New Life phase.

I had anticipated spending a long time in that area looking for Mauni. Everything went so well it was as if it were pre-arranged; the only thing was that I did not know the arrangements in advance. Baba's orders imply perfect guidance, I learnt; Baba gives orders but He also gives one that guidance which allows the orders to be fulfilled. Mauni experienced the preciseness of this vital spiritual principle all the more during the concluding part of his *sadhana*. He later related to me an account of the last seven days of the period stipulated by Baba, when he had to observe a fast on water. He found that in the Brahmanand *ashram*, the place where he stayed, it would be difficult for him to draw water from the deep well. Hence, as Baba had given him the option, he wished to shift to a room near the bank of the Ganges.

He inquired if he could be lodged in a secluded hut for a week. But that was the period of the Kumbha Mela at Hardwar which is regarded as the biggest religious fair in India. This time, over half a million pilgrims were expected. Hundreds of *sadhus*, *nangas*, *bairagis*, and *sanyasis* of different sects had reserved certain areas for their followers. So accommodation in a special hut, meant for a single person, was not possible. But miraculously enough, Mauni got a very small hut, just for himself, and there was also a tin pitcher to store water, the one thing he needed most.

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On the last day of his fast Mauni felt very weak and feverish. He had no strength to go to the river and fetch water, even in that tiny pitcher. He lay alone in the hut, remembering Baba. Sometimes he felt extremely exhausted and depressed too. Just after midnight, when the period of seven days was over, Mauni, to his great wonder and delight, saw Beloved Baba's exquisitely fascinating face, compassionately looking at him from an undefinable distance. The vision was so comforting that he felt indescribable vibrations of bliss and peace within him. All his agonies vanished, and a new life was infused in him. The experience corroborated the fact that Baba had been with him all the time during the *sadhana*. Suddenly with great speed the face commenced drawing closer and closer till Mauni felt that its radiance touched and filled his heart. It was indeed Baba's glowing gesture to bless him.

By this time, he had also learnt about Baba's stay somewhere near Hardwar. But in obedience to His orders, he never tried to approach Him. Perhaps to get over the temptation of seeing Baba, and also for reasons of health he soon left Rishikesh for Benares.

### Lila Sustains Reality

In October 1949, after delivering the message to Mauni, I felt relieved and enlivened. In that happy mood I decided to pass a few more days visiting the different areas sanctified by the presence of saints and *masts* contacted by Baba. I specially visited Swargashram, where in the summer of 1942, Baba had stayed with a group of Westerners in the bungalow of the Rani of Singhai. In the course of my stay I happened to meet a renowned *swami* who was a founder of an international society dedicated to spiritual ideals, including *yoga*. I stayed in his *ashram* attending different programs for two or three days. This short stay provided me with an opportunity in 1953 to revisit Rishikesh with Baba. About my personal meeting with the *swami*, on a moonlit



night, sitting on a parapet in his *ashram* that stands by the bank of the Ganges, I intend to narrate later.

On my return to Kurduwadi, I met the headmaster again who seemed unwilling to take me on the staff. I wrote a short letter to him with a request to let me know his final decision. I could sense that he was somewhat prejudiced about my connection with Meher Baba. To be frank, I regarded my contact with Meher Baba as the most sacred and personal affair. At the same time, I was very particular that my relationship with Baba did not have any adverse effect on my work at school. It was true that I did not mix with or join my colleagues in visiting shows or going out for picnics, but the fact was that I had no liking for them. And perhaps, in the eyes of the headmaster this conduct was objectionable.

I did not personally approach the office bearers of the institution or the headmaster with the request to reconsider my case. But a day or two later, to my surprise, the school peon brought the news of my reappointment. I was asked to resume my duties the same day. What made the management change its mind so quickly I do not know. All I know is that Baba *knows* best, the when and the how, of every incident connected with the lives of those who come in the orbit of His love. My break in the service was also later condoned. It appears to me now that the headmaster's initial response to my request for reappointment was negative only so that I would feel inspired to fulfill Baba's order first and actually there was never any doubt about my eventual reappointment.

This detailed personal account may or may not be regarded as a digression. But as these incidents are directly connected with Baba's orders and the wonderful way in which they automatically got worked out, I succumbed to the temptation to include them. Before entering upon the New Life, Baba had given different types of orders to different people closely connected with Him. The above narration may give an idea of the way Baba helped all in carrying out His instructions. The

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orders of the God-Man and the subsequent happenings are not two separate parts; it is one inseparable phenomenon. Such events, though they come to pass in a most natural way, deepen one's faith in the companionship and the compassion of the God-Man — the *Lila* that sustains Reality — and thus simple things imply profound potentialities.

Had not Baba been in the New Life I would surely have met Him to recount my meeting with Mauni. The coincidence of my visit to Poona, when Baba was at the station, revealed to me a glimpse of His omniscience. For thus He indirectly "heard" without my telling Him the thoughts I fervently wished to convey to Him. With all its simplicity the life of the God-Man can be so mystical! His formless Presence and the enformed Personality are creatively multi-dimensional, wherein simplicity and surprise are superbly mingled.

### In Nati Imli at Benares

Resuming the account of Baba's journey by train from Poona, the Baba-party reached Benares on November 15, 1949. Babadas was at the station to receive Baba. He and Sadashiv Patel had been sent earlier from Belgaum to find and rent a residence at Benares which fulfilled certain conditions laid down by Baba. Both of them had become very much disappointed in their search and were on the point of sending a telegram to Baba, conveying their inability to secure a place fulfilling the requirements.

At the eleventh hour, Dr. Nath agreed to the unusual terms for lodging and boarding the Baba-party. Thus Dr. Siddheshwar Nath became the chief host of the Baba-party. He was a well-known physician and ophthalmologist. In addition to working as the honorary surgeon in the Civil Hospital, he had his own clinic on Kabir Road. He was an absolute gentleman who had spiritual leanings and held saintly personalities in high regard. He had neither met Baba nor heard of

## BENARES TO MORADABAD

Him before. Babadas and Patel did not reveal Baba's name but only talked to him about a party on the way to Hardwar. How Babadas and Patel, who could not speak English or Hindi well, succeeded in convincing a highly educated person like Dr. Nath to be their host is still inconceivable! Dr. B. S. Khare was an assistant to Dr. Nath. He was also working as a Professor at Benares Hindu University. Dr. Nath with the help of Dr. Khare agreed to entertain this incredible party of 16 men and 4 women who were total strangers to them.

The demands and the terms of the Baba-party aroused such deep interest in Dr. Nath that he went to the railway station in his car with his wife. When Baba got down on the platform, He cursorily looked around and then, pointing at a couple standing on the overhead bridge at a considerable distance away, asked Eruch to inquire about them. Eruch and the other companions arriving by the train neither knew nor cared where they were to stay at Benares or who was to be their host. The couple told Eruch that they were waiting for a party enroute to Hardwar which intended to stay for a few weeks at Benares. It was clear Dr. Nath was the host.

As Eruch conveyed this information to Baba, He was displeased with Babadas for asking the host to visit the station. He also sent Eruch back to meet Dr. Nath and inform him that as his visit to the station was a breach of the terms, the head of the party (Baba) wished to proceed to some other place, canceling the halt at Benares. To this message Dr. Nath politely replied that on learning that there were four women in the party, he had wished to give them a lift in his car, to the place where they would be staying since it was rather far from the station. This explanation and Dr. Nath's attitude pleased Baba and He accepted his offer on condition that Dr. Nath accept only one rupee for the lift, and the rest of the expense be accepted by Dr. Nath as his gift (*bhiksha*) to the party.

Thus Baba's arrival at Benares marked the beginning of the phase of *bhiksha*. (begging). Dr.

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Nath was all the while standing at a distance wondering about the messages conveyed from the head of the party, but according to the terms he dared not ask the name or the whereabouts of the party. The women companions left the station in Dr. Nath's car, driven by the driver and the men companions left on foot, with their luggage carried on hand carts.

The residence was near Nichi Baugh (garden), a place near the Bharat Milap section, in the Cantonment area. The building was inside a big compound with an unkempt garden. It was in a secluded place but had water and electricity. The women stayed on the first floor. Two statues, standing as sentinels, on each side of the staircase, a remnant of former grandeur, greeted the visitors. Inside the main room there was a lot of furniture, mostly chairs. Baba, however, asked the women not to use any chairs. The next day all the furniture was neatly placed outside the room. The costly carpets were also removed. No comforts! In the adjacent building Baba allotted a place for each companion; Donkin was accommodated in a side room. The disciples had to carry and arrange all the things by themselves; for some, the work was very tiring especially after the tedious night journey. Nevertheless, a sumptuous breakfast arranged by the host refreshed them all.

According to the conditions, previously conveyed through Babadas and Patel, Baba sent Eruch to give six hundred rupees to Dr. Nath and to Dr. Khare towards the party's expenses of lodging and boarding for three weeks. They sensed that this was not an ordinary party and so hesitated to accept the money but they did not want to risk violating one of the conditions again and so they accepted it. The quality of the food was left to the choice of the host, though soon many a message was sent concerning the flavor and savor of the meals sent. It was really commendable and even astonishing that during Baba's entire stay at Benares, these two devoted families willingly carried out all of Baba's instructions. They were blessed souls indeed.

### Power Blended with Helplessness

The next day Vishnu brought the news that a package booked from Belgaum was missing. Because of this the clerk at the railway station was not willing to deliver the rest of the packages which had arrived. This caused great inconvenience and after their bath the companions had to put on their dirty clothes. Luckily a day later the undelivered luggage including the missing package was handed over to Vishnu and all felt relieved. Baba sent Adi and Eruch to Dr. Nath to give him seven hundred extra rupees. With this amount he was asked to purchase two good milch cows and two female donkeys for the Baba-party . Why? Even the companions did not know. Any additional amount required for the purchase of these animals was to be offered by Dr. Nath as *bhiksha* (which literally means anything donated in response to an appeal to one's generosity).

On that day, Baba discreetly sanctioned a small sum for each companion to buy shoes, gloves and other necessary things to protect themselves from the cold. No one was to bring back the unspent money. It could be given to beggars but they were not allowed to use it for tea or snacks. A few days were set aside to visit the famous *ghats* — the broad and long steps leading to the Ganges. The sight of burning corpses and of the city's sewage rushing into the river repelled the holy feelings of some of the companions. It is noticed that in the holy and spiritual places in India good and bad go hand in hand. Maybe it's a test, or call it a spiritual jest, but the fact cannot be denied.

One day out of fun, Baba instructed Ghani to greet Him each morning, on His arrival in the companions' room, like the Pathans, in the Pushtu language. The peculiar intonation of the words of greeting, ending in *hai, mai, tai*, made everyone smile and perhaps forget all inconveniences. Ghani was also asked by Baba to repeat in a sing-song way a few rhythmic lines in Urdu, as a way of wishing Him good night. The free rendering

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of these lines is as follows:

How differently have passed the days of the Old  
Life!  
Somehow today has passed too!  
Tomorrow be damned! We are not in the least  
bothered by what happens next!

One day the owner of Nati Imli visited the estate and was talking with the watchman. He wanted to know if the visitors were in any way inconvenienced; he wanted to be of some help. But his visit displeased Baba and He sent a message to the landlord to leave the place immediately and the landlord unhesitatingly did so. Strange!

This brings to mind an incident which occurred when Baba was touring India contacting the *masts*. One night He was staying in a government rest house at Miraj (M. S.). It was summer and very sultry. However, according to His habit Baba asked the one on night watch to close all the doors and windows of the room. He did not even permit the fan to be turned on. Baba's suite was on the second floor. At midnight He complained that the sound of the ceiling fan from the ground floor was disturbing His sleep. "Could it be stopped?" He gestured. So Eruch went down the stairs and softly knocked on the door. The person seemed annoyed but reluctantly opened the door. Eruch gently pleaded that he and his elder brother, who was not keeping well, were lodging in the room just above the one he was in. He explained that the sound of the revolving fan kept his brother awake. At the end Eruch added, "It will be a favor if you will kindly turn off the fan." He also assured the man that if he wished, his cot and bedding would be gladly moved by Eruch and those accompanying him to the open verandah. Strangely enough the person consented to this.

In the morning this man asked if he could visit their room to express his good wishes. When this was conveyed

to Baba, He gave His permission. As the man entered the room he at once recognized that he was in the august presence of Meher Baba. With deep reverence he bowed to Baba. He considered himself fortunate to have Baba's *darshan*. It then turned out that the visitor was none other than the Executive Engineer — the one in charge of all the rest houses in the district. Eruch wondered why the chief engineer had agreed so readily to his midnight suggestions. Maybe it was an excuse for Baba to bring this soul in His contact and indirectly offer him a chance to be of some help in His spiritual work. In Baba's New Life also, we come across some events where we find that even in the phase of "helplessness", the "power" of His presence was obviously expressed.

### Baba's first *Bhiksha*

The second period of training comprising of *bhiksha* was to begin at Benares. On November 20, while sitting on the verandah, which had an aura of stark austerity, Baba explained the subject of *bhiksha* to His companions. The main tenor of the New Life song was helplessness, and to live by begging was a part of it. They were instructed to go barefoot, wearing white *kafnis* and green turbans, with a begging bowl and a cotton satchel (bag) having separate compartments for food, grains and flour. They were to address the householder politely, "Mother/brother, with love please give *bhiksha*." Whatever food was offered had to be accepted, but no money was to be taken. If *bhiksha* were denied, the companions had to pass on to the next door without getting in the least perturbed. Baba often colored His instructions which presaged tests and trials with His sense of humor. Today, with a twinkle in His eyes, He concluded, "Do not beg at the sweetmeat shops or at the door of a

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eunuch!" Whatever was received was to be placed before Baba. He also set up a schedule for the begging: who was to go where, and when, etc. Nilu, a *Brahmin*, was to beg in the Muslim colony and Ghani, a Mohammedan, was to go begging in a *Brahmin* locality. On this day, before explaining the above details, Baba on His arrival dictated an Urdu couplet to Ghani which meant:

Today our helplessness has bestowed upon us a rare fortune for which we had been longing for years.

A profound indication!

As the saying goes, example is better than precept; Baba Himself wished to inaugurate the phase of *bhiksha* on November 24,<sup>2</sup> at Dr. Nath's residence. At this time no one other than Dr. Nath's family was to be present in the house. Before leaving for *bhiksha* Baba called all the companions and touched their feet, every time lifting His hand to His forehead. Was it a prerequisite for the *Avatar* before going to beg? He asked Ghani to read a special prayer, a part of which is given below:

Today the 24th November is a very significant day for me in the New Life. I ask the most merciful God to forgive me and my companions for any shortcomings and any conscious and unconscious mistakes done singly or wholly [collectively] or towards each other, or personally or impersonally, relating to the conditions or otherwise, as [and] also for any lusty [lustful] angry, greedy or Old Life thoughts or desires.

. . . I ask God to forgive us all, not merely by way of ceremony, but as a whole-hearted pardon.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Coincidentally this happened to be the last Thursday in November which is celebrated as Thanksgiving Day in the U.S.A.

<sup>3</sup> *Circular NL 2*, issued on 23-1-1950



About this incident one of the companions wrote:

While this prayer was being read, the atmosphere, one could feel, had undergone a change. Baba Himself became very serene ... and the glow on His face was that of one on the judgment seat, overflowing with love, kindness, compassion and mercy. He seemed to be the judge, the crime and culprit rolled into one ... All through He listened to the prayer in rapt attention and then, making a gesture of forgiveness, brought the invocation to an end.

As planned, Baba walked barefoot to Dr. Nath's house, about a kilometer from Nati Imli. He carried a brass pot in His right hand and an ochre satchel hung on His shoulder. Eruch accompanied Baba. Dr. Nath and his family had the unique fortune of offering the first *bhiksha* to Baba. When this was over he requested Baba to allow Dr. Khare, his colleague who was helping him with all the arrangements, and his family members, the privilege of offering *bhiksha*. Dr. Khare was staying a few kilometers away in the university area. So, for the sake of convenience Baba was invited to Dr. Nath's place for a second time on November 25.

It was on this day that Dr. Nath, not having told anyone of his intention, took the snapshot in which we find Adi accompanying Baba. Perhaps this was the first picture taken since Baba entered the New Life. It was from this photo that Dr. Nath ascertained that the head of the party was no other than Meher Baba. While the Khare family was offering *bhiksha*, a piece of it fell on the ground. Baba very naturally bent down, picked it up and put it in His begging bowl.<sup>4</sup> Baba had become a perfect beggar! Or maybe He could not part with anything which was offered with such love. Fortunate were these two families who

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<sup>4</sup> The bowl and satchel are preserved in Meherabad Museum.

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had the honor of being the hosts of the Divine Beggar, Baba, the Ancient One.

### Some Events at Benares

The breakfast time at Benares was 5 o'clock in the morning. It was winter and quite cold. All the companions had to get up for breakfast which usually was just a cup of tea and a *chapati*, otherwise some would have preferred to continue sleeping under their coarse warm blankets. There seemed to be no reason to rise so early; Baba had given no other instructions about bath, meditation or any other work. Could not the breakfast time be changed? But no one could defy Baba's order; that would have been against the conditions of the New Life. Ghani, as Baba's childhood chum, enjoyed a special latitude in Baba's company for making jokes. With an oblique reference to the early morning breakfast time he casually remarked that the New Life meant doing routine things at odd times! And some companions had a hearty laugh over this. The next day Baba asked if Ghani were joking or serious about his remark. Baba felt relieved when Ghani and the companions assured Him that it was just a joke and nothing more. Baba, however, asked the companions to pinch His ear for He had doubted Ghani's intention! The New Life phase veiled Baba's Divinity

under the guise of a few common, human weaknesses!

After some months (April, 1950), a great religious fair (*mela*) which is known as the Kumbha Mela was to be held at Hardwar. Baba asked Vishnu to find out the main dates for the Mela. On another occasion, He asked Baidul and Babadas to collect information about the *masts* and saints who were expected to visit Hardwar. Hearing this, someone asked whether Baba's activity of contacting *masts* had not ended with the termination of the Old Life. Upon this Baba explained, "The mast activity of the Old Life had exclusive importance for me; but hereafter this work will have importance for all. Henceforth, the work with the *masts*, *sants* and *sadhus* will be absolutely different from what it had been in the past. I might make you serve them; or I shall myself serve them in your presence which was never the case before. I might even humiliate myself in your presence or in the presence of others, in a manner that would be shocking to you all. So I need *masts*, *sadhus* and *sants* for a different kind of work altogether."<sup>5</sup> Such statements from Baba did not clarify the nature of His work with the *masts*. And to ask Baba to give any more explanation, particularly in and of the New Life, was to make the subject more enigmatic. So no one tried to ask any more questions.

According to the original plan Baba was to spend three weeks at Benares. But after some days He expressed a wish to camp for ten days at Sarnath, a place closely connected with the life of Lord Buddha. It is about 9 kilometers to the north of Benares. The Baba-party was to start to Sarnath on foot. The luggage was to be carried in two bullock carts. In an informal discussion it came out that the two carts would not be sufficient to carry the luggage of the companions. Adi suggested that he get a camel cart. Baidul, when in the prime of his youth, had stayed in Iran and knew how to look after a camel.

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<sup>5</sup> Ghani's unpublished *Diary of the New Life*, (October-November 1949), p. 89

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Dr. Donkin, before joining Baba in India, had gained some knowledge about handling a camel during his visit to the Sahara Desert in Africa. This was enough for Baba to find favor with the idea of purchasing a camel cart.

Baba sent one of the companions to Dr. Nath to inquire if he could purchase the required camel cart. The noble doctor was in a mood to carry out any instruction from Baba. He readily agreed to get the desired vehicle for the Baba-party but was unwilling to accept any money for it. Had he not been so willing, Kaka Baria, the Treasurer of the party, would have been required to subtract this amount from the sum earmarked for the fodder of the animals and that would not have been easy. Some days passed and Baba sent two of His companions to get information about the purchase of the animals and the camel cart. In addition, Dr. Nath was asked to find and rent two bungalows at Sarnath for the Baba-party, as Baba intended to stay there for ten days. With the help of his brother, an influential person, Dr. Nath succeeded in getting the required accommodation within a few days. In the New Life there were occasions when Baba's instructions appeared entirely impractical and practically impossible but they invariably worked out very well.

The companions were not allowed to speak among themselves either about political or spiritual subjects. They were neither to read the dailies or the weeklies, nor were they permitted to talk about anything related to the Old Life. For some it was not easy to transcend their old habits and interests. They felt bored. Knowing this, in one of the sittings Baba stated, "Though the sufferings of this stage are dry and uninteresting, the suffering of the New Life [to commence] in real earnest after 1st of January 1950 though 100% more severe will be wet and enjoyable. The New Life will be wet through and through."<sup>6</sup> It seems He wanted them to

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<sup>6</sup> *Circular NL 2*, issued on 23-1-1950.

live happily from moment to moment and the secret of doing this lay in their willingness to do anything or nothing when it was at Baba's bidding.

Once the topic of journeying on foot from Sarnath to Hardwar was discussed. The provisions had been made for a period ending in December. It was brought to Baba's attention that taking into account the absolute minimum requirements of the party and the accompanying animals, the money in hand was insufficient. Various ways of meeting the deficit were thought of. At the end Baba suggested that some belongings of the companions, especially trunks and clothing, be given to Dr. Nath and to Dr. Khare. They were free to retain or sell these things and in return they were to give the extra money the party needed. In short, in return for their loving offer to provide a camel and a camel cart to the Baba-party and their willingness to contribute the amount needed to meet the deficit, these two doctors were to receive the used clothes and trunks of the companions! From November 25, the host knew for certain that the head of the party was the eminent spiritual personality, Meher Baba, who was regarded by many as the Perfect Master. He did not divulge this recognition of this to Baba's companions but he felt himself most fortunate to be of some service to Meher Baba.

After hearing Baba's message, Dr. Nath with perfect courtesy said, "We will very happily give the sum of money you need. Is it necessary that in return we must accept the clothes? We can gladly get the clothes washed and return them to you, too." At this Eruch pointed out that the head of the party did not want that. In a graceful way the doctor continued, "In that case, I hope, the clothing you mentioned includes the clothes of the 'head' also." Eruch could not give any direct answer. He returned to Nati Imli and told Baba of Dr. Nath's reply. Baba appreciated Dr. Nath's demeanor and consented to add one of His scarfs to the bundle of clothes. In due course, the clothes and the trunks were handed over to the host. At the close of this gesture of giving

away the clothing, Baba, with a charming chuckle, conveyed to the companions, "While leaving Meherabad on October 16, we were comparatively speaking 'light weight'; at Benares, with the disposal of the trunks and 'Old Life' clothing, we have become 'feather weight' and after January 1, 1950, who knows (I don't promise) we might become 'air weight.'"<sup>7</sup>

Prayer in the Cellar at Sarnath

On December 1, the Baba-party shifted to Sarnath. The women and Baba were lodged in one bungalow and the men companions in another. One morning Baba asked Mani to write the names of the known *Avatars* on a piece of paper. She wrote: Zoroaster, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammad and Meher Baba. Baba kept this paper in one of His coat pockets and later led the women companions to one of the underground passages around Sarnath. It turned out to be the place where He later sat in *langoti* (loin cloth) with His companions. This noteworthy event happened during their visit to a subterranean cellar associated with the life of Buddha — the Enlightened One. It is believed that Gautama after attaining *Bodhi* (Enlightenment) preached his first sermon to his five disciples at this place. One morning, after reaching this particular spot, Baba asked His men to wear only a *langoti*. They were asked to sit and repeat mentally for fifteen minutes the following prayer, a copy of which was given to each companion. It read thus:

God, give me strength to follow the conditions hundred per cent. God, help me to speak the truth and not to tell a lie under any circumstances. God, help me to control anger, and to keep away from lusty [lustful] and greedy desires. God, help me to be just, fair, honest and kind towards my companions

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

and towards those who come into contact with me.<sup>8</sup>

When the silent repetition of the prayer was over, Baba asked the men to don their clothes and to get in a line. Baba looked very radiant and stood at one end of the passage. He greeted everyone with a warm handshake. Then He asked each companion to come and hand Him the prayer note. With a beaming smile He asked Ghani to then repeat loudly, seven times in Hindi, "*Ho-gaya*" (meaning accomplished or completed). And in a very delightful mood Baba Himself participated in each of Ghani's repetitions by raising His right hand. Was the reading of this prayer a revival of Lord Buddha's teaching, particularly the first sermon, in a different way? Baba instructed those who were present to mark the loin cloth they were wearing; it was not to be worn again, unless Baba specially told them to.

#### God's Gift to the Gardener

While returning, Baba took His companions to the bungalow where He was staying, specifically to point out the old gardener working there. Baba had once remarked that the game of Love is not for the weakling. This gardener outwardly looked like a skeleton but possessed a robust heart, bubbling with unadulterated love for God. He was a real hero. He would invariably get up before 4 o'clock in the morning, sit on his low rickety bed that was open to the skies and would melodiously repeat, "Rama, Rama, Sita-Rama," for hours, irrespective of the changing seasons. Baba conveyed to the companions, "This old man is thoroughly content with what little he has. He is one-pointed in his devotion. Though he does not wear the ochre robes, he is a real *sadhu*."

Once, according to Baba's instructions, Goher

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

approached the gardener and asked him if he wanted anything. His prompt reply was, "God be praised. I do not want anything. *Thakurji*<sup>9</sup> (the Lord) provides me with anything I need." Hearing this Baba felt pleased and sent Goher again to inquire if he really needed anything. When persistently pressed he replied, "A box of matches!" What a demand! On another occasion Baba called this gardener to Him and presented him with a good blanket which he delightfully and most reverentially accepted without any hesitation saying, "I am blessed. This is *Bhagwan's* [God's] gift." Did he recognize Baba as *Bhagwan*? That is unclear. But surely the God-Man had spotted His lover and the Divine Gardener seemed pleased with the blossoming of this "flower" in His garden of Love.

The premises of the bungalow where the companions stayed at Sarnath presented a strange sight. During the stay at Belgaum, Baba had sent specific instructions to Padri, staying at Meherabad, to deliver a coach (later known as the New Life caravan), along with the bullocks to the Baba-party at Benares. Dr. Nath, in fulfillment of Baba's instructions, had purchased and handed over to the companions a camel cart with a camel, two milch cows (one had a newly born calf) and two female donkeys. In addition to these animals, there was one white horse. According to the conditions of the New Life money was not to be accepted from anyone; if someone offered any animal it was to be politely rejected. But, while refusing, the companions were permitted to say, "The only animal we can accept is a white horse." In response to this, Dr. Khare had presented the Baba-party with a spotless white horse as *bhiksha*. All these animals were tethered to pegs in the compound.

### Baba Bows to Buddha

In one of the informal sittings a point was raised

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<sup>9</sup> Devotees of Lord Krishna address Him as *Thakurji*.



whether any new person could join Baba in His New Life and stay with Him. One of the companions remarked that such an admission would mar the charm of the New Life. Baba conveyed, "The importance of the New Life is not from us but from those who keep it alive. If we were to fail in the conditions we would disgrace the New Life, and if an outsider were to obey the conditions 100% he would uphold the honor of the New Life."<sup>10</sup> Perhaps it was in this sense that Baba once stated, "The New Life will live by itself eternally...." At the end of the above meeting it was agreed that Baba could permit anyone to join Him as one of the companions. Baba, before October 16, had indirectly promised Kaikobad Dastur that He would accept him as one of the Yeswallas. Later in the light of this discussion Baba sent the necessary instructions to Kaikobad who was asked to join the Baba-party directly at Dehra Dun. Kaikobad was the only one who was not originally a Yeswalla to join Baba in His New Life. As for the women, Naja (Pendul's sister) was the only one to join the women companions, also at Dehra Dun.

In another meeting when the topic of the journey on foot from Sarnath to Hardwar was discussed, it was suggested that the extra luggage should be sent in advance by railway to Hardwar. This seemed practical and convenient too. The question of railway freight was brought up. This required extra money as no provision had been made for such an expenditure. So Baba asked most of His companions to surrender their wristwatches to raise the money. Donkin, Pendul and Adi, who had to attend to duties which brought them into contact with the outside world, were allowed to retain their watches.

One day at Sarnath, which is studded with shrines and temples, Baba visited a place that enshrines the figure of Buddha. The walls were beautifully painted, representing different incidents from the life of Siddhartha

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<sup>10</sup> *Circular NL 2* issued on 23-1-1950.

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Gautama. In the center was a splendid statue of Lord Buddha. Baba asked those accompanying Him to pay their respects to that graceful piece of sculpture and He Himself bowed most reverentially, to set an example as to how one should honor the God-Man, who in fact is omnipresent. To some an idol, a portrait or a painting of the God-Man is the silent symbol of His omnipresence. In its right perspective, I personally think it is like a telescope through which the wonders of the Formless One are revealed. It is a window to the ever inviting Eternal.

### On Foot to Shivapur

On December 12, Baba with His companions, some driving the carts, some driving the animals, commenced the journey on foot from Sarnath to Jaunpur which was about 60 kilometers away. This was predominantly a phase of gypsy life. Generally the march began by sunrise. Baba with Eruch walked ahead and the women followed them. A little later the companions, wearing white robes and green turbans, followed. At first Baba had suggested that the women companions wear blue *kafnis* and gray turbans during the march on foot. But later He cancelled this instruction and asked them to wear light blue *saris* only once, on the opening day of the march. The chiming of the camel bells was very melodious. Gustadji and Ghani were in charge of the donkeys, a hard job indeed. Nilu and Aloba had to look after the cows.

After going a little distance Baba wanted to attend nature's call. There were no latrines by the road and so Eruch led Him to a suitable place, a little distance away and returned to the highway. This march on foot with such an unusual group of animals and with people belonging to different religions had aroused deep suspicions in the minds of the police officers. One of them accosted Eruch and began to ask different questions about the party's itinerary and intentions. Eruch, who skillfully managed to give satisfactory answers, stated

that the group consisted of people who shared the intention of going to Hardwar for the Kumbha Mela (fair). From distorted reports the officer had received previously, he had suspected that they belonged to some political party or were engaged in some anti-government activity. His last question was, "And where is that man who was walking with you?" Eruch told him the truth and before Baba returned the officer went away, feeling that he had done his duty well. He did not know what a precious opportunity he had missed by just a few minutes! One can be quite close to Baba and yet miss His *darshan* while someone else may be far away and yet the circumstances will be so arranged that he soon finds himself at the threshold of the God-Man. Astounding are the ways of the *Avatar*!

The first halt was at Shivapur. Baba and the women were waiting at the outskirts of the town for the men companions. The women described the scene of their arrival as follows:

They arrived later than was expected, but we shall never forget the scene. It was like a beautiful pageant being enacted before us. All the companions were dressed in their white robes and dark green turbans. First came Dr. Donkin with an Arab-like headdress leading the white horse which looked tall and beautiful, walking proudly, without a saddle. Then followed the bullock-carts and the stately camel drawing a cart. The camel had a large sized bell round its neck which gave a melodious sound as it walked. Some of the companions were driving the carts while the others were accompanying them on foot. Lastly came the caravan drawn by two bullocks. Gustadji was in charge of the two donkeys who were stubborn and would not walk. They were tied to the caravan and were being dragged. One of the bullocks drawing the caravan was Raja, the English bull which Baba had fed milk from a feeding bottle when it was a calf

in Meherabad.<sup>11</sup>

All the companions had arrived except Nilu. He was very fond of milk but this fondness had gotten him in trouble. At Sarnath Baba told Nilu that as he was fond of milk, he would have to look after the milch cow! It had a young calf too. After a journey of about a kilometer the calf could not keep pace with the mother cow. It began to stagger and fall to the ground. So, poor Nilu had to carry it on his shoulders for some distance. He fell behind; the party had already walked into town when, at the octroi<sup>12</sup> outpost, Nilu was to pay the tax. The clerk thought Nilu had come to sell the cow. According to the New Life conditions he was not permitted to carry a single coin with him. Fatigued and annoyed as he was, it was hard for him to convince the clerk that he was a pilgrim on his way to Hardwar. God be blessed, in the end he somehow managed to prevail upon the official to let him by. Later, the same day, hearing the plight of the companions in charge of the animals, Baba agreed to sell some of them and also to send some by railway to Hardwar.

#### Parade of Animals

It took four days for the party to reach Jaunpur. Those were the days which gave them the first taste of the gypsy life. The companions, in spite of the cold weather, had to spend the nights in the open, under the trees, beg for food and remain content with whatever was received in *bhiksha*. (It is rather difficult to express in English the exact meaning of the word *bhiksha* when used in different contexts. In general, it can be anything which one receives as one begs for something, especially food.) The party spent one night each camped at Shivapur,

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<sup>11</sup> *The Glow*. Vol. VIII, No. I, February 1973, p. 5.

<sup>12</sup> In India a small tax is levied by the city municipality on things brought for sale, from the outside area.

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Babatpur and Rehata. The march would generally commence before sunrise and continue till mid-day. Dried wood, if conveniently possible, would be collected on the way. At each stop, Pendu's work would be to look after the fodder of the animals and to take them to water. Kaka Baria would be in charge of cooking. The companions and even Baba begged for food in the villages. Generally the villagers were more hospitable in offering *bhiksha* than the city people.

There was a small two-flapped tent for Baba, the two ends of which could be tied to the caravan which provided shelter for the women companions at night. Anna would keep watch at night, in the *mandali* he was known as Anna 104. He did not understand English but in the 1940s when he was running a high fever some Baba people visited him. As everyone entered the room he would greet each with the word 104! When Baba visited him Anna loudly cried out, "Baba, 104! " And since then he was known as Anna 104, the nickname Baba gave him. Mehera, Mani and others knew that it was getting colder and colder. So they sewed some blankets together and made a warm sleeping bag for Baba. This was to protect Baba's physical body — the fairest flower of creation — the most delicate and the most powerful form! During the night the women would rest in the coach (caravan).

About this journey the women companions wrote:

Early in the morning, often before 4 o'clock, we would be awakened by Baba's knock on the door. Goher would roll up her bedding and she and Meheru would jump out of the caravan clutching their warm clothes, hurrying, so Baba would not be kept waiting. Baba would enter the caravan, ask how we had slept and tell us how cold it was outside, that we should take care and put on our warm clothes. While we washed and prepared hot water for Baba's washing and shaving, we were drawn to the warmth of the open fire, like a pin to a magnet. The caravan was

well insulated and warm compared to the air outside.

Breakfast — a hot cup of tea, was most welcome and with it Baba would give us a *chapati* or two — anything that we had received in "*bhiksha*" the day before. Milk for the tea was provided by the cow. Patil [Patel] would milk her and Kaka made the tea. Mehera would pour the tea for Baba and we would have breakfast. After tea we would wash up and hurry with our packing as best as we could with our fingers numb with cold. Baba would go over to the men *mandali* to see how they were faring. They had to tend to the animals and then to themselves and pack the carts. In the carts were packed the *mandali's* belongings, their beddings and household utensils, hurricane lanterns, fodder and grain for the animals and parched rice and lentils that provided for our meals.<sup>13</sup>

At every halt there would be a crowd of visitors — men and women with eyes filled with inquisitiveness. This made the women companions feel rather uncomfortable as they had spent most of their lives in secluded places. The villagers marveled at the parade of animals and the strange group wearing long robes and turbans. Some thought that they were a group of refugees from Pakistan, for this was the period following the partition. Some inquired if the companions belonged to a circus troupe! A few were curious about the inclusion of the donkeys with the other animals. Nowhere in India had they seen or heard of any spiritually minded group leading donkeys to a place of pilgrimage! It was extremely difficult for anyone to satisfy their curiosity. Years later, Kaka Baria, one of the companions, commented that through the animals taken with them in the New Life, Baba gave a fresh impetus to the work done for the animal kingdom in His past Advents. The white horse, according to Kaka, represented the work

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

accomplished by Zoroaster and the cows that by Krishna. The donkeys were the medium for recharging the spiritual push given by Jesus and the camel that by Prophet Mohammad. Kaka, as Baba's dearest disciple and personal attendant, might have asked Baba about the significance of this "parade of animals" in the New Life or this might be entirely his own interpretation, I am not sure. Had Kaka told this to the villagers, some might have laughed at him and perhaps this explanation would have intrigued them all the more. Leaving such queries apart, as soon as the villagers knew that this group was on its way to Hardwar, the famous place of pilgrimage in India, their minds and hearts would be filled with deep respect and devotion. They would ask if they could be of any help to them.

### The Vacuum Period

Suitable accommodations at Jaunpur could not be settled in advance by Babadas and Adi. So a place called Kai-Bagh about a kilometer from the city was hired. Even in the New Life, Baba's habit of building and dismantling, planning and replanning continued. The activities of the God-Man are not meant for immediate tangible results but they are symbolic expressions of the inner work in which the *Avatar* is engaged. At this place Baba instructed some companions to sell the camel, the camel cart and the cows. The coach, the bullock carts and the two donkeys were to be sent by rail to Hardwar. The white horse was to be retained. At Jaunpur, Baba disclosed to the companions that before leaving for the New Life He had asked Meherjee Karkaria to set aside one thousand rupees for each of the Yeswallas. This amount was to be given to any companion who, without any fault of his, was sent back to the Old Life by Baba.

But in the same meeting, a little later, He asked each one whether he would willingly forego this provision made by Him. And He smiled the God-Man's smile. Whether the *Avatar* gives something or takes away

anything from any of His dear ones, it is equally graceful! All readily agreed to remain penniless, whether physically with Baba or away from Him. This pleased Baba very much and He asked all to go wash their hands and faces and return to Him. Then He poured some water on the palms of each companion. In India, this simple, visible action stands for complete acceptance of a deal between two people.

The next proposed halt was to be at Moradabad, a place over 150 kilometers to the east of Delhi. Baba instructed Adi to contact Harjeevan Lal, one of Baba's dear ones at Delhi. He was directed to help Adi find a suitable place at Moradabad for the Baba-party. The next day, Baba, His beautiful and graceful bearing radiating a carefree feeling, conveyed, "We have left the Old Life and there is no going back to it now. The Old Life is practically dead. I have heard it said that when a person is dead, the spirit has [a] connection with it for three or four days, and before the spirit gets established in the new sphere, there intervenes a wee bit of a time which may be said to be a sort of a vacuum between the old and new life. Similarly speaking, our Old Life is dead since October 16, 1949. From that date up to December 21, our New Life has had a kind of connection with the Old Life."

Then turning His beaming face towards all the companions He continued, "I have, therefore, decided that the vacuum period should be from December 22, to December 31 (both [days] inclusive). During these ten days there will be observed a complete suspension of the ordeals of the training period."<sup>14</sup> He also made it clear that within those ten days the companions would neither wear *kafnis* nor beg. It would be a period of complete relaxation, and they could even have good food during it. This unexpected declaration filled the hearts of the listeners with a rare delight. Was Baba demonstrating to the companions that in the New Life,

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<sup>14</sup> *Circular NL 2*, issued on 23-1-1950.



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if they accepted every happening of any day as it came to pass, without any grumblings, there would be occasions that would fill their hearts with delight and courage, helping them to follow Baba till the very end?

The journey to and the stay at Jaunpur provided the experience of begging and gypsy life alike. Baba would be sitting in His two-flapped tent, with a hurricane lantern, right from the early morning, keeping all the companions engaged in the work assigned to them. All had to get up as early as 4 o'clock and Baba would see that each companion was "out of bed". An hour later, after a hot mugful of tea, all would take their "posts" for the "quick march".

### The Stay at Moradabad

Adi, with the help of Harjeevan Lal, an advocate and Keki Desai, was trying to find a place at Moradabad for Baba and His companions. At the last minute he was successful in securing a building called Ram Leela Grounds. As planned earlier, Baba boarded the Dehra Dun Express at Jaunpur bound for Moradabad which He reached in the early morning of December 22, 1949. The women accompanying Baba narrated the arrival and stay at Moradabad as follows:

We arrived at Moradabad station in the middle of the night. The tonga ride in the dark to our destination seemed endless. It was 2 in the morning and bitterly cold and Mani was not feeling well at all. When we reached the place it was pitch dark. There was no chair or bed or bedding on which to make Mani comfortable. She sat huddled on the floor and we started shutting the doors of the house to keep out the cold. There seemed numerous doors to that one room — 12 in all — and the floor was not yet dry, it had been recently washed, and puddles of water had formed here and there. At last some luggage arrived and we hurriedly opened a bedding roll for Mani.

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Next morning while we were unpacking a *Brahmin* came along and scolded us for occupying the place. He was taken to the men *mandali* and things explained to him that permission for our stay had been granted. This was a *Dharmshala* for the Hindus where pilgrims stayed during a fair that took place here. The *Brahmin* thought we were squatters. Baba did not stay in the room. His tent was pitched on the broad verandah. Along both sides, close to the house, were paths which led to the city. Almost all day there were passers-by. There was very little privacy. One afternoon when we were on the verandah Baba wanted to rest. He said He was not to be disturbed. While He was resting in the tent, a *sadhu* — a monk — in ochre clothes and bald pate stood before the door, demanding *bhiksha*. He said he wanted flour. There was no such thing in the house as we did not do any cooking. Goher told him to forgive her for refusing it and go to the men *mandali*. He looked at her curiously and said that flour should be where the women were. Goher tried to get him away as fast as she could so that Baba would not be disturbed by his loud talking. Baba later said that he was a genuine seeker.

The camel and the cart had been sold at Jaunpur as it was not practical. The cow and the calf were sold at Moradabad as the calf gave much trouble. Dr. Nilu had been responsible for the cow and he often had to carry the calf on his shoulders so that the mother would follow. The white horse had to be hitched to a *tonga*, but it refused to budge. An expert *tongawala* (coachman) was called to break him in. After a tussle the horse was hitched to the *tonga*. Another *tonga* and filly were also bought and another bullock cart to replace the camel cart. Baidul drove the *tonga* drawn by the white horse with Kaka behind with provisions for our meal. They would go ahead so that the meal could be prepared and kept ready when our party arrived. But it was not easy to get the temperamental horse to start. If there was weight

in the *tonga* it would not budge. Otherwise he would start with jerks and Kaka would have to run after the carriage, putting the packages in the *tonga* and jumping in himself. This, more than anything, was responsible for the heart attack he had at Najibabad. Adi drove the other *tonga* with Dr. Ghani, his companion. They had the job of collecting *bhiksha* on the way.<sup>15</sup>

Baba — The Emperor and the *Fakir*

At Jaunpur, all the companions had willingly consented to forego the one thousand rupees that had been allocated to each in case they, without any fault, were sent back to the Old Life by Baba. Now Baba was free to utilize this amount. Once Baba had money He rarely spared any part of it for long. He was a real *Fakir* who owned nothing! To clarify this status of being the Emperor and the Beggar at one and the same time, I wish to quote a few lines from one of the Life Circulars:

Baba, the Divine Beloved, carries within Him the most precious treasure of Infinite Love which permits no room for worldly wealth. As such, He has always been and is the Perennial *Fakir*.<sup>16</sup>

The residence at Moradabad was far from the city. So out of the above-mentioned amount, to facilitate transportation, two *tongas* were purchased. This being the vacuum period, the companions were not to beg for food. Hence, a part of this sum was used to pay the boarding charges and other expenses of the party. A certain part of this amount was earmarked for building small huts or for buying portable tents for each companion, after reaching the headquarters, near Hardwar. The remaining money was to be utilized for meeting

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<sup>15</sup> The Glow, Vol. VIII, No. 1, 1973. pp. 8, 9.

<sup>16</sup> Life Circular No. 30, 1-9-1950

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the ferry fares, pilgrim taxes, fodder for the animals and such other most essential expenditures. Baba stayed at Moradabad till December 31, 1940, and by the time He left the city they had practically no money left.

In the earlier years, Baba sometimes would put His hands in the pockets of His coat, which contained some letters from His lovers, and would jokingly gesture, "The pockets are big; they can admit a few more letters," and with a smile He would add, "But they have holes [!] and as such they cannot hold any coins [money]." Throughout His life Baba was indeed the Perfect *Fakir*.

Without affecting the begging conditions laid down by Baba, Harjeevan Lal, Kishan Singh and Kain wished to offer, purely in the form of *bhiksha*, some eatables and warm clothes for the companions. Baba kindly accepted the proposal. He allowed them to send these articles before January 1, 1950. They were not to deliver these things in person but to send the same with a person approved by Baba. Harjeevan Lal sent mufflers and sweaters, socks and monkey-caps, woolen jackets and blankets. As it was December, a fairly cold season in U.P., the warm clothing was not only useful, but one might say essential. Without these woolen clothes the companions would have suffered tremendously from the severe cold. In two separate trunks, he also sent many nourishing things — jam, dry fruits, ghee, etc. This timely offer was very much appreciated by all. He also asked Baba's permission to send some pajamas and sugar before the beginning of the next year. The companions felt that to live with Baba was to live with the Emperor and the *Fakir* in one. A note was sent to Harjeevan expressing Baba's happiness for this unconditional and unselfish offering, but at the same time, he was warned that henceforth he should have no communication or contact with Baba during His New Life. To Baba's people any message from Him was the harbinger of blessedness; it meant the Master regarded them as His own.

## BENARES TO MORADABAD

### Mystical Lining of the New Life

The stay at Moradabad was a period of relaxation. The food was brought in *tongas* from the hotels but it was only vegetarian. One day Ghani remarked that he did not feel satisfied with this "grassitarian" stuff." In this vacuum period why can't we enjoy the nonvegetarian dishes?" he concluded. Hearing this Baba turned His gaze towards him and conveyed, "Today I permit you to visit any good hotel you like. You can satisfy your palate to your heart's content, with as many dishes of any non-vegetarian food as you want." Ghani felt greatly delighted.

On the other hand, among the companions, Nilu had been a strict vegetarian for the whole of his life. He disliked the non-vegetarian dishes. But dogmatic dislikes bind as much as explicit likes. Perhaps for this reason Baba asked Nilu to accompany Ghani and taste a bit of anything and everything he ate. This was a real test for Nilu. But with the spirit of obedience embedded in his love for Baba, he underwent this ordeal fairly cheerfully.

On that day, perhaps it was Christmas, Ghani enjoyed a mixed grill at a grand hotel. The next day Baba asked Ghani if he really felt happy He inquired of him about the dishes and delicacies he had had. Ghani said, "I had mutton chops, chicken chops, fish and. . ." At this Baba smiled and gestured, "Fine." Then He continued, "I am happy you obeyed me. Today here is another order from me for you. Put on your *kafni* and visit the same hotel to beg for food!" Ghani sportively and willingly, agreed to this. As he approached the hotel, the manager, as well as the servants who had received tips at Ghani's hands were greatly surprised to find the respectable customer of yesterday today calling out, "Brother, give *bhiksha*." How could one expect them to understand the sense of humor of the Perfect Companion and one's companionship with Him? Anyway Ghani played his part well and this pleased Baba. He also permitted

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Baidul and Aloba to have a non-vegetarian feast. But as they had not grumbled about the vegetarian diet, they were not sent out for *bhiksha*.

The New Life had throughout a mystical lining. For some companions it provided a few intense inner emotional experiences, while for others it provided a deeper understanding of life. With Baba this phase was never a freak, superficial religious insanity; it was rather a profound expression of universal Divinity, sowing the seeds of the New Humanity. It was a demonstration where kingly and beggarly life were beautifully blended. But to inherit a little of the treasure of the New Life special preparedness is expected of a person. Francis Brabazon, one of Baba's close disciples, once read the following lines to Baba. These point out the qualifications needed to be a companion to the Eternal Beloved and they also give a taste of what life with Him is like:

The qualifications for the path of love are these:  
A gale of destruction to oneself, to others a soft  
dawn breeze.

When a man can suffer heart's tempests while his  
forehead smiles  
He is fit for sea travel, deserts and mountain defiles.

When he becomes both the fabled lion and lamb at  
play  
He will meet that master who can set his feet on the  
way.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Francis Brabazon, *In Dust I Sing*, p. 69.

*Termination of the "Gypsy Life"*

1950 — Part I

On New Year's Day in the Morning

WITH a smile beaming on His face like dawn at the horizon, Meher Baba gestured, "Happy New Life" as He offered a piece of cake to each one of His companions. It was the first morning of the year 1950. The "vacuum period" of relaxation was over and Baba had decided to continue the journey on foot. The baggage consisting of bed rolls and odd things was loaded in the carts and by afternoon all the companions, in white long robes and green turbans, left for a place a few miles from Moradabad. It was a bright day with warm sunshine but by evening the sky was laden with black clouds. At night it began to rain. The showers, however, stopped as abruptly as they had set in. Yet, during that short span it rained so much that Baba's bedding in the tent got wet. The plight of the companions who had no proper shelter over their heads can well be imagined. Next morning the march was resumed and all camped at Haryana. The next two halts were at Amroha and Ratangarh. This was a gypsy life with its alternate joys and discomforts.

On this journey there would be an advance party going ahead in a tonga to arrange a place where the whole paraphernalia of animals and vehicles could be accommodated. Baidul, who drove one of the *tongas* in an attempt to overtake another one, damaged one of the wheels of his vehicle. He somehow managed to get the *tonga* to the halting place. On Baba's arrival the mishap was brought to His notice. He, however, did not approve

of being detained at that place. He ordered an early morning start for the next day. Hence, the repairing of the wheel which could not be done there became a pressing problem. It was learnt that there was a wheelwright in a nearby village. The damaged wheel was disjoined and taken in another *tonga* to the wheelwright. Baidul, Adi, Donkin and Pendu left for the village where the wheel could be repaired.

By sundown they reached the wheelwright's house. He was reluctant to work at night but after a little persuasion he agreed. Some wooden spokes of the wheel had to be replaced, and then the iron plate round the wheel had to be refixed. From the demeanor of the visitors the wheelwright knew that they were not conventional customers. He requested them to take their seats on a *charpai* as the work would take a long time. It was getting darker and colder too. Out of courtesy the wheelwright asked them if he could offer them tea. In India any time can be tea time! The man was very surprised at the nature of their acceptance, for they were willing to have it only if it were offered as *bhiksha*. And yet these four fair skinned robust men were prepared to pay reasonably well for the repair charges. Strange! The wheelwright explained that he was not joking; the companions answered that they too had been serious in their reply to him. All this was beyond the wheelwright's comprehension. He just said, "Sir, whatever it be, please accept tea at my house!

When it was served all felt happy to have a hot drink in the cold weather. But at the first sip they had a surprise. As was customary in that part of India, salt in addition to sugar had been added, and this was not to the companions' taste. When the work was done, the wheel, along with the iron plate, was placed on a circular formation of cow dung cakes that were set aflame. The plate with its rubber tire was then hammered and fixed to the wheel. Because it was so dark a friend of the wheelwright was requested to guide them to the main road leading to the camp of the companions.



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By the time they reached the halting place it was after midnight. A fire was kept burning to ward off the cold. Donkin and the others attached the repaired wheel to the damaged *tonga*. Donkin was so exhausted by the work that without unrolling his bedding he just rested his head on it and passed the night by the fireside. As had been decided the party started before daybreak. In the New Life everyone tried to carry out Baba's wishes cheerfully. That was their only pleasure.

### Baba Uses a Proxy

During these wanderings, Baba would lead the way, Eruch accompanying Him. Keeping a little distance behind, Mehera, Mani, Meheru and Goher would follow; about a furlong behind were the men companions. The women generally carried a flask of fresh water for Baba. Finding that Baba did not ask for water, and since it was winter when one wouldn't ordinarily develop much of a thirst, one day they did not fill the flask. On that very morning Baba felt thirsty! The women were very sorry but they were helpless. Just then Baba noticed a man fetching water from a well in a field that was by the road. Eruch, on Baba's indication, was quick to get water from him for Baba. Before quenching His thirst Baba called Eruch and placed His forehead on Eruch's feet. He was then instructed to repeat the same gesture before conveying the words of thanks to the farmer. Eruch did as he was told and it was tantamount to Baba bowing down to that person. He used Eruch as His proxy. Baba had on some occasions used this method of extending His help to needy persons through the medium of His disciples and close lovers.

This brings to mind an incident in the early 1940s. Baba had sent Eruch on special work to Poona. Previously someone had offered Baba a packet containing money. Baba did not wish to accept it. The man was pained and he begged Baba to accept the packet. Baba then asked Eruch to pick up the packet. He told him to give

that sum to a needy family. He also instructed Eruch to keep the money with him whenever he went out visiting some town to fulfill the work Baba had entrusted him with. Eruch looked a bit puzzled but Baba assured him that He would inwardly guide him to whom the amount should be given. After some months Eruch went to Poona. It was summer. He felt thirsty and visited a sugar-cane juice stand. There were a lot of customers. A few of them, sitting beside Eruch, were loudly debating on the present day condition of human virtue. One stated, "Honesty has become a sin and dishonesty a merit." The topic arrested Eruch's attention. In support of this "modern" policy one among the group related a true story wherein an honest, pious person had to suffer much for his righteousness. The owner of the shop also participated in this discussion.

When these people left, Eruch approached the proprietor and requested him to tell him the name and address of that person. At first he hesitated. When Eruch convinced him that his elder brother (Baba) intended to help such people, he related the whole story and gave him the man's address. It seemed this man, now middle-aged, lived in Bhor, a place about 40 kilometers from Poona. Formerly he had held a good post in the Municipal Office. His uprightness and impartiality had thwarted the corrupt schemes of some Municipal members. Being in power, these individuals brought false charges against this employee and he was demoted to an ordinary octroi clerk. Because of his family he dared not leave the job as it was not easy to get another. Eruch knew Baba's instructions concerning such families and also the conditions under which some monetary help could be offered to them.

That same afternoon he left for Bhor. On reaching the town he found the residence of that oppressed person. He was not at home. His wife and two daughters, finding young Eruch wearing khaki pants and a shirt, with a hat in hand, took him to be a police officer. Were they to face a police inquiry? The women were afraid.

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The girls became evasive and hesitated to divulge any real information about their father. Eruch with great skill explained the philanthropic work of his elder brother who lovingly helped respectable families in distress. Slowly and hesitatingly they revealed that the head of the family was at work and would not return till late evening. The wife explained that if the help was in the form of a loan they would not be able to pay even the interest, let alone the principal.

Eruch clarified that the money would be given as an unconditional act of grace help from the Brother to a brother. "He will give and forget; you receive it and forget; that's all," concluded Eruch. To them this seemed unbelievable. Eruch during the conversation personally discovered the authenticity of the information he had casually overheard. He told the woman that he would return the next day with the money and requested her to ask her husband to remain at home. With this instruction he left for Poona to attend to other Baba work.

### Karmic Debts and Dues

The following day Eruch met the head of the family at home. Surprise and suspense were writ on his face. Without wasting any time Eruch conveyed the purpose of his visit and asked for a jar of water. He asked the man to stand and washed his feet while the other family members looked on wide-eyed at both. After drying the feet with a towel he placed his forehead on the man's feet and handed over to him a sum of five hundred rupees saying, "Please accept this, on behalf of my elder brother, as *prasad* from God and oblige us." He did not disclose that the gift was from Meher Baba -- God in human form. As the person counted the currency notes he was overjoyed and tears rolled down his cheeks. It was a most unexpected gift for him, amounting nearly to his year's salary.

To him this was indeed divine intervention for he

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confided to Eruch that had he not received the message yesterday his family members would not have seen him alive today! For in a mood of desperation, made especially bitter because of his helplessness in raising money for the marriage of his dear daughter, he had resolved to end his life. He saw no ray of hope, and had prayed to God most sincerely as his last resort. The clerk in a mood of great relief ended the conversation by saying, "After hearing about your loving request that I stay at home, I decided to postpone committing suicide to see what you would do. Now I firmly believe that God is not only compassionate but He never lets down those who sincerely pray to Him. May God bless your compassionate brother!"

The whole incident made Eruch quite happy for the money had reached a most needy person as Baba had wished. But he also wondered over the way everything had worked out, as if it had all been prearranged. He left the place without disclosing Meher Baba's identity. What would have happened had the person known that the help was from Baba? Would he have become one of His ardent lovers? Baba knows best. The Avatar's game of concealing and revealing His name depends upon the spiritual necessities of the situation. History proves that even the idea of God in human form is not palatable to some good-natured souls; they lack the closer connection essential for that personal touch and subsequent acceptance.

Baba, in a letter addressed to one of His disciples in England, Will Backett, had referred remotely to this subject. He wrote: "To some it is a greater help to know me through my disciples. Not all can understand the human side of God. It is more difficult for some to follow and obey God in the human form, due to preconceived ideas of God."<sup>1</sup> The God Man knows perfectly how and when to bestow the conviction of accepting Him, on His terms, and the spontaneous love for

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<sup>1</sup> *Meher Baba Journal* (November 1940), p. 34.

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His Form that symbolizes His everlasting Formlessness. The above incident brings out one more aspect of Baba's inner working. As I already mentioned, while accepting the money (which Eruch subsequently disposed of), Baba had remarked that He would spend the amount in His own way and time. The donor did not know the donee; the recipient did not know the contributor. The God-Man thus becomes the medium for the repaying and recovery of *karmic* debts and dues, whether in cash or kind. Baba's casual concern in the monetary affairs of His people was solely spiritual; it was to free them from intricate monetary ties. The *Avatar* as Infinite Consciousness works out innumerable problems on various levels. But these responses of unconditional compassion give rise to apparent contradictions and make the God-Man's life appear enigmatic. And this is all the more true with Baba's New Life. Has not Baba said, "Don't try to understand me. My depth is unfathomable. Just love me and you will know what you need to understand ...

### Baba's Slightest Displeasure Grieved the Companions

The march on foot continued from Haryana to Amroha, on to Ratangarh. During this walk, sometimes, soon after dawn, the companions would notice smoke rising above the huts. It was a sure sign that the women folk were busy preparing food. On some such occasions Baba would send Eruch to those distant huts for *bhiksha* to rejoin Him again on the main road. Eruch's experiences of begging were pleasant and amusing too. He observed that those living in mansions were not large hearted, but the village folk readily offered something from what little they had. An owner of a sugar-cane crusher, for example, presented him with a *chatty* (a big earthen bowl), full of sugar cane juice as *bhiksha*. Eruch had difficulty carrying it on his shoulders to Baba who shared its contents with all. One person felt such affection for Eruch that he requested him not to beg

and in return, though it seems unbelievable, he was ready to have Eruch as his son-in-law!

Aloba also had a heart-warming experience. At Benares, Baba had asked him to visit a slum of supposedly low caste people for *bhiksha*. In white *kafni* and green turban, Aloba, who has a fair Iranian skin, appeared very impressive. When this young "beggar" stood before a low roofed cottage and said aloud, "Mother, please give *bhiksha*," a woman in a faded *sari* appeared at the door. It had never occurred to her that such a distinguished looking beggar would be at her door! With a look of astonishment she said, "Do you mean what you say?" Aloba answered that he did. He requested her to give him any cooked food that she could willingly part with. Upon this the woman felt so happy that she carried Aloba's bowl into the hut and filled it to the brim with whatever she had. When Aloba returned to Nati Imli (Benares) where the party had camped, Baba mixed this *bhiksha* with the rest of the food and distributed it to all the companions. Baba always regarded *bhiksha* as something very special. At Ratangarh, Baba Himself went out begging with His bowl and satchel. God knows who were the hosts of honor of this Perfect Beggar!

It was January, a season of severe cold in northern India, but the companions had to pass some nights with no proper shelter. Some slept under the open skies, some under the trees or whatever other accommodation was possible. At Ratangarh, to ward off the cold, Nilu and Aloba slept near a temple, a bit away from the camp. One night Anna 104, who was the night watchman near Baba's tent, blew a whistle. According to Baba's standing instruction, when this emergency call was sounded, all had to gather near the tent. By the time the companions got there it was discovered that the alarm signal had been given by mistake; Anna had been frightened by what turned out to be nothing more than a shadow. In no time all returned to their beds, perhaps cursing Anna for disturbing their sleep for nothing.

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Next morning while joking about this funny incident Baba casually asked whether all had assembled at the call. Nilu and Aloba admitted that owing to their sound sleep they had failed to attend. Hearing this Baba seemed displeased and admonished them both severely. He conveyed, "If you can't be alert enough to follow my standing orders, why should you accompany me? You are good for nothing!" At times Baba would scold the *mandali* very harshly, over seemingly insignificant things. Though Aloba's violation of the order was unintentional he, being sentimental by nature, took Baba's words to heart. He became emotionally disturbed, for the thought of displeasing Baba was unbearable to him. He did not express this openly to the others but he secretly thought of ending his life rather than be a burden to Baba. However much he tried, he could not ward off the black clouds of dejection.

In the middle of the night, he went to a nearby well and was on the point of committing suicide. At the last moment Baba's saving grace enlightened his heart. He started revising his decision. He thought, "Will the ending of my life lighten Baba's burden or worsen it? Perhaps there will be a police inquiry and what not. And all this will be a great nuisance to Baba in leading the New Life." He thus realized that his very attempt to be of some help to Baba would actually create obstacles in Baba's New Life. Aloba was at his wit's end. Finally he relinquished the idea of committing suicide and instead he slapped himself hard fifty times on each cheek. In a sullen mood he returned to his bed but he could not sleep at all. He did not tell his companions about his self-mortification, but his face did disclose a slight swelling over the cheeks. Next morning while sitting with the companions Baba again stressed the dire necessity of being alert to His standing orders, and He looked at Nilu and Aloba. It was one of Baba's practices that having delivered the reprimand there would follow a few words of cheer a gentle pat or even a comforting hug.

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On this occasion He embraced Nilu and Aloba and pardoned them for their unintentional failure. Then He asked the question, "Who didn't sleep last night?" Aloba raised his hand. Baba, the All-knowing One, did not ask him the reason but just conveyed, "Try to have a good sleep tonight." Aloba tried his best but he had to spend most of the time watching the stars. He feared that the next morning, Baba might again ask him about his sleep and He did. Aloba had to again reply that he hadn't slept. Without any further inquiry Baba ordered him to sleep well that night. Aloba had not yet recovered from the shock of disobeying Baba and he was worried about successfully carrying out this latest order. So he bound a scarf tightly over his eyes and kept it on from night till early morning. True, he did not succeed in having a sound sleep, but he did doze off occasionally. He had done his best and that was what Baba expected of him. Baba did not inquire again about his sleep. Baba's soothing embrace and His promise of forgiveness gradually comforted Aloba's heart and after a fortnight he succeeded in sleeping normally.

Sentimental disturbances need a considerable time to heal. For those who stayed with Baba, whether in the Old Life or in the New Life, it was agonizing to bear His slightest displeasure. They regarded each of Baba's actions as a selfless expression of Divinity of Divine Wisdom in action. So they felt that to displease Baba meant offending God. Hence, whenever Baba got annoyed with any of the closer ones, it became very painful for that person and Aloba was no exception.

Here, I am reminded of an event that Aloba once told me. In the early days it was very difficult for Aloba to control the expression of his love for Baba. In the 1930s he once went to see Baba at Bombay, at Kaka Baria's house. Quite a crowd had gathered to have Baba's *darshan*. The moment Aloba saw Baba he tried to prostrate before Him but he suddenly fell like a log of wood with a big thud at Baba's feet and became oblivious of his surroundings. Baba's gentle touch helped



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him to regain his senses. As he got up beads of tears were trickling down his cheeks.

During this program, with a winsome smile, Baba offered him a big rose garland that He had on. After reaching home, Aloba dried all the flowers and leaves and turned these into powder. He consumed it by taking a pinch of it for about a year. Perhaps this *prasad* had strengthened Aloba in later years to bear the radiance of Baba's presence. To some this may sound strange but any spontaneous response of love, awakened by the grace of the God-Man is most sublime and holy. In the later years if Baba asked Aloba to do anything, he would be so quick and enthusiastic in complying to His wishes that Baba once jokingly gestured, "I have to be cautious in giving instructions to Aloba; he gives me a fright!"

### Incredible Becomes Credible

After three days stay at Ratangarh, the party marched on to Natore, Akbarabad and Hussainabad. From the last stop Baba sent Adi, Ghani and Babadas a day in advance by rail to Najibabad to make the necessary arrangements for lodging and boarding the companions. He asked them to try and conform with the following conditions:

1. To find a place where the men and women companions, with their carts, coach and animals, can stay for a period of three days. If possible, to arrange a hot bath for the whole party.
2. To make arrangements for the meals, lunch and supper and also morning and afternoon tea for the companions, to be provided in *bhiksha*!
3. To find someone who would voluntarily pay for the railway fare of the companions from Najibabad to Dehra Dun.

All these conditions appeared obviously incredible. One often wonders if such a life of "planned uncertainties" and incredible actualities has ever been lived by any Master! To some extent Baba's New Life seemed to have a Zen flavour about it. In this life those who accompanied Baba had to have implicit allegiance to His orders. So Adi with Babadas and Ghani left for Najibabad. Baba gave them enough money for their railway fare and transportation in town. But they were not permitted to spend a single pie from that amount for food or soft drinks. They were to carry food with them from Hussainabad. In case the stock of food was exhausted and they felt hungry they were to beg for it. During the journey by rail, the trio felt so hungry that by the time they reached Najibabad, they had finished all the food they had brought with them. They had not previously visited this place. They had no idea where to go or whom to contact and yet the work entrusted to them had to be completed soon for Baba was to arrive the next morning.

Adi approached the manager of a *dharmshala* who did not readily agree to allot them a room. The three cots practically filled their room and left very little space in between to move about in. Ghani was a heart patient and on that day, all of a sudden, he felt very weak and had to rest in bed, while Babadas, who had developed sciatic pain, expressed his inability to accompany Adi. So Adi hired a *tonga* and asked the driver to take him to prominent citizens of the town; he visited some but no one expressed any readiness to accede to any of the three conditions as laid down by Baba. Moreover, they were expected to fulfill these terms without inquiring much about the party's whereabouts!

After some time the *tongawala* politely asked Adi about the nature of his work. After learning Adi's intentions he remarked, "Why didn't you tell me about it in the beginning? That would have made this job easier." So saying, he took Adi to a cloth merchant named Makhanlal, a very generous person. Adi explained to

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him the three requirements of the Baba-party . Makhanlal frankly replied, "Don't depend on me for any residential arrangements. As for the meals and the tea I shall willingly do what you want me to. Be assured that I can manage it not only for three days but even for three weeks!" Adi was quite surprised with this answer and felt greatly relieved. A big problem was solved. He thanked Makhanlal and told him that he would tell him their place of residence after the party's arrival.

Now the *tongawala* became a guide. He led Adi to another merchant, a wholesale dealer in catechu (one of the substances used in the preparation of *pan*). It seemed that Adi's luck had changed. The businessman readily agreed to pay the railway fare of the companions going from Najibabad to Dehra Dun. He did not press Adi for the whereabouts of the party. The casual information that the group was on its way to the Kumbha Mela proved sufficient for his consent. He called his *munim*, accountant and cashier, and introduced him to Adi. He also directed him to go to the station and to purchase when requested to, the railway tickets under Adi's direction. For this second surprise of the day Adi heartily thanked that large-hearted person.

The problem of lodging was still unsolved. While going towards the station Adi noticed an unkempt garden. The gate was closed but not locked. There was a spacious platform inside which Adi thought could be used for spreading the bed rolls of the companions. Standing by the gate, he was just wondering who could be the owner of that place, when coincidentally a man accosted him and asked him about his interest in the garden. Adi told him that his party was on its way to Hardwar and the companions were expected to arrive at Najibabad the next morning and he was looking for a place where they could stay for three days. On hearing this the stranger replied, "If you think that the open space in the garden would serve your purpose you can occupy it during your stay. The garden belongs to me. Just open the gate and go in."

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In a very cheerful mood Adi returned to the room in the *dharmshala* but felt sad to find Ghani and Babadas still unwell, resting in bed. They welcomed Adi's arrival and were glad to share the news. But they were feeling weak and especially hungry. Baba's instruction was not to spend money on food or soft drinks. They had no food left with which to appease their hunger. The only solution was to get some in *bhiksha*. But after his hard, active round through the city, Adi had no energy left for going out and begging.

The *tongawala* was still waiting to be paid. As Adi went out to pay him, he thought of a plan and asked the man, "How much money should I give you?" The man answered, "Ten rupees, sir." Adi replied, "You have really been of great help to me. I will be happy to pay you twenty rupees for your services." The person did not expect such a big sum. In that mood of surprise the *tongawala* said, "It is too much, sir. I am very thankful to you. What more can I do for you?" At this Adi gave him another surprise by saying, "If you really mean what you say, you may offer food to the three of us, as *bhiksha*." The man looked confused and said, "Sahib, what are you saying? I can arrange to pay for your meals at any hotel. Why do you talk of *bhiksha*? Are you joking?" Adi explained that he had meant exactly what he had said. In the end, though with much hesitation, the *tongawala* brought enough food for three people. Before receiving it Adi instructed him to say aloud that it was offered in *bhiksha*! The poor man, with an astounded look, somehow managed to mutter some words, saluted Adi with respect and left the companions to themselves!

The room in the *dharmshala* was rather stuffy. Yet the trio soon went to sleep. By midnight Ghani got up in his bed and began to grumble and groan, whispering to Adi about some trouble in his chest. He began to twist and contort his fingers. He was having a second heart attack, though a mild one. Ghani began to shiver with fright and pain. Adi, as he gaped at the strange

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scene, tried to be brave but he could not shake off his nagging fears. It was hard to find any medical aid in the dead of night. As a last resort he asked Ghani to remember Baba whole-heartedly; Baba the only hope of their lives. Miraculously enough the pain lessened and he slowly resumed his sleep and began to snore. By sunrise he felt quite refreshed. Babadas's energy seemed also to have been restored. And according to Baba's instructions, the trio was ready at the entrance of the town to receive Him.

### Najibabad to Dehra Dun

By late morning the party arrived. The first question Baba asked Adi was about the lodging facilities. Adi answered that he had arranged open air accommodations on a platform in an unkempt garden. This was not heartening news and Baba admonished Adi for not trying harder to secure a better place. Adi silently submitted to Baba's reprimand but in the course of their talk told Him about the food and the railway fare arrangements he had made. This pleased Baba. Baba's sneering and cheering were equally significant. They were meant to free His dear ones from the binding snares of "I did it." A Sanskrit line states, "Even the anger of the God-Man is verily a blessing." The party with its coach and carts was led to the garden. The animals were tethered and Pendu began his work of looking after the needs of these dumb creatures.

Adi went to the town to inform Makhanlal that lunch was needed. From the uncommon conditions, this merchant intuitively felt that the party he was going to entertain must be an extraordinary group. Within a few hours he brought a nice lunch to the garden. He was taken to Adi's "elder brother." In His flowing hair, Baba looked incredibly beautiful; His presence commanded respect. When Makhanlal saw Baba, he could not help but touch Baba's feet by way of offering his homage. Adi gathered that Baba disliked this devotional gesture of

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Makhanlal. So in soft Gujarati Adi told Baba that he had not disclosed His identity to the visitor. A pleasing look reappeared on Baba's face and He gladly accepted the food. Upon request, He permitted Makhanlal's family to visit the garden the next day. For practical reasons, he was told that morning and afternoon tea were to be ordered from the railway station.

From the beginning, at Sarnath, villagers seemed to express special concern and curiosity about the two female donkeys named Sakhu and Thaku. Carrying them to Hardwar while on pilgrimage to the Kumbha Mela struck them as rather unusual. The donkeys too were not very cooperative in marching with the other animals. In the beginning poor Gustadji, who was observing silence, had great difficulty in driving and dragging them on to the camp. Later Mani and Meheru by loading them with odd things somehow managed to get them moving ahead.

At Najibabad, Baba wished to sell them. Sadashiv (Patel) was asked to take them to the market. On the first day the customers offered a very low price and so they were brought back. The next day Baba fixed a price and instructed Sadashiv to settle the bargain with a person who would of himself propose to have both for that particular amount, not more, not less. On that day no one offered the "fixed price" and Sadashiv returned again unsuccessful. On the third day a customer approached Sadashiv and on his own offered exactly the price confirmed by Baba, and off went Sakhu and Thaku with their new master. Maybe Baba wished that this particular person should own them and so the deal was delayed by two days. A mysterious New Life dealing!

During this stay at Najibabad, when Adi was standing near the gate, a stranger approached him and began to inquire about the party's intentions. Adi tried to be evasive but the man persisted in asking rather pertinent questions. When Adi looked annoyed the person said, "Do you know that the garden where you are staying belongs to me? And you are trespassers." This was

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startling news. Adi went inside and talked to Baba about the situation. He also told Baba how two days earlier another stranger whom he had coincidentally met there had gladly permitted the party to stay in the garden. Of course this had been done orally and nothing had been given in writing. Hearing this, without the least perturbation, Baba gestured that under such circumstances it was better that they leave the garden and move somewhere else.

Adi met the person and apologized for the intrusion. He also informed him of their intention to vacate that place then and there. With this answer the person calmed down so much that in turn he asked Adi to forgive him for being discourteous. He also told him that he would be pleased if the party continued their stay in the garden till they all left for Hardwar. Further he explained that he had lodged a case in the court for the legal possession of that garden and that the respondent might have deliberately misguided Adi. With this cordial conversation the forthcoming inconvenience was warded off and the whole matter ended well. Sharp thorns sometimes bring us closer to the flowers!

Owing to the physical strain of the New Life, Kaka Baria had a severe heart attack at Najibabad. Two days earlier Ghani too had had grievous chest trouble. In the gypsy life, comforts and discomforts changed hands in quick succession. The sickness of the companions made Baba confirm His former intention of traveling from Najibabad to Dehra Dun by railway. Some companions were to drive the carts and the coach (caravan) by the main road so as to reach the headquarters, at Manjri Mafi, within a week. With this decision, Baba asked Adi to inform in advance the wholesale dealer in catechu to arrange for the railway tickets. The date of departure was January 12. They were to board the Dun Express passing through Najibabad by early morning.

According to the agreement, the merchant had consented to hand over the tickets and not money to Adi. He had allotted this work to his *munim*. Accordingly

he was instructed to be present at the station by 3 A.M. and he was. When the train arrived it was so crowded that it seemed impossible, especially for the women, to get into any of the third class compartments. Also they had a lot of luggage with them. Baba hurriedly sent Adi to contact the *munim* again and to ask him to pay the difference for transferring some third class tickets to first class. The *munim* on his own, without the prior consent of his master, agreed to this extra payment. The express train's halt at Najibabad was very short. It was not possible to contact the ticket inspector and get the due receipt for the change in class. So, informing the railway authorities and approximately calculating the money, the *munim* gave the necessary sum to Adi. The women somehow got into the first class compartment and most of the luggage was dumped in there.

The companions managed to get into other third class carriages. At the next halt, Baba learnt that instead of regular railway tickets Adi had accepted money to be remitted to the ticket checker. Accepting money was not allowed in the New Life. So Baba instructed Adi that after getting down at Dehra Dun his first duty would be to refund the balance, no matter how meager the amount, by money order to the person concerned. Baba was particular in matters, small or big alike, and Adi literally followed Baba's instructions.

To narrate every event of this gypsy phase is neither possible nor practical. Nevertheless, the happenings at Najibabad mentioned above offer a glimpse of the inconceivable nature of the New Life led by Baba.



*New Plans in the New Life*

1950 — Part II

Kumar's First Meeting with Baba

PRIOR to the commencement of the New Life in 1949, Baba had called one of His lovers, Keki Desai, from Delhi to Meherabad. He was given the duty of purchasing a small piece of property near Dehra Dun in the name of Baba's companions. This was to be the headquarters for Baba's New Life activity. Keki was asked to build a small tenement on the plot and to dig a well nearby. The work did not go as scheduled and could not be completed prior to Baba's arrival. So Desai with the help of Harjeevan Lal, an advocate from Delhi, made a tentative arrangement for the party to stay in Mrs. Pratt's bungalow on its arrival in Dehra Dun. The women left for that place but Baba was requested to wait a while in the waiting room on the railway station for lunch.

The plot purchased for the headquarters was in a village called Manjri Mafi, now called Meher Mafi, a place a few kilometers from Dehra Dun. In the adjacent plot lived Shatrughna Kumar Ghildial, an agriculturist. Baba called him Kumar. Kaikobad Dastur, one of Baba's *mandali*, was sent in advance to Dehra Dun, in October 1949, to stay on the property at Manjri Mafi. Out of convenience Kumar was asked to arrange for Kaikobad's meals. Kumar also supervised the construction work on the site. Keki Nalavala, one of Baba's dear ones at Dehra Dun, was entrusted with the work of feeding the party on its arrival. He asked Kumar to see to this and Kumar willingly agreed to send food

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on Baba's arrival. The Baba-party reached Dehra Dun by 10 A.M. on January 12, 1950. It was time for food to be served to Baba. Kumar had come to the station to receive the Baba-party and Eruch asked him about the food. Kumar knew that Meher Baba whom he was meeting for the first time was very particular that one be punctual. So he left for his residence on his motorbike and soon returned to the railway station with good hot food.

In the waiting room Eruch started serving food to Baba while Kumar was standing by His side. Baba casually asked him, "Why late?" Kumar told Him that it was due to a slight misunderstanding on the part of his dear wife, Subhadra. She thought that the guests would visit their residence for the meal. With the intention of serving them steaming hot food, especially rice, she was waiting for the guests to arrive. This was the cause of the delay.

Looking at Kumar, Baba held the morsel of rice in His fingers and expressed His happiness over its preparation. Baba was a good judge in appreciating different dishes and delicacies, their flavor, taste, everything. Very casually, He asked Kumar, "Did you feel perturbed over the delay? I hope you did not get angry with your wife." At this first meeting Kumar was deeply drawn to Baba but he did not expect Him to ask such a personal question. He, however, replied with an open mind, "Yes, Baba, I did feel annoyed that the food was not ready in time." With a suggestive smile Baba added, "Right. One should be particular about time. Did you admonish your wife for this? I hope you didn't hit her!" Kumar might have thought that this was rather meddling too much in his personal affairs but he could not help saying, "In that mood of impatience I did strike her, though very slightly." Hearing this, Baba pushed aside the plate of rice and with a grave look conveyed "How can I eat food associated with ill feelings?"

The situation became tense. It was true that Kumar

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had lost his temper over a petty affair but it was because of the inconvenience caused to his honorable guests. He conceded that he had treated his wife roughly but he didn't see why Baba should express such anxiety over someone else's personal affair. Yet Kumar did not express any annoyance but simply apologized for ill treating his wife. This was perhaps the first time in Kumar's life when he unhesitatingly expressed his regrets over a personal affair before someone he was meeting for the first time! In the course of time it was revealed to him that this "someone" was the Ancient One and the most intimate One to whom the life of each one was an open book. The above incident clearly shows that Baba expected men to treat women with respect and courtesy. In fact, "Respect Life," is one of Baba's teachings.

This verbal acknowledgement from Kumar did not seem to satisfy Baba. He told him that only if Kumar promised not to repeat any ungallant behavior towards his wife, Subhadra, would He (Baba) partake of the lunch that was served on the table. He even stretched out His hand inviting Kumar to promise Him. Things were moving so speedily that the rebellious spirit of Kumar had no chance to think about either complying or protesting against Baba's gesture. Kumar placed his hand in Baba's as a token of affirmation. Baba looked pleased and started eating the food. A little later He took a morsel from His plate and offering it to Kumar He indicated that Kumar should eat it. To the politically minded Kumar such an act of intimacy was totally new but he did not refuse it. In this meeting, by offering *prasad* to Kumar, Baba sowed the seed of a close relationship with him that was to blossom in the years to come. During different phases of Baba's work in the New Life a few families which would not have met Baba in the ordinary course of events coincidentally came into His contact and became His ardent devotees. The New Life brought Kumar's family into Baba's love orbit. Baba, the Eternal Fisherman, even now

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continues to adopt marvelous means for "netting" His lovers.

### A Challenge to Mr. God!

The significance of Kumar's promise to Baba can rightly be understood only when correlated with an event that occurred some years earlier and another incident that took place years later. This backward and forward sweep in narration shall reveal, to some extent, the profundity of Baba's actions. Kumar as a youth belonged to a revolutionary party. Those were the days when India was ruled by the Britishers. Kumar, as a staunch patriot, wished to free his motherland, India, by any means whatsoever, including violence.

During the Second World War, India was still a British territory. Some Indians, especially those belonging to the revolutionary parties, concentrated on overthrowing the British regime and were jailed. Kumar was one of them. In the beginning Kumar was at the Devali (Rajasthan) Detention Camp, and later he was taken to the Bareilly Camp in Uttar Pradesh. The main political party, the Indian National Congress, cooperated with the British and so when the war was over, although independence was not granted, many political prisoners were released as a good will gesture. However, terrorists, who were regarded as a special threat, continued to be detained and Kumar was one of them. During his imprisonment Kumar noticed that some of his friends would regularly offer prayers to God. He would sarcastically laugh at those who prayed. He had no faith in prayer for he was a staunch atheist, not even an agnostic.

One evening he thought, "Should I experiment with prayers? With a clear conscience, why should I not test God's existence?" He wanted to be very concrete and practical in his experimentation. One evening he addressed the Impersonal Presence as follows: "O Mr. God, they say you are omnipresent and omnipotent. If

you are really that, hear what I have to say. You can call it what you may, a request or a challenge. You know I am in jail for no fault of mine except my love for the motherland, India. I am a married person and my dear wife and family members have to suffer for nothing. If you are compassionate or at least reasonable, I sincerely agree to abide by the following terms: if you effect my release from the prison by tomorrow early morning, I shall accept your omnipresence. In that case I assure you I will dedicate the rest of my life in your service. This is my promise to you. And Mr. God, if I am freed any time after tomorrow morning, I shall treat this as chance or anything but your doing. In that case I shall not be bound to you or to anyone to keep this promise."

Kumar knew that the jail office opened daily at 10 A.M. and that the time to discharge any political prisoner could not be earlier than that. However, whatever Kumar said to himself or thought that evening was not done as a joke. In some remote corner of his being, he felt that something extraordinary might happen! "Nothing is impossible," he thought, "if the One I prayed to turns out to be the Omnipresent One, the Omnipotent One! After all, this is a sincere experiment and I must remain open and also take some risk." In that peculiar frame of mind Kumar even started collecting his belongings, in case Mr. God sympathetically considered his case! With a mixed feeling of belief and disbelief he was unable to get any sleep.

In the early hours, much before dawn, a jail officer visited Kumar's cell and handed him a note saying that he must be ready to leave the prison premises shortly. He was immediately taken to the office where the Superintendent was present. It was a surprise to Kumar to find him there at such an unusual hour! The Superintendent rifled through some papers and told Kumar that he would be immediately released from the Bareilly jail and that he would have to wait outside the gates to collect his railway warrant, etc. No more explanations

were given. With this unexpected event Kumar felt greatly astonished. "What a humorist God must be!" he thought. It was still dark and Kumar waited on the road to receive his allowances and railway warrant. This release from prison before sunrise brought a change in Kumar's outlook towards life itself. The atheist became an agnostic. Yet he had no idea that instead of indirectly experiencing the Impersonal Presence of God, he was to meet God in human form, face to face and that in fact He had the greatest sense of humor.

Some years later Kumar came in close contact with Baba and had the unique fortune to stay with Him as one of the *mandali*. He would regale Baba by narrating interesting stories. In 1954 during Baba's stay at Satara, Kumar would accompany Baba in the mornings for a stroll. His duty was to carry an umbrella to hold over Baba when needed. One day, during a morning walk, all of a sudden Baba turned to Kumar and gestured, "Do you recall the promise that you gave me?" Kumar could not understand what Baba meant. In 1953 during Baba's Fiery Free Life, Kumar had been with Baba for a number of programs, in different parts of India. He had witnessed thousands of people clamoring for the *Avatar's darshan*. He had also been present when Baba had given instructions to some of His lovers. Kumar did not realize that Baba was referring to the particular promise he had given Him in the waiting room at Dehra Dun. So he said, "What promise, Baba?" Baba further gestured that He was referring to Kumar's promise to treat Subhadra (his wife) with respect. Kumar recollected the event and assured Baba that he was implicitly following Baba's instruction. Baba looked pleased and conveyed, "You have kept your promise. Good." And with a smile He added, "I also kept my promise!"

Through this statement Baba was indirectly indicating God's eternal promise to respond to prayers. For want of a definite context Kumar could not gather what Baba meant. At this point Baba gave him a meaningful look and all of a sudden Kumar remembered the challenge

and the promise he had given to God when he was in prison at Bareilly. The incident which had remained dormant in his subconscious for about a decade vividly flashed before his mind, in complete detail. Emotion brightened Kumar's face and his eyes glistened as he related to Baba, for the first time, the whole story. At the end Baba smilingly gestured, "I am Mr. God! I am God in human form." What a mysterious and time penetrating corroboration! Later, whenever Kumar wrote letters to Baba, he would address Him as, "Dearest *Khuda* [God]." Baba's casual act of taking a promise from Kumar at Dehra Dun had such a profound context. Every act of the *Avatar* is immensely meaningful. Indeed, unfathomable is His *Lila*!

In Mrs. Pratt's Bungalow

Mehera, Mani, Goher and Meheru left the railway station at Dehra Dun in a car that took them to a fine bungalow owned by an English lady, Mrs. Pratt. This villa, in contrast to the unkempt premises at Najibabad, had a lovely garden with fine rows of rose bushes and many other flowering plants blossoming in the sun. There was a lovely lawn and a small orchard too. A fine view of the snowcapped Mussoorie hills offered a delightful sight. From whatever angle you looked it was a vision of sheer beauty. Inside, the bungalow was well furnished. It had a good kitchen with an electric stove. Hot water could be had at any time. They hadn't had a good bath for weeks, so this pleased them all the more. But in fact they were more concerned about Baba. They thought that now Baba's clothes could be washed. Lukewarm water could be made available to Him at any time. He will have a good rest here. They deeply felt that Baba's delicate body needed at least a few minimal comforts, especially after the strenuous gypsy life. They, however, did not know that their stay in the bungalow was to be for just a few days.

In one part of the bungalow stayed an English couple,

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Mr. and Mrs. Angelo. Mr. Angelo had retired from the military service as an officer. But at that time he was depressed for he had lost his two sons in the Second World War. He was also suffering from some serious eye trouble and was gradually losing his sight. In addition, he didn't have enough money to return to England. Baba sent one of His companions to meet this couple. In the friendly talk that followed Mr. Angelo revealed his plight. Baba, hearing of this, later managed to offer him some financial help, through Dr. Donkin, to proceed to England. Maybe because of the Angelos' past connections Baba agreed to that very short stay in Mrs. Pratt's bungalow. It has been noticed that Baba's movements, with all their unexpected changes, have a sublime spiritual motivation.

### "Baba Jane" Baba Alone Knows

Another incident during this stay which I find more astonishing is connected with Todi Singh and his first meeting with Baba. He was a cream contractor from Aligarh, a place over 100 kilometers to the east of Delhi. In the second week of January, 1950, he had an unusual dream. In that fortuitous dream he saw Baba in His long white *sadra*, effulgence radiating from His beautiful body. Baba's flowing hair added spiritual splendor to His personality. Todi Singh was in rapture and felt blessed. He reverentially touched Baba's feet. In the dream, Baba lifted him up and He spoke, "At present I am at Dehra Dun. Come there. Serve me. Feed me." He had not heard of Meher Baba before. But the dream was so powerful that he felt convinced that the personality whom he had seen in the dream was his Master and he intuitively addressed the Master as "Baba." The dream awakened him from his slumber of worldliness. With eyes streaming with tears, he decided there and then to visit Dehra Dun to meet the Radiant One. It was a divine call.

Without knowing the name of his Master or His



address, he left for Dehra Dun. He carried with him a good many things, packets of butter, fruits, sweets, etc. to offer in "Baba's" service. He was confident he would definitely meet Him somewhere in that extensive city. A heart filled with love knows no doubts. Through some coincidences Todi Singh eventually reached the house of Keki Nalavala, 36 Lytton Road, Dehra Dun. He remembered that he had seen this particular house in his dream.

Overwhelmed with feeling he knocked at the door. Keki Nalavala came out to find a stranger requesting him to accept a cart load of things he had brought. Keki asked him his name and where he was from. He also asked him why and for whom he had brought these things. The only two words that Todi Singh repeatedly uttered, in answer to any and all questions, were, "Baba Jane" meaning Baba alone knows. Baba's arrival in Dehra Dun had not been disclosed to Baba people except for a few very close ones connected with the activities of the New Life. Keki was forbidden to give anyone Baba's address. He wondered how Todi Singh, from a distant city, Aligarh, managed to visit his house just at the time when Baba was visiting Dehra Dun. With Baba's permission, however, Todi Singh was taken to Mrs. Pratt's bungalow.

As soon as Todi Singh saw Baba he became oblivious of the companions and everything else except Baba. He muttered to himself in Hindi, "*Wohi to hai, wohi to hai*" (He is the same One, He is the same One) whom he had seen in the dream. Instantaneous recognition, surprise and delight flashed across his face. Overpowered with blissful feelings he could not say anything but shed tears of joy. Anyone can imagine with what fervor he must have prostrated at Baba's feet! All those who witnessed this scene were greatly touched by Todi Singh's devotion. After he offered all the things he had brought, Baba made Todi Singh sit near Him and patted his back. In spite of the New Life phase, Baba did not object to Todi Singh's expression of love and reverence.

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It seemed Baba knew about Todi Singh's dream.

Referring to the packets of butter he had brought, Baba commenced teasing him, "You have brought the cans but who will cook the eatables in clarified butter [ghee]?" Todi Singh gladly and promptly replied, "I shall regard myself as most fortunate if you allow me to do that. I shall go and bring my wife and family here to render such service." Surprisingly enough, Baba unhesitatingly agreed to this proposal; it was an authentication of the instruction in the dream, "Serve me, feed me."

Todi Singh went back to Aligarh and within a few days returned to Dehra Dun with his wife, daughters and a son. By this time Baba had left Mrs. Pratt's bungalow. The whole party had moved to Mahant's *Kothi* (house) in Manjri Mafi. From January 16 through January 21, Todi Singh fed Baba and His companions with tasty vegetables and other nutritious food. He looked exceedingly happy while serving Baba. He would be seen shedding tears of joy for this unique opportunity to serve the Lord of love. He was so absorbed in Baba's love that he evinced little interest in obtaining any information about Baba's earlier life. To him Baba was God in human form and hence he never thought of getting any personal information about Baba's earlier life. He was blissfully content in meditating on Baba's form and mentally repeating His name. He would not talk much with the companions and if someone asked him anything about his family or business he would repeat his pet phrase, "*Baba Jane*"

After a short stay, Baba instructed him to go back to Aligarh and this made him extremely sad. On the day of his departure he bowed down to everything and anything that Baba had touched. He was trying to suppress and swallow the grief of parting from the Divine Beloved. He strived to restrain his sobs but big beadlike tears often lingered at the edge of his eyes and subsequently flowed down his cheeks. Todi Singh's first stay with Baba turned him into a semi-mast and his eyes

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looked intoxicated with Baba's love. He intensely longed to be with Baba for a second time, and in response to his love, Baba called him again to Manjri Mafi in the summer of 1950. But this was just for a few hours in connection with a business Baba intended to start at Delhi.

Todi Singh had very devotedly served Baba and His companions with good food. This incident brings to mind the time when a person staying at Bhivandi (Maharashtra) lovingly arranged a light refreshment for Baba and His people. This event is also connected with a dream and a march on foot. In 1923 Baba was staying in Manzil-e-Meem at Dadar, Bombay. During this period, with some of His disciples and devotees, Baba left Bombay on foot for Sakori where Upasni Maharaj, one of His five Perfect Masters, was residing. Sakori was over 400 kilometers from Bombay. After walking a distance of about 80 kilometers the party reached Bhivandi.

Here, unexpectedly, the Baba-party was received by a government servant. He told Baba that he had been anxiously waiting to meet Him and asked Baba to kindly condescend to have some refreshment which he had arranged at the government rest house. Why? In the course of conversation he revealed that in the early hours of that morning which are regarded as very auspicious he had had a dream in which he saw a party of mendicants, headed by a saintly personality with flowing hair and a bright silvery halo. The leader was wearing a long white cloak. When he awoke, the memory of the dream was so vivid and convincing that he began to await his spiritual guest. And then he met Baba. Baba accepted this breakfast served with love. Whether in the Old Life or the New Life, Baba's work of drawing His dear ones to Him through love continued, and this heart orientation still goes on even more marvelously though Baba has dropped the cloak He had donned for some years.

The incidents connected with Major Angelo and Todi Singh have made Baba's short stay in Mrs. Pratt's

bungalow much remembered by the companions.

### Revising Some Conditions

Baba had cancelled the journey on foot from Najibabad to Hardwar and with some companions He left the city by train for Dehra Dun. It did not seem practical to ship the animals and the carts by rail. So it was decided that these should be led to the headquarters (Dehra Dun) on foot. Pendu was in charge of this work. The cavalcade of vehicles was led by Donkin; he held the reins of the *tonga* while Pendu was the "guard" driving the caravan. In between were the vehicles of Baidul, Sadashiv and Aloba. After journeying some miles, at one of the crossroads, some local people suggested a shorter route to Dehra Dun. With the intention of reaching the destination earlier, the companions forgot Baba's hint to journey by the highway. This detour ended up causing them great inconvenience and they ended up regretting their decision.

When the animals were crossing a rivulet, the caravan, owing to the heavy load it carried, stuck in a marsh patch. In spite of great efforts the bullocks could not get it out. At last, with the help of some villagers, they removed the muddy soil that lay near the wheels and instead spread some dried twigs and branches there. This plan worked well and the caravan was pulled out. The road ahead wound through a forest area infested with wild animals. To make up for lost time the party continued to drive. It was getting darker and darker, and the way led through a jungle. Fortunately they came across a rest house built for the forest officers. Circumstances forced them to break the journey. They lit a camp fire to keep the wild animals away. They tethered the bullocks and horses round the fire. At night it began to drizzle. So, with the permission of the caretaker, Donkin, Pendu and the others passed the night on the veranda of the rest house. At daybreak they resumed their journey. Because their short cut had prolonged their trip, they

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didn't have enough food. So for the last two to three days, before reaching Manjri Mafi, the party had only one meal a day. Baba was residing in the Mahant's house as the erection of the huts on the plot purchased had not been completed.

After reaching Dehra Dun, Baba thought of revising some of the conditions to be followed by His companions in the New Life. They had passed through the phases of training, begging and gypsy life. These phases had offered Baba's companions some objective lessons which had helped them to understand their own weaknesses and merits. Everyone had enough experiences of the comforts and discomforts, the thrill and the fatigue of the New Life phase. This life had many surprises, some aggravating, some soothing. They had to pass through them all with considerable unconcern. Sometimes it was natural for them to feel depressed and dejected but they had to laugh it off soon — the sooner the better.

Baba, however, never lost his celebrated wit. His breezy humor would reach the hearts of the companions whispering to them a message of cheer to take things easy. But as the deeper levels of emotions were occasionally stirred up in the New Life, sometimes it was not easy for the companions to keep really cheerful. Baba's benign smile, however, helped them in such situations. During Baba's stay in Mrs. Pratt's bungalow, He had several open and intimate conversations with the companions, and by the time He left this house He had practically dictated the final draft of the revised conditions for the New Life. He seemed to be waiting only for the arrival of Pendu's party to disclose the three plans.

### The Three Plans

On January 15, in a meeting with the companions, Baba communicated the following: "You all should honestly and whole-heartedly consider these three plans in their entirety. They are of my own making, and my

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own free will and accord, and you must accept one of them as being my wish and order. By accepting one of these plans collectively or individually, you will still remain one hundred per cent my companions in the New Life. These three plans make me free to live the New Life in my own way and yet keep you all one hundred per cent in the New Life ... These three plans are based on the labor phase. The other three phases of begging, gypsy and *langoti* life will be personally carried out by me alone or with the companions staying with me . . . In these three plans, the two points of 'responsibility before God' and 'no spiritual benefit' stand good for ever." <sup>1</sup>

The first plan was divided into three independent units, A, B, and C: "A" was to be worked out collectively; "B" was to take effect either collectively or individually; "C" was to be undergone personally by any companion. The second plan allowed anyone to open any business he wanted or to take any job. The third plan called for total adherence to all the conditions agreed to in the meeting at Meherabad on August 31, 1949.

Here is the gist of some clauses included in these three plans. Plan I-A (Collective): All the companions would cooperate and help one another in adjusting things each doing his best to keep the plan going. The earnings of the companions from their jobs, farming or business, would belong collectively to all the members. Baba would have nothing to do with money or accounts. In their spare time the companions could come together for casual conversation with Baba or entertain Him with music and songs. This Plan I-A, in a sense, offered full freedom to Baba for His work and also enough latitude for the companions. If, instead of all, only a few agreed to act according to the clauses mentioned above, such a small group was classified by Baba under I-B. Baba proposed to keep the carts, *tongas* and animals

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<sup>1</sup> Circular NL 3, issued on 10-2-1950.

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at the disposal of this batch.

In Plan I-C (individual) Baba permitted the companions to lead the New Life at their place of residence. Some of the terms in connection with this option were the same as in I-A. Such a one was allowed to earn money by taking a job or opening a business. After keeping the money necessary to support himself he was to send the balance for those who would decide to stay with Baba. He had, however, to give up hope of ever being in Baba's *sahavas* again. Those in this plan were also prohibited from having any correspondence with Baba of their own.

Plan II was similar to Plan I-C (Individual) in many respects. The companion who chose this plan could go to any place other than the one he had been residing in, in the Old Life. Of course he had to follow a few conditions laid down by Baba. In one of the clauses of Plan II the following was stated: "No duties will be allotted to you by me [Baba]... and you can lead an absolutely independent life ..." Because of this "independence" offered by Baba no one dared to join Plan II. Who would ever want to free himself from the privilege of being guided by the God Man? Plan III was for those who were thoroughly prepared to accept the original conditions circulated during the first meeting about the New Life in Meherabad hall.

The necessary copies of these three plans as suggested by Baba were mimeographed. On January 21, He called another meeting of the companions and everyone received a copy of these plans. They were to study seriously all the conditions before deciding to join any plan. They were to meet again after two or three days when everyone had to convey his decision to Baba. It turned out that Plan I-A was dropped since it required unanimous approval. Donkin came forward to work out I-B. Kaka and Gustadji joined him and Donkin shouldered responsibility for them. Adi, Ghani, Babadas and Anna 104 wished to abide by I-C. No one thought of joining Plan II.

## GLIMPSES OF THE GOD-MAN

The remaining eight companions, Nilu, Pendu, Baidul, Eruch, Murli, Vishnu, Sadashiv (Patel) and Aloba decided to accept Plan III *in toto*. All the companions had to affirm their decision by taking an oath before God the Impersonal and the All-knowing Each one had to follow most sincerely and honestly all the clauses mentioned in the plan of his choice. Some of the standing instructions mentioned in all the plans were: not to touch any woman with lustful intention, not to discuss politics, not to criticize anyone, not to tell lies, not to create situations (directly or indirectly) that would invite homage and above all to remain cheerful, thus maintaining the "Don't worry and expect nothing" attitude. It seems that anyone who wishes to be Baba's companion in His eternal New Life has to lead it voluntarily and cheerfully, but the aforementioned injunctions have to be observed as well. Baba expected the companions to remain intrinsically detached from any activity, though in the thick of it. Baba's New Life phase was a symbolic demonstration of a life of unreservedly committing oneself to the Divine Will.

To be in the company of the God Man and to serve Him to His selfless satisfaction was not an easy-going affair. Those who stayed close to Baba had to pass, time and again, through "fires". Sometimes the mind would rebel and the heart would be in low spirits, but the God Man, being infinitely skillful, played with each of His companions a thrilling game to its farthest limits. To illustrate how in the lives of Baba's dear ones whether in the Old Life or the New Life the emotional crises were initiated and resolved, I quote below a letter from Baba sent in the early 1930s to Quentin Todd, one of His lovers from England. Baba dictated:

I have all your loving letters and know how you long to be of service to me. You have been and will be still more, dear boy. Why should you feel yourself "unworthy" and that I am pulling on [putting up] with you and so on? For I love you as you are. You



## NEW PLANS IN THE NEW LIFE

have a nice, frank, receptive heart that can and does love, in spite of the constant reverses, as you say, from the head. And that is all I want.

When one completely depends on me and leaves things to me as you have, I see that the reverses from the head gradually give way. I will order everything for the best, as you desire. The way you feel, your own weaknesses open your way and lead you to rise above them. They all have to come out once and the sooner the better. It is because of this that you feel as you do, but you, dear Todd, needn't at all worry. For it is all for the better. Things are being stirred up and they are all brought out to prepare you for the greater future that is to be yours. Love me more, and that will take care of other things, consuming all in its flame, till nothing but pure Love Divine remains. That is all I want you to do, more and more.

The merits or the weaknesses of His followers and lovers did not matter much to Baba. He was and is concerned with their total and willing surrender to Him. He is ready to accept anyone *as he is*. In the New Life Baba often stirred up the companions' emotions and then helped them to face their weaknesses. The plans and the many changes in the external aspect of the New Life were made by Baba to keep the spirit of the New Life intact while at the same time accommodating the natural weaknesses and proclivities of His companions. After all, He is the Compassionate Companion!